

Playwright's Introduction

The Komagata Maru Incident is a theatrical impression of an historical event seen through the *optique* of the stage and the mind of the playwright. It is not a documentary account, although much of it is documented. To encompass these facts, time and place are often compressed, and certain dramatic licence is employed.

By the early 1900s, the Canadian government believed it had devised an airtight method to virtually exclude immigration from Asia. In 1914, the *Komagata Maru*, a Japanese steamer, entered Vancouver Harbour carrying 376 potential immigrants of East Indian origin. The majority were veterans of the British Army, and all were British subjects. As such, they had right of entry to Canada guaranteed by their membership in the British Empire, but they were forbidden entry by Canadian immigration officials. For the following two months, the *Komagata Maru* lay at anchor in Burrard Inlet, with those aboard suffering much deprivation, while political, legal, and racial skirmishes ensued. Inspector William Hopkinson of the Department of Immigration was instrumental in negotiations with those aboard and was involved in the formation of a ring of informers within the Sikh community.

The *Komagata Maru* returned to India in the fall of 1914, leaving behind only twenty passengers who could prove former residence in Canada. The repercussions of the government's actions—the Budge Budge riot, the radicalisation of those aboard, the vigilante action against informers, the death of Hopkinson, the execution of Mewa Singh—were overshadowed by the outbreak of World War One.

As a Canadian, I feel that much of our history has been misrepresented and even hidden from us. Until we recognise our past, we cannot change our future.

—Sharon Pollock

The Komagata Maru Incident was first produced at the Vancouver Playhouse in January, 1976, with the following company:

T.S	Allan Stratton
HOPKINSON	Richard Fowler
EVY	Heather Brechin
GEORG	Leroy Schulz
SOPHIE	Nicola Cavendish
WOMAN	Diana Belshaw

Directed by Larry Lillo

Designed by Jack Simon

Stage Managed by Paul Reynolds

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The Komagata Maru Incident was subsequently produced by Citadel Theatre, Edmonton, in January, 1977, with the following company:

T.S.	Ray Hunt
HOPKINSON	Michael Ball
EVY	Peggy Mahon
GEORG	Jean-Pierre Fournier
SOPHIE	Angela Gann
WOMAN	Patricia Lenyre

Directed by James DeFelice

Designed by David Lovett

Stage Managed by Marion Brant

Characters

T.S., The Master of Ceremonies, who plays many roles.
WILLIAM HOPKINSON, Department of Immigration Inspector.
EVY, A prostitute involved with Hopkinson.
SOPHIE, A prostitute involved with Georg.
GEORG, A German national.
A WOMAN, A Sikh immigrant, British subject.

Scene

A brothel, Vancouver, 1914.

Production Note

It is important that the scenes flow together without blackouts and without regard to time and setting. The brothel is the major playing area. Surrounding it is an arc or runway used by T.S. and HOPKINSON for most of their scenes. Although T.S. cannot intrude upon the WOMAN's space, he is free to move anywhere else on the set to observe or speak. As the play progresses, T.S.'s scenes move from the arc into the brothel area.

The characters never leave the stage. When not involved in the action, they sit on benches placed on the extreme Stage Right and Stage Left ends of the arc. The WOMAN is on a level above and behind the area used by the other characters. An open grill-like frame in front of her gives both the impression of a cage, and of the superstructure of a ship. T.S. observes the audience entering. The other characters are frozen on stage; the grill-like frame, with the WOMAN behind it, is concealed by a sheet.

• *The Komagata Maru Incident* •

The houselights fade out and a faint light comes up on T.S. who moves to a stool set in the centre of the arc. On this stool are his gloves, hat, and cane. He carefully puts on the gloves while surveying the audience.

T.S. Good... goooood. *(pausing for a moment)* Do you like the suit?

T.S. puts on his top hat, gives it a tap with the cane, looks toward the lighting booth, and snaps his fingers. A spot comes up on him.

Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Right this way, ladies and gentlemen! First chance to view the *Komagata Maru*! At this very moment steaming towards picturesque Vancouver Harbour. Yes sireee! The *Komagata Maru*! A first-class—let the buyer beware—Japanese steamer, 329.2 feet in length, 2,926 gross tonnage! Captained by one Yomamoto, remember that name. And Japanese crew, carrying a cargo of coal! And 346 Sikhs, count ‘em! Plus 30 East Indians, religious affiliation unknown! Add ‘em all together and what do you get? That is correct, sir! Give the man a cigar! Three hundred and seventy-six is the answer! Three hundred and seventy-six Asians, to be precise, and all of them bound for Oh Canada, We stand on guard for thee!

T.S. salutes, holds it for a moment, then lets it drop as he moves into the brothel area.

This is Vancouver, ladies and gentlemen, the 21st day of May, nineteen hundred and fourteen.... And may I direct your attention to my hat... I place the hat on the table... I pass my hands over the hat... and what do we have inside the hat? A pair of gloves! I give you Inspector William Hopkinson, Head of Intelligence, Department of Immigration!

T.S. slaps the gloves into HOPKINSON's hand, looks at him for a second, then continues.

Ladies and gentlemen, the hand is truly faster than the eye... you see this box... and now you don't... and here it is again *(passing it behind his back)* I open it, it's empty, I close the box. *(looking at EVY, then placing it in her hands)* May

I present *(stepping back)* Miss Evy: Entrepreneur!

T.S. bangs his cane, spot out. EVY and HOPKINSON are lit and animated.

EVY What is it?

HOPKINSON It's a present.

EVY Don't tell me, silly.

HOPKINSON You asked.

EVY But I don't want you to tell me.

HOPKINSON removes his hand from her eyes.

Oh, Bill *(opening the box which contains a brooch)* It's beautiful. Here, pin it on me.

HOPKINSON bends over her to do so. T.S. bangs his cane, they freeze, spot on T.S.

T.S. Ladies and gentlemen! Your attention, please! Now the pocket's empty. Not so now. *(taking out billfold and visa)* I have here one billfold and one German visa for one Georg Braun! *(throwing it on the floor near GEORG)* And here! Behind an ear, a chocolate! *(placing it in SOPHIE's hand)* Allow me to introduce, one Georg Braun and Sophie!

T.S. bangs his cane, spot out. SOPHIE goes to eat the chocolate, GEORG attempts to embrace her, and she pushes him off.

SOPHIE Not so fast.

GEORG Eh?

SOPHIE No tickee, no washee.

GEORG I...?

SOPHIE *(putting her hand out)* Mon-ey.

GEORG Oh. *(feeling for his billfold and finding it on the floor as T.S. knocks)*

SOPHIE Somebody get the door! *(plucking billfold from GEORG's hand)* Thank you.

GEORG amorously tries to embrace SOPHIE again as she counts the money. T.S. knocks. SOPHIE pushes GEORG away.

Wait a minute! Are you deaf? There's someone at the door.

SOPHIE moves off SR with the billfold. After a moment of indecision, his billfold gone, GEORG moves after her.

GEORG Ah—Sophie?

T.S. *(laughing, spot on him)* Ladies and gentlemen. Lest we forget. The *Komagata Maru*. A Japanese steamer chock-full of brown-skin Hindus headed for a predominantly pale Vancouver, and entry into whitish Canada. The *Komagata Maru* in blue Canadian waters!

T.S. pulls cover to reveal WOMAN who bends over child on deck. T.S. bows. Spot is out.

WOMAN Go to sleep. Go to sleep. Shut your eyes, go to sleep.

It's very hot and WOMAN turns from the child, wipes her forehead and looks out with a sigh, then turns back to the child.

Still not asleep?

HOPKINSON *(pinning brooch on)* There. Everything's forgotten. Alright?

EVY Alright.

HOPKINSON But you have to thank me for the brooch.

EVY Thank you, Billy.

HOPKINSON Don't tease. You know I don't like Billy.

EVY Thank you, Bill.

HOPKINSON That's better.

EVY Now you sit down, and I'll get you a drink.

HOPKINSON checks his watch.

Oh—not the time again? You just got here.

HOPKINSON Can't be helped. I'm sorry.

EVY You always have to go.

HOPKINSON Don't be mad. I won't be long, it's just an appointment.

EVY Bill?

Still holding the billfold, SOPHIE crosses round to SL with GEORG following.

SOPHIE You may as well get used to it. That's what it's like around here. Half the time I'm running messages for him.

GEORG For who?

SOPHIE Mr. Hopkinson. Evy's friend with Immigration.

GEORG Immigration?

SOPHIE I'm sick of answering that damn door for him.

GEORG Sophie, do you think—?

SOPHIE (*at "door" SL*) There's a man out back for Mr. Hopkinson!

HOPKINSON (*from inside "room"*) Who is it?

SOPHIE He says tell Mr. Hopkinson that Bella Singh is here.

EVY Your rat again.

HOPKINSON (*preparing to leave*) Don't call him that.

EVY I don't like rats coming round.

HOPKINSON Let's not start this again.

EVY He's always coming round and when he does, off you go, poof!

HOPKINSON It'll only take a minute.

EVY My mother always said, don't snitch, and don't play with snitchers. Didn't your mother ever tell you that?

HOPKINSON Evy, we've settled all this.

SOPHIE Mr. Hopkinson! Did you hear me!

HOPKINSON Now don't pout, you'll get wrinkles.

EVY Oh, get out.

HOPKINSON I'm going. (*going to "door"*)

SOPHIE Come on, Georg.

GEORG Mr. Hopkinson?

HOPKINSON Who's this, Sophie?

GEORG Georg Braun, sir, if I could—

WOMAN See the birds? Land must be near.... Mountains, trees, then the island, through the pass. Your uncle will meet us.... Look! Soon we will enter the harbour. See where your uncle lives? That is where we'll live.

GEORG Thank you, sir.

SOPHIE Georg!

GEORG goes to the bench. HOPKINSON turns back into the room.

HOPKINSON Evy? That fellow with Sophie.

EVY Georg Braun?

HOPKINSON I've, ah, asked him in for a drink when I get back.

EVY Oh?

HOPKINSON I want to meet him.

EVY You've already met him.

HOPKINSON Talk to him, then.

EVY I thought brown rats were your specialty.

HOPKINSON Bella Singh's a loyal British subject.

EVY Well, Georg Braun's no British subject! You're setting up no rats in my house!

HOPKINSON I'll do just as I please in your house! It's me that keeps you open, and don't you forget it! A nod from me, and you'd be buried under warrants. Oh Evy, Evy, Evy... what's good for me is good for you, eh?... Eh Evy? All I want to do is meet him, get to know him better...

EVY makes a murmur of protest.

I get ahead, Evy, do you know how I do that? I look ahead, I'm always thinking. Now, you read the papers, you stop and think... With Kaiser Wilhelm and all, something in here tells me a German can do me some good. Eh? Perhaps not today or tomorrow, maybe next year, who knows. Now you can understand that, can't you?

EVY I just don't like—

SOPHIE Bella Singh's at the end of the yard! He wants to see you!

HOPKINSON The German's coming in for a drink, Evy. *(exiting)*

EVY If—if you say so.

T.S. Hopkinson!

HOPKINSON joins T.S., DSR arc.

HOPKINSON Yes sir.

T.S. The *Komagata Maru*'s in port with three hundred and seventy-six potential immigrants.

HOPKINSON Yes sir.

T.S. So? What do you know about them?

HOPKINSON I've spoken to my man, Bella Singh, sir. He tells me they're Sikhs from India, British subjects, and as such they do have right of entry to Canada, sir.

T.S. The word is no entry.

HOPKINSON I realise that, but we may have a problem.

T.S. A what?

HOPKINSON Many are veterans of the British Army, sir; they're sure to plead consideration for military service.

T.S. You can put it this way—we don't mind them dying for us, we just don't want them living with us. *(laughing)* Get the point?

HOPKINSON *(laughing)* Yes sir... but if they should go to the courts—

T.S. They won't go to the courts. He hasn't done his homework. Have you forgotten our two orders-in-council? If an immigrant wishes to enter the country through a western port, he must make a continuous voyage from his own country to here. Have they done so?

HOPKINSON No sir, they haven't.

T.S. And that's no surprise. There's not a steamship line in existence with a direct India-to-China route and for our second ace-in-the-hole—a tax, two hundred dollars per head, to be paid before entry. Do they have it?

HOPKINSON Bella Singh says they do not, however—

T.S. Again, not surprising. In the land of his birth, the average Indian's wage is nine dollars per year. There—you see how we operate, Hopkinson? Never a mention of race, colour, or creed—and yet, we allow British subjects; we don't allow them to enter.

HOPKINSON Thank you, sir. However, I must inform you that Hermann Singh says—

T.S. Sh, sh.

HOPKINSON *(lowering his voice)* Hermann Singh says that the local Sikhs have raised the money for the head tax.

T.S. That's not so good.

HOPKINSON It's possible that a launch—

T.S. It is possible? Do you pay for information like that?

HOPKINSON Bella Singh says a launch will deliver the head tax to those on the ship late tonight.

T.S. The word is no entry, Hopkinson.

HOPKINSON Yes sir.

SOPHIE rushes into the room followed by GEORG.

SOPHIE Listen everybody! Here it is! *(reading from paper)* "Immigration Officials Intercept Head Tax in Vancouver Harbour."

EVY enters SR. HOPKINSON enters from arc.

WOMAN Look! A launch is coming! Maybe it's your uncle.

SOPHIE There's your name right there! Inspector William Hopkinson.

WOMAN Be careful! You'll fall!

SOPHIE Look, Georg! Look, Evy!

WOMAN The Immigration boat is stopping the launch.

SOPHIE There it is again, "Hopkinson declares—"

WOMAN Shhhhhh. Don't be afraid.

SOPHIE You read it, Evy, what's it say?

HOPKINSON I can tell you what it means. British Columbia wants no Calcutta coolies. We've Chinamen and Japs running our shops, Greeks running our hotels, Jews running our second-hand stores, and we don't want Hindus running our mills.

EVY For God's sake, Bill, have a drink.

T.S. Have a drink.

HOPKINSON *(offering bottle)* Georg?

GEORG Please. The Sikhs on the ship would pay the head tax with the money from the launch, eh? And what is legal? Can you intercept it like that?

HOPKINSON Well, we did. Another bottle, Evy. The Calcutta coolie, Georg, belongs in India.

GEORG Do you know India, sir?

HOPKINSON Do I know India? He wants to know if I know India, Evy.

EVY Does he know India!

EVY gives him a bottle, sits at the table and begins to play cards.

HOPKINSON I know India, and I know its people. When I was a child, my father was stationed in the Punjab—He had only to shout "*Quai Hai*" to summon a slave—a servant—no, goddamn it, a slave, to summon a slave, to scrawl his initials on a chit, and there was a felt carpet from Kashmir, brass ornaments from Moradabad, silver for pocket money, cigars, a horse, a dog, anything he wanted. Show him your brooch, Evy. It belonged to my father. Wonderful craftsmen, the Natives.

GEORG It's lovely.

HOPKINSON Did you know "loot" was an Indian word?

GEORG Is it?

SOPHIE *(examining the brooch)* Really beautiful.

HOPKINSON My father was a big man, blond curly hair, wonderful moustache he had, looked like a prince in his uniform. A prince—surrounded by little beige people. *(laughing)*

SOPHIE What about your mother?

HOPKINSON “*Quai Hai!*” That’s all, and they’d scuttle like bugs.

SOPHIE Did your mother like it there?

HOPKINSON She never said. You’ve no idea, Georg, of the size, the immensity, and the millions. *(smiling)* When I was a boy I used to like to read at night, alone, in a room that had dimensions.

GEORG Sophie tells me you yourself served in the Punjab.

HOPKINSON Oh, yes. Lahore Police Force. Six years service.

GEORG And how do you end up in Canada, sir?

HOPKINSON Promotion was blocked in Lahore.

GEORG That’s hard to believe for a man like... yourself.

HOPKINSON Quite simple, Georg. Cliques. And I learnt something from that. So. I answered an ad and here I am.

GEORG Your life has been very exciting—

SOPHIE Sophie can make your life exciting too, yes, she can. Let Sophie sit on Georg!

SOPHIE lifts her skirts and plunks herself on him. They both fall over on the floor as T.S. bangs his cane. They freeze.

T.S. Ladies and gentlemen! The turbanned tide is flowing! May 23rd, 1914. The first wave of an Asian Invasion sits at anchor in Vancouver Harbour!

WOMAN They won’t let us land! I’ve told you. We’ve asked a judge to rule on the orders-in-council. Now go!... Our food and our water are rationed. How long must we wait?

T.S. Today’s lesson is taken from the Department of Immigration’s handbook, Regulation 23, Paragraph 4. I am talking about Checks and Balances of Power. Now, I am the Department of Immigration, I have the power to hold proceedings, make decisions, give orders. I can detain and deport any person or potential immigrant on any grounds whatsoever, unless that person is a Canadian citizen. You are the courts. You have the power to review, reverse, and restrain, quash, and otherwise interfere with my power to hold, to make, and to give, to detain and deport. And you do. Fairly often. It’s annoying. So what do I do? Quite simple. I pass Catch 22, Regulation 23, Paragraph 4, which states: “No judge and no court and no officer thereof shall have any jurisdiction to review, reverse, and restrain, quash or otherwise interfere with my holding and making and giving, detaining, deporting.”

We are gathered here in the sight of God, and in the spirit of the British Empire to rule on the *Komagata Maru*’s contention that Catch 22, Regulation 23, Paragraph 4 is invalid. They maintain that the Department of Immigration has not the authority to deny immigrants access to the courts. If we give them access, then a judge or a court or an officer thereof could overthrow our orders-in-council of which we have two denying them entry—And that, my good friends, would open the floodgates!

T.S. bangs his cane. GEORG picks himself up in embarrassment, pushing SOPHIE aside.

GEORG My... my feelings are this, sir. If you examine the world and its history, you will see that the laws of evolution that have shaped the energy, enterprise, and efficiency of the race northwards have left less richly endowed the peoples inhabiting the southern regions.

HOPKINSON Go on.

GEORG Yes. This... this process is no passing accident, but part of the cosmic order of things which we have no power to alter. The European races must administrate; all that’s needed to assure their success is a clearly defined conception of moral necessity. Do you agree, sir?

HOPKINSON Agreed. It’s a pleasure to talk to you, Georg. I feel as if you’re a friend, a good friend.

GEORG I’m honoured.

HOPKINSON I have very few friends. A man in my position, Head of Intelligence, has very few friends.

GEORG Please consider me one of them.

HOPKINSON I'm thought of most often as a dose of salts; not palatable, but essential for the health of the body. I accept this.

GEORG You are—

HOPKINSON But! If I may make a small observation? It's truly amazing the number of people who use laxatives regularly, and lie about it. Eh? *(laughing)* You follow me, eh?

HOPKINSON laughs and GEORG joins in.

Yes, I have my job, and I do it. And damn well, if I say so myself.

GEORG You've a good network of men.

HOPKINSON Uh uh, more than that. It's a sense of responsibility, that's what it is. I take the risks, and I find my reward in the fulfillment of my task. Now there's your difference between white and coloured—the Gift of Responsibility.

EVY *(looking up from her cards)* What's the difference?

HOPKINSON You see that's why we're sitting in here, and the *Komagata Maru*'s out there scratching at the door.

EVY Why?

HOPKINSON For Christ's sake, Evy, if it weren't for the British, they couldn't construct a canoe, much less charter a steamer.

EVY *(back to her cards)* You should know, I suppose. You lived with them.

HOPKINSON I did not live with them!

EVY Well, you were there, God knows I've heard it often enough. It's hard to keep straight where you were when, and with who.

HOPKINSON I was brought up in India! I know them, if that's what you mean. Keep your mouth shut when we're talking! *(picking up bottle and starting off)* Come on, Georg, I've a chess set, hand-carved from ivory. *(moving off with GEORG following)* Marvellous chess player, my father.

WOMAN I saw what you did! Do you think because I have no man you can steal food from my child? If you steal again, I will come when you sleep and I'll kill you!

T.S. *(DSR, arc)* Ah, Hopkinson.

HOPKINSON I have observed suffering and deprivation on the *Komagata Maru*.

WOMAN The child cries! He is thirsty!

T.S. What else?

HOPKINSON Our policy of disallowing the supplying of the ship is sound.
It weakens their morale. It's only a matter of time till they question their leadership...

T.S. Continue.

HOPKINSON As... conditions deteriorate, we could, at some future date, offer supplies as an incentive to leave.

T.S. Very good. Very good.

HOPKINSON There is... a woman and child on the ship.

T.S. Irrelevant.

WOMAN It's hard to explain to a child... Your father was a soldier, he died fighting for the king, so we come to live with your uncle. But first—we must wait...

SOPHIE My feet hurt.

EVY Mmn?

SOPHIE I don't know why. I'd have thought it'd be my back.

EVY looks at SOPHIE and laughs.

What? *(laughing)* Noo. Back trouble runs in the family.

EVY Oh.

SOPHIE In the women, that is. With the men it's always having to, you know, piss when they're older.

EVY laughs.

Yeah, I guess if I had my druthers, I'd rather have a bad back.... In the night when the pot was full, Grampa would piss out the window.... Unless the wind blew from the east. Then he pissed out the door.

EVY Why?

SOPHIE It blew back at the window. The window faced east.

EVY Oh Sophie.

They both laugh.

SOPHIE It's true... I used to lie on my back in the field and Mama would scream "Sophie, Sophie!" and I'd lie there and think, "Sophie, get out of here, better yourself!" ... And Mama would scream "Sophie! I know you're hidin." ... and I'd just lie there.... Mama always said I was lazy. Maybe I am, but you don't see me emptying piss pots. I got out of there.

EVY Don't stop here, Sophie.

SOPHIE My back's not breaking from too many kids and carrying milk cans. *(looking at her foot)*

EVY *(as she exits)* Find a nice man, and move on.

SOPHIE Maybe I sprained it.

WOMAN bends over, retching, dry spasms. When she's finished she draws in several deep breaths. She attempts a smile for the child.

WOMAN Don't worry... smile, it's only the water. Don't worry. You are a very brave boy. Your uncle will like you. Come, we'll sit on the side where there's shade.

T.S. I don't understand.

HOPKINSON I've promised them food and water.

T.S. Really?

HOPKINSON I've given my word.

T.S. And what did you hope to gain from that?

HOPKINSON Sir—

T.S. Surely not plaudits from me.

HOPKINSON Sir, when I boarded the ship for inspection, they seized me and were ready to take off in our launch and head for shore, patrol boats or not. They were desperate. They say they'd rather be shot than die of hunger and thirst. I felt it only—humanitarian to grant one week's provision.

T.S. You've enabled them to hang on. That's what you've done!

HOPKINSON I saw the mother and child—

T.S. Now where's that incentive to leave?

HOPKINSON Their case is still pending.

T.S. Never initiate action when you haven't the guts to carry it through. It's a sign of weakness, Hopkinson.

HOPKINSON Yes sir.

T.S. You disappoint us.

HOPKINSON Yes sir.

T.S. We brought you up. We can put you down.

HOPKINSON Yes sir.

T.S. We trust that our meaning's sufficiently clear?

HOPKINSON Yes sir.

EVY enters the room SL.

EVY Bill!

SOPHIE Evy!

EVY Bill!

SOPHIE Mr. Hopkinson!

HOPKINSON enters SR.

HOPKINSON What's the matter?

EVY Oh, Bill.

SOPHIE I thought you went shopping.

EVY I just—sat on the tram. A round trip. I never got off it.

HOPKINSON Come on, Evy.

SOPHIE Are you sick?

EVY I... was on the tram. I had a seat by the window. When we...

HOPKINSON Come on now.

EVY When we came round by the creek there was a queue for employment, a long line of men looking for work. They were standing in line, we'd stopped for a fare, and then... the line... all of a sudden it... there was a man in a turban at the end of the line, his eye had caught my eye as I looked out the window—he looked so—solid—and I smiled... and he smiled... and as he smiled a man stepped in front of him, and he was back at the end... Then, I don't know, it happened so quickly, he touched the man on the shoulder, the man turned... and the long line of men, it seemed to turn. The man in the turban started to speak, he got out a few words, I didn't sense anger—and then it exploded. They knocked him down, the man in the turban they were kicking, and then pushing and shoving to get in a blow—and the tram pulled away... it was gone. As if I'd imagined it. It had never been.

HOPKINSON You were frightened, that's all.

EVY I should have done something.

HOPKINSON You should have come home and you did. Come on now, you saw a fight. You've seen fights before.

EVY No, it wasn't a fight! And I just sat on the goddamn tram and came home.

HOPKINSON (to SOPHIE) Get her a drink.

EVY goes to look out the window, at the audience, where the Komagata Maru sits.

EVY There are... people at the end of Burrard, staring out at that ship.... They look like the men in that line.

HOPKINSON That's why we're sending the *Komagata Maru* back, so things like your fight won't happen. We don't want them here.

SOPHIE exits after giving him the drink.

EVY But why does it happen?

HOPKINSON All I know, Evy, is my father didn't die in the service for the world to be overrun by a second-rate people.

EVY You don't make sense. Who's second-rate when you run out of brown people?

HOPKINSON Drink your drink.

EVY I don't want a drink! (*speaking while exiting SR*) You belong on Burrard.

HOPKINSON follows her.

HOPKINSON Evy!

T.S. Mr. Speaker; Prime Minister; Honourable Members. Today I am opening my heart to you. I am telling you my fears—fears that affect each and every Canadian today... I fear for my country, and I fear for my people... I am not ashamed, nor should you be, to state that this is white man's country! And I can tell you that our British legacy, our traditions, those things that we hold dear, that we have fought and died for, is placed in jeopardy today by a massive influx of coloured foreigners! The class of East Indian that has invaded British Columbia is commonly known as Sikh—having been accustomed to the conditions of a tropical clime, he is totally unsuited to this country. He is criminally inclined, unsanitary by habit, and roguish by instinct. The less we speak of his religion, the better. Suffice it to say that unless his ridiculous forms of worship are relinquished, he is an affront to a Christian community. His intelligence is roughly that of our Aborigines. He indeed belongs to a heathen and debased class. Honourable Members, stand up and be counted! Admit the honest fears of your constituents! Will the Sikh work for cheaper wages, and thus take away their jobs? Will he bring out his women, children, relatives and friends. Will Canadians step on a tram next week to ride from home to work and never hear a word of English spoken? And once at work, if they still have a job, who will they eat their lunch with? Men, honest and true like ourselves, whose fathers made this country what it is today—or will they be surrounded by coloured men with foreign food? Canadians have rights! Our fathers died for them! Let any man who is not willing to do the same step down! I've told you here today what's in my heart. For God's sake, show me what's in yours!

HOPKINSON enters SL.

HOPKINSON Evy!

EVY enters SR.

EVY I'm here.

HOPKINSON Was Bella Singh around?

EVY Don't ask me.

HOPKINSON Where's Sophie? Sophie!

SOPHIE enters SR.

SOPHIE What?

HOPKINSON Was Bella Singh around?

SOPHIE When?

HOPKINSON Day before yesterday, goddamn it, was he here?

SOPHIE Maybe. I don't remember.

HOPKINSON What the hell do you mean, you don't remember?

EVY Look, Bill, my girls don't keep track of your rats.

HOPKINSON If they don't, they better start. Customs picked up three men at the border today. Sikhs smuggling guns for the *Komagata Maru*. And my head's on the block! That's the kind of information I'm paid to deliver! And I knew nothing. Do you hear that? Sweet bugger all! Was Bella Singh around or not?

EVY You can leave now, Sophie.

HOPKINSON She'll leave when I tell her. Did you forget a message, Sophie?

EVY You run your business, I'll run mine; Sophie, get out!

HOPKINSON (*grabbing SOPHIE*) By Jesus, I want an answer!

EVY Me! It was me! Bella Singh came round, he left a note, I threw it out!

HOPKINSON releases SOPHIE. She leaves.

HOPKINSON Why did you do that?

EVY I don't pass notes.

HOPKINSON It's me they come down on. Don't you realise that? If I don't deliver, I'm the one that pays—not Bella Singh. Why did you do it?

EVY I'm sorry.

HOPKINSON No you're not.

EVY No, I'm not.

HOPKINSON You wanted to make me look bad, is that it?

EVY No.

HOPKINSON I look bad enough then they'll dump me. Is that what you want?

EVY No.

HOPKINSON And off we go! Something else, somewhere else, eh?

EVY What's wrong with that? People do it!

HOPKINSON Not me.

EVY Don't you like honest work?

HOPKINSON That's a funny remark from a whore!

EVY You want to know why I threw out your note? I'll tell you why! I'm a whore and what you do is offensive to me! What you do would gag me! I'm a whore and when I look at your job, I could vomit!

HOPKINSON slaps her.

WOMAN Don't look at the crowd on the shore!... don't listen, pretend they aren't there... the sky is a blue, a beautiful blue... look at it! Don't look at them on the shore, they are ugly!

WOMAN turns her back and begins to sing to the child.

HOPKINSON I never think of the woman and child they never enter my mind.... Mewa Singh is a mill worker and priest caught crossing the border with guns. Mewa Singh is a trusted man in the Sikh community. Mewa Singh is a man

I could use... I speak to him in his jail cell. I begin with loyalty, move on to money, end up with threats. Mewa Singh says nothing. He looks me straight in the eye. I don't always like that, with some it's an act of defiance.... In Mewa Singh's eyes there is an infinite sadness, and surrounding him is a pool of silence, and as I speak and the words fall on my ears as if from a distance... I think of an incident when I was a child... there was trouble at the bazaar... the soldiers had to come in on their horses... and the next day I walked through... I saw blood, like clots of dark jelly still on the streets... but no people... an empty bazaar. Do you have any conception of how strange that is? I remember standing very still, scrawny and pasty, very still, afraid to move... in the middle of silence, listening, like a mouse on a pan, listening, for the beat of the wings of the owl... very still... And then as I stood there, I saw a figure approaching from one of the streets. Some Native person. He stopped in the shadow of the huts... he extended his arms towards me... and I... turned around... and ran home. I was frightened... Mewa Singh... when I finish my mixed bag of offers Mewa Singh turns his head towards the window. It's narrow and barred. He has dismissed me. His answer is no. Goddamn it! I need a man who they trust! I'm the one who has something to lose!

T.S. Relax! Don't worry! Congratulations are in order.... The courts have come through! Catch 22, Regulation 23, Paragraph 4 still stands!

Carnival music, the air of a party. SOPHIE, GEORG, and EVY join HOPKINSON on stage.

Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Final Immigration ruling on the *Komagata Maru*! Right this way, folks! Right this way! July 16th, 1914! Last and final chance to view the *Komagata Maru*! Anchored in picturesque Vancouver Harbour these last six weeks and two days! Yes sireeee! A decision is made! Of three hundred and seventy-six Asians, twenty individuals have proven to Immigration Officials the legality of their Canadian domicile; ninety suffering from disease are ordered deported and the rest can just shove off! The Immigration Department reigns supreme! To hell with the judges, the courts and the officers thereof! Last chance to view! The *Komagata Maru*! Take it away, Bill!

Everyone's been drinking and it shows.

HOPKINSON Fare thee well, *Komagata Maru*! Have a pleasant journey!

GEORG Fare thee well!

HOPKINSON *Bon voyage!* You had your day in court—

SOPHIE Goodbye you Hindus!

HOPKINSON Now you and yours can eat crow from here to Calcutta! Crow with seagull, crow with seaweed, or crow with seawater!

SOPHIE (*laughing*) Crow!

HOPKINSON Fare thee well! Fare thee well!

They're all roaring with laughter, except EVY.

HOPKINSON Fare thee well *Komagata Maru*!

EVY Is it moving yet?

HOPKINSON Not yet, but any minute.

SOPHIE That's funny.

HOPKINSON Have a drink, Evy.

SOPHIE That's very funny. Why would they want to eat crow with seawater?

GEORG Who knows what Hindus eat?

GEORG and SOPHIE are laughing still.

SOPHIE Still, crow and seawater? It would make you sick. It would make me sick.

GEORG You aren't a Hindu.

SOPHIE It'd make anybody sick!

GEORG Silly, silly, Sophie.

HOPKINSON See, Evy? It's all over.

SOPHIE You wouldn't eat that unless you had nothing else to eat, that's for sure.

GEORG Silly, silly.

SOPHIE Hey, crow and seawater sounds awful too.

HOPKINSON Forget it, Sophie.

SOPHIE Eh?

HOPKINSON It's just an expression.

SOPHIE So what's it mean?

HOPKINSON Come on, Evy.

SOPHIE *(louder)* Eh?

HOPKINSON To submit humbly!

EVY Surely that rings a bell, I mean, it does for me.

SOPHIE What?

HOPKINSON Don't be like that. Say you're sorry. I'm sorry.

SOPHIE Come on, Georg.

GEORG embraces SOPHIE.

Where's the music—you gotta have music for a party!

HOPKINSON Sophie's right.

GEORG What we'll have is a polka!

GEORG and SOPHIE wind up the gramophone.

HOPKINSON It's a party! Come on, Evy, let's dance.

SOPHIE I love to polka! It's hard on the feet, but I love it!

They dance to the music.

T.S. Hopkinson!

HOPKINSON stops dancing.

There's someone at the end of the yard. Bella Singh's at the end of the yard!

HOPKINSON exits. EVY follows him for a step or two, then stops. SOPHIE and GEORG dance, carry the bottle and laugh.

WOMAN We hear them rejoice on the shore.... They say we are beasts; physical death is no evil for us, it may be a blessing, else why pestilence and famine? They say we are the enemies of Christ, the Prince of Peace; they will hate us with a perfect hatred; they will blast us with grape shot and rockets; they will beat us as small as dust before the wind!

The music stops. SOPHIE and GEORG collapse.

They say our appeal to the courts is dismissed. They say tonight the *Komagata Maru* will sail for India.

T.S. *(winking)* Guess again!

HOPKINSON The bastards!

WOMAN On the ship a meeting is held. I vote in the place of my son who is five. It is right that we're here!

HOPKINSON *(gazing out at the ship)* Sit tight in the harbour, will they?

EVY Drink up, everyone.

HOPKINSON The foolish bastards. They must think it's a cricket game with the officers. Fair play. Your wicket. Pass the crumpets.

GEORG So what can they do?

HOPKINSON Bugger all. A move can't be made nor a word whispered, on the street, in the temple, on the waterfront, without my knowing it.

EVY He has his men! His men produce! Eh, Bill?

HOPKINSON If they don't, they'll find themselves in steerage on the next ship out!

EVY *(drunk)* You know something?

HOPKINSON I'll seal the *Komagata Maru* off tighter than paint on a wall.

EVY You sound worried.

HOPKINSON I'll see it wrapped round with rot and rust and manned by skeletons before one bastard disembarks!

EVY Come on, everyone! It's a party!

HOPKINSON That's right! Glasses up, glasses up! Here's to the *Komagata Maru*—stuck in picturesque Vancouver Harbour! It gives me great pleasure to extend to you the hospitality of the Canadian people! Enjoy your anchorage! Sip our rain and eat our air! And when you've had your fill—India lies westward!

T.S. Ladies and gentlemen! It walks! It talks! It reproduces! It provides cheap labour for your factories, and a market for your goods! All this, plus a handy scapegoat! Who's responsible for unemployment? The coloured immigrant! Who brings about a drop in take-home pay? The coloured immigrant! Who is it creates slum housing, racial tension, high interest rates, and violence in our streets? The coloured immigrant! Can we afford to be without it? I say "No!" It makes good sense to keep a few around—when the dogs begin to bay, throw them a coloured immigrant! It may sound simple, but it works. Remember though—the operative word's "a few"—For reference, see the Red, the White, the Blue and Green Paper on Immigration, whatever year you fancy!

EVY *(still drinking)* This place is a pigsty.

SOPHIE That's old news, Evy.

EVY This place is a pigsty.

SOPHIE At least it's a profitable pigsty—isn't it?

EVY Money isn't everything. *(laughing as no one else reacts)*... eh?

SOPHIE Don't be silly.

EVY Did you know that if a pig falls in a trough, the other pigs would eat him. *(playing cards)* Gobble, gobble gobble... I think pigs are alright... I've known some not bad pigs... it's the goddamn pigstys that turn them nasty...

GEORG *(sitting reading a German paper)* I would not want to be Kaiser Wilhelm today...

EVY Why? Isn't he feeling well. *(laughing as no one else reacts)* Oh well... that's too bad... maybe tomorrow?...

SOPHIE It's so hot. At home you always get a breeze off the water.

EVY In Manitoba you don't.

GEORG *(turning page)* If war should break out... well...

EVY *(brightly)* People will die, eh?

EVY looks at HOPKINSON who stands staring out at the ship.

Bill?... Bill, a watched pot never boils.

T.S. *(speaking very quietly, his stance mirroring HOPKINSON's)* What we need is a reason to board her. To mount a police action, preliminary, whatever. To arrest those aboard.

EVY Leave the window alone, Bill.

T.S. We could board them, arrest them, escort them to the open sea, and once there, release them, pointed towards India.

EVY Come talk to me.

T.S. Now if the captain and crew charged the Sikhs with mutiny, we'd be away, eh?

EVY Bill?

T.S. The captain refuses to press charges? Really? You know, I can't help but feel you don't give full vent to your powers of persuasion. One begins to wonder whose side you're on, someone should check out your file. A good man would find a reason to board her.

HOPKINSON Yes.

SOPHIE It's the heat. It's so hot.

SOPHIE gets up and exits.

HOPKINSON It's July.... It's supposed to be hot...

T.S. howls in a boy scout position, on his haunches, two fingers of each hand at his temples.

T.S. Akela says "Be Prepared." (*howling*) Akela says "Do your Duty for God and the King, and Obey the Law of the Pack." (*howling, then stopping abruptly and rising*) Akela says I have three merit badges for the boy who comes up with
a first-rate reason to board the *Komagata Maru*!

EVY What're you writing?

HOPKINSON Nothing.

EVY Are you writing in German, what is it?

HOPKINSON It's nothing... now... clear off, I'm busy.

EVY wanders off SL.

WOMAN This is not where we live... we shall not see your uncle... but we can't cross an ocean without water or food.... You must not be afraid, for hundreds of years the Khyber Pass has run with our blood, we're not afraid to spill more of it here! Do you hear me ashore! We have suffered, but we have endured! We are tempered like steel! We are ready!

HOPKINSON Georg?

GEORG Mnn? (*from behind his paper*)

HOPKINSON I was wondering.

GEORG Yes?

HOPKINSON I have a small problem... perhaps you could advise me...

GEORG Certainly. What is your problem?

HOPKINSON It's the *Komagata Maru*.

GEORG (*laughing*) You call this a small problem?

HOPKINSON (*doesn't like the laugh*) Compared to, say, Kaiser Wilhelm, of course. Compared to that of an enemy alien in this country if war should break out, yes, I think a small problem, don't you?

GEORG gets the point.

T.S. It's not what you call subtle, but it works.

HOPKINSON I wish to make the *Komagata Maru* an offer—to give them supplies, to make some vague promise of promises, to recompense them for their cargo of coal, to entice them to sail. I wish the whole transaction kept quiet.

GEORG And what is your problem?

HOPKINSON If my offer got out, it might look like some kind of acknowledgement of their rights, and in this affair, they have none.

GEORG goes to speak.

As for Bella Singh and the rest, well, to be blunt, I don't trust them—trustworthy as they are, have been in the past, will be in the future, I do not totally trust them in this endeavour. A very slight qualm of mistrust.

GEORG I see.

HOPKINSON What do you advise, my good friend, Georg?

EVY enters unobserved. She's come in for a bottle but stops to listen.

GEORG You're looking for someone to carry your offer out to the ship?

HOPKINSON That's correct. *(drawing out envelope)* This particular offer—a man I can trust—a man for whom I possibly could do a small favour sometime in the future in return for this favour...

GEORG And with some small financial reward, I suppose?

HOPKINSON Correct. I will provide a boat, and one of our patrols will study the night sky as you slip through the—oh—excuse the use of the pronoun.

GEORG Quite alright. Quite—alright—in fact, is there any reason why I myself, Georg, cannot act on your behalf in this matter?

HOPKINSON Ah.

GEORG Shall we drink to it? *(moving to do so)*

HOPKINSON First the details—

They catch sight of EVY.

EVY Hello.

GEORG Hello, Evy.

HOPKINSON lowers his voice slightly as EVY hovers in background.

HOPKINSON First the details, then the drink—Note, the envelope is sealed, and must remain so.

As he passes the envelope to GEORG, EVY takes it.

EVY What's this?

GEORG *(looking to HOPKINSON)* Ah?

EVY A letter home?

GEORG Yes. May I have it?

EVY A letter to Germany—but it has no address.

HOPKINSON Give him his letter.

EVY A letter to Germany—what if—someone should open it. What's in it?

HOPKINSON Evy—

EVY Georg, where's your head? We're practically at war. The only thing worse than a letter to Germany is a letter from Germany. Governments are paranoid. Ask Bill.

GEORG Eh?

HOPKINSON She drinks too much.

EVY I just had an idea! What if—

HOPKINSON *(making a grab for her arm and missing)* Give it to me!

EVY I'm not finished! What if a letter containing—who knows what—was carried by a German national out to the *Komagata Maru*—

HOPKINSON Shut your mouth.

EVY —and intercepted by the Department of Immigration—what if, eh?

GEORG What if? *(shrugging)*

EVY A plot between the Germans and the Sikhs!

GEORG A plot between...?

GEORG laughs with a tinge of nervousness and a look to HOPKINSON.

Give me the letter.

EVY He wants a good solid reason to board the *Komagata Maru* and by Jesus I'm looking at it!

HOPKINSON You're going to end up in a sailor's bar, Evy.

EVY I won't let you do this!

HOPKINSON Two-bits-a-crack in a dark alley.

EVY Georg—(*giving it to him*) Open it.

GEORG This is an offer to—

HOPKINSON That's enough.

EVY It's a trick. Open it!

HOPKINSON Return it, or deliver it sealed.

GEORG You don't understand—

HOPKINSON No trust, no deal.

EVY Don't you know who he works for?

GEORG Evy, he works for the government.

EVY Oh yes!... Oh yes... and I can tell you a story about governments... a bedtime story—

T.S. & EVY Once upon a time—

The characters freeze as T.S. moves among them. T.S. continues the story.

T.S. There was a little boy who came to Manitoba with his mummy and daddy and sisters and brothers and many others very much like him. Their skin was a pale ivory, their eyes a light blue, and their hair dark—without being too dark—and curly—but not too curly! They were running from persecution and injustice... and Canada said: "You wish to own farm land communally? No bother at all! You will not swear allegiance to the crown and the flag? Weeeeelllll, what is it, after all, but headgear and a piece of cloth? You do not wish to fight wars? That too can be arranged; exceptions can be made." The daddies worked to earn money for seed and supplies, and the mummies harnessed themselves to the plough and pulled it, breaking the hard brown earth of Manitoba and the soft white flesh of their backs till the red blood ran down, and the little boy walked beside the plough picking bouquets of tiny blue flowers. By and by, the mummies and daddies had homes and barns and food for the winter and seed for the spring and horses for the plough. Then others came and saw what they had. And Canada said—"Now about this allegiance! And which of you owns this particular piece of land? Be precise and sign here! And my goodness, friends, isn't all this worth killing and maiming for? What kind of people are you?" The mummies and daddies and sisters and brothers set out on a pilgrimage. They walked to Yorktown and along the tracks towards Winnipeg.

T.S. bangs his cane. The others unfreeze, and GEORG turns to HOPKINSON.

GEORG About this letter! (*extending it*)

EVY Listen to me! I watched them walk past—

T.S. bangs his cane. They freeze.

T.S. It was snowing. They had little to eat, and then nothing to eat, for the Mounties cut off their supplies—and it snowed. People dropped by the tracks and a special train came along and returned everyone to Northern Manitoba. And those who would not sign and swear allegiance were driven from their land with only what they could carry! (*bangs his cane*)

HOPKINSON (*snatching the letter*) I'll make other arrangements!

T.S. bangs the cane. They freeze.

T.S. Then people whose skins were so fair as to be opalescent, whose eyes were so light they shone in the dark, whose hair sparkled like dust motes in the sun, with each strand hanging in a manner that can only be described as poker straight—these people stormed the land office for homesteads and barns and harvests still in the fields.

EVY My brother stood in line for three days, he got a section—next to my father's.

T.S. And they all lived happily ever after!... There now. Goodnight, sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite....
Shhhhhhhhhh! (*tiptoeing away*)

EVY It can happen to any of us.

HOPKINSON Go to bed.

EVY Look at him. He'd cut off his hand before he'd make the *Komagata Maru* an offer. (*laughing*) He's got a thing about race, about colour, haven't you noticed?

HOPKINSON You're boring and stupid, Evy.

EVY Why do you suppose that is?

GEORG I—

EVY He goes to the temple.

GEORG Eh?

EVY Gets himself all dolled up, goes to the temple in disguise—he thinks he looks like a Sikh. I bet the Sikhs think he looks like an ass.

HOPKINSON Goodnight, Georg.

GEORG About—

HOPKINSON Goodnight.

GEORG gives a little bow and leaves.

EVY I've been thinking. Funny thing, your background—

HOPKINSON That's enough.

EVY Birthplace, things like that, where were you born, Bill?

HOPKINSON Get the hell upstairs.

EVY Where?

HOPKINSON England.

EVY Where in England, be specific.

HOPKINSON Yorkshire!

EVY Yorkshire? Yorkshire! Now that's a new one, Yorkshire, eh?... That's not what I think.

HOPKINSON Evy!

EVY Quick, Georg (*pretending GEORG is still there*) without looking, what colour's his eyes, wanna bet? I'd say brown.

Sometime during this scene, HOPKINSON begins to subtly stalk her. She as subtly avoids him.

HOPKINSON You filthy bitch!

EVY Blue, did you say? Well then I bet his mother's eyes were brown.

HOPKINSON My mother's dead.

EVY Born in Punjab, served by Yorkshire.

HOPKINSON Born in Yorkshire!

EVY So are they blue or brown?

HOPKINSON Blue!

EVY Your mother's eyes, now what were they?

HOPKINSON My mother's eyes were blue, you bitch! I'll kill you.

EVY First you'll have to catch me.

HOPKINSON chases her; she avoids him.

You're stupid, Bill, you're stupid... it's not me that's stupid, it's you. Stupid, stupid, Bill! They all use you, Bill, yes, they do... You think that you use Georg, you think that you use Bella Singh, you think that you use me, but you're the one that's being used... they're using you and Billy Boy's too dumb to know and stupid dumbo Billy will keep on being used cause Billy Dumbo's stupid! Stupid dumbo Billy's stupid dumbo Billy.

HOPKINSON catches EVY; she speaks softly.

EVYY And Billy's mother's brown.

HOPKINSON slaps EVY; she speaks louder.

And Billy's mother's brown!

HOPKINSON slaps EVY; she speaks louder.

And Billy's mother's brown.

HOPKINSON throws EVY down, kneels and shakes her.

HOPKINSON Don't say that. Don't say that! I'll kill you if you say that to me! (*slowing down his attack on her*) Evy, don't say that. Please don't say that... (*stopping*) I... I love you, Evy, don't say that to me...

EVY reaches out and draws his head to her.

EVY Oh... oh... poor, poor, Billy.

T.S. Hopkinson!

HOPKINSON moves very slowly and speaks without expression. It's an effort for him to get up.

T.S. What're you waiting for... where's your report?

HOPKINSON Sir.

T.S. You've come up with what?

HOPKINSON Sir.

T.S. A reason to board her, remember?

HOPKINSON Sir.

T.S. Kindly observe. (*clearing his throat*) Captain Yomamoto! Captain Yomamoto! Is there a Captain Yomamoto in the house? Ah, my dear Captain, there you are. If you wouldn't mind taking a seat.

T.S. indicates a chair for the Captain who is exceedingly short.

How many times have we had this conversation? How many times must we have this conversation? Yes, yes, I know what you said before: "strictly speaking" your passengers have not mutinied, hence you are reluctant to lay a charge.... Truly a commendable stance—however. Let us forget "strictly speaking" for a moment. How about trying "laxly speaking," "loosely speaking," "informally speaking"—could you find it in your heart to lay a charge "loosely speaking" against the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*?... Nothing has changed, huh?... Not so quick, Captain, one more minute please.... While casually flipping through my classified copy of condensed Canadian law "What to Do in a Pinch" I found the most interesting—oh, I'm sure you'd be interested—you see it says right here, as I interpret this small item here.... Yes, right here in very small print—You can't see it? But my dear Captain, I assure you I can. It states: If given formal notice to sail, then sail you must, *tout de suite*—it's a bilingual law—or be subject to a fine of \$500.00. That's per person aboard. "With-the-Power-Vested-in-Me-by-His-Majesty's-Government-I-Hereby-Give-You-Formal-Notice-to-Sail!" Now, let me see, 500 times 356, that's put down the zero, carry the three—what was that you just said? You wish to press charges? Mutiny, sedition, treason, and—blackmail? Be serious, my dear fellow, the first is sufficient...

Mutiny!
M—that's Militia for instilling fear,
U—Union Jack which God knows we hold dear,
T—for a tugboat, one you can't sink,
I—for informant, a nice word for fink,
N—for our Navy of fine volunteers,
Y—for Yomamoto, who finally signed

Here!
Hopkinson! Here are your papers.
Now, my good man, do your duty.

GEORG helps HOPKINSON on with his jacket.

GEORG I'm sorry about the letter. I pay no attention to her. She's a stupid woman.

HOPKINSON Yomamoto has signed, pressed charges of mutiny. The militia is lining the dock, they are armed, they wait in reserve.... We will engage the *Komagata Maru* at sea!

GEORG In the harbour, you mean.

HOPKINSON In the harbour. *(addressing a crowd)* We will mount an attack from the *Sea Lion*, the largest ocean-going tug in the port! Police Chief MacLennan shall lead 120 policemen and 40 special Immigration Officers—

GEORG May I volunteer my services, sir?

HOPKINSON In a paramilitary attack on the ship.

GEORG Will I come under fire, sir?

HOPKINSON On board the *Komagata Maru* are veteran soldiers.

GEORG Are they armed?

HOPKINSON Reliable sources inform me that weapons abound on the ship. They have made clubs from floating driftwood, possibly spears from bamboo poles.

T.S. He's forgotten the cargo of coal.

HOPKINSON Force will be met with force. Rifles will be issued before we embark...

T.S. *(prompting)* I expect every...

HOPKINSON I expect every man to do his duty. No doubt we will meet with stubborn opposition, but remember, we are a formidable force!

T.S. In an orderly manner.

WOMAN They are coming.

T.S. Board the *Sea Lion*.

WOMAN *(softly)* Jai Khalsa...

GEORG It was fair-sized for a tug, but not large enough for a company of men such as we were.

WOMAN Stand back from the rail.

GEORG Four reporters came along for the ride. "Hoppy," they cried, "How about a smile for the press!" Mr. Hopkinson smiled.

WOMAN Get below.

GEORG It looked like a very big ship and the closer we got—

WOMAN They have guns.

GEORG The more quiet we were... silence.... The *Sea Lion* rode low in the water... as we looked up we saw them... lining the rails were great turbanned figures.... We stared up at them... they stared down at us... then...

T.S. (low) Throw out the grappling hooks.

WOMAN (screaming) *Jai Khalsa!!*

GEORG All hell broke loose!

WOMAN *Jai Khalsa!*

GEORG From three hundred odd throats came a yell!

WOMAN *Jai Khalsa!*

GEORG Followed by bricks from the boiler settings, scrap iron and coal!

WOMAN Hide!

GEORG Mostly coal!

WOMAN Hide below!

GEORG Coal rains around us!

WOMAN *Jai Khalsa!*

GEORG Hopkinson's hit again and again!

WOMAN *Jai Khalsa!*

GEORG They can see the gold braid on his hat!

HOPKINSON I look for the woman and child.

GEORG Get down! For God's sake get down!

WOMAN *Jai Khalsa!*

HOPKINSON I stand as straight as I can.

GEORG Take off your hat and get down! (raising his gun to fire)

HOPKINSON There's no order to fire! Don't fire!

WOMAN throws the missile of coal which knocks HOPKINSON down.

WOMAN *Jai Khalsa!*

A pause with HOPKINSON lying on the floor. EVY enters slowly with SOPHIE. They help HOPKINSON to the sofa and press a cloth to his head.

GEORG It was a total and humiliating defeat. What else can you expect? It was ridiculous. We go out with rifles and then never use them. The whole thing was poorly conceived. However, compared to the execution of the scheme, the conception was an act of genius!

SOPHIE What do you mean?

GEORG It was a stupid thing to do.

EVY Hold the cloth to your head, Bill. It's cold. It'll help.

HOPKINSON I'm alright. I just want something to wash with.

SOPHIE (laughing) I don't wonder. He looks like a chimney sweep, doesn't he, Georg?

GEORG There you sit, a servant in His Majesty's government, battered and bruised by a bunch of Hindus.

HOPKINSON Get me some water!

SOPHIE If you yell you can get it yourself.

GEORG Tell me the point of carrying rifles if nobody uses them?... And there he stood with his hat. The smart thing to do was remove it. No, there he stood. Every time he was hit, they all cheered. The air rang with cheers!

SOPHIE I just thought of something... *(laughing)* Mr. Hopkinson, I guess it was you that ate crow, eh?

SOPHIE nudges GEORG who chuckles after a slight effort to restrain himself.

It was him that ate crow!

HOPKINSON Get out! Get out and leave me alone!

SOPHIE and GEORG move to exit SL.

SOPHIE It was him that ate crow.

They're still chuckling.

GEORG Sophie.

They exit. WOMAN is at a meeting on the ship.

WOMAN We have gained nothing but time! We've driven them off for only a while, what now we must press for is food! I say it is better we starve on their doorstep than out on the sea!

HOPKINSON Do you remember when I gave you your brooch?

EVY Yes.

HOPKINSON Do you like it?

EVY Yes, I do.

T.S. Order! Order!

HOPKINSON begins to adjust his clothing.

EVY Bill—this time don't go.

T.S. Order!

EVY Say to hell with it.

T.S. Are you assembled?

EVY speaks as HOPKINSON joins T.S.

EVY Don't go, Bill.

T.S. The meeting will come to order.... Well now, that was a bit of a balls-up yesterday, wasn't it?...

HOPKINSON goes to speak. T.S. continues

However, we aren't here to assign guilt, we can do that later. What's the next step, that's the question. Any suggestions, Hopkinson?

HOPKINSON shakes his head slowly.

I thought not. Well, luckily we have in our midst a man with courage and foresight. He has had refurbished, refitted, and manned a second-class cruiser at Esquimalt, the *Rainbow*, length 300 feet, 3,600 gross tonnage with two six-inch guns and six four-inch guns. A small hand please for Harry Stevens, our federal M.P.... I think we can do better than that.

HOPKINSON claps.

Ah, yes... Mr. Stevens has worked diligently since the arrival of the *Komagata Maru* in our waters. Diligence, perseverance, and patriotism always pay off.

Let the *Rainbow* push through the Narrows; let her anchor near enough to the *Komagata Maru* for the sun to glint on her guns. Let our next message be—we won't necessarily fire on you—but we will fire on you if necessary! *(turning to leave)*

HOPKINSON Sir!... My informants in the Sikh community inform me—

T.S. Informants inform you? *(laughing)* You're being redundant, my boy.

HOPKINSON My people in the Sikh community tell me that threats have been made. Death threats.

T.S. You've stirred up a hornet's nest, haven't you? You've opened up Pandora's Box. You've created a maelstrom.

HOPKINSON I was following orders.

T.S. Let me tell you something—there's someone at the end of the yard...

HOPKINSON Bella Singh?

T.S. Not Bella Singh.... Someone who's not Bella Singh waits at the end of the yard...

EVY Who is it out there?

HOPKINSON One of my men, I imagine.

EVY Why don't you go out?

HOPKINSON Later, perhaps.... Let him wait.

WOMAN (*laughing*) Do you know something? My son's lips have swollen and burst from the thirst—they are covered with grease from the engines. My legs are like sticks—if I smelled a real meal I would vomit—and you think a few guns will make our knees knock? (*stopping laughing*) *Sale Haramazaade!* Give us supplies and we'll leave!

HOPKINSON See the cruiser... it has guns trained on the *Komagata Maru*.

EVY Will they fire on it?

HOPKINSON That—is not my concern.

EVY Don't you feel anything for them?

HOPKINSON You wouldn't understand.

EVY Yes I would. I would try.

HOPKINSON One has to make decisions. Commitments. To one side or another.

EVY What side are you on?

HOPKINSON The winning side.

EVY Are you winning?

HOPKINSON This time the *Komagata Maru* will sail.

EVY Do you think then you'll have won?

HOPKINSON I'm... tired. Let's go to bed. (*starting off*)

EVY Not right now.

HOPKINSON stops, turns to look at EVY.

HOPKINSON Lie beside me. That's all.

EVY I don't want to.

HOPKINSON I don't have to ask! I can order!

EVY looks at him, then picks up her cards, begins to lay them out. After a moment, HOPKINSON leaves. Carnival music plays.

T.S. Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Absolutely the last and final chance to view the *Komagata Maru*! Anchored in picturesque Vancouver Harbour for two, count 'em, two glorious months! Note the cruiser standing by to the right, see the sun on its guns, what a fantastic sight! Ladies and gentlemen, can you truly afford to bypass this splendid spectacle? Run, my good friends, you mustn't walk, you must run! Cotton candy, taffy apples, popcorn and balloons! All this and a possible plus, the opportunity to view your very own navy in action with no threat to you!

Music stops.

SOPHIE It's all so exciting... now tell me what are all the little boats doing?

GEORG Some of them are harassing the Sikhs, some of them are supplying the ship—the government is giving them provisions.

SOPHIE And what about the cargo of coal—if there's any left.

GEORG I hear the government may recompense them. My friends tell me they have promised them everything and will give them nothing. That's called diplomacy, eh Bill?

SOPHIE Oh look, everybody! Look! There's black smoke coming out of the smokestack... look the *Rainbow's* moving... it's moving in... what's it going to do... I bet it's going to shoot, I hope it's going to shoot, it's... Look, Evy! Come look! It's... It's... it's moving—The *Komagata Maru's* moving—and the *Rainbow's* going right alongside... We won! We won! Didn't we, Georg? Didn't we, Mr. Hopkinson? Aren't you even going to look? It's over and we won!

A bang of the cane and they freeze.

T.S. Over?... A note, Mr. Hopkinson, from the man at the end of the yard... "When the affairs were past any other remedy, I thought it righteous to draw my sword."

HOPKINSON looks at the note.

WOMAN (*hard, not sentimental*) We go back. My husband is dead. He died in their war. His father is dead. He died when they cut back the famine relief. I am a British subject, and my people's taxes have gone to their King. I am not a possession, a thing. I am myself and I will fight for myself and my son and my people. I am strong.

GEORG The whole thing has been most educational. I should thank you. I have made many valuable friends and good contacts. I owe it to you, Bill... Can I get you a drink, Sophie, get him a drink.

HOPKINSON (*stepping out to T.S.*) I have good men in the Indian community... good men... they produce... Bella Singh, Baboo Singh, Hermann Singh, Gunga Ram—

T.S. Mewa Singh?

HOPKINSON Not—Mewa Singh.

T.S. For God's sake, get on.

HOPKINSON Their lives are in danger... the community feels that they're traitors, surely they're loyal British subjects, like myself.

T.S. Hurry up.

HOPKINSON My own life has been threatened... I ask for—

T.S. Extra! Extra! Read all about it! War Declared! Recession Recedes! Factories Hum the National Anthem! Send your sons overseas! See all of Europe at federal expense! Check your programme for casting—the enemy's the Kraut! The Sikh's on our side! Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

GEORG (*picking up paper*) This can't help but work nicely for me.

HOPKINSON What?

GEORG I say the war shall increase my use to your department.

SOPHIE Isn't he smart, Evy? Georg is going places—and so is Sophie.

EVY (*looking up from her cards*) Christ, Sophie, it's a war.

GEORG It's also a good business deal.

EVY spits on the floor.

GEORG You should teach her some manners.

SOPHIE You're jealous.

EVY Oh Sophie.

SOPHIE It's true—you're jealous of me—Georg's up and doing—he gets around—we have a good time. Look at him—he doesn't do anything since the *Komagata Maru*. And you're just as bad. This place is just like a morgue. Who wants to live in a morgue? I'll leave if I want to—I can, you know—I'll leave anytime I want.

HOPKINSON No you won't.

SOPHIE Yes I will. Won't I, Georg? Whenever Georg wants.

HOPKINSON Georg wants what I give him! When I say move, you bloody well move, when I say jump, you say how high. In this stinking world there's two kinds, there's the ruler and the ruled—and when I see the likes of you, I know where I stand! *(beginning to weaken)* Some people talk, and some people listen, but by God, I act, and if... it weren't for people like me... people like you... would still be down in the slime... I have my... I have my...

T.S. Bill?

HOPKINSON I have...

T.S. Mewa Singh waits at the end of the yard.

HOPKINSON Yes.

EVY moves to him.

WOMAN We dock at Budge Budge fourteen miles from Calcutta. We are to be herded aboard trains and returned to the Punjab although many of us have not been there for years. We resist. Police, reinforced by soldiers, open fire. Men who shared their rancid flour with my son are dead. *(threatening)* We will remember them.

T.S. Order! Order! The court will come to order! Will the Inspector take the stand! Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as it befits this case, so help you God?

HOPKINSON I do.

T.S. Might I ask if you were acquainted with one Hermann Singh?

HOPKINSON I was.

T.S. What was his character?

HOPKINSON He was a quiet, unassuming man, intensely loyal to his King.

T.S. What was the nature of your relationship?

HOPKINSON He rendered assistance to the government in the *Komagata Maru* Incident.

T.S. Five and one half weeks after the departure of the *Komagata Maru*, one Pirt Warnes was walking along a little used trail on the Kitsilano Indian Reserve. It was quite a pleasant trail... he noticed what at first glance appeared to be a bundle of rags behind a log close to the path. He examined it. It was the badly decomposed body of an East Indian. The turban was wrapped round the ankles. Beside the body lay a leather satchel, an empty brandy flask, and an open straight razor. When he touched the head it came off in his hand. It was Hermann Singh. Let me ask you, Inspector, from your intimate knowledge of the Asian mind, would you say the facts as related are consistent with... suicide?

HOPKINSON No, I would not.

T.S. Ah... and if indeed it were murder, can you suggest a possible motive?

HOPKINSON By informing, Hermann Singh had incurred the hatred of his people.

T.S. You may step down.

EVY Why don't we go away?... Why can't we?... Bill?... Bill, talk to me!... I can leave. I can leave. And I will. *(exiting off stage)*

T.S. Six weeks after the departure of the *Komagata Maru*, Arjun Singh shot through the back of the head from behind!

HOPKINSON Arjun Singh is dead.

GEORG *(on the sofa, feet up, reading the paper)* He'll have to get a new stable of fellows, eh?

SOPHIE *(playing cards)* Where would he find them, eh?

GEORG *(laughing)* Good point... where is he going to find them?

T.S. September 5th, 1914... early evening... Bella Singh goes to the temple.
Inside the temple, people are singing. They're singing hymns for Arjun Singh, Hermann Singh... Bella Singh takes off his shoes... Bella Singh enters the temple... Bella Singh moves to the back... Bella Singh sits in a corner... Bella Singh takes out a gun... he fires ten shots, scores nine out of ten, seven wounded, two dead. He never speaks till arrested.

GEORG Do you know what he says, Sophie? He says that he acted in self-defence, he says Bill will verify that... will you testify, Bill?

HOPKINSON Yes.

T.S. October 21st, 1914.... My God, what a day! Look at that sky... and the leaves all russet and gold... the mountains like sentinels, just a light breeze, the city set like a precious gem on the Pacific... breathe in... breathe out... breathe in... breathe out...

HOPKINSON I leave the house early. I walk to the court house.... It's fall... I feel like a toy man walking through a toy town. Everything's working. My arms and my legs move so well together, there is... a mechanical precision to everything... I notice the houses seem neater than usual, a certain precision... at the same time, it's slower, things are slower, but very precise... there are no clouds in the sky, and it's blue, a deep blue... there's a slight breeze... the veins in the leaves protrude as if swollen... toy mountains frame my toy town... I'm just a bit late because of the walk. I enter the court house from Howe Street.

As I wait for the lift to take me up to the court, I place very carefully one hand on the wall, feeling the wall, and feeling my hand on the wall, in this tiny toy court... I open the door of the lift, I step inside, then I close it. I think of the peace of the coffin. I think of the safety of the cage. I open the door. I step out.

I walk down the corridor. I see no one I know...

T.S. Mewa Singh waits in the witness room.

HOPKINSON I stop at the witness room.

T.S. Mewa Singh steps out of the witness room. In each hand he carries a gun.

HOPKINSON When I see him, I feel myself bursting. My toy town is destroyed in an instant. He is large, he encompasses my world, I feel myself racing towards eternity.... They say I grapple with him. I do not. I open my arms, I say: Now!

Dazzles the sparkle of his sword
Who is utterly dreadful and is contained not
By the elements. And when he performeth
His death-dance, how dolefully his bells
toll and knell.
He, the four-armed one, of a lustrous hair bun,
He wieldeth the mace and the club,
And crushes the swollen head, even of death.
His auspicious tongue of blazing fire
Licketh all that is unholy.
When shrieks his horrid conch
The whole universe reverberates with its
raucous notes
How tintinnabulating are thy ankle bells,
And when thou movest, thou stampest the earth like a quake,
And thy immense gongs strike deep resonant notes.

T.S. Mewa Singh fires three times. A bullet pierces Hopkinson's heart.

T.S. touches HOPKINSON with the cane. HOPKINSON's head falls forward.

WOMAN Mewa Singh will be hanged by the neck till he's dead. Mewa Singh says on the gallows: "I am a gentle person, but gentle people must act when injustice engulfs them. Let God judge my actions for he sees the right and the wrong.

I offer my neck to the rope as a child opens his arms to his mother."

T.S. does a soft-shoe shuffle, stops, looks out, raises his arms, pauses and makes a large but simple bow. Black.

The end.