

Scenes with Joyce Cho

~
Amber Reed

Second draft
April 6, 2006

....

FAN

Excuse me, but are you Joyce Cho?

JOYCE CHO

Yes, I'm Joyce Cho.

FAN

Would you mind my telling you a few Joyce Cho stories?

JOYCE CHO

I love Joyce Cho stories.

FAN

It was 1881 and you were living the café life in Vienna. You lived with a dwarf, with whom you quarreled in front of guests. At night you and the dwarf composed plinky soundtracks for robot films. You promenaded about on the Lord's day like the whore of Babylon. Then your skin dried and the scales fell from your eyes.

JOYCE CHO

What a horrible story.

FAN

May I tell you another?

JOYCE CHO

Please.

FAN

It was 1992 and you were questioning the new religion of form. You shouted, "Down with chairs!" and other wrong and violent slogans. A battalion of award-winning thermal tile designers stormed the ramparts of your walmartians. "Remember the beauties of the eighties," you pleaded, as they cleansed your lines and remade you in fascinating new polymers.

JOYCE CHO

That's true, but I had more memorable sayings and diatribes against the emporiums of taste.

FAN

May I tell you my last Joyce Cho story?

JOYCE CHO

I love Joyce Cho stories.

FAN

This was in Ceylon, apres le deluge. Your boyfriend was going to show you the Alamo but instead he played golf with his redneck uncle. This made you worry it was no longer cactus season, and all the facts were against you. Finally you gained some knowledge of the balefully palimpsestuous nature of the human soul. And wept stones from the corners of your eyes.

JOYCE CHO

Like an icon of Sainte Foy?

FAN

Yes.

JOYCE CHO

Oh. That's in France.

They shake hands.

....

In front of the Colosseum.

JOYCE CHO

In this play Joyce Cho goes to different places. She's really an agent of discovery—for the *audience*. As audience members learn about different places through Joyce Cho, they grow as human beings. Because that is what it is all about. Rabies. I mean growing.

The Colosseum was built in [[something]]. The Colosseum was a big [[something]]. What do locals think of the Colosseum? Les vivants sont dingues. What do you think of your Colosseum?

LOCAL

I like it. It reminds me of my car.

JOYCE CHO

Oh my God, you're a person too!

They embrace.

An agent for discovering things, for interacting, with people.

....

JOYCE CHO *and her lad* JAMES LEE *lunch outside of the Pantheon.*

JOYCE CHO

It's so funny, James. I just ran into someone who knew all about me and told me everything about my life.

JAMES LEE

Ha, ha, ha!

JOYCE CHO

If we got married, I could sit around and spend your money all day.

JAMES LEE

That sounds great.

JAMES LEE *makes a strange gurgling noise.*

JOYCE CHO

This building was very old and then it got older. It was built in 118.

JAMES LEE

You're so Korean, ordering the most expensive thing on the menu.

JOYCE CHO

Oh.

Pause.

Tell me all about your white trash relatives.

JAMES LEE

My cousin was an assistant manager at Wal-Mart but he got a girl pregnant so now he lives in a trailer.

JOYCE CHO

Oh my God, this is so awesome.

JAMES LEE

I hate smelling your chicken fingers and your ketchup.

JOYCE CHO

James. You should spend a moment every day thinking of someone to thank. Be aware of the snowball effects of your thinking.

JAMES LEE *does something mean with a fork.* JOYCE CHO *is distressed.*

Supposing we got attacked by pirates.

JAMES LEE

We'd have some disappointed pirates.

JOYCE CHO

If we got married I could try saving you on the road from Rome. I could say, "Where are you going?" and you could say "Oh crap!" This is a building of heroic permanence, like the Astrodome or the Rothko Chapel. Let's never go back to Houston. Let's ride around and eat berries.

Silence.

Just wait until you see me in better jeans.

....

In an indeterminate location.

JOYCE CHO

I forgot to say that during our voyage of discovery we're also going to try to flee this mysterious dark presence.

She gestures toward DARTH VADER, who is trying to act like a very Don Giovanni-like dark presence. For the rest of the play, DARTH VADER should make himself as ubiquitous as he likes, as if he were running in a hotly contested school board election and were afraid of losing by only four votes.

He doesn't symbolize anything. I think he's just Darth Vader and dislikes me.

....

JOYCE CHO *on Bosworth field.*

RICHARD OF YORK

The fans have got to understand that Patrick Ewing makes a lot of money, but Patrick Ewing spends a lot of money.

Four strenuous joggers canter across the field and disappear from view.

Restore my strength with raisins and refresh me with apples!

JOYCE CHO

Yes yes but tell me about your great successes and tell me how you felt when this and this happened, and how it was or what you ate?

RICHARD OF YORK

[*Muttering*] It's difficult to get in sync because of all the fucking Mormons out here.

Eight more strenuous joggers trot across the field.

Fucking MORMONS!

JOYCE CHO

Is that why you signed the contract?

RICHARD OF YORK

Look I just want to drink Pepsi and wear Reeboks. If I didn't make three million dollars a year people would run to the other side of the street when they saw me.

Fourteen more strenuous joggers jog across Bosworth field.

JOYCE CHO

What about your family—do they cringe when you come home as if expecting you to hang them up by their feet with their heads stuck in buckets of pigs' blood?

RICHARD OF YORK

[*Darkly*] I may have to sell a couple of my cars to make ends meet.

Eighteen strenuous joggers zip across Bosworth field. Twenty-three strenuous joggers zoom across Bosworth field. Twenty-eight strenuous joggers skedaddle across Bosworth field. RICHARD OF YORK regards them contemplatively.

JOYCE CHO

If you could live forever, would you, and why?

Thirty-four strenuous joggers prance across Bosworth field.

RICHARD OF YORK

I would not live forever, because we should not live forever, because if we were supposed to live forever, then we would live forever, but we cannot live forever, which is why I would not live forever. There's nothing more unfortunate than soft, chubby, fat-looking children who go to watch their school play basketball every Saturday. And regard that as their week's exercise.

Forty-two strenuous joggers hop around Bosworth field. A longish pause.

JOYCE CHO

Do you think about your historical legacy?

Seventy-two strenuous joggers waltz onto Bosworth field. RICHARD OF YORK begins to stretch his calves.

RICHARD OF YORK

In the studio, I do try to have a thought in my head so that it's not, like, a blank stare. They were doing a full back shot of me in a swimsuit and I thought oh my gawd, I have to be so brave. See, everyone hates himself from behind.

JOYCE CHO

What do you think of this play?

RICHARD OF YORK

Unfortunately, there are really only two plays: Richard the Third and put the ball in the goddamn basket.

Ninety-six strenuous joggers pour onto Bosworth field.

JOYCE CHO

Richard, should I have a baby?

RICHARD OF YORK

It's a huge change for your body. You don't even want to look in the mirror after you've had a baby, because your stomach is just hanging there like a dead Shar-Pei.

JOYCE CHO

Oh.

....

A flock of pretty bird doves flies around Saint-Chapelle, singing the following song:

Triolet of the Pretty Bird Doves

I want our love to annualize
Where the grass is like emerald sticks.
You stare with wonder and surprise;
I want our love to annualize.
You get so fat when you chomp those fries,
And you ask for scratches and kicks;
But I want our love to annualize
Where the grass is like emerald sticks.

DARTH VADER grabs a bird dove and eats it. JOYCE CHO flees the scene.

....

In the Conciergerie, the Girondins are carousing in the background and CHARLOTTE CORDAY is wandering around looking luminous while Marie Antoinette gets special treatment somewhere else.

JOYCE CHO

Here we are in the Conciergerie with Sibyl Kempson, famous playwright, actress, and chanteuse. She is talented but also nice. I grew up but they kept casting me as the short guy behind the desk. So I sang songs for the working.

SIBYL KEMPSON

Ain't it awful?

JOYCE CHO

Socialists destroy sandcastles but New Historicists say power is power and uh there's nothing that would make one kind more legitimate than another.

SIBYL KEMPSON

Ain't it awful?

JOYCE CHO

Yes. The nation is the idea, hope, and fear that everybody does so believe.

SIBYL KEMPSON

Ain't it awful?

SIBYL KEMPSON groans like a wounded hippo and gets ugly then pretty again.

JOYCE CHO

I want to be read as a social text instead of as a judicial document.

SIBYL KEMPSON

Ain't it awful.

JOYCE CHO

Heavy rains wash out our grapefruit leagues and the Japanese are attacked in their tugboats. Shelves are left unstocked at the universal news café.

SIBYL KEMPSON

Ain't it awful?

JOYCE CHO

Carnal liberty and enormity and sin.

SIBYL KEMPSON laughs and looks around like she's better than all the people but still wants to be their friend. CHARLOTTE CORDAY wanders up to her and offers her a big dagger covered in blood. SIBYL KEMPSON demurs at first but finally accepts and embraces her. The two begin to plait each others' hair, speaking rapidly in low voices.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY

We go to the discotheque tonight.

SIBYL KEMPSON

The discotheque! It pleases me, the discotheque.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY

C'est chouette, ca.

JOYCE CHO

What would be nice would be to believe in institutional history as the projection of the political imaginary.

SIBYL KEMPSON & CHARLOTTE CORDAY

Ha, ha, ha!

JOYCE CHO

What would be nice would be to say, the nation chooses the form of political organization indigenous to the nature of its people and belief in institutions is more important than the success of the institutions themselves.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY

N'est-ce pas terrible?

JOYCE CHO

Who the crap are you?

CHARLOTTE CORDAY

Oui, quel horreur.

....

ARNOLD WEINSTEIN *stands off in the shade somewhere in Tintern Abbey, hanging out with DARTH, as JOYCE CHO conducts an energetic fire drill.*

JOYCE CHO

When you hear the alarm, don't disregard the alarm. You should hear an announcement from your building's fire marshal. If you don't hear an announcement, walk into the hall, pick up the fire phone next to the alarm, and call downstairs to ask what's going on. Do you want more paper towels? Look at the signs. Stairways are located to the left and right of the elevator banks. Remember that doors are attached to walls. Do you want to be turned over? Wow this is a really good fire drill. When you go out the door you should just love everyone. Reconnoiter with your group at your preassigned meeting place. Protect your skin like a famous Chinese movie star. And love everyone. Don't scratch your dandruff patches. I was a fireman for twenty years and firemen don't like going after ghosts. Do you want some new water? Wait for the appropriate authorities' signal to return to the building. Tell the Fulbright committee you're going to Rome to figure out what makes art great instead of good—which you know you won't figure out so you'll just eat fried artichokes and lose your dignity and sobriety with hooched-up ragazze on Tuesday nights. That'll be *sweet*. And wait for the appropriate signal. And love everyone. How are they treating you in here? Read this play by Arnold Weinstein: *The Red Eye of Love*. And these operas: *Casino Paradise*, *Dynamite Tonite*, *A View From the Bridge*, *The Wedding*, others. Oh help me you early Christians. Alert everyone in the hall. And love everyone, even if they're from Seattle and say things like, "I'm addicted to Europe." Do you understand? What do you do all day?

ARNOLD WEINSTEIN

Protect your skin like a famous Chinese movie star.

JOYCE CHO

I don't have wrinkles.

ARNOLD WEINSTEIN

You don't have wrinkles because when you were small you were a nerdling who stayed inside all day reading books and making beaded things. Now you walk around outside and have to wear a hat.

JOYCE CHO

No I wasn't.

ARNOLD WEINSTEIN

That's right. I was thinking of somebody else.

....

Borodino. There's a huge lava lamp (blue) standing smack in the middle of the field. The rest of the field is filled with Russian soldiers, who treat the lava lamp with suspicion at first but gradually come to regard it as one of their own. Some shells (French) are falling here and there. The CEO of Google and the CEO of Sun (Microsystems, hello) are on the field conducting an elaborate ceremony.

GOOGLE CEO

I'm not quite sure how to present the lava lamp. Am I supposed to point it out to him?

A soldier nods and GOOGLE CEO points to the fricking enormous lava lamp in the middle of the field.

SUN MICROSYSTEMS CEO

This is my new lava lamp?

GOOGLE CEO

Yes.

They embrace and exchange military decorations including the Order of St. George..

We plugged it in, in case you got confused. You look confused.

SUN MICROSYSTEMS CEO

I think I'm touched.

GOOGLE CEO

The math behind lava lamps is chaotic, just like the Internet, where people, conceivably, this year can come and find these wonderful pumpkin-shaped orange-iced cookies in a beautiful tin and gift container that they can see on Halloween morning and still have delivered that day to any address in the United States.

SUN MICROSYSTEMS CEO

Thank you. Thank you.

PRINCE ANDREI BOLKONSKY steps onto the field.

GOOGLE CEO

Consumers use this type of thing to say, 'I bought this gift for you because I'm so rich that money is no object to me and I care about you a great deal. So here's this British telephone booth.' It doesn't work for everybody, but it works for a large number of people. For example, me and you.

A shell falls near the SUN MICROSYSTEMS CEO, killing him instantly.

This lava lamp was invented in the sixties, back when all the people doing this stuff were born, and it's meant to symbolize our partnership and money and the end of time.

Notices splayed corpse of SUN MICROSYSTEMS CEO for the first time.

GOOGLE CEO (cont'd.)

Scott looks really confused. Exactly what I like to do to him.

PRINCE ANDREI BOLKONSKY

Is this shell trying to kill *me*?—me, whom everyone likes so much? It looks as though it may fall closest to him, in which case I may, perhaps, lose no more than an arm, and I shall certainly ask for chloroform. What a long time it's taking! What about my five-star castle? I can't go to hell. I helped preserve the American elms.

GOOGLE CEO

As for me, my favorite store is the [[mumbles]] store. Seeing how there are no other stores around, that pretty much narrows it down. There is so much I'm tempted to buy just because I could potentially put it to good use. That and I enjoy having new things. Sometimes I can just sit in a chair and read a random book. But mostly I browse around looking at things I might want.

We are in the midst of a product renaissance. A bright season of new containers. There aren't any robbers hiding among the boulders and there are swarms of unique visitors lurking on the beach.

The French really step it up. JOYCE CHO throws herself under an ammunition cart (this is extremely stupid) and shouts at them.

JOYCE CHO

Prince Andrei! Money man!

PRINCE ANDREI BOLKONSKY *smiles, and holds out his hand.*

GOOGLE CEO

Where now are the short stirrings of meekness, the tattlers of tales?

PRINCE ANDREI BOLKONSKY *smiles, and holds out his hand.*

Who now would return to his awful job decorating cupcakes?

PRINCE ANDREI BOLKONSKY *smiles, and holds out his hand.*

When we expel certain vegetables, we release seeds of God.

PRINCE ANDREI BOLKONSKY *smiles, and holds out his hand. A shell falls on him and money man and they fall down dead. A horde of DECEMBRISTS swarms over the field and when they leave there is nothing there, not even JOYCE CHO.*

....

JOYCE CHO *on the Reed farm.*

JOYCE CHO

Here we are at the childhood home of my friend AMBER REED.

(Slide 1)



Yeah. She likes to be a bad-ass. Baaad-ass.

JOYCE CHO *strolls along, humming to herself and smiling at the donkeys. Suddenly she stumbles across a damp patch of earth, around which a secret ritual is being conducted by the DARK MOO COW OF MORIBUNDITY and MILK CHILDREN. She hides.*

DARK MOO COW OF MORIBUNDITY

The lonely wife of the visiting dictator puts on her shoes. You put on your shoes. Aye verily.

And now you think that's the way it's going to be!

MILK CHILDREN

Aye verily and well-spoken, Dark Moo Cow of Moribundity.

Arr arr arr.

MILK CHILDREN *start throwing soy beans at DARK MOO COW OF MORIBUNDITY.*

**DARK MOO COW OF MORIBUNDITY
(cont.)**

I used to sit staring with envy at everyone.
I was interested in life, humans.
But sat there with my finger and lost the
light of high heaven.

Bury it where it can't be found.
Nobody makes a fool of me except God.
Let it be buried where it cannot be found.

I used to sit staring with envy at everyone.

Well well.

Go and bring the ladykiller some napkins
from the bathroom. The old-time party
boy.

Shallup, shallup! Let him be buried where
he can't be found. Let it be buried in the
ground. I used to sit staring with envy at
everyone.

I used to sit staring at everyone as they
voluptuated at the desecrated corpse of
reason.

The second button falls off the coat. The
bear takes off his tracking collar and flies
away to the moon.

MILK CHILDREN (cont.)

Bury it where it can't be found.

I used to sit staring with envy

I used to sit

*MILK CHILDREN continue to throw soy
beans which now look like little bones.*

Lose the light of high heaven.

I used to sit STARING

The desecrated corpse

**DARK MOO COW OF MORIBUNDITY
(cont.)**

For a second the coffin looked like a piece
of cake.

Where may it not be found?

Oh yes there.

And then what?

OK.

I used to add to the verdure of the early
trees. I used to open my iced tea and win
a car.

Bury it and stare, with the perpetual tiara,
some women wear.

How can you fail to remove your shoes?
Bury them at the door.

MILK CHILDREN (cont.)

Bury it where it can't be found!

(whispering)
up and down the earth and to and fro it

bury it

laugh really loud and go har har har

I used to sit staring with envy at everyone.

bury it where it can't be found

How can you believe in high heaven with
your finger up your nose?

Aye verily.

The song ends in a chorus of loud mooing and honking.

DARK MOO COW OF MORIBUNDITY & MILK CHILDREN
Har har moo moo har har har har har moo har har har!

DARTH VADER arrives and starts waving his arms around. JOYCE CHO flees.

....

In the Cimitero Accatolico per Gli Stranieri in Rome. JOYCE CHO, alone, finds Shelley's grave and recites "Stanzas Written in Dejection Near Naples"¹ over it with a fair amount of warmth and feeling. She pauses in satisfaction, and turns away. Suddenly she spots Gregory Corso's grave, right across from Shelley's.

JOYCE CHO

Shelley didn't understand evil man.
Shelley didn't understand evil man.
Shelley didn't understand evil man.

And the statues rise up and embrace her.

....

In the Luxembourg Gardens.

DR HWANG WOO SUK

May I take you into the bushes?

JOYCE CHO

Dr. Hwang Woo Suk you elevate the brand value of our country.

DR HWANG WOO SUK

I love your arty interest in the divine.

JOYCE CHO

Dr. Hwang Woo Suk!

She forgets and then recalls herself.

DR HWANG WOO SUK

I will never let you doze off and everyone take pictures of you with their phones.

JOYCE CHO

Dear James: I hear you're building your little house. No. Dear James: I hope you bought more furniture and your daughter hasn't turned dangerous. What? Dear James: I wanna make out with this guy I met. Yeah. If we stood together before the appropriations committee of the gods, he would speak for me, and if people wanted to take pictures of me sleeping with their phones he'd beat them up. Tomorrow I'll be dumpy and old and say, "I was born like a mushroom, in obscurity and wind."

DR HWANG WOO SUK

May I pull you into the bushes?

JOYCE CHO

Mayhap I will lose the light of high heaven with my forehead down in the bushes.

DARTH VADER is walking toward them, eating young French children.

DARTH VADER

Who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow?

DARTH VADER eats DR HWANG WOO SUK. JOYCE CHO flees.

....

At the Chiesa di Domine Quo Vadis on the Via Appia Antica.

SAINT PETER

Joyce Cho, quo vadis?

JOYCE CHO

To the mall, to buy pants.

SAINT PETER *glares at her.*

SAINT PETER

Why don't you learn Spanish? Everyone says it's so easy. You should stop building robots and experience different cultures.

JOYCE CHO

Excuse me but I have to buy some pants. And return to the heart of my lovely intellectual life. Excuse me Saint Peter, I'm sorry [*Ed. note – this originally read “you meddlesome git” but Joyce was afraid she'd get in trouble with the law*]

SAINT PETER

Joyce Cho, uh quo vadis?

JOYCE CHO

I told you, I have to go to the zoo and adopt a giant panda.

SAINT PETER

Wait to buy pants until you're fatter.

JOYCE CHO

I have to go see him before the Chinese government takes him away.

She weeps.

SAINT PETER

Quo Vadis!

JOYCE CHO

I don't know how many more requests my legs will take. I want them to be covered in nice material. I don't want someone sticking a thermometer up my butt to determine my time of death.

SAINT PETER

One great thing about being dead is not having to worry about other dead people anymore. Like where they are and if they're watching you do something weird. Or if you're bad at grave maintenance, whether they care about that. If they knew such and such. How you might have been different.

Because you're dead too!

JOYCE CHO

How many more requests will my legs take?

SAINT PETER

Another cool thing about being dead is that you don't walk around engorged with all the dead folk you made extra room for in yourself so as to offer them continued existence. You can't do that when you're dead. It's neat.

JOYCE CHO

What about my irreplaceable store of treasures?

SAINT PETER

Those get burned.

JOYCE CHO

Oh?

SAINT PETER

Yeah.

JOYCE CHO

Wow Saint Peter that sounds really great.

Silence in which SAINT PETER beams the answers to all the great mysteries of life and death to JOYCE CHO from his brain.

Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SAINT PETER

Joyce Cho, quo vadis?

JOYCE CHO

To Rome, to be hung up in the manner I desire.

SAINT PETER

Let us go boldly unto that which lieth before us.

....

An outdoor picnic at Versailles (chintz and flounces). JOYCE CHO presides, because she is our angel of discovery. MARIANNE MOORE is the guest of honor.

JOYCE CHO

Would you like some more tea, Mrs. Moore?

MARIANNE MOORE

Oh lovely.

OTHER GUESTS

Oh lovely.

JOYCE CHO

[*Confidentially*] Apparently Montaigne became interested in hydraulics when he got kidney stones.

MARIANNE MOORE

Enchanting!

OTHER GUESTS

Enchanting!

Suddenly a baby is run over by a carriage

MARIANNE MOORE

It's a season of definition changes revisions of etiquette dot the landscape like Civil War monuments wouldn't you agree Ms. Cho.

JOYCE CHO

Oh indeed.

OTHER GUESTS

Oh indeed!

JOYCE CHO

I always thought you were on the side of the angels.

MARIANNE MOORE

I always thought the same of you.

JOYCE CHO

Charmed.

MARIANNE MOORE

Charmed.

OTHER GUESTS

Charmed. Charmed. Charmed. Charmed.

Suddenly a poet is run over by a dune buggy. A kid is almost run over by a tractor but then is saved

JOYCE CHO

People who die quietly get free breakfasts at hotels. Mrs. Moore what do you think.

MARIANNE MOORE

Oh indeed.

OTHER GUESTS

Oh indeed. Yes yes oh oh indeed indeed.

JOYCE CHO

Does seeing the ivory-billed woodpecker mean we've been given another chance?

MARIANNE MOORE

I think it was a hoax.

JOYCE CHO

What about the clock that stopped suddenly the voice they heard calling in the the night?

A kid is almost run over by a tractor but then is saved

MARIANNE MOORE & OTHER GUESTS

Yes indeed yes charmed most obliged thank you.

....

DARTH VADER goes away now. There is nothing more for him to do.

EPILOGUE

....

Joyce Cho sits at the foot of the Campanile di San Marco. She is eating a small bag of popcorn and looking up at the top, where the natural man is sitting and sort of hanging out. A thought balloon filled with snow rises from the top of her head. The balloon detaches from her head and engorges with snow until it is the size of small planetarium. In the balloon with the snow are some white otters who are amazed to be in a balloon and cover their black noses with their paws.

The balloon explodes, but the air is so cold that the snow hovers and doesn't fall, and the otters hover and don't fall. The piazza fills with the voices of the ethereal otter choir:

[blurry music here]

Otters: All that is sol – id melts into air

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

The pigeons in the piazza fly up in a panic and are eaten by the otters in bloody fashion. The otters, so engorged, begin to drift slowly down.

[blurry music here]

Joyce Cho: All that is sol – id melts into air

hm mm mm mm mm mm mm mm

The engorged otters burst open like sheep's bladders on the stones of the piazza. Rubies, sandstorms, and snakes tumble out of their bodies, as if they (otters) were gourds sawed open by bad people.

Bells: [music here]

The natural man falls off the campanile. This is the well-known "Fall of the Natural Man" spoken of by the School of Salamanca. With the natural man fall brochures attacking pasta, brochures for salacious proclivities, purple brochures, polka-dotted brochures, brochures for adopt-a-panda, brochures for adopt-a-Korean, brochures of casserole recipes, brochures defending Venice's nonparticipation in the First Crusades, brochures for coming to America and brochures for adjusting your handwriting to become the kind of person you never even thought it was even fair to dream of becoming. The natural man falls to the ground and the campanile falls on top of him and the snow falls all at once so that you can't even see Joyce's mittens, or even her face.