



# PASSAGE

BY  
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INC.

PASSAGE  
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PASSAGE had its New York premiere at Soho Rep. (Sarah Benson, Artistic Director; Cynthia Flowers, Executive Director) in April 2019. It was directed by Saheem Ali, the set design was by Arnulfo Maldonado, the costume design was by Toni-Leslie James, the lighting design was by Amith Chandrashaker, the sound design and original music were by Mikhaal Sulaiman, and the production stage manager was Nicole Marconi. The cast was as follows:

B ..... K.K. Moggie  
G ..... Lizan Mitchell  
H ..... Purva Bedi  
M ..... David Ryan Smith  
F ..... Linda Powell  
Q ..... Andrea Abello  
R ..... Yair Ben-Dor  
S/D/J/MOSQUITO/GECKO ..... Howard W. Overshown

PASSAGE was originally produced by the Wilma Theater (Blanka Zizka, Artistic Director; James Haskins, Managing Director), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in April 2018. It was directed by Blanka Zizka, the set design was by Matt Saunders, the costume design was by Vasilija Zivanic, the lighting design was by Maria Shaplin, the sound design was by Christopher Colucci, and the stage manager was Patreshettarlina Adams. The cast was as follows:

B ..... Lindsay Smiling  
G/MOSQUITO/GECKO ..... Sarah Gliko  
H ..... Taysha Marie Canales  
M/D ..... Keith J. Conallen  
F ..... Krista Apple  
J ..... Jaylene Clark Owens  
Q ..... Justin Jain  
S/R ..... Ross Beschler

PASSAGE was presented as part of the Contemporary American Voices Festival at Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven, Connecticut, in 2017.

PASSAGE was developed with support from The Ground Floor at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Berkeley, California.

## CHARACTERS

### *Country X:*

B  
G  
H  
M  
S  
MOSQUITO  
GECKO

### *Country Y:*

D  
F  
J  
Q  
R

When double- or triple-casting, it is suggested that actors play both Country X and Country Y roles. Gender and sexuality are fluid. Pronouns within the script can be replaced.

## AESTHETIC

A bare, minimalist aesthetic; a neutral environment with almost no set. All actors should be dressed minimally and similarly, yet with clear delineations between Country X and Country Y. For example, their shirt colors might be different. All actors' speech should be modern.

# PASSAGE

## PROLOGUE

*The actors gather onstage, out of character. The following is a suggested greeting, but it may be improvised or changed based on the ensemble's wishes.*

ACTOR PLAYING G. Hello everyone, hi. Thank you for joining us this evening. We are the ensemble.

*Ensemble says hi.*

We're just going to go around and introduce ourselves. Give our name, and just...where we're from. (*Could also be "something about ourselves."*) Again, my name is [actor's real name], and I'm from [real hometown].

*The ensemble goes around and introduces themselves.*

Okay, it's a pleasure sharing this space with you this evening, and here we go.

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*Slow fade up from darkness.*

- Q. When I think of Country X, the thinking starts from darkness. And by that I mean the same darkness as the blank space in your mind, before a thought forms. Does that make sense? Do you know what I'm talking about? Because all thoughts, and hence all universes, really start—because they have to, right?—from *nothing*. In the *beginning*. Right? That's all I'm saying. So when I think of Country X, it starts, because it *has to*...with my eyes closed.

*She closes her eyes.*

And then, here's what I do. Because I haven't been to Country X before, I think back to a country to which I *have* been: Country W, which *borders* Country X, and hence has a similar feel.

*She opens her eyes.*

At least I think they have similar feels because they look the same in photographs, and anyway borders are man-made so they might as well be the same country for all the *earth* cares. This makes sense, right? You've done this too? When imagining places you haven't been to?

*She closes her eyes.*

So I stopped there for a week—this country similar to Country X. And I stayed in a small hotel, on a dirt road. The ocean wasn't far off. There were palm trees, warm rain, and a gentle tropical breeze. And there were jungles and mountains in the distance. You could smell the wet soil.

*She opens her eyes.*

Can you picture what I'm describing? Can you fill in the rest of the picture yourself?

*Sounds of a ship.*

This is how I picture Country X in my mind. Yes, I know it's reductive, I know I'm romanticizing it, and that it's infinitely more complex than tropical rain and mountains. But I'm just being honest about how my mind makes its first sketches. But I don't have expectations. I'm ready for whatever the country gives me. I'm joining my fiancé there. I'm going to Country X to live.

## Scene 2

*On the ship over. F is slightly older than Q.*

F. I've enjoyed our talk.

Q. So have I.

F. It's refreshing, talking to you.

Q. How so?

F. Everyone going to Country X these days just seems to talk about opportunity, opportunity.

Q. That kind of describes my fiancé, doing business there and all. You don't fault me for that?

F. You're not your fiancé.

Q. I'll be living off his "opportunity."

F. We all have to live somehow.

Q. R, my fiancé, says I don't have to work if I don't want to. I plan to. But first I want to take some time to really get to know Country X, in a deeper way.

*Beat. Then Q chuckles to herself.*

F. What is it?

Q. No, I just know that sounds naive?

F. How come?



- Q. Oh: (*Self-mocking earnest.*) “Know the country, in a *deep way!*”  
F laughs.
- F. Well that *is* what you should do, right?
- Q. Yeah, I guess.
- F. Though of course there’s limits to what you can know. Especially with Country X.
- Q. Why especially?
- F. Well, it’s in a different position.
- Q. Mm.  
*Slight beat, Q not sure what F means.*
- F. Because it’s under our control.
- Q. Of course, yes.  
*Pause.*
- Why are *you* going to Country X? Did I even ask you?  
(*Apologetically.*) We were talking about *me* the whole time.
- F. (*Warmly.*) I was asking you.  
Q smiles.
- I’m taking a teaching position there.
- Q. Ah.
- F. At the National School.
- Q. Have you been to Country X before?
- F. Briefly, while traveling.
- Q. Ah.
- F. Hey, when we disembark, why don’t we do some of our exploring together?
- Q. I’d like that very much.

# PASSAGE

by Christopher Chen

12 n/s (flexible casting)

A fantasia inspired by E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, PASSAGE is set in the fictional Country X, which is a neocolonial client of Country Y. B, a local doctor, and F, an expat teacher, begin to forge a friendship that is challenged after a fateful trip to a local attraction. A meditation on how power imbalances affect personal and interpersonal dynamics across a spectrum of situations, the play allows a director wide latitude in casting the roles by race, ethnicity, and gender, with different casting choices highlighting different societal structures.

*"Nationalist rage and resentment are taken to a quiet place in Christopher Chen's PASSAGE... Voices are rarely raised in this gentle, tutorial exploration of xenophobia from the Obie Award-winning author of Caught... [PASSAGE is] guaranteed to raise your heart rate."*  
—The New York Times

*"Christopher Chen's tense, fascinating PASSAGE is a delicate walk through a field of landmines... To Chen's great credit, PASSAGE struggles not to prescribe... It tries to stay true to its title, fashioning itself as a long dark corridor through which we're all stepping together—tentatively, fearfully, hopefully—without a light or a door yet in sight."*  
—New York Magazine

*"...a real and affecting drama...PASSAGE dares to raise questions that make the audience profoundly uncomfortable, but simultaneously creates a welcoming space to which everyone is invited. Unashamedly political yet deeply humane, it's a difficult journey that is well worth the trouble."*  
—Time Out New York

Also by Christopher Chen  
CAUGHT

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