



Bridges Built, Bridges Broken

Characters: Miss Ho, Miss Perkins, Alysha, Bax, Ravi

Synopsis: Miss Ho can see that Miss Perkins is having a difficult time so she invites her out to dinner as a way of reaching out and helping her. Bax meets Alysha on the way home. They get talking and Bax gets himself invited back to Alysha's home to listen to some Indian music. But Ravi, Alysha's elder brother comes home and is very suspicious and angry.

Scene 1 Classroom

(SFX: Very noisy and unruly. The noise goes on even when Miss Perkins is talking.)

Miss P: Quiet everyone.... Quiet I say? (noise continues)

Student: Potty Perkins. (all giggle nastily. Uproar resumes)

Miss P: If you don't keep quiet I am leaving, (noise continues) I mean it... I won't teach you (All students cheer)... Very well... if that's how you feel... You can just get on with it yourself... see if I care!

(SFX: Classroom door slams with classroom still in uproar... Fade)

Scene 2 Staffroom

Miss Ho: Miss Perkins.

Miss P: Wendy would you please stop calling me Miss Perkins.... I don't call you Miss Ho.

Miss Ho: Gladys, listen... I know we don't always see eye to eye on things.

Miss P: What are you trying to say Wendy?

Miss Ho: Well, what I'm trying to say is.... What are you doing for dinner tonight?

Miss P: (Suspiciously) Dinner? Why?

Miss Ho: It's just that... well.... Why don't we have dinner together.

Miss P: You and me? Have dinner together?

Miss Ho: Why not... we're colleagues and... well to tell you the truth Gladys... you seem to have been under a lot of strain recently... you could do with a nice relaxing evening out and a chat.

Miss P: I haven't been under a lot of strain! Who told you that?

Miss Ho: You walked out of your class Gladys... you just abandoned your duties.

Miss P: I had a meeting to go to.

Miss Ho: A meeting with a cup of tea?

Miss P: No. An important meeting.

Miss Ho: Gladys, face it... 5D is a difficult class.... They've been getting on top of you... you walked out because you couldn't face them.

Miss P: Don't say that Wendy... it isn't true.

Miss Ho: Look I'm not spying on you or anything... I won't tell anyone... I'm just trying to help you.

Miss P: I don't need any help.

Miss Ho: Oh yes you do.... You're a stubborn woman Gladys... but fortunately we have that in common... I'm stubborn too.... And I am not leaving this staffroom before you say you're coming out to dinner tonight.

Miss P: Look at the time... you'll miss your class.

Miss Ho: I don't care. I'm standing here till you give me an answer... a positive answer.

Miss P: Oh all right then.

Miss Ho: You'll come?

Miss P: Who's paying?

Miss Ho: Me.

Miss P: Okay then... you're on.

Miss Ho: Good... let's meet here when lessons have done.

Miss P: I've got marking to do before I can go out.

Miss Ho: Me too. Let's stay here and do our marking and leave at about six.

Miss P: Where are we going?

Miss Ho: I'm taking you to my favourite Shanghainese restaurant... it's not very posh but the food is delicious.

Miss P: Don't expect me to eat chicken's feet or anything funny like that.

Miss Ho: (Little laugh) I won't. Okay Gladys... I'll see you later.

Scene 3 Classroom in uproar. Students ignore miss Perkins

Miss P: Quiet everybody... I said Quiet.

Student 1: Shut up Potty. (uproar resumes)

Miss P: (Furious) Who said that? (noise) I said, who said that?
Student 2: She's mad as a hatter.
Student 1: Nuts.
All: Potty Perkins. (All laugh nastily. Uproar resumes)
Miss P: I am reporting this class to the headmistress.

(Noise continues)

Miss P: Right! Teach yourselves see if I care, (noise) Teach yourselves!

(Door slams. Uproar continues. Fade)

Scene 4: Staffroom

Miss Ho: What an afternoon... I'm exhausted... I've taught six classes one after the other... dreadful... How about you Gladys... how was your afternoon?
Miss P: Fine... fine.
Miss Ho: No discipline problems?
Miss P: Nope.
Miss Ho: That's good.
Miss P: Shall we go.
Miss Ho: I thought we were going to do our marking first?
Miss P: Oh let's do that later.... I just want to get out of here,
Miss Ho: Give me another thirty minutes... I promised 3C I'd mark their history test.
Miss P: Do it later.
Miss Ho: You really want to go don't you.
Miss P: Yes.
Miss Ho: Okay... let's go then...
Miss P: Where's the restaurant?
Miss Ho: In Tsim Sha Tsui... we can get the MTR.
Miss P: Okay... come on.

(SFX: They leave staffroom)

Student 1: Oh look, there's Potty Perkins.
Student 2: She's as mad as a hatter.

Student 1: Nuts.
Student 2: (calling out) Potty Perkins.

(They all giggle)

Miss Ho: Who was that?
Miss P: What?
Miss Ho: Someone called your name.
Miss P: I didn't hear anything... come along... let's go.
Student 1: (Calling out) Potty Potter!
Miss Ho: That was your name... and with a rude epithet in front of it.
Student 2: (calling out) Potty Perkins!
Miss Ho: Hey you....
Miss Ho: Hey... come back... come back here!
Miss P: Come on Wendy... I'm starving.... Let's go.
Miss Ho: But Gladys... those students were calling you names... you can't just ignore that.
Miss P: They're just silly kids that's all.
Miss Ho: But you mustn't let them think that they can call you names like that.
Miss P: Who cares.
Miss Ho: Gladys... YOU should care.
Miss P: Let's eat.

Scene 4 In the restaurant

Miss Ho: It's not usually as empty as this.... It's because we're early
Miss P: Never mind... it's good to eat early... good for the digestion... it's bad for you to go to sleep on a full stomach.
Miss Ho: You're right... okay... well... I recommend the steamed pork dumplings... they're delicious.
Miss P: Pork? Mmm... is it fresh.
Miss Ho: Oh yes... I've been eating here for years and I've never had anything to complain about... and the bean curd and spicy minced pork is nice.
Miss P: Okay... whatever you say Wendy... you're paying.
Miss Ho: Waiter...
Waiter: Yes Miss?
Miss Ho: We'll have the Siu Lum Bao... and the pork and beancurd... and um... some fried rice.

Waiter: What tea would you like?
Miss Ho: Jasmine?
Miss P: Tea?... no fear... I'll have a beer.
Miss Ho: A beer Gladys?... but it's only half past five.
Miss P: That's okay... (To waiter) two beers please.
Miss Ho: I'm having tea.
Miss P: Come on Wendy, don't be a spoil sport... have a beer.
Miss Ho: (To waiter) A pot of Jasmine tea and one beer please.
Waiter: Yes Miss.
Miss Ho: Now then Gladys... tell me what's been going on in your life?
Miss P: My life?... you see this restaurant?
Miss Ho: Yes.
Miss P: Well... that's what my life is like.
Miss Ho: How do you mean Gladys?
Miss P: Well... are there any people in it?
Miss Ho: NO... we're too early... normally it's packed.
Miss P: Well that's what my life is like.
Miss Ho: Empty... no people in it.
Miss P: Yup.
Miss Ho: You said your life was like this restaurant Gladys.... Well it's not true to say that it is empty... apart from you there is one other person in it... me.
Miss P: Funny you inviting me out to dinner... you know I always thought you hated me Wendy.
Miss Ho: No Gladys... I don't hate you... there's too much hate in the world...what the world needs is a little more love... OH look... here come our steamed pork dumplings....
Miss P: And my beer.

Scene 5 In the street

Bax: Hi Alysha... where you going?
Alysha: Home.
Bax: Where do you live?
Alysha: Tsim Sha Tsui.
Bax: So do I.
Alysha: Really?
Bax: Yes... I'll come to the MTR with you.

Alysha: Okay.
Bax: You're Indian aren't you.
Alysha: Yes... I suppose so... I mean my parents are from India but I was born here.
Bax: Do you like it here?
Alysha: Of course, it's my home.
Bax: But you go back to India don't you.
Alysha: For holidays... but this is where I feel I belong.
Bax: What kind of music do you like?
Alysha: Hike all kinds of music.
Bax: Cantonese or Indian?
Alysha: Both, but, I mainly listen to Indian music... you know, classical Indian sitar music
Bax: Sitar?
Alysha: You know... it's the traditional Indian musical instrument.
Bax: What does it look like?
Alysha: Well it's a string instrument... with a very long neck... and you sit on the floor and play it crossed legged.
Bax: Wow.
Alysha: I like Indian pop music too... in my building we can get Indian MTV so I can keep up with all the new songs.
Bax: Indian pop music?
Alysha: Yes.
Bax: Who are your favourite Indian singers then?
Alysha: Well I like.... (Sujatta says the names of her favourite Indian groups and singers).
Bax: Never heard of them.
Alysha: They're great.
Bax: I'd love to hear some Indian music.
Alysha: I'll lend you some if you like.
Bax: Hey Alysha... why don't I come home with you now and you can play me some.
Alysha: Come to my home Bax? Um...
Bax: I won't stay long... go on Alysha... it will be fun to listen to some Indian music together.
Alysha: Um... I don't know.'
Bax: Just for ten minutes or so.
Alysha: Um... what day is it? Oh yes... Ravi will be having his tennis lessons...

okay then... but only for ten minutes.
Bax: Who's Ravi?
Alysha: My elder brother.
Bax: So he won't be there?
Alysha: No he'll be having his tennis coaching.
Bax: Great Alysha... let's go.
Alysha: Um Bax ... wouldn't you rather lend some of my Indian music.
Bax: No, I want to hear it now... with you.... at your place.
Alysha: Okay then.... Let's be quick about it though.

Scene 6: In the restaurant

Miss Ho: What do you think of the steamed pork buns?
Miss P: (Mouth full) Yes there very nice. Cheers.
Miss Ho: Cheers. Um... are your mother and father still....
Miss P: Mum's gone... she had a heart attack last year... she was in the garden pulling out the weeds... and then someone reached down out of the sky and pulled HER out.
Miss Ho: I'm sorry.
Miss P: At least it was quick.
Miss Ho: True.
Miss P: Dad's in a home... Alzheimers.
Miss Ho: I'm sorry.
Miss P: H e doesn't recognize me anymore.
Miss Ho:' That must be hard.
Miss P: My sister goes to see him once a week... just to see how he is.
Miss Ho: Is that in Sydney?
Miss P: Balerat... it's a smallish town outside of Melbourne
Miss Ho: Is that where you come from?
Miss P: Yes. I was born and brought up there... got married there...
Miss Ho: I didn't know you were married.
Miss P: Divorced.
Miss Ho: I see. Children?
Miss P: No.
Miss Ho: And why Hong Kong?
Miss P: The NET scheme...
Miss Ho: The Native English Teacher Sceme.
Miss P: Yes... I thought... here's my chance... I'd always wanted to see the

world... why not start with Hong Kong?
Miss Ho: Are you happy here?
Miss P: Yes... yes... but....
Miss Ho: But what.
Miss P: It gets a bit... lonely... it's alright for the youngsters there's lots of places for them to go and meet up... Lan Kwai Fong, places like that... but at my age... it's harder to meet people.
Miss Ho: Yes I suppose it is.
Miss P: Oh well... I mustn't start whinging... Waiter... another beer. Wendy?
Miss Ho: I'll stick to the jasmine tea thank you.

Scene 7 In Alysha's flat

Bax: So Alysha, this is where you live?
Alysha: Yes, but everybody's out at the moment. Sit down. Would you like something to drink?
Bax: Sure.
Alysha: Bax... want to try some of this.
Bax: What is it?
Alysha: Lassi.
Bax: What's that?
Alysha: It's a yogurt drink... really nice.
Bax: Yogurt?
Alysha: Yes... it's sweet and nice... this one's mixed with fresh strawberries.
Bax: Is it an Indian drink?
Alysha: Yes, haven't you ever had it before?
Bax: No.
Alysha: Don't you go to Indian restaurants?
Bax: No.
Alysha: Try it Bax.
Bax: Thanks Alysha.

(SFX: Bax gulping Lassi)

Alysha: Like it?
Bax: Yes... it's good.
Alysha: Have one of these.
Bax: What are they?

Alysha: Curry puffs, they're really good.
Bax: Curry?
Alysha: Yes, don't be frightened... they're not that hot.
Bax: Thanks Alysha.

(SFX: Bax munching on a curry puff)

Alysha: Nice?
Bax: Mmmm... it's very tasty.
Alysha: Okay Bax, now for some music... first some classical Indian sitar music...this is by the famous Indian sitar player Ravi Shankar... same name as my eldest brother... Ravi.... He comes late to-day... it's his tennis. Coaching day... he's wild about tennis.... He's a really good player.
Bax: Can I have another curry puff.
Alysha: Sure... help yourself. I'll put the music on....

(Music: Indian Sitar Music)

(As the music is playing)

Alysha: Do you like it?
Bax: Yes, yes I do... it's kind of... different.

(Sitar music plays for about two minutes)

Alysha: Okay... that's just to give you an idea... you can borrow the CD and listen to the rest at home.
Bax: Thanks.
Alysha: And this is (name of Indian pop group).... They're my favourite Indian pop group. See if you like them.

(Music: Play Sujata's Indian pop CD)

Alysha: (over the music) Do you like them?
Bax: Yes, yes I do... it's great.

(Music plays for about 45 seconds)

(SFX: Door slams loudly)

Alysha: Oh no. (she stop the CD)
Bax: Don't take it off Alysha... I was enjoying that.
Ravi: (calling from outside the room) Alysha!
Alysha: Quick Bax, you've got to go.
Bax: But we haven't finished listening to the song....
Alysha: (Urgent whisper) My brother's come home.

Interval

Scene 8 Alysha's Flat

Alysha: Quick Bax, you've got to go.
Bax: But we haven't finished listening to the song.
Alysha: (Urgent whisper) My brother's come home.
Bax: I thought you said he was having his tennis lessons.
Alysha: That's what I thought... here, take these CDs... I'll see you tomorrow.
Bax: Okay. Thanks.
Ravi: (entering the room) Hey guess what Alysha... my tennis instructor was sick.... (he trails off on these last words as he spots Bax. Formal and annoyed) Who's this?
Alysha: Um, Ravi... this is my new classmate, Bax.
Bax: Hi Ravi.
Ravi: What's he doing here?
Alysha: I, um... Bax is interested in Indian music and so I...
Ravi: What's he doing with my CDs?!
Bax: Are these yours?
Ravi: Yes they are!
Alysha: Um Ravi... I said Bax could borrow them so he can listen to them at home..
Ravi: Not my CDs... no way... Give them back.
Bax: Yes, sure, sure... I'm sorry, I thought...
Ravi: If you want to give away our CDs give away your OWN!
Alysha: I wasn't giving them away, I was lending them.
Ravi: Come off it Alysha... you know what it's like with CDs... people NEVER give them back.

Alysha: I'm sorry Bax... um... here... this one is mine.... You can borrow this one.

Ravi: Let's see. (He says the name of a famous Indian singer)?! That's not yours!

Alysha: Yes it is... Cousin Poona gave that to me last time we visited her in Mumbai:

Ravi: This is mine Alysha... I bought it last week at H.M.B. it cost me a hundred and forty dollars.

Bax: Look... it doesn't matter Alysha... I tell you what... just write down some names and I'll see if I can buy them for myself.

Alysha: No need... I'll lend you one.... Look, here's one.

Ravi: (he says the name of another famous singer or group)! You're joking! That's not yours!

Alysha: Yes it is.

Ravi: No way... anyway I haven't finished listening to it.

Bax: I'd better be going.

Alysha: Sorry Bax.

Ravi: Sorry for what? What are you saying sorry for?

Alysha: Nothing... look Ravi... I'm just seeing Bax to the door.

Ravi: Who's been eating all the curry puffs?!

Alysha: This way Bax.

Ravi: And the lassi?! It's nearly finished... I was really looking forward to a glass of lassi and now someone else has drunk it.

(They walk to the door)

Alysha: Um sorry about that Bax.

Bax: No problem... thanks for the music... and the curry puffs and lassi.

(They both laugh a bit)

Bax: I'll see you tomorrow at school.

Alysha: Bye Bax.

(SFX: Doors being closed}

Ravi: Oh Alysha, Alysha... you just wait till our Father hears about this.

Alysha: About what Ravi? I haven't done anything.

Ravi: Listen to her! Haven't done anything she says!

Alysha: Well I haven't.

Ravi: Alysha... you brought a boy back home when no one was here... Father will go crazy... and not only a boy... a Chinese boy!

Alysha: So what? He's a classmate that's all, and anyway, I'm nearly sixteen, why shouldn't I have friends home... you do... you bring your friends home all the time.

Ravi: Male friends... yes... but you don't see me dragging girls back here do you... I've got to much respect for mum and dad to do filthy things like that!

Alysha: Bax is ... is NOT my boyfriend if that's what you are thinking... I just bumped into him on the way home and...

Ravi: Alysha... don't make this whole thing worse by your lies.

Alysha: I am not lying!

Ravi: Yes you are... Huh! You thought.... Okay... to-day Ravi won't be home because it's the day for his tennis coaching... so you thought the flat would be empty... That's why you brought that Chinese boy home isn't it... nice and early so no one would be here.

Alysha: We started talking about Indian music... I said I'd play him some.

Ravi: You could have taken some CDs to school tomorrow... why did he have to come into the family home?!

Alysha: He... well he asked if he could and I said yes.

Ravi: You said yes... he asked and you said yes... just like that.

Alysha: Yes.

Ravi: Oh Alysha, Alysha... you're so naive.

Alysha: Naive? I'm not naive!

Ravi: You're a baby.

Alysha: I'm almost sixteen!

Ravi: Boys will always push you that way.

Alysha: He didn't push me... he just asked if he could come back and listen...

Ravi: Poppycock! He didn't want to listen to Indian music.

Alysha: He did.

Ravi: Alysha... Chinese people don't listen to Indian music... they don't like it... they think it's weird and funny in the same way that they think WE'RE weird and funny.

Alysha: Bax is not like that.

Ravi: Bax is a boy and boys are .. are...

Alysha: Bots are what Ravi?!

Ravi: Bad! They have bad thoughts and girls should never, ever bring boys back to their homes unless their older brothers are there to protect them.

Alysha: I don't need protecting Ravi... I'm old enough to look after myself.

Ravi: Our Father will be furious! And our sacred Mother... she'll have a heart attack!

Alysha: Don't tell them then.

Ravi: Huh! So now you want me to start lying to our parents the same way as you've lied to me.

Alysha: I'm going to my room.

Ravi: Oh no Alysha... I haven't finished yet.

Alysha: Maybe not, but I have.

Ravi: And you wait till Father hears that you fed that Chinese boy all our curry puffs.

Alysha: He had TWO.

Ravi: And swallowed down all the lassi.

Alysha: He had one glass full.

Ravi: Oh Alysha... what is to become of you... bringing boys home and you're still only fifteen... a baby.... (pause) Wait a minute. What were you doing before I came home?

Alysha: Listening to music.

Ravi: Did he... go into your room?

Alysha: No!

Ravi: Are you sure?

Alysha: Yes!

Ravi: It was luck... just luck... pure luck that my tennis coach was sick to-day otherwise... (gasps) I can't bear to think of what might have happened!

Alysha: Shut up Ravi... you really are talking rubbish... complete and utter rubbish.

Ravi: Don't you speak to me like that Alysha... I'm your older brother... you should speak to me with respect!

Alysha: Yes Ravi, you're my older brother NOT my father.... Now if you'll excuse me I'm going to my room!

Ravi: Oh Lord Lord, what has my sister done! What has she done?!

Scene 9 Restaurant

Miss P: Waiter... another beer.

Miss Ho: Gladys... don't you think you've had enough.
Miss P: Don't say that Wendy... this has been a perfect evening... please... allow me to enjoy it in my own way.
Miss Ho: Of course.
Miss P: (Tearful) I have been.... so lonely Wendy... here in the middle of Hong Kong, the most densely populated city in the world... I have felt more alone than I ever felt even when I was standing in the middle of the Australian outback...
Miss Ho: Cities are often lonely places for people without families.
Miss P: And the kids... I don't know what's happened... I adore them... I work hard, I try to make my lessons interesting... and they... they... (she starts crying)... they just faugh at me and call me... Potty Perkinsy

(Echo effect: Student saying Potty Perkins Potty Perkins Potty Perkins...)

Scene 10 Alysha's Flat

(SFX: Door closes)

Ravi: Father? Is that you Father? Father, you'll never guess what my sister Alysha has done this day. Sit down while I tell you and sorry there are no curry puffs but that is all part of the sad tale....

Music

The End