

MANDIRA SIDES (Bombay Princess)

These scenes have been condensed. The right actor will perform the lines as a part of an overall narrated story. The actor will make Mandira her own and deliver the lines with force and attitude. Mandira should have an Indian accent.

MANDIRA – An Indian woman in her late-40s working as an au pair for a family with three, soon to be four, children in Cambridge. Originally from Kerala, India, she has lived in the US for half her life. She is willful and unafraid to share her opinion.

DR. CASSAVA – A homeopathic fertility doctor living in Cambridge, MA with his wife and three other children.

ORCHID-MIST/ECHO – A 7-year-old girl and the Cassava's oldest child.

SCENE 1: The Cassava's home. Mrs. Cassava is in labor in the bedroom. Mandira has been tending to her until the midwife and Dr. Cassava come.

NARRATOR

Dr. Cassava arrived an hour and a half later and, without taking off his coat, made his way up to his wife's bedroom.

MANDIRA

She has a fever! She should be in hospital.

NARRATOR

Mandira followed him upstairs, where he was coo'ing at his wife like a dog.

MANDIRA

She should be in a hospital. You are being stubborn, you know, like a child.

DR. CASSAVA

Thank you for your concern, Nanny Mandira. I assure your Mrs. Cassava and the baby are in capable hands.

MANDIRA

In my country rich women go to the hospital to have their babies.

DR. CASSAVA

Get the children ready. I'll call you when it's time to return.

MANDIRA

And where do I take them?

NARRATOR

But Dr. Cassava had already closed the door.

SCENE 2: A bit later in the story. Mandira has dressed the three children in their winter clothes and has brought them outside to the car. A winter storm is beginning outside. They can hear Mrs. Cassava's labor screams from the house.

NARRATOR

Orchid Mist, the oldest at seven-years old with red hair and a heartless peanut allergy, announced she could manage her coat on her own. "I'm not a baby!" When Mandira bent down to help with the buttons, she crossed her arms and fell to the ground.

MANDIRA

Don't wear a coat. See if I care.

NARRATOR/ECHO

Outside the ground was mostly ice. Mandira and Echo held the twins' hands and together they shuffled down the driveway in a cautious chain. [...] Echo stood with her feet wide and her arms crossed. "I want to sit up front," she said.

MANDIRA

You are too small

ECHO

I want to sit up front or I'm not going.

MANDIRA

Fine, you stay and freeze to death.

ECHO

I'm not a baby.

MANDIRA

One less mouth to feed.

ECHO

I'll tell Daddy I hate you and he'll fire you.

MANDIRA

There is a special place in Hell for little girls who try to manipulate their elders.

NARRATOR

Echo sat down in the snow, her eyelids punched shut like angry scars. Mandira bent low, easing her knees onto the icy ground until they were face to face.

MANDIRA

Oh Echo, Your mother will be all right.

NARRATOR

Mandira took off her gloves and rubbed the girl's ears. It had always soothed her, even as an infant.

MANDIRA

You are too small for the front seat. It is what the law says.

NARRATOR

Dr. Cassava opened the window to the cold air. Mrs. Cassava's cries covered the lawn. In the window stood the silhouette of the midwife. She sang a soothing hymn. Her voice diving and rising like a hawk hunting for prey. Mandira picked up the girl.

MANDIRA

OK, just this once.