

GALLIMARD. No? Isn't that what you've been trying to convince me of?

SONG. Yes, but what I mean—

GALLIMARD. And now, I finally believe you, and you tell me it's not true? I think you must have some kind of identity problem.

SONG. Will you listen to me?

GALLIMARD. Why?! I've been listening to you for twenty years. Don't I deserve a vacation?

SONG. I'm not just any man!

GALLIMARD. Then, what exactly are you?

SONG. Rene, how can you ask—? Okay, what about this? *(He picks up Butterfly's robes, starts to dance around. No music.)*

GALLIMARD. Yes, that's very nice. I have to admit. *(Song holds out his arm to Gallimard.)*

SONG. It's the same skin you've worshiped for years. Touch it.

GALLIMARD. Yes, it does feel the same.

SONG. Now—close your eyes. *(Song covers Gallimard's eyes with one hand. With the other, Song draws Gallimard's hand up to his face. Gallimard, like a blind man, lets his hands run over Song's face.)*

GALLIMARD. This skin, I remember. The curve of her face, the softness of her cheek, her hair against the back of my hand . . .

SONG. I'm your Butterfly. Under the robes, beneath everything, it was always me. Now, open your eyes and admit it—you adore me. *(He removes his hand from Gallimard's eyes.)*

GALLIMARD. You, who knew every inch of my desires—how could you, of all people, have made such a mistake?

SONG. What?

GALLIMARD. You showed me your true self. When all I loved was the lie. A perfect lie, which you let fall to the ground—and now, it's old and soiled.

SONG. So—you never really loved me? Only when I was playing a part?

GALLIMARD. I'm a man who loved a woman created by a man. Everything else—simply falls short. *(Pause.)*

SONG. What am I supposed to do now?

GALLIMARD. You were a fine spy, Monsieur Song, with an

even finer accomplice. But now I believe you should go. Get out of my life!

SONG. Go where? Rene, you can't live without me. Not after twenty years.

GALLIMARD. I certainly can't live with you—not after twenty years of betrayal.

SONG. Don't be so stubborn! Where will you go?

GALLIMARD. I have a date . . . with my Butterfly.

SONG. So, throw away your pride. And come . . .

GALLIMARD. Get away from me! Tonight, I've finally learned to tell fantasy from reality. And, knowing the difference, I choose fantasy.

SONG. I'm your fantasy!

GALLIMARD. You? You're as real as hamburger. Now get out! I have a date with my Butterfly and I don't want your body polluting the room! *(He tosses Song's suit at him.)* Look at these—you dress like a pimp.

SONG. Hey! These are Armani slacks and—! *(He puts on his briefs and slacks.)* Let's just say . . . I'm disappointed in you, Rene. In the crush of your adoration, I thought you'd become something more. More like . . . a woman.

But no. Men. You're like the rest of them. It's all in the way we dress, and make up our faces, and bat our eyelashes. You really have so little imagination!

GALLIMARD. You, Monsieur Song? Accuse me of too little imagination? You, if anyone, should know—I am pure imagination. And in imagination I will remain. Now get out! *(Gallimard bodily removes Song from the stage, taking his kimono.)*

SONG. Rene! I'll never put on those robes again! You'll be sorry!

GALLIMARD. *(To Song.)* I'm already sorry! *(Looking at the kimono in his hands.)* Exactly as sorry . . . as a Butterfly.

SCENE 3

M. Gallimard's prison cell. Paris. 1988.

GALLIMARD. I've played out the events of my life night after night, always searching for a new ending to my story,

one where I leave this cell and return forever to my Butterfly's arms.

Tonight I realize my search is over. That I've looked all along in the wrong place. And now, to you, I will prove that my love was not in vain — by returning to the world of fantasy where I first met her. (*He picks up the kimono; dancers enter.*) There is a vision of the Orient that I have. Of slender women in chong sams and kimonos who die for the love of unworthy foreign devils. Who are born and raised to be the perfect women. Who take whatever punishment we give them, and bounce back, strengthened by love, unconditionally. It is a vision that has become my life. (*Dancers help him make up his face.*) In public, I have continued to deny that Song Liling is a man. This brings me headlines, and is a source of great embarrassment to my French colleagues, who can now be sent into a coughing fit by the mere mention of Chinese food. But alone, in my cell, I have long since faced the truth.

And the truth demands a sacrifice. For mistakes made over the course of a lifetime. My mistakes were simple and absolute — the man I loved was a cad, a bounder. He deserved nothing but a kick in the behind, and instead I gave him . . . all my love.

Yes — love. Why not admit it all? That was my undoing, wasn't it? Love warped my judgment, blinded my eyes, rearranged the very lines on my face . . . until I could look in the mirror and see nothing but . . . a woman. (*Dancers help him put on the Butterfly wig.*) I have a vision. Of the Orient. That, deep within its almond eyes, there are still women. Women willing to sacrifice themselves for the love of a man. Even a man whose love is completely without worth. (*Dancers assist Gallimard in donning the kimono. They hand him a knife.*) Death with honor is better than life . . . life with dishonor. (*He sets himself c.s., in a seppuku position.*) The love of a Butterfly can withstand many things — unfaithfulness, loss, even abandonment. But how can it face the one sin that implies all others? The devastating knowledge that, underneath it all, the object of her love was nothing more, nothing less than . . . a man. (*He sets the tip of the knife against his body.*) It is 1988. And I have found her at last. In a prison on the

outskirts of Paris. My name is Rene Gallimard — also known as Madame Butterfly. (*Gallimard turns u.s. and plunges the knife into his body, as music from the "Love Duet" blares over the speakers. He collapses into the arms of the dancers, who lay him reverently on the floor. The image holds for several beats. Then a tight special up on Song, who stands as a man, staring at the fallen Gallimard. He smokes a cigarette; the smoke filters up through the lights. Two words leave his lips.*)
SONG. Butterfly? Butterfly? (*Smoke rises as lights fade slowly to black.*)

END OF PLAY