Businesswoman exits.

Tower to God, huh. Easier than I thought.

CANNAPHLIT (pointing to bag of manure) That's where thinking'll get you.

GORPH And it's Shmoloch, in blue.

CANNAPHLIT Houlihan, in red.

GORPH Blue.

CANNAPHLIT Red.

GORPH Blue.

A loud thundercrack. They grovel, daven, and make conciliatory signs.

So listen. Now we found God—you wanna invent the wheel?

CANNAPHLIT Yeah. What's a wheel?

GORPH I dunno. We'll fake it.

GORPH & CANNAPHLIT YES!

BLACKOUT.
At right, a freestanding, open doorway with a multicolored bead curtain. At center, a small, plain wooden table with a white cloth and a sign that says "SALE." On the table: a picture frame, a stone, a gold ring, and a figure of a frog. At lights up, FLORA—very ordinary—is at the table, dusting the four objects with a featherduster. Through the bead curtain comes NORMAN—utterly normal—who carries a well-traveled suitcase. Immediately, the INTERPRETER appears and leads Norman in. The Interpreter wears loose, colorful robes and sandals, and may be played by a woman wearing a dark beard.

INTERPRETER Right this way, sir, this way. The most beautiful shop in the world. All the wonders of the kingdom. For nothing! Nothing!

NORMAN (to Flora, tongue-tied) Ehhhh . . .

INTERPRETER Ehhhh . . . I will interpret for you.

NORMAN Hello.

INTERPRETER Hail, fair maid! says he.

FLORA (to Norman, putting the featherduster away) Good morning.

INTERPRETER All praise to the highest, says she.

NORMAN Do you . . . um . . . speak any English?

INTERPRETER Do you . . . um . . . speak any English?

FLORA (She speaks perfect, unaccented English.) Yes, I speak some English.

INTERPRETER Indeed, sir, I can stammer out a broken song of pitiful, insufficient words.

NORMAN Ah-ha.

INTERPRETER Ah-ha.

NORMAN Well . . .

INTERPRETER A deep hole in the ground.
NORMAN I . . .
INTERPRETER (points to his eye) The organ of vision.
NORMAN Ummm . . .
INTERPRETER Ummm . . .
NORMAN Listen.
INTERPRETER Do you hear something?
They all listen for something.
NORMAN I’m sorry to rush in so late like this.
INTERPRETER I’m sorry to rush in so late like this.
FLORA No, please.
INTERPRETER No, please.
NORMAN But you see . . .
INTERPRETER (points to his butt) But—(points to FLORA)—you—
(does binoculars with his hands)—see . . .
NORMAN (looks at his watch) Darn it, it’s late . . .
INTERPRETER (produces an hourglass) How swiftly flow the sands of
time!
NORMAN I know this sounds crazy—
INTERPRETER Am I insane? Give me an opinion.
NORMAN I only have about ten minutes.
INTERPRETER Soon the shining orb of heaven will cleave the
house of the hedgehog.
NORMAN I have to catch a plane.
INTERPRETER I must clamber upon the flying corporate carpet
and flap away from your kingdom.
INTERPRETER Anyway, I want to find . . .
INTERPRETER Anyway, I want to find . . .
FLORA Yes?
INTERPRETER Yes?
NORMAN I guess you’d call it . . .
INTERPRETER Something unparalleled! Something sublime!
NORMAN A souvenir.
INTERPRETER (You’re kidding) A souvenir . . . ?!
NORMAN Something to take with me.
INTERPRETER A treasure!
FLORA Any particular kind of thing?
INTERPRETER Can the funicular hide the spring?
NORMAN Excuse me?
INTERPRETER Accuse me?
FLORA How much did you want to spend?
INTERPRETER How much did you want to spend?
NORMAN It doesn’t matter.
INTERPRETER Let’s haggle. I’m loaded!
FLORA Is this for yourself?
INTERPRETER I have you a mistress, a wife, a harem?
NORMAN No, this is for me.
INTERPRETER Alas and alack, a lad alone in all the world am I. La
la la!
FLORA Well . . .
INTERPRETER  A deep hole in the ground.

FLORA    I think I can help you.

INTERPRETER  Solitary sir, the maiden says, I look in your eyes and I see your soul shining there like a golden carp in an azure pool.

NORMAN    Really . . . ?

INTERPRETER  Really. Now, in this brief moment, in the midst of this mirage called life, here on this tiny square of soil on the whirling earth, I feel the two of us joined by a crystal thread, your soul to my soul to yours.

NORMAN    You do?

INTERPRETER  You do?

FLORA    I do.

INTERPRETER  She does.

NORMAN    You know, I've been up and down this street every day . . .

INTERPRETER  Day and night have I shepped through the kasbah . . .

NORMAN    I sure wish I'd seen this shop sooner.

INTERPRETER  . . . only so that I might glimpse you.

FLORA    I've noticed you walking by.

INTERPRETER  How I pined for you to enter as you passed.

NORMAN    You did?

INTERPRETER  She did. She asks your name.

NORMAN    My name is Norman.

INTERPRETER  My name is Sinbad!

NORMAN    I'm here on some business.

INTERPRETER  I am the merchant son of a great prince, exiled from my land.

FLORA    Is that so.

INTERPRETER  Her name is Izthatso.

NORMAN    Is that so?

FLORA    People call me Flora.

INTERPRETER  But people call me Flora.

FLORA    With an “F.”

INTERPRETER  With an “F.” Of course.

NORMAN    I . . .

INTERPRETER  The organ of vision.

NORMAN    (looks at watch)  Darn it . . .

INTERPRETER    (produces hourglass)  Darn it . . .

NORMAN    Y’know, Flora . . .

INTERPRETER  Y’know, Flora . . .

NORMAN    You shop and you shop . . .

INTERPRETER  We live our brief and miserable lives . . .

NORMAN    . . . you never seem to find that special thing you’re shopping for.

INTERPRETER  . . . each day awaiting the donut of happiness.

FLORA    That’s so true.

INTERPRETER  That’s so true.

NORMAN    Maybe what I’m looking for is right here.

INTERPRETER  Perhaps today my donut has dawned.

FLORA    Shhh!
INTERPRETER  Shhh!
FLORA    I thought I heard my father.
INTERPRETER  My father may be listening!
FLORA    It’s almost time for his tea.
INTERPRETER  If he sees me talking to you, he’ll cut your throat!
NORMAN & INTERPRETER  (simultaneous as they pick up the suitcase together)  Maybe I should be going . . .
FLORA    No—
INTERPRETER  For God’s sake!
FLORA    He won’t bother us.
INTERPRETER  Have mercy, good sir!
NORMAN    (hefts suitcase)  I do have a plane to catch.
INTERPRETER  Take my suitcase.
Flora takes the suitcase from him and sets it down.
FLORA    There’s plenty of time.
INTERPRETER  Keep your voice low.
FLORA    Shhh!
INTERPRETER  Shhh!
FLORA    I thought I heard him calling.
INTERPRETER  He’s sharpening the blade.
We hear the sound of a blade being sharpened.
NORMAN    [A CRY OF SURPRISE.]
INTERPRETER  [A CRY OF SURPRISE.]
FLORA    He’s just watching old movies.

INTERPRETER  The old man is mad!
FLORA    Anyway, I’m sure I’ll have something you’ll like.
INTERPRETER  Act as if you’re buying something.
NORMAN    What about these things right here?
INTERPRETER  What about these things right here?
FLORA    Maybe you’d like a picture frame?
INTERPRETER  Can you conceive, prince, how lonely my days are? They are as empty as a silver frame awaiting a picture.
FLORA    Or maybe a stone?
INTERPRETER  My life is as hard—and as cheap—as this stone.
FLORA    (gestures left)  I have more in the back.
INTERPRETER    (gestures left)  He keeps me locked in a tiny cell at the back.
NORMAN    No. No.
INTERPRETER  Stay with me.
FLORA    Maybe you’d like . . .
INTERPRETER  What I truly long for . . .
FLORA    . . . a golden ring?
INTERPRETER  . . . is love. The endless golden donut of love.
FLORA    If not a ring, maybe a figurine?
INTERPRETER  But my father has betrothed me to a man as ugly as this frog.
FLORA    Does that interest you?
INTERPRETER  Would you marry this?
NORMAN    Not really.
INTERPRETER  Not really.
FLORA  I don't know what else I can show you.
INTERPRETER  I have nothing, sir. Nichts! Nada! Niente!
NORMAN  My God, you're beautiful.
INTERPRETER  My God, you're beautiful.
FLORA  Excuse me?
INTERPRETER  Beh, beh, beh, what?
NORMAN  I'm sorry.
INTERPRETER  I'm not sorry I said it.
NORMAN  I don't usually say things like that.
INTERPRETER  Though I know I sound like a jerk.
NORMAN  You know, sometimes it's something so simple.
INTERPRETER  So complicated are the ways of kismet.
NORMAN  You walk into a shop . . .
INTERPRETER  I look at you . . .
NORMAN  . . . and everything's suddenly different, somehow.
INTERPRETER  . . . and my heart flutters inside me like a leaf of
the perfumed gum tree at the scented bounce of bedspring.
FLORA  Really?
INTERPRETER  Really.
NORMAN  Now in this brief moment . . .
INTERPRETER  Now in this brief moment . . .
NORMAN  . . . on this tiny patch of ground on the whirling earth . . .
INTERPRETER  . . . in the midst of this mirage called life . . .
NORMAN  . . . I feel us joined by a crystal thread, your soul to my
soul to yours.
INTERPRETER  Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.
FLORA  You do?
INTERPRETER  You do?
NORMAN  I . . .
INTERPRETER  The organ of vision.
NORMAN  . . . do.
INTERPRETER  He does.
NORMAN  How can I leave, now that I've seen you, met you,
heard you?
INTERPRETER  How can I get on a plane and eat that food?
NORMAN  Now that fate has brought me to this bazaar?
INTERPRETER  It's so bizarre.
NORMAN (takes out an hourglass)  O cruel fate! How swiftly flow
the sands of time!
INTERPRETER (looks at a watch)  O shit, I gotta get outa here . . .!
NORMAN  The stars have decreed we must part. (He kisses Flora's
hand.) But I will return, O my florid queen!
INTERPRETER  Maybe I'll pass this way again sometime.
FLORA  I will wait for you, my Norman prince!
NORMAN  O, Izthatso.
FLORA  It is so! I will be yours and you will be mine and we will
be each other's.
INTERPRETER  Hommina hommina hommina, you get the idea.
NORMAN  Well . . .
INTERPRETER A deep hole in the ground.
FLORA Well . . .
INTERPRETER With purest spring water at the bottom.
NORMAN Salaam!
INTERPRETER So long!
FLORA Salaam!
INTERPRETER So long! So long! So long!
NORMAN Open, sesame!

Norman whirs out, followed by the Interpreter.

FLORA (sighs) Oh, well. (She takes out the featherduster—and finds: that it's been changed into a bouquet of red roses.) Shazam! (She starts to dust the objects with the bouquet.)

BLACKOUT.