

Oh I have an idea. Sonia, do you want to go as the wicked witch with the wart on her nose? (*Sonia stands up to Masha with firmness.*)

SONIA. I do not wish to be a witch with a wart on my nose, Masha. I am going to go as the BEAUTIFUL evil queen BEFORE she turns into the wicked witch. The one who says mirror, mirror on the wall, and so on. And I will look good in my costume!

MASHA. Well I don't know that Hootie Pie can organize such a costume by tonight ...

SONIA. I will get the costume myself. There's a secondhand store in Upper Black Eddy. I will drive there this afternoon and I will find some sort of Beautiful Evil Queen costume that I will wear tonight.

VANYA. Good for you, Sonia.

MASHA. Well I don't see why you're both ganging up on me. You can see why I don't come here that much. And what kind of name for a town is Upper Black Eddy? Pennsylvania scares me sometimes.

SONIA. Well what kind of name do you prefer? (*Contemptuously.*) Manhattan? The Upper West Side?

MASHA. Sonia, I'm sorry if I offended you about the dwarf costume. But you do whatever makes you happy. I only want to be around happy people. (*Sonia looks out the front window, by chance.*)

SONIA. Who is that young woman Spike is talking to down at the pond?

MASHA. (*Immediately worried.*) What young woman? (*All three of them look out the window. Masha looks quite concerned and leaves the morning room quickly and stands on the grass, calling out toward the pond.*) Spike! Spike! We need you up here. (*She comes back into the room.*) He can't hear me. Do you have a gong or anything?

VANYA. What for?

MASHA. I just want to make a noise and summon him back.

SONIA. We don't have a gong. You probably could take a big pot and bang it with a metal spoon.

MASHA. Oh what a good idea, thank you, Sonia. (*Goes off to kitchen.*) Cassandra! I need a pot! (*Masha exits toward the kitchen.*)

SONIA. (*Not confrontational; being honest.*) I don't think you believe I'll meet anyone at this party. I think you looked at me with pity as I said that.

VANYA. (*Trying to be kind.*) No, not at all. One should stay open to unexpected possibilities. I think you could meet someone there tonight.

SONIA. Our lives are over, aren't they?

VANYA. Yes I think so.

SONIA. Still, I'll go to the party. And I won't go dressed as a dwarf. (*Reenter Masha with a big pot and a big metal serving spoon.*)

MASHA. I had to struggle with her to get a pot out of the kitchen. And she started to do all that "Beware this" and "Beware that" business. She's very difficult. (*Masha goes outside again and makes very loud noises banging the pot. Calling.*) Spike! Spike! We need you! Spike!

VANYA. Oh look, he's seen her. He's waving.

MASHA. (*Calling.*) Lunch is almost ready. (*Seeing something.*) No, don't bring the girl. There's not enough lunch. Tell her to go home.

VANYA. Oh, the girl's coming with him. (*Masha comes back into the house, angry.*)

MASHA. I don't know if he can't hear me or is pretending he can't. Oh God. She's very pretty. And she's very young.

SONIA. Masha, I'm sure the power of your money and your connections will keep Spike at your side for a long time.

MASHA. Oh. That's a comforting point. Thank you. I shouldn't be intimidated by a young girl, should I? Plus I don't actually know how pretty she is, maybe she's hideous. (*Enter Spike and Nina. Nina is in her early 20s, and is very pretty and luminous.*)

Begin

SPIKE. Look who I met at the pond.

MASHA. Oh did you meet someone?

SPIKE. Yes. She's visiting her aunt and uncle who live next door. And you're her favorite actress, and she came over here hoping to meet you.

MASHA. Oh how charming. Welcome, lovely little nymph.

NINA. Hello. Oh, it's so thrilling to meet you. My aunt and uncle said to me you mustn't go bother them, and plus she's never ever there, but then we had our binoculars out and we saw your car drive up, and I thought, I can't believe she's here! I can meet Masha Hardwicke. A woman who has achieved fame and success in theatre and in motion pictures. I LONG to make theatre my life, and you're an idol to me. And I'm only here for three days, and I hoped I could meet you, but then I didn't dare think it would actually happen. But it has.

MASHA. (*Sort of friendly.*) Yes, you're meeting me. Hello. Hello.

NINA. And today is my name day, can you imagine? Americans like to say "birthday," but I like to say "name day" because I love the

Memo addition

plays of Anton Chekhov and Irina in *Three Sisters* is always saying "it's my name day."

MASHA. Ah, well. It's lovely to meet you. You're so very pretty and luminous, and full of youthful hope and enthusiasm. I wonder if it makes it hard for older people to be around you.

NINA. I'm sorry, what?

MASHA. Nothing. My unconscious was speaking, pay no mind. Happy name day. What is your name by the way?

NINA. I'm Nina.

MASHA. (*Furious.*) GOD DAMN IT!

VANYA. What's the matter?

MASHA. That crazy psychic in the kitchen told me to "Beware of Nina" and now her fucking name is Nina!!!

NINA. What? I'm sorry, what?

SONIA. Hello, Nina, I have a feeling no one is going to introduce me, I'm kind of like furniture in the room rather than a person. But I'm Sonia, Masha's sister. Although I'm adopted and don't really belong here. Or anywhere. And this is my brother Vanya.

VANYA. Hello, Nina. Happy name day.

NINA. How lovely to meet you. And what a funny joke about the furniture. (*Everyone looks confused.*)

End

SPIKE. I told Nina I'd introduce her to my manager. And I invited her to the costume party.

MASHA. (*Taking that in.*) You invited her. How nice. I have an idea! Spike, why don't we skip the party and hop in the car and race back to New York City right this minute. I suddenly want to see a Broadway show. How late is the half-price ticket booth open, does anyone know?

SPIKE. No, I wanna go to the party. And Nina is so excited to meet you. She just worships you. (*A bit flirtatiously.*) As do I.

MASHA. (*Taking in what he said, a bit mollified.*) Well, that's sweet of you to say, Spike. I ... uh ... am flattered Nina looks up to me. Hello, Nina. Happy name day.

NINA. Thank you. (*Enter Cassandra.*)

CASSANDRA. Lunch will be a little delayed. I dropped the omelets on the floor. I'm going to have to start over. (*Sees Nina, points at her.*) What did I say? BEWARE OF NINA!

MASHA. Cassandra, Nina is visiting from next door, and she's a lovely aspiring actress.

CASSANDRA. Well, I warned you, but the curse of Apollo keeps

everyone from acting on my warnings. (*Feels drawn to make a bit of a speech.*)

Oh mystery and misery, descends upon me like a thunder cloud,
Pregnant with rain and Jupiter's arrows.

The terrible burden of true prophecy, of my unwanted but
unstoppable prelude.

Look out, look out — all around us are lions and tigers and bears.
Oh my, the omelette is a failure, I crush it beneath my foot.

The libation bearers bring guts and entrails
And parents' children chopped up and served in a shepherd's pie.
Something tastes wrong with it — little wonder!
Next time you won't go killing Agamemnon, will you?
He's already dead. My car needs to be inspected,
How can I keep all these facts in my head when I see calamity
and colossus

Lumbering up the walkway?

Oh wretches, oh misery, oh magical mystery tour.

Beware the future. I know you will not abide me,

You ignore because I am not tall.

But I am right! I see disaster ahead for all of you!

Lunch in about twenty minutes! (*She strides out.*)

NINA. Oh she's a wonderful actress, too. What was that from, what she just recited?

MASHA. It was from one of the Greek tragedies, I think. But I believe she embellished it slightly.

NINA. Tell me ... I wonder if this is a stupid question. But what is the difference between acting in a movie and acting onstage?

MASHA. No, it's not stupid at all. In film, you are acting in front of a camera, and you need to speak in a normal voice. And onstage, you are in a sort of wooden box in front of people who are looking at you and you must speak more loudly. So that they can hear you.

NINA. I see, yes. What was your favorite role onstage?

MASHA. My favorite role onstage. Well I loved all the Ibsen I did, and the Chekhov, and the Shakespeare. Google me when you go home. Besides I'm not the only actor in the room. Spike is wonderfully talented. He was almost cast in *Entourage 2*.

NINA. Yes, he told me.

MASHA. Spike, why don't you ... (*Suddenly notices he's still in his underwear.*) Goodness, you're still in your underwear. Spike, dear, why