

UNANSWERABLE LOVE

A MUSICAL BY

DOROTHY GUO

## **SETTING**

1960/1990/2020, the writer's house

## **CHARACTERS**

Writer – female, always covering her face so that the audience cannot tell her face and age. She wants to write a novel to document women's perspectives on love and marriage. As the play goes, the audience realizes that she is actually an older Lei Lei.

Lei Lei – 18, a young girl living in the 1960s. She is illiterate and comes from a farmer's family. Shy and conservative, she is going to be married to a man she has never met soon under the arrangement of her family.

Ou – 20, a young girl living in the 1990s. She is from a small suburban town and works in a hair salon. Stylish and free-spirited, she is always being hit on costumers in her salon. As the play goes, the audience realizes that she is Lei Lei's daughter.

Vicky –18, a young girl living in the year 2020. She is from a big city and loves browsing on social media and dating apps. She is energetic and outgoing, always looking forward to trying out new things. As the play goes, the audience realizes that she is Ou's daughter.

## **SCENE 0: Writer's House**

*(The writer is sitting downstage center, facing against the audience. On stage, we see three Chinese young girls sitting behind a table. LEI LEI is curiously observing the room. OU is looking at a mirror to check her hair. VICKY is browsing on her phone with headphones on. Each of them is in their own time period and is not aware of the presence of the others.)*

**WRITER**

*(To the girls)*

Thank you so much for interviewing with me. Please make yourselves comfortable.

**LEI LEI**

You're a writer?

**WRITER**

Yes. I'm a writer.

**LEI LEI**

Wow! I have never seen a writer in my whole life. You must be good at reading books!

**OU**

So, what's this about?

**WRITER**

I am working on a book about how women think of love.

**OU**

Love? Sounds old-fashioned. But I'll take the 30 yuan.

**WRITER**

You'll get it once we're finished.

*(VICKY is humming a TikTok song. A long silence. VICKY finally realizes the situation and puts off her headphones.)*

**VICKY**

Wait, what's going on?

**#01. Why Women Love**

**WRITER**

THERE IS A QUESTION I'VE BEEN WONDERING  
WHY WOMEN LOVE DESPITE EVERYTHING  
THERE IS A PUZZLE I'VE BEEN SOLVING  
WHAT IS IT THAT KEEP YOU UNAFRAID OF LOSING  
WHY WOMEN LOVE

IT IS A NOVEL NO ONE WAS EXPECTING  
CAUSE WOMEN LOVE  
IS SOMETHING THAT MANY'S ALREADY BEEN ASSUMING

THERE ARE CHARACTERS I'M CREATING  
WHO NEVER STOPPED THEIR LOVING  
THERE IS A PLOT I'M PLANNING  
THAT CAPTURES WHY LOVE'S SO TEMPTING

WHY WOMEN LOVE  
THERE IS NO ANSWER I'M HIDING  
CAUSE WOMAN LOVE  
WITH THEIR OWN SENSES AND REASONING

So why do you love?

**LEILEI**  
BECAUSE IT IS WAY THEY ARE WISHING

**WRITER**

Why do you love?

**OU**  
BECAUSE IT IS THE WAY TO MAKE A LIVING

**WRITER**

Why do you love?

**VICKY**  
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT'S THAT WORD'S MEANING

**WRITER**

Can you be more specific?

**LEILEI & OU & VICKY**  
I'm not sure if I can give you the answer you're expecting.  
CAUSE WHO HAS NEVER LOVED FOR NOTHING  
WHO CAN TELL LOVE FROM LIVING  
WHO CAN SUM THEIR LIVES UP TO AN ANSWER  
TO KEEP THE MYSTERIOUS FROM HAPPENING

## **SCENE 1: Lei Lei's Farm**

*(The table disappears.  
LEI LEI is harvesting in her family's farm,  
the WRITER is observing her on one the side of the stage.)*

**LEI LEI**

Hi, welcome! This is my home. A lovely, lovely farm in the countryside. Everyday, all that I can see is sheep, and grass, and more sheep, and more grass...

**WRITER**

I recognize this place.

**LEI LEI**

Yes, it is very easy to recognize. It's right there, on the top of the mountain. Oh, I forgot to say! You can see sunsets from there too. The most beautiful sunsets.

**#02. The Most Beautiful Sunset**

**LEI LEI**

EVERY DAY  
STARTING FROM LOOKING BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS  
EVERY DAY  
CLEANING UP THE FLOOR AND THE FOUNTAINS  
WAITING FOR A BEAUTIFUL SUNSET

*(A young man's voice yells "Lei Lei!" from afar.  
LEILEI and THE WRITER turns to the direction of the voice simultaneously.)*

Here it comes.

A SUNSET WHOSE VOICE I CAN MELT IN  
A SUNSET WHOSE COLOR CLIMBS UP MY CHEEKS  
A SUNSET I CAN ALWAYS SEE AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN  
A SUNSET WHO COMES FOR ME FOR CERTAIN

I am the eldest sister in my family, so I never went to school. But he is studying in the high school in the village. Every day at exactly the time of the sunset, he would be dismissed from school, and he would run to me, telling me everything he has learned.

**WRITER**

He taught you how to read?

**LEI LEI**

Every word.

**WRITER**  
S-H-E-E-P/

**LEILEI**  
SHEEP/

**WRITER**  
G-R-A-S-S/

**LEI LEI**

Grass/

**WRITER**

S-U-N-S-E-T/

**LEI LEI**

SUNSET/

**WRITER**

B-E-A-U-T-I-F-U-L/

**LEI LEI**

BEAUTIFUL/

*(OU and VICKY enters in the costume of peasants.  
They dress LEI LEI in a wedding dress.)*

**LEI LEI**

But you know, I am the eldest sister in my family, and I never went to school. I must get married. Not to some schoolboy, but to another man whom my family approves of.

*(OU and VICKY push LEI LEI downstage.  
They carry a puppet of a male peasant to stand beside her.  
They turn her head violently so she can complete the wedding ritual with the puppet.)*

**WRITER**

L-O-V-E/

**LEILEI**

LOVE/

**WRITER**

Y-O-U

*(LEI LEI smiles in bitter but does not answer)*

**LEI LEI**

I guess he doesn't count. I love my husband—that I do know. The thing with him can't be called love...it's more like...

A SUNSET WHOSE VOICE FADES DEEP INTO THE NIGHT  
A SUNSET WHOSE COLOR'S NO LONGER WITHIN MY SIGHT  
A SUNSET I CAN NEVER SEE UNDER THE LIGHT  
A SUNSET WHO IS JUST NOT RIGHT

**WRITER**

Thank you, Lei Lei. I'll mark them down.

**WRITER**

G-O-O-D-B-Y-E /

**LEI LEI**

GOODBYE

*(LEI LEI exits with the peasant puppet)*

## **SCENE 2: Ou's Hair Salon**

*(OU is chatting and flirting with several customers in her salon. She notices the WRITER and instantly comes up to her as if she didn't recognize the WRITER)*

**OU**

Hey beautiful! Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, or whatever. How can I help you today?

*(A thick male costumer's voice shouts "Ou! Where are you?" in a clearly flirting way.)*

I'll be right there with you, darling! You just can't live a second without me, can you?

**WRITER**

*(in disbelief, and, a little disgust)*

This is where you work?

**OU**

Yes, yes. Welcome to the Ocean Wide Salon! Oh, wait. I know you. You still owe me 30 yuan.

**WRITER**

But you still haven't answered my question.

**OU**

Come on. What do I think of love? I thought I made it very clear last time.

**WRITER**

No. You said you loved only for money.

**OU**

Yeah. What's wrong with that?

**WRITER**

There's no way you only love someone for their money.

**OU**

Why not? I thought you are the knowledgeable one, you writers. Of course people love for money. It happens everyday here at the Ocean Wide Salon.

#03. Ocean Wide

**OU**

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU CAN SEE AT OCEAN WIDE

THE FAT GUYS WHO NEVER SMOKE OUTSIDE  
THE LADIES WITH PINK HAIR AND EVER-LOSING PRIDE  
THE KIND OF LOVE NO ONE CARES TO BUY

TWENTY YUAN FOR A CUT ON THE BANGS ABOVE EYES  
FIFTY YUAN FOR A PERM OR A DYE  
SEVENTY YUAN FOR A LITTLE CHAT OFF TO THE SIDE  
A HUNDRED YUAN FOR A BEAUTIFUL NIGHT

**WRITER**

No, no, no. No way. This is not the kind of love I'm talking about.

**OU**

Well, you interviewed the wrong person. I'll be honest. I don't believe in all that shit about love since I was sixteen.

**WRITER**

But you did believe in it. You should believe in it. Right?

**OU**

Let me just tell you this.

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU CAN SEE AT OCEAN WIDE  
A GIRL WHO THOUGHT SHE COULD CLIMB UP HIGH  
A GIRL WHO THOUGHT THEY WERE JUST BEING NICE

*(LEI LEI and VICKY enters stage in male costumes with fake beard. They laugh and take off OU's coat, leaving her with a single garment)*

UNTIL SHE'S GOT NOTHING LEFT

**OU**

You know what my name means? Ou?

**WRITER**

SEA GULL ON THE OCEAN WIDE

**OU**

You know what hope I was carrying when I left the small village where I came from?

**WRITER**

FLY HIGH TO THE BLUE BLUE SKY

**OU**

You know how much I wanted to make a living on my own in this town?

**WRITER**

STAY STRONG SO NO ONE CAN DEFY

**OU**

You know what my mother said to me?

**WRITER**  
DON'T EVER LET YOURSELF CRY

**OU**

I grew up in a farmer's family. My father wanted me to stay in the farm, but my mother had always hoped me to step out of the little village and go out to the town. She said all she wanted was to let me fly out to my ocean, where there's more chances and more love to pursue.

**WRITER**

And you did.

**OU**

And I did. I made a living here at Ocean Wide, in the town that my mother dreamed of. But it is so hard to find love when you are struggling to survive—after all, money can guarantee me a better life, but love cannot. So I quitted from finding love, just like my mother.

**OU & WRITER**

SEA GULL ON THE OCEAN WIDE

**OU**

LOVE IS SOMETHING THAT I CAN'T BUY

**OU & WRITER**

SEA GULL ON THE OCEAN WIDE

**WRITER**

LOVE IS SOMETHING YOU DESERVE TO TRY

### **SCENE 3: Vicky's Home**

*(A very Gen-Z vibe room with many self-portraits of different styles hanging on the walls. VICKY is on social media with her headphones.)*

**WRITER**

Hi. *(VICKY doesn't respond)* Hi. What are you looking at?

**VICKY**

Didn't your mom teach you knock before you come in someone's door?

**WRITER**

Oh. I'm sorry. I just wonder how are you with answering the interview questions.

**VICKY**

Well. I don't know. I literally don't care.

**WRITER**

Can you at least share something about how you think of love?

**VICKY**

Still I don't care.

**WRITER**

*(finally irritated)* What's wrong with you?

#### #04. To the Left

**VICKY**

What's wrong with me? I'll tell you what's wrong with me.

BROWSING PROFILES DAY BY DAY  
GO ON FIRST DATES I DON'T PAY  
SPENDING MONTHS AND MONTHS ON  
BORING GUYS WHO ACT IN THEIR OWN WAYS

IT IS AN ERA WHEN LOVE IS A PLAY  
YOU ACT QUICK, YOU CAN'T WAIT  
YOU GET IN FANCY DRESS AND JUST PRAY  
THAT THE NEXT GUY ISN'T GAY

OH  
SWIPING EVERY NEW GUY TO THE LEFT  
OH  
PASSION'S GONE AND ONLY BOREDOM'S LEFT  
MAYBE LIFE HAS ALREADY SWIPED ME TO THE LEFT

**WRITER**

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to blame you for anything. I just wanted to know your real thoughts on love, that's all.

**VICKY**

My real thoughts—I'm a Gen-Z living with my single mom who doesn't even know who my dad was, and I never had a real relationship with anyone, that's all. But why do you care anyways?

**WRITER**

I care because I want to document your story.

**VICKY**

I don't have a story-story. I mean, who has a real love story nowadays?

STAYING IN MY ROOM EVERYDAY  
TEXT THE PERSON WHO WON'T STAY  
PAINTING PICTURE OF MYSELF WITH COLORS  
THAT MY PROFILE CAN'T DISPLAY

IT IS A WORLD WITH RUNNING PACE

YOU FALL QUICK, AND THEN BREAK  
YOU GET LOST IN FLOODING STORIES  
OF HOW LOVE IS JUST A WASTE

OH  
SWIPING EVERY NEW CHANCE TO THE LEFT  
OH  
WHY AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO'S LEFT  
MAYBE LOVE HAS ALREADY SWIPED ME TO THE LEFT

I am sick of how people nowadays have twisted the meaning of love and I am glad that I'm not loving anyone in that way. Love is not just love anymore now. It's not simple like that.

**WRITER**

It is exactly simple like that.

**VICKY**

Why would you ask my opinion if you already know so much about love?

*(OU and LEILEI enters the stage, standing next to VICKY and confronting WRITER. They suddenly see each other, and some recognizes the faces of one another.)*

**OU**

Exactly. Why would you keep asking if you don't even agree with my idea of love?

**LEILEI**

And...why would you ask for my story if you know my love did not end up well?

**VICKY**

Let's be frank here. No one knows anything about love. Not me, and *(to Ou)* obviously not you.

**OU**

*(to LEILEI)* And obviously not you.

**WRITER**

*(WRITER takes off her mask and robe and reveals that she is an older LEILEI as she is in the same hair and costume as LEILEI.)*

Okay! It was my fault, I'll admit it. I was the first to fail at loving. I didn't set a good example for you, Ou, and I haven't cared for you enough, Vicky. I'm sorry. I didn't know things would turn out this way. I thought you two would have lived better...loved better than me.

*(Silence.)*

**LEI LEI**

It's not your fault...

**OU**

I can't believe it, mom. It's you?

**VICKY**

Grandma? You're a writer?

**LEI LEI**

You learned how to read. No. I learned how to read!

**WRITER**

Yes, you did.

**LEI LEI**

This is unbelievable...you know how to read and write now. This is so exciting.

**VICKY**

Why don't you read us your book then?

**WRITER**

What?

**VICKY**

Your book. The book about women's opinions on love. I wanna hear it.

**WRITER**

You do?

**OU**

Now I'm curious too. I didn't know you can write, mom.

**LEI LEI**

I wanna hear it too. I really wanna know the answer—why do women love anyways?

#### **#05. Unanswerable Love / Why Women Love (Reprise)**

**WRITER**

Okay, I'll read. But I'll have to let you know that this is an old woman, an amateur writer, and a failed lover writing. I've heard your stories and I noted them down. Although none of you consider yourself as worthy of love, here's what I've written...

LOVE IS ABOUT  
FARAWAY VOICE, UNSPOKEN WORDS, AND FADED LETTERS  
LOVE IS ABOUT  
SCENTED HAIR, COLORED DYES, AND BUSY COUNTERS  
LOVE IS ABOUT

QUIET ROOMS, LONELY NIGHTS, AND PAINTED PICTURES  
LOVE IS ABOUT  
THE THREE OF YOU AND THE ONE SHARED HEART THAT SHIMMERS

Well, I guess I'm not quite a good writer. Forgive me for being someone who started learning how to read at the age of 60. But I learned all the words by myself. And I'd like you all to know, Ou earned all the money by herself, and Vicky painted all the pictures on her wall by herself. They may not be called winners of love, but they all got what they wanted in the end.

LOVE IS ABOUT  
**WRITER & LEILEI**  
INABILITY, COMPROMISE, AND CATCHING SUNSETS

**WRITER**  
LOVE IS ABOUT  
**WRITER & OU**  
FRAGILITY, COMPENSATION, AND OCEAN WIDE

**WRITER**  
LOVE IS ABOUT  
**WRITER & VICKY**  
AUTONOMY, ISOLATION, AND SWIPING THE LEFT

**WRITER**  
LOVE IS ABOUT  
ANYTHING YOU GRANT YOUR HEART TO DESIRE

**LEI LEI**  
UNANSWERABLE...

**OU**  
UNANSWERABLE...

**VICKY**  
UNANSWERABLE...

**LEI LEI**  
LOVE IS  
UNANSWERABLE...

**OU**  
UNANSWERABLE...

**VICKY**  
UNANSWERABLE...

**ALL**  
LOVE IS ABOUT UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS AND HURTED SOULS  
BUT THE ACT OF LOVING WEIGHS HEAVIER THAN LOVE ITSELF

LOVE IS ABOUT HEARTBREAKS AND MISERIES AND LOSTED GOALS  
BUT THE ONES WHO LOVE ARE MORE PRECIOUS THAN STORIES ALONE

**WRITER**  
AND THE UNANSWERABLE IS WHY WOMEN CAN

**LEI LEI**  
L...

**OU**  
O...

**VICKY**  
V...

**WRITER**  
EVENTUALLY

**LEI LEI**  
L...

**OU**  
O...

**VICKY**  
V...

**WRITER**  
EMBRACE

**LEI LEI**  
L...

**OU**  
O...

**VICKY**  
V...

**WRITER**  
ETERNAL LOVE

So why do you love?

**WRITER**

**LEILEI**  
BECAUSE IT WAS WAY I AM WISHING

Why do you love?

**WRITER**

**OU**  
BECAUSE I WANT TO MAKE A LIVING

Why do you love?

**WRITER**

**VICKY**  
BECAUSE I'M LEARNING THAT WORD'S MEANING

**LEILEI & OU & VICKY**

And why do you love?

**WRITER**  
THERE IS A QUESTION I'VE BEEN WONDERING  
WHY WOMEN LOVE DESPITE EVERYTHING  
THERE ARE SOME WOMEN I'M INTERVIEWING  
WHO ARE BRAVE TO CONFESS THEIR MISGIVINGS

WHY WOMEN LOVE  
WHAT AN UNANSWERABLE SETTING  
CAUSE WOMEN LOVE  
ONLY IN THE WAY THEIR HEARTS ARE DIRECTING

*(WRITER turns back to the three girls. They smile and hug together, then turn away to three different directions back to their respective time periods. WRITER watches them going away and eventually exit from the same direction as VICKY.)*

END OF PLAY.