

Ana Reeder and the cast  
of LCT3/Lincoln Center  
Theater's production of  
"Queens," by Martyna Majok.



Excerpt from the script of  
**Queens**  
by MARTYNA MAJOK

**NOTE**

In Martyna Majok's play *Queens* (which premiered as *queens* at Lincoln Center Theater in 2018, and which is slated for a Manhattan Theatre Club production this fall in a newly rewritten version), two generations of immigrant women pass through the same illegal basement apartment over two decades and debate among themselves how to launch a new life in America. In 2017, a young Ukrainian woman, Inna, shows up looking for the mother who abandoned her years ago, launching the memories of current landlord and former basement resident Renia, who abandoned her own young daughter in Poland. This scene takes place the first week Renia arrived at the basement, in December 2001, after she just received some devastating news from back home in a language her roommates Pelagiya and Aamani don't understand.



*(AAMANI and PELAGIYA sit together, as if in a hospital waiting room. Mugs of coffee. Both women smoke.)*

**AAMANI**

She is in there so long.

*(They both turn to look at the door behind which RENIA resides.)*

**PELAGIYA**

That's why you can't trust people. They come and tear apart your life.

**AAMANI**

...

**PELAGIYA**

It's true.

**AAMANI**

Well I am a little tired of living like that.

**PELAGIYA**

You gotta let go your old life.

**AAMANI**

I think her problem is she did. And this is where she ends up to be.

**PELAGIYA**

What's wrong with here? We have parties.

Soon as you go from your country, you are gone. People back home they get mad, offense, because they think you think you are better than them. Because you come here. And I don't know if better but you do become different. You say you gonna write, gonna call. They say they gonna call. But you become different. They don't know what's happening here, to you, how you live. And, after a while, you almost forget how they do. When you are not there, that it's exactly what you are. Not there.

**AAMANI**

Then what do you hold on to then?

**PELAGIYA**

Nothing. You don't hold on to nothing. You move. You are here.





**AAMANI**

I was in love.  
I am.  
It has been a long time. I am.  
That is why I came here. I am in love. And we would have  
been killed.

I came on a temporary visa to attend a conference. I  
submit to every conference outside of Afghanistan that I  
could. Soon as I arrived here, I apply for asylum. Then I  
was supposed to bring... her.

...

I don't hear from her long time. I cannot call her because  
what people suspects. I can't ask about her. I send  
letters but I know I should not. I rent apartment with  
other Afghan people in California. But they—They left  
Afghanistan, the parts of Afghanistan they do not believe  
in, but certain ideas about proper ways that certain things  
should be, those they bring here with them. I don't feel  
safe. I don't feel good. So I move. Chicago. Brooklyn.  
Everywhere I don't feel good. Nervous. Paranoia. I did  
not want to bring danger to her. Or to my family. I was  
having terrible dreams. I was afraid I would say her name  
in my sleep. So I find this place. I find you. And this place.  
Where no one knows me. That is the real reason why I  
come here.

**PELAGIYA**

I did not actually believe your other story. About the  
husband. When first you come here.

**AAMANI**

Yes you did.

...



**PELAGIYA**

What's her name?

*(A fear washes over AAMANI. She has spent so long hiding this. She shakes her head no.)*

**AAMANI**

Maybe in Canada.

I can maybe apply for asylum there and then I can apply for her. I am too afraid to do anything here right now. It is my curse that language is my skill, my love. Dari language. Math and science are international. Because if I have position here, if I could show what I'm good to do, that I am smart—I keep trying to write and to translate but I work so late and come home so tired, I just smoke instead.

...

*(re: RENIA)* I saw this woman...crumble to the floor here and—

**PELAGIYA**

I know.

**AAMANI**

What do you think happened? Did you understand any of that?

**PELAGIYA**

The same part you understand. Something at home.

**AAMANI**

Her family?

**PELAGIYA**

Something.  
Something not good.

**(END OF EXCERPT)**