

THE MATING OF ANGELA WEISS

a one-act play
by Renee Calarco

**This is a sample of the first 10 pages of THE MATING OF ANGELA WEISS.
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THE MATING OF ANGELA WEISS

Characters in order of appearance:

ANGELA	F., 25 -30. Chinese American. A zoo veterinarian and breeder of giant pandas. Funny, self-deprecating. A beautiful, awkward, glorious, messy genius.
RYAN	M., 25 – 40. Any race/ethnicity. ANGELA’s friend. Intense, romantic, inquisitive. The actor who plays RYAN also plays the following characters: PAPA PANDA RABBI YAAKOV
MOM	F., 35 – 40. Caucasian. ANGELA’s mother. A free spirit. Ferocious, hilarious, heartbroken. The actor who plays MOM also plays the following characters: MAMA PANDA LI CHENGBIN

Time: Now and before now

Place: A large zoo in the Northeast, and other places

A couple of notes:

The play contains 13 scenes or “shifts.” Changes in location and time can be indicated by light shifts, music/sound changes, etc. Changes in location and time can also be indicated by the presence, absence, or movement of the following set pieces:

- A video screen
- A long wooden box that serves as a podium, a bench, and a bed
- A large inflatable ball
- A pile of bamboo, which can remain onstage throughout the play

The lyrics to the “Maidele Schmaidele” song are the playwright’s own. The actor who plays MOM is encouraged to invent her own original tune that fits the lyrics.

Li Yanmei is a fictional poet. The poems “quoted” in the play are the playwright’s own.

Production History

THE MATING OF ANGELA WEISS had its world premiere at Cultural Development Corporation's 2009 Source Festival in Washington, DC. Director: Jenny McConnell Frederick. Producer: Jeremy Skidmore. Dramaturg: Elissa Goetschius. Stage Manager: Amy Kellet; lighting design: Sam Kitchel; sound design: Brendon Vierra; costumes: Erin Nugent; props: Suzanne Maloney.

The cast was as follows:

ANGELA: Yasmin Tuazon
RYAN: Francisco Reinoso
MOM: Barbara Papendorp

Scene 1: A conference room, 2008. A laptop sits on a podium, U.L. A video screen hangs U.C., above the stage. Lights are just dim enough to accommodate a PowerPoint presentation. RYAN sits D.C. on the floor, watching ANGELA practice her presentation. ANGELA stands near the podium, blowing up a balloon. She blows it up a bit, then lets the air out of it in short bursts, so that the balloon squeaks rather cutely.

ANGELA

It sounds like that. Kinda like that.

A beat. RYAN watches expectantly. ANGELA looks up at the screen. There's nothing on it.

Oh, shit. Shit! One second.

She lets the air out of the balloon and presses a key on the laptop. A photo of a one-week-old panda cub appears on the screen.

Okay.

A beat. ANGELA resumes her presentation.

As you can see, the panda cub is hairless and helpless. It is completely dependent on its mother for everything. Dangerously dependent, as the mother can quite accidentally crush her cub while caring for it. And so the cub's cries...the-the-you know, squeaking ...I like to think it's a cub's warning system, if you will. "Hey! Mom! Down here! Don't crush me!"

ANGELA waits for RYAN to laugh at the lame joke. He doesn't.

ANGELA
(to RYAN)

I thought I'd tell a joke or something there. You know, to warm up the audience.

RYAN

Angela, you're talking about pandas. Nobody needs to be warmed up.

A beat. ANGELA resumes the presentation to her imaginary audience.

Veterinarians have a strict protocol in caring for the cubs. We feed them inside the incubator...we bottle-feed them until they grow enough fur to keep warm on their own. We do give them back to the mother, of course. This here is Li Hua and her cub, who is a few months old in this picture.

ANGELA hits another key on the laptop. A new photo appears of MAMA PANDA cradling the cub.

ANGELA, continued

We're pretty excited by what we've been able to do vis a vis panda breeding. Our knowledge of breeding giant pandas in captivity has really improved dramatically over the past thirty years. If you're old enough, you might actually remember the problems that the National Zoo had in the 1970s with getting Ling Ling and Hsing Hsing to mate. We've come a long way since then. So with a little luck and a lot of hard work, we may have ourselves a- a- viable panda cub yet..

Slight pause.

(to RYAN)

Okay. Tell me if this next part works.

RYAN

Okay.

ANGELA taps away on the laptop. On the screen we see windows opening and closing, file folders and directories, etc. One of the folders is labeled "DO NOT USE." RYAN interrupts.

RYAN

Uh, Ange—

ANGELA

—Hold on a sec—

ANGELA opens the folder and clicks on a file. A new photo appears on the screen. It's of MAMA PANDA, curled up in the fetal position. She is wracked by grief.

ANGELA

(to her imaginary audience)

This is Li Hua two weeks after that previous photo was taken. As you can see, she's distraught. Grief-stricken, if you will. Because despite our best efforts—despite our techniques and our knowledge and our research—despite all this, the cub died. And honestly? We're really not sure why.

RYAN

You wanna keep your job, right?

ANGELA

Ryan!

RYAN

I'm just saying: that might not be the best thing to say—

ANGELA

—I'm not done. I have a conclusion.

RYAN

Okay. Conclude.

ANGELA

(to the audience)

Giant pandas are obviously still endangered. We can try to breed them, but frankly, they're rare. Sometimes it's easy to forget that. Honestly, I think that maybe pandas are meant to be rare. It seems wrong to just build them. Like they're skyscrapers or-or-or-you know...spreadsheets. You know? Like-like..Build-a-Bear!

A beat.

RYAN

Yeah, don't say that.

ANGELA shoots RYAN a look.

So after you give this talk, then what?

ANGELA

I take everyone to the exhibit to see the pandas.

RYAN

So they get to see them.

ANGELA

Yeah.

RYAN

Nice way to hit up the donors. Very nice.

ANGELA

Can I please finish?

Slight pause. ANGELA concludes.

ANGELA

At any rate, we do encourage you to continue to support our zoo's efforts. Frankly, we'd like to show those zoos in Washington and San Diego and Atlanta and Memphis—the ones with all the pandas—what we can do here in the Northeast. Before we move on, do you have any questions?

RYAN

Actually, I do.

ANGELA

I don't mean you, I mean them. The audience. I have a part where I open it up for questions.

RYAN

Well, I still have a question.

ANGELA

Okay. What?

RYAN

Will you marry me?

A beat.

ANGELA

Don't fuck with me.

RYAN

I'm not—

ANGELA

—No, don't even. Because—

—Goddammit, you know I have to go right out and do this in, like, an hour!

RYAN

Forget it.

ANGELA

No! I can't just forget it!

RYAN exits.

ANGELA

Ryan! Wait. Just—

(quietly)

I love you.

Lights shift. Music plays.

Scene 2: ANGELA's bedroom, 1991 or so.

MOM

(off)

Angela! We're late! Let's go, Maidele.

ANGELA

I can't find it!

MOM

(off)

What?

ANGELA

I can't find my science project!

MOM enters.

MOM

It's in the car. I put it there for you. So you wouldn't forget.

ANGELA

Mom! Don't do that!

MOM

Don't yell at me, I just—

ANGELA

—I swear! You so totally don't trust me!

MOM

No, I've finally learned from experience that this happens every time. You take all this time to work on your science projects, then you don't have them ready and then we spend twenty minutes digging through this mess to find them.

ANGELA

I like my room this way.

MOM

Ugh, I don't see how you can stand this.
Let's go.

ANGELA

I hate my science class. I hate giving presentations. Everyone in there hates me.

MOM
Oh, they do not.

ANGELA
They think I'm weird.

MOM
Nobody thinks you're weird.

ANGELA
Mom! Everybody thinks I'm weird! Everyone in school and-and the neighbor kids and-and-and all the kids in Hebrew school. They all hate me.

MOM
I don't know about that. Ryan seems to like you.

ANGELA
He does not.

MOM
He's a very nice young man. Cute. Smart.

ANGELA
Mom!

MOM
I think he has a crush on you.
(singing)
Angie and Ryan, sittin' in a tree
K-I-S-S-I-N-G...

ANGELA
(overlapping)
Aaagh! Stop it!

MOM
My goodness, such a thin skin. I'm only teasing

ANGELA
Well, it's stupid. Why don't you act your age?

MOM
Why don't you act yours? Little old lady.

A little bit of a standoff. Neither moves as they look at each other.

MOM
Oh for heaven's sake. I'm sorry.

ANGELA
Okay.

MOM
Okay. Let's go, Angie-Pangie.

ANGELA
Don't call me that.

MOM
Okay, Maidele-Schmaidele.

ANGELA
Don't call me that, either!

MOM hugs ANGELA from the back and rocks her.

MOM
(singing)
Maidele, my Schmaidele
My Angie-Pangie Schmaidele
Schmaidele, my Maidele
I've got something to say to ya

MOM lovingly tickles/pokes ANGELA.

MOM <i>(speaking)</i>	ANGELA <i>(shrieking and laughing)</i>
I love you here	Stop it!
here, here,	Stop it! Mom!
here, here,	I said: stop it!
and here!	

ANGELA wiggles away from MOM's embrace.

ANGELA
God, I hate when you do that!

MOM
Don't begrudge your mother some affection.

MOM reaches out for one last tickle. ANGELA shrieks.

ANGELA

Stop it!
My real mother wouldn't do that.

This isn't the first time that ANGELA has said this.

MOM

I know, I know. And she wouldn't make you unload the dishwasher...or make your bed...or feed the cat...I know.

ANGELA

Someday I'm gonna go to China and live with her.

MOM
(resigned)

Okay, Angie.

ANGELA

I will!

MOM

Fine. You have a nice time over there in China where they don't even have dishwashers or beds or cats.

ANGELA

They do too!

MOM

Ugh. Never mind. Let's go.

ANGELA nervously gets ready to leave.

I'm sorry I tickled you. I know that you hate it.

ANGELA

Yeah, and now I'm totally nervous and my presentation is gonna suck.

Throughout the following exchange, ANGELA begins to take shallower, ever-more-panicky breaths.

MOM

You need to learn how to deal with that. It's called performance anxiety.

ANGELA
(on “anxiety”)

I know what it’s called!

MOM
(on “called”)

Don’t yell!
You’d better learn how to deal with it.

ANGELA
(on “with”)

I know!

MOM
Your bat mitzvah is only three years away, and—

ANGELA
(on “years”)

—I know!—

MOM
—you’ll be in front of a lot of people.

ANGELA
(on “lot”)

—God, Mom! I know!

MOM
Angie. Breathe. Come on.

ANGELA tries to slow her breathing. MOM talks her down and breathes with her.

Breathe.

They inhale, hold their breath, and exhale.

Breathe.

They inhale, hold their breath and exhale.

Breathe.

They inhale, hold their breath and exhale.

