

4-1-2012

## Rhea Perlman

Benjamin A. Simon

*Trinity College*, [benjamin.simon@trincoll.edu](mailto:benjamin.simon@trincoll.edu)

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### Recommended Citation

Simon, Benjamin A., "Rhea Perlman" (2012). *115 Vernon*. Paper 11.  
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Benjamin A. Simon

Today we killed two guys.

And their mother?

It will be a few days before she finds out; she'll be upset and will throw herself onto the ground—maybe even into the Kabul River.

We have to remember that she held her sons' hands when they were young boys as they walked around their village together or to town—and when they were older she sent them off to town on their own or into the village to get their chores done: collect eggs or tend to the livestock or something.

And then there was school. She was proud of her sons when they brought home their first thin crinkled and worn books. She had to search to find them pens. All boys at the school needed pens. And then they wrote and read and ate a whole lot. No one told their mother how much boys had to eat—how much mothers had to cook: goat, chicken and beef sometimes and always bread. And always beans. And always, “don't stuff yourselves.”

Every so often she would cook something extra special: their favorites. “No we will not start dinner until everyone is home.” And, “don't reach over other people's plates.” And, “not before we say grace.”

She would always give her sons big kisses on their cheeks. They would get them before bedtime. “Goodnight Ma,” and then a big kiss on the cheek, and an, “I love you,” and then bed and a window shutting to keep the crickets out—and then quiet.

And Sam Malone; they talked together a lot—when the bar closed and John Allen Hill from upstairs sometimes walked quietly down to listen:

Sam, we used to listen to *O Mio Babbino Caro* before dinner on Sundays. And they said that they wanted to be like their uncles and cousins and neighbors and their other brothers and like you; and they left. They used to watch me do my makeup—just blush and mascara—and then the mortars shot up out of cigarette clouds and orange rinds and old television sets. They were massaged in the air by the big earthy Afghani god's hands—permanent black under toenails and hashish stains—and he probably smiled. He probably hurled those mortars harder than they would have hit otherwise at my boys, whose hashish was better because they got it from a guy who grew it right next to the Kabul River who would whirl and whirl around every morning when the sun came up like Shams. And they would get so high, they told me, that they would have been Rumi's beloved too. Rumi, whose hashish was the best because he fertilized it with orange rinds and made his wives watch over it and pray for hours a day that their god would give their plants the most THC so that Shams would stay; so that he would make love to them too.

But that god, the one that wanted them to whirl and who did give those plants lots of THC, flew into the ground with those mortar rounds, and blew her two boys into last week or the week before when she guest starred on *Taxi*:

Sam, *O Mio Babbino Caro* was on before dinner, and I made them wash their feet and help their brothers and sisters wash theirs because the rugs were new and the goats were new and I bought

a cheese that they liked from the bazaar. We said grace under the noise of Chinook helicopters that blew away the baby spiders that had just floated down on single silk threads from the mountain ridge behind us to leave tiny circle ripples in the river.

*That's where we're going, Ma—to where the spiders spun their silk threads—where we can see our village and the light from Kabul in the distance like hashish pipe embers. We'll come back older when the snow is back and older and filled with moon particles. And we'll bring presents.*

But the moon particles fired from the mortar, and now we are alone to think about it—with the clouds from the burning trash pits, and sunflowers that stare and stare and stare and stare and stare because of our friend who whirls and whirls every morning...