

PROVIDENCE PLAYERS OF FAIRFAX

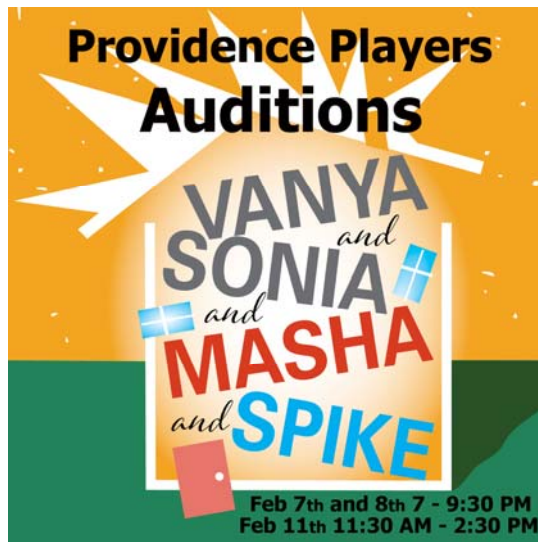
AUDITIONS – *VANYA and SONIA and MASHA and SPIKE*

February 7th & 8th 7:00pm – 9:30pm
February 11th 11:30 am – 2:30pm

Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike

By Christopher Durang

Directed by Jimmy Gertzog



The Tony Award winner for Best Play of 2013, Durang's hit comedy skewers the classic dramas of Chekhov through an absurdist tale of family dysfunction. But you don't have to be a student of Russian literature to appreciate this hilarious play. Siblings Vanya and Sonia live a quiet life in the Bucks County farmhouse where they grew up. But when their movie-star sister Masha swoops in unannounced with Spike, her 20-something boy toy, an unforgettable weekend ensues. Add a clairvoyant cleaning lady, someone named Hootie Pie, a sweet young aspiring actress, and plans that could devastate the family, and you have a laugh-out-loud stage offering that will be a sure-fire audience favorite.

The Providence Players of Fairfax is a non-profit community theater troupe. All participation is on a volunteer, non-compensated basis. The company is a membership organization. Membership is not required to audition. If cast, actors and production team members will be asked to become members of the Providence Players (\$10) for the season (if they are not already).

A Full-length Comedy Play

4 Women 2 Men, All Open

Location

The James Lee Community Center
2855 Annandale Road
Falls Church, VA 22042

Auditions will be held in several different rooms at the James Lee Center. Proceed through the main entrance and ask for directions from the front desk. Signs will be posted.

Performance Dates & Times

JUNE 2nd – JUNE 17th

Preview:

Thurs

7:00pm Curtain

June 1st

Evening Performances:

Thurs, Fri, Sat

7:30 pm Curtain

June 2nd, 3rd, 8th, 9th, 10th, 15th, 16th, 17th

Matinees:

Sundays

2:00 pm curtain

June 4th, 11th

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Audition Dates

Please RSVP to providenceplayers@cox.net for which date you plan to audition.

We will NOT be having actors audition on multiple dates, barring unforeseen circumstances and at the director's discretion. Choose your preferred date to attend – you will be given a number of opportunities to read throughout the audition session.

Tuesday February 7th 7:00-9:30pm, JLCC Urbanites Room

Open auditions, all roles. Readings from sides provided (see below).

Wednesday February 8th 7:00-9:30pm, JLCC Theater

Open auditions, all roles. Readings from sides provided (see below).

Saturday February 11th 11:30am-2:30pm, TBD

Open auditions, all roles. Readings from sides provided (see below).

Possible callbacks TBD by the director will be held on the 11th.

Note: The Providence Players will not post scanned copies of plays on their website. Feel free to review a personal copy of Vanya & Sonia & Masha & Spike prior to auditioning, however this is not required. Do come prepared to have fun, be flexible, and take some basic instruction during your auditions!

About the Play

Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike, by Christopher Durang

Set in the present, a lovely farm house in Bucks County PA

"The cause which this writer defends is perhaps the most precarious possible, for he defends the ordinary humors and frailties of ordinary men. **These odd and wonderful creatures are outrageously funny: they are grotesque, but they are also desperately human.**"

These words very neatly encapsulate the plays of Christopher Durang: themes for audiences and performers alike to remind themselves of even as they laugh at the absurdities portrayed within. In actuality, the quote was said by biographer and literary scholar Robert Payne of Anton Chekhov, the late 19th and very early 20th century Russian playwright and innovator of the modern short story. Yet they hit the mark a century later for the accomplished comedic author. It is no surprise for Durang to have written a play that is an homage, a reinvention, and a refraction of a definitively Chekhovian environment.

Because he is a canonical literary figure – and by implication, a staid and stoic figure – it is easy to overlook the comedy and absurdities that shine through the tragic poignancy of Chekhov's plays. It is my view one cannot perform *Vanya et al* well without playing it through the instrument of Chekhov. In Durang's own words "the play takes Chekhovian characters and themes and puts them in a blender...its funny but has genuine emotion in it as well."

Vanya and Sonia et al is an overt citation of Chekhov's most famous characters and settings, but the characters within are also living the same types of stale, vainglorious, unfulfilled lives. Durang's play is a comedy, but it is funny and absurd because the alternative is a sorry recognition of our own meandering regrets.

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Vanya (male, 50s-60s; the elder brother). Wry, retiring, frustrated, resigned fellow.

Vanya et al is an ensemble piece, but the closest to a lead role is Vanya, who acts as the peacemaker in the family and has the most stage time. He also has a pages-long eruption of a monologue at the conclusion of the play. He is gay and lives with his adopted sister ('together alone') in the house of their childhood, having cared for their parents until they passed, supported financially by their sister. He never had to work and was complicit in letting his life slip by without making much of it at all.

Sonia (female, 50s; the adopted sister). Melancholic, capricious, definitely regretful, possibly desperate.

A mirror image of Vanya except less resigned and more prone to manic outbursts and accusations for her state of being. She also maybe has/had a clearer image of what she wanted from life. Sonia and Masha have a raw, contentious hostility toward one another that comes out as the play progresses. May be the one worth the most sympathy.

Masha (female, 50s; the famous sister). Expansive, glamorous, haughty, frenetic.

A successful and well-traveled actress, often married, Masha returns home to her siblings having found herself on the edge of "once beautiful." Her self-deceptions are worn more on her sleeve than either of her siblings – see the flirtatious, empty-headed young companion she brings home with her. She returns to the homestead with intentions to sell it out from under her siblings, but really, she might not have had anywhere else to go.

Spike (male, 20s or early 30s; Masha's 'companion'). Chiseled, flippant, devil-may-care boy toy.

A preening millennial, Spike is a young actor who pays just enough attention to Masha to keep her satisfied. He does not seem to have any urgency for anything, despite the fact that he has little to show for his career thus far. But he's got his looks, a captive audience, and believes the rest will be laid out all on a plate for him when the time comes. **As fair warning, Spike does disrobe down to his underwear in the play, and maintains that status for several pages on stage.**

Nina (female, 20s-30s; aspiring actress). Earnest, bouncy, a guileless admirer.

An accidental arrival on the scene, Nina is the neighbor's niece who has dreams of becoming an actress and has the (mis)fortune to stumble into her idol Masha. Her appearance though provokes lust in Spike and, unsurprisingly, envy in Masha.

Cassandra (female, flexible; soothsayer housekeeper). Obtrusive, kooky, dramatic.

A true wildcard, gem of a comedic role, Cassandra is aptly and unambiguously named: she is a psychic prognosticator that no one believes but speaks the truth (mostly). She is also the housekeeper and somewhat of a caregiver to Sonia and Vanya. Her sudden, wild pronouncements for the future offer a lot to play around with for the adventuresome actress. **I am truly open to most anything brought to the table for this character.**

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Instructions

How we work:

Our goal is to provide a welcoming, relaxed, and engaging audition environment for all who attend. Audition sides will be provided and you will be asked to act out short passages with other auditioners. Count on being up and down multiple times. At times, we may even have you read outside of your preferred role, just to see you on stage and interacting with your peers as much as possible. In addition to the director, there will likely be 2-3 other volunteers assisting and communicating with the director to organize ensuing sides & groups.

Materials:

Brief 2-5 minute sides are provided below, selected by the director from the play. You will not be expected to recite a monologue. Additional sides may be included at auditions.

Expectations:

The Providence Players of Fairfax have a few expectations of their cast & crew members that you may be unfamiliar with. We are a family of volunteers and truly want to see this family grow with each production. You all make our season possible. Please do consider joining our production team in some capacity – and consider learning something new! Our production participants usually end up rolling up their sleeves in some capacity before the final curtain closes. **We request that all cast & crew members to be available for BOTH set construction (4 weeks prior to opening) and set strike (the Sunday a.m. after closing).**

Forms, resumes & headshots:

Resumes and headshots will be accepted at auditions, but are not required. Most important is that you fully complete the attached **VSMS Audition Form** – especially with preferred contact information and expected scheduling conflicts - and bring it with you to your audition, or come early enough to auditions to complete it in-person.

Membership:

The Providence Players of Fairfax is an all-volunteer membership organization. You are not required to be a member to audition, but cast and production members will be asked to join if they are not already. The cost is \$10 for the entire '16 – '17 season.

Rehearsal Schedule:

The preliminary rehearsal schedule is included with this announcement. On-stage rehearsals officially begin May 2nd, however expect there to be table sessions and additional rehearsals 1-3 times per week for at least a month prior, for some or all cast members.

Again, please come to auditions with known scheduling conflicts in hand.

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About the Director

Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike will be the second venture into directing a mainstage production for Jimmy Gertzog, but he has been involved in community theater and the Providence Players for over 15 years. His directorial debut came in 2012 with a production of Warren Leight's *Side Man*. Before directing he was primarily engaged in the technical side of productions, serving as technical director, lighting designer, sound and special effects design, and stage managing. He has also taken a few turns on the stage as well, including as the primary puppeteer in PPF's 2013 musical *Little Shop of Horrors*. Outside of the theater, Jimmy is pursuing his graduate studies in Linguistics. His varied skills and experience give Director Jimmy Gertzog a holistic approach to production direction and an interest in exploring the language and literary depth of theatrical works.

Audition Sides

Starred names show particular characters that the scene focuses on or highlights.

Side 1 – *Cassandra, Vanya, Sonia

Side 2 – *Masha, *Vanya & Sonia (midway through)

Side 3 – *Nina, *Spike, *Masha, Sonia, Vanya

Side 4 - *Nina, *Masha, Vanya

Side 5 – *Vanya, *Sonia

Side 6 - *Spike, *Masha, Sonia, *Vanya, Nina

Side 7 - *Vanya (part of a monologue)

Side 8 - *Cassandra, Vanya, Masha (offstage)

Side 9 - *Sonia, *Masha, Vanya, Cassandra

PPF Preliminary Production and Stage Use Calendar – VANYA and SONIA and MASHA and SPIKE



By Christopher Durang
Directed by Jimmy Gertzog

Stage Use and Production Calendar

PPF Preliminary Production and Stage Use Calendar – VANYA and SONIA and MASHA and SPIKE

Rehearsal Schedule Principles

1) MARCH

- First read-through and cast assembly (pending conflicts with other shows) – By March 17th
- Study assignments & early line memorization!
- Initial Production Meeting – Coordinated by Producer John Coscia
- Production leadership finalized
- All April scheduling conflicts identified and submitted

2) APRIL

- Total of 2-5 table reading & script study sessions, as determined by cast needs – Finished by final week in April
- Set design production meetings
- Specialty costume planning/sourcing
- Schedule ~3 pre-stage access rehearsals for early blocking, 2 hour rehearsals – Final 12 days of April
- Identifying/contacting technical crew

3) MAY

- Full stage rehearsals begin May 2nd
- ALL LINES MEMORIZED by May 10th
- Set Construction weekend – no rehearsal, but full cast attendance.
- No Friday rehearsals until dress rehearsal week, generally.
- Tech Weekend – cast attendance will be requested *at some point*. Keep May 19th & 21st open for cue-to-cue.
- Jimmy family graduation conflict on May 20th. Likely will be no rehearsal, only tech load-in.
- Tech Booth staffed nightly beginning May 24th
- May 30th – Performance conditions
- Publicity photographs, headshots, and other events throughout the month
- SPREAD THE WORD, BUTTS IN SEATS!

4) JUNE

- Final Dress Rehearsal = Preview, 7pm curtain, Q&A following the run.
- Opening Night June 2nd – Opening weekend party
- **Break legs**
- Brush-up speed through rehearsal between weekend 1 & 2, usually the Tuesday or Wednesday.
- Set strike Sunday after close. IMPORTANT DATE – final strike of the PPF Season

PPF Preliminary Production and Stage Use Calendar – VANYA and SONIA and MASHA and SPIKE

April 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Mockingbird Performance 7:30 pm Curtain JIMMY WEDDING NOT AVAILABLE
2 Mockingbird Performance 2 pm Matinee JIMMY WEDDING NOT AVAILABLE	3	4	5	6 Mockingbird Performance 7:30 pm Curtain	7 Mockingbird Performance 7:30 pm Curtain	8 Mockingbird Performance 7:30 pm Curtain
9 PPF Theater Use Strike 9 AM – 5 PM	10	1-3 table readings/sessions			14 <i>Good Friday</i>	15
16 Easter	17 PPF Board Meeting	18	19	20	21	22
		1-2 readings or rehearsals				
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
2-3 rehearsals (non-stage space likely)						
30 JIMMY WEDDING NOT AVAILABLE						

PPF Preliminary Production and Stage Use Calendar – VANYA and SONIA and MASHA and SPIKE

May 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Blocking Act II	3 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Blocking Act II	4 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Blocking Act II/I	5	6 VSMS Set Build Weekend 9:00 AM – ~5 PM FULL CAST CALL Act I
7 VSMS Set Build Weekend 9:00 AM – ~5 PM FULL CAST CALL Act I	8 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Blocking Act I	9 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Scene work PPF Play Reading Night	10 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Review & Refine ALL LINES MEMORIZED	11 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Review & Refine	12	13 VSMS Rehearsal 9:00am - 5pm Character & Scene Work
14 VSMS Rehearsal 9:00am – 5pm Full Act Runs Mother's Day	15 PPF Board Meeting	16 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Full Act Runs	17 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Full Act Runs	18 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Review & Fix	19 VSMS Tech Set Up 6:00 PM –10PM Some Cast Called	20 VSMS Tech Weekend TBD-10pm Jimmy Family Commit
21 VSMS Cue-to-cue TBD –5 PM FULL CAST CALL	22 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Full Act Runs Tech refine	23 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Full Act Runs Tech refine	24 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Full Run-through Tech refine	25 VSMS Rehearsal 7 PM – 10 PM Full Run-through	26 VSMS Dress Rehearsal 6:30 PM –10PM	27 VSMS Dress Rehearsal 6:30 PM –10PM
28 No Access	29 Memorial Day	30 VSMS Dress Rehearsal 6:30 PM –10PM	31 VSMS Dress Rehearsal 6:30 PM –10PM			

PPF Preliminary Production and Stage Use Calendar – VANYA and SONIA and MASHA and SPIKE

June 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 VSMS Preview Performance 7:00pm Curtain 5:30pm Call	2 VSMS Opening Night! Performance 7:30 PM Curtain	3 VSMS Performance 7:30 PM
4 VSMS Performance 2:00 PM matinee	5 PPF ANNUAL MEETING	6	7	8 VSMS Performance 7:30 PM	9 VSMS Performance 7:30 PM	10 VSMS Performance 7:30 PM
11 VSMS Performance 2:00 PM matinee	12	13 PPF Play Reading Night	14	15 VSMS Performance 7:30 PM	16 VSMS Performance 7:30 PM	17 VSMS Performance 7:30 PM
18 PPF Theater Set Strike 9AM-5 PM FULL CAST CALL Fathers Day	19 PPF Board Meeting	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	



Providence Players of Fairfax

Audition Form

VANYA and SONIA and MASHA and SPIKE

Please fill out each section below

Attach a resume and/or headshot to this form (optional)

NAME		
ADDRESS		
	Home	Work
Phone		
Cell		
Email		

Note: The Providence Players of Fairfax is a membership organization. If you are cast and are not already member, you will be asked to become one. Membership is \$10 per season.

Vanya et al Character Preferences

☐ I wish to be considered for any role.

☐ I wish to be considered for any role, but have a strong preference for the roles checked below.

☐ I would prefer to only be considered for the following roles (checked):

ROLES, IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE [6 total; 4 Women, 2 Men]

NOTE: For actors' awareness, Spike IS expected to disrobe down to his skivvies in this play and spend a not-insignificant amount of time in that state.

☐ VANYA (M, 50s/60s)

☐ SONIA (F, 50s)

☐ CASSANDRA (F, any)

☐ MASHA (F, 50s)

☐ SPIKE (M, 20s)

☐ NINA (F, 20s/early 30s)

Notes from you about Role Preference:



Providence Players of Fairfax

Audition Form

VANYA and SONIA and MASHA and SPIKE

Scheduling Conflicts?

Please review the audition announcement, show dates, and preliminary production calendar

The Director will schedule a first read-through in March following casting and based on actor availability TBD. There will be a series of 2 (or more, based on cast preference) preliminary table sessions in April held outside of The James Lee Center. The last week in April the director will schedule pre-stage rehearsals in a reserved room at the Center, based on actor availability. Review the preliminary production calendar for more information.

Please list April conflicting dates when you could NOT participate in either table reading sessions or pre-stage rehearsals at the JLCC.

Please list known conflicts for the stage rehearsals during the production timeline (Stage rehearsals begin May 2nd, show opens June 2nd):



Providence Players of Fairfax

Audition Form

VANYA and SONIA and MASHA and SPIKE

Give us a sketch of your theater background

A resume may be attached in lieu of filling out the table below, though it is not required.

Acting Experience:

High School ___Y ___N - Approx. Number of Productions _____

College ___Y ___N - Approx. Number of Productions _____

Community ___Y ___N - Approx. Number of Productions _____

Pro (Paid) ___Y ___N - Approx. Number of Productions _____

Other Production Experience:

Production Role	# Shows	Production Role	# Shows	Production Role	# Shows
Director		Producer		Choreographer	
Stage Manager		Properties		Musician	
Stage Crew		Lighting Technician		House Manager	
Set Designer		Sound Technician		Publicity	
Set Carpenter		Costumer		Photographer	
Painter/Decorator		Makeup/Hair		Other	

Important: Would you be interested in getting involved in the production if you are not cast?

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ Unsure

Please give us a brief sense of any theater work over the past three years:

* Cassandra

Side 1

Vanya & Sonia

VANYA: What is the matter with you???

SONIA: Do I have to do everything?

VANYA: But you offered to take it. Are you bi-polar now?

SONIA: Yes!

VANYA: Some people claim antidepressants help them.

SONIA: If everyone took antidepressants, Chekhov would have had nothing to write about.

VANYA: I'm not going to clean up the broken cups, you know.

SONIA: Me neither.

VANYA: Well, obviously there's no solution.

SONIA: The housekeeper comes today. We'll ask her to clean it up.

VANYA: What if she refuses?

SONIA: We'll fire her.


VANYA: All right. We'll never ever pick the cups up, and instead we'll sell the house.

SONIA: You can't sell it. You don't own it. Masha owns it.

VANYA: I know Masha owns it! But if we leave broken cups and coffee smells all over the house, I'm sure she'll decide she *has* to sell it. And you and I can finally live separately since we hate each other.

SONIA: What a good idea!

VANYA: A very good idea!

 (Short pause. They both look out, where presumably there is a picture window.)

VANYA: It's comforting to have a pond to look at, isn't it? Pretty.

SONIA: Yes. I hope the blue heron comes later.

VANYA: I hope so too. It's like a good omen.

SONIA: Of course, it eats frogs, so it's not a good omen for them.

VANYA: No. Nature is cruel. But pretty. And for some reason I think of the blue heron as a harbinger of good luck.

(Enter CASSANDRA. She's 30-60. dressed comfortably for cleaning. Or maybe a colorful dress, an exotic style, something she actually looks good in.)

CASSANDRA: Beware the ides of March!

VANYA: What?

CASSANDRA: Beware the ides of March!

SONIA: March? Isn't it late August?

CASSANDRA: Beware the middle of the month! Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!

(Suddenly she feels inspiration from above, or from somewhere – her psychic powers suddenly turn on, maybe her head moves, or her eyes flutter; She is visited by visions/thoughts, and what she says she dramatically intones, sounding a bit like a speech in Greek tragedy. We should hear her words, she should make sense of them, but they should also be said fast, her mind and psyche are receiving thoughts quickly.)

O wretches!
 into the Land of Darkness we sail
 in a pea green boat;
 all around us is full of fire,
 and the Delaware River overflows its bank,
 and dismal moans rise from Bucks County,
 where amity and enmity intermingle.
 Portents of dismay
 and calamity
 yawn beneath the yonder cliff.
 O fools looking behind but not looking ahead,
 Dost thou not sense thy attendant doom?

VANYA: Cassandra, I have asked you repeatedly to please just say "good morning." Alright?

CASSANDRA: I see visions. Shadows of what lies ahead. It is my curse to see these shadows and my duty to warn you.

VANYA: Cassandra, I think you take your name too seriously.

CASSANDRA: My name? What do you mean?

VANYA: You know. Greek mythology. Apollo gave Cassandra second sight, but then cursed her so no one ever believed her.

CASSANDRA: Oh I know that. *(sudden psychic thought pops into her head)* Oh my God! I see something imminent. It's going to happen any moment. One of you is going to take two cups of coffee, and smash them onto the floor.

(she looks between them)

It will be you, Vanya. Don't do it!

SONIA: It already happened.

CASSANDRA: Then I was right!

SONIA: No, you said it was GOING to happen, and it already has happened.

CASSANDRA: But I am correct you will want me to clean it up. Right? Where are the broken cups?

SONIA: *(pointing)* Right over there.

CASSANDRA: *(looks)* Oh my God! I was right. You did this, you, Vanya, broke the cups.

SONIA: That's right, he did.

VANYA: Just clean it up, would you please?

SONIA: Clean it up, clean it up!!!

CASSANDRA: Fie on you both! I see doom and destruction swirling around you.

VANYA: No, just say good morning. Try it.

CASSANDRA: Good morning.

VANYA: Thank you. Good morning.

SONIA: Good morning.

CASSANDRA: And yet, what's good about it? Beware of Hootie Pie.

SONIA: Who?

CASSANDRA: I don't know. Just beware of her. Or it.

VANYA: Hootie Pie. We need to keep a small notebook nearby and write all these things down. For your sanity hearing later.

SONIA: Hootie Pie. Is that a first name, "Hootie Pie"? Or is "Hootie" the first name, and "Pie" the last name?

VANYA: Or maybe Hootie Pie is a pie. And you can order it at a restaurant.

CASSANDRA: I don't know what Hootie Pie is. I just know you must beware it.

(She feels another psychic message. Maybe her head moves or maybe her eyes flutters. Something.)

And also beware of something happening to this house. *(walks toward them, or walks in a bit of a circle)* The house, beware. Be wary. Something bad is coming. You may lose the house.

VANYA: Lose it?

CASSANDRA: Someone will sell the house right from under you and you will become homeless. You will walk many miles to the poor house.

SONIA: Surely someone would give us a ride.

CASSANDRA: No, you will walk.

VANYA: And I don't think there are such things as the poor house anymore.

CASSANDRA: You will live in the gutter then. Excuse me, I must go and get a Dust Buster and a pail of water and sponge to CLEAN UP YOUR MESS!

(She exits, angry.)

VANYA: I wish she wouldn't come every week and tell us terrible things. It feels abusive.

SONIA: Yes, but sometimes she seems to get some of it right, no? Remember when she said a bat was going to get inside the house, and then it did at 2 a.m.

VANYA: Yes, true.

SONIA: Or that time she said I was going to break my middle toe, and minutes later I did.

VANYA: Yes, but that may have been some kind of hypnotic suggestion.

* Masha

Side 2

16

* Vanya

Sonia, next page

MASHA: Now, Spike, I'm sure Vanya thinks you're a perfectly nice looking young man. Let's leave it at that. (to VANYA) He craves attention slightly. But all good actors do.

SPIKE: I'm hot!

VANYA: Oh yes? Shouldn't you leave that for others to say?

SPIKE: (laughs good naturedly) No, I mean I'm warm. The air is warm, I'm hot!.
(looking out the window)

That pond that's out there. Can you swim in it?

VANYA: Swim in it? It's not very deep. You can wade in it,

SPIKE: Yeah. Maybe I'll do that.

MASHA: Really, darling, you want to wade in a pond?

SPIKE: Yeah, it's a hot day.

MASHA: I guess it is. There are frogs in the pond you know.

SPIKE: I like frogs.

MASHA: Did you bring a swim suit?

SPIKE: No, I can just strip to my underwear. See you later, babe, I'm gonna go cool off in the pond.

MASHA: Well, if that's what you want, darling. (to VANYA) He's so unpredictable.

(Very comfortable, but also liking people to watch him, SPIKE takes his shoes off, then takes his shirt off, then takes his pants off. With abandon, he throws his clothes onto a couch or chair. He puts his shoes back on. He is now only in his underwear. He looks very good. He starts toward the pond, but gives MASHA a quick kiss on his way out.)

SPIKE: See you later!

(He moves quickly out of the room, but oddly ruffles VANYA's hair on his way outside. It's a playful gesture but VANYA finds it strange. SPIKE happily exits on to the grass, looking forward to wading and frogs...)

MASHA: The younger generation is like that. They strip to their underwear right in front of everybody.

VANYA: Did he do that because he knows I'm gay?

MASHA: I rather think he did that because he knows I'm straight.

VANYA: Well it's very peculiar. Did you tell him I'm gay?

MASHA: No, why would I? And are you gay? I'm sorry, did we have some conversation I forgot?

VANYA: No, I guess we didn't. I just... assumed you assumed.

MASHA: Oh, I did. I just thought maybe you were still in denial. Or had become asexual from so many years of abstinence. Oh, I've been a bad sister. I'm sorry, darling. Where is Sonia? Oh that's right, I upset her. Well I'll apologize later.

VANYA: I must say, I'm a trifle surprised to see you with this young, young man. How old is he?

MASHA: *(takes his hand)* Oh, Vanya dear, I'm so happy I'm with Spike. He's so adventurous and free, he gives me energy. We've been together 3 months.

VANYA: Well he's handsome. Is he a good idea?

MASHA: Don't be judgmental. I've been very lonely for several years ever since Robert left me for Angelina Jolie.

VANYA: Angelina Jolie?

MASHA: I just say that to make myself feel better. He left me for someone who looked a little like Angelina Jolie. So I comfort myself with saying it was she. Still I haven't been able to hold on to my husbands, I don't know why. I'm talented, charming, successful – and yet they leave me. They must be insane.

(Enter SONIA.)

SONIA: Why is that young man naked in the pond?

VANYA: He's naked? *(looks out the window, interested)* Sonia, he's wearing underpants. That's not naked.

SONIA: Well, underpants, naked, it's the same to me.

VANYA: You need glasses.

SONIA: I need a life. I need a friend. I need a change. But nothing ever changes.

MASHA: Now, now, please don't get down in the dumps.

SONIA: That's easy for you to say. You have a life, you have a career.

MASHA: Oh, I wish you wouldn't feel jealous of me. It just exhausts me. Even if you were an actress, God forbid, we wouldn't ever go up for the same parts. I'm a leading lady, while you are much more of a...

VANYA: Masha, I don't think you should finish that sentence.

SONIA: Thank you, Vanya.

VANYA: You're welcome, Sonia.

MASHA: Well, it's not as if my career has been without disappointments, just like your life, Sonia. I've suffered too. I'm a movie star, but am I known as a classical actress on the stage?

SONIA: No you're not.

MASHA: Exactly! That's a path I didn't get to take. Remember when that famous acting teacher was going to cast me as Masha in *Three Sisters*. He said I was born to play that role. Imagine how wonderful I would've been.

(to Vanya and Sonia, suddenly acting the lines:)

"Oh my sisters, let us go to Moscow! To Moscow, let us go."

I would have said that with an ache in my voice and my soul, and it would have been heartbreaking. I feel the public doesn't know how heartbreaking I can be. *(genuinely)* Oh missed opportunities! Regret, regret, regret!

SONIA: Regret, regret!

MASHA: Please don't change the focus to yourself, Sonia. I'm talking now. You can talk later.

SONIA: When?

MASHA: 4:30.

(back to her story)

Oh that famous acting teacher said I was born to play the classics. And that once I did *Three Sisters*, he said I would have one classical triumph after another. I'd be the American Judi Dench. But I had to go do that movie about the nymphomaniac serial killer. It was a terrible script, but I was so good in it that it became this enormous hit and, of course, we made five of them eventually. Did you see all of them?

VANYA: Oh yes, we certainly did. We liked you very much. They were extremely violent though. Sonia had to look away from the screen a lot.

★ Nina ★ Masha

Side 3

24

★ Spike

Vanya & Sonia

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.

(Re-enter 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 noise banging the pot.)

MASHA: *(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.

Spike & Nina
offstage

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.)

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 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.)

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,

*Masha *Nina

Side 4

32

Vanya

(they start to exit to the dining room)

VANYA: (not sure what else he can say) Tell you more? All right...

(They exit to the dining room.)

Scene 2. Sound of a doorbell.

MASHA: (calling from off-stage) Come in! The door is open.

(Enter MASHA dressed like Snow White, and carrying a shepherd's crook. Her costume is based on the old Walt Disney cartoon: she has a bright blue bodice, with puffy sleeves around her shoulders. She has a big yellow skirt to the floor, and a red bow in her hair. She looks good, but it's a somewhat dominating costume. It is possible she is still putting parts of the costume on.)

Meanwhile NINA has let herself, and enters the Morning Room. She is dressed like a princess. She holds a fairy wand.)

NINA: Hello. Oh my, you look beautiful.

MASHA: Oh dear, I didn't talk to you about costumes, did I? Whatever are you dressed as?

NINA: I didn't have anything, but my aunt and uncle took me to K-Mart, and I'm a princess.

MASHA: Oh you are? I see. I didn't get it. I thought you were a child dressed in her mother's clothes.

NINA: I'm sorry. I wasn't expecting to go to a costume party.

MASHA: No, that's quite evident.

NINA: What are you dressed as?

MASHA: What am I dressed as? You can't tell?

NINA: I think so. Are you that silent screen actress from the old movie who lives in a mansion and says "I'm ready for my close up, Mr. DeMille"? What's her name?

MASHA: No, I'm not Norma Desmond. Although when I'm around you, I feel like her. You must be reading my aura.

NINA: I never really saw the movie. I just saw the clip where she says "ready for my close up." So who are you dressed as?

MASHA: I'm dressed as Snow White. The Walt Disney version.

NINA: I've never seen "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Is it like "the Little Mermaid"?

MASHA: *(a touch annoyed)* No. One's about a mermaid, and the other's about dwarfs.

NINA: I see.

MASHA: Now since I'm Snow White, I feel all the other people going to the party with me must *relate* to Snow White.

(Enter VANYA dressed like one of the seven dwarfs. Big floppy knit cap, and a pumpkin colored shirt with a belt around and brown pants.)

MASHA: You see – like that. That's Grumpy, one of the seven dwarfs.

VANYA: Doc.

MASHA: Right. Doc. Another one of the seven dwarfs.

VANYA: You look lovely, Nina.

MASHA: No she doesn't. She looks like a child dressed for Halloween. I'm afraid I can't have it.

NINA: *(sad but obedient)* Oh. Well maybe I can't go then. I'm sorry I didn't have the right costume.

VANYA: Masha...

MASHA: No, no, Nina. I'm not saying you can't go to the party. I'm so sorry. I'm really being a bully, but when you're my age – whatever that age is – you get used to having your way. I suppose I'm monstrous, but lovable monstrous, I hope. Besides the good news is I have an extra costume that DOES relate to *Snow White*, and if you'll just put it on, then we'll all be very happy. Now wait here, I have to ask Spike where he put it.

NINA: Oh I can't wait to see what he's wearing.

MASHA: Really? Why?

NINA: Well, I can't wait to see what everyone's wearing.

MASHA: Okay.

VANYA: What is he going as?

MASHA: He's going as Prince Charming. It took a long time to convince him, so everyone tell him he looks sexy. Not you, Nina. Vanya, you tell him. I'll be right back.

(MASHA suddenly takes both of NINA's hands)

Thank you Nina for being so cooperative.

(ends the moment, moves on, exits to the second floor)

NINA: I wonder what costume she has for me.

VANYA: I'm afraid I know. I believe you're going to be a dwarf like me. Dopey.

NINA: I'm just so happy to be included. I love to be around artistic people, who create things, who act, who value the arts.

VANYA: Well Masha obviously fits that. I'm afraid Sonia and I are just ...two lumps on a log.

NINA: Oh I don't think so. I feel you both have hidden reservoirs that just haven't been tapped. Or maybe you're secretly creating things, and not telling anyone.

VANYA: That's remarkable that you say that. I have been writing something... I haven't told anyone, not even Sonia.

NINA: I thought so. I sensed it. Is it a TV pilot?

VANYA: No, it's a play. In progress. And I was thinking of that play Konstantin writes in *The Sea Gull*. And it's very experimental and mysterious, and I can never tell if it's meant to be a play ahead of its time or just a play that's ... rotten. And so I thought I might like to write my own version of that play, but relate it to now and see if it would... be good or not.

NINA: Oh I'm so honored you told me this. I feel certain it's good. I always feel so sorry for Konstantin when I read that play, they were so mean to him.

VANYA: Well, life is hard for everyone, I guess.

NINA: You remind me of my uncle, only nicer and more artistic. He burps a lot and doesn't speak much. But you don't burp that I've noticed, and you're quiet but then you speak when spoken to. May I call you Uncle Vanya?

★ Vanya

★ Sonia

Side 5
4

SONIA: Alright.

VANYA: I'm sorry. Really.

SONIA: That's alright.

(She suddenly takes the cup she's holding and smashes it on the floor, in the direction of the kitchen.. Silence.)

VANYA: Is this how you're going to be today?

SONIA: I don't know what you mean.

VANYA: YOU JUST THREW THE FUCKING COFFEE AGAINST THE WALL!

SONIA: I DIDN'T!

VANYA: You didn't??? What kind of idiot response is that?

SONIA: I don't know. It's an angry "I hate my life and I hate you" response.

VANYA: Well, it was effective then, good for you!

SONIA: Thank you!

(Silence.)

SONIA: I'm sorry. I shouldn't have thrown the cup.

VANYA: That's alright.

SONIA: It's just I had bad dreams last night.

VANYA: Oh?

SONIA: I dreamt I was 52 and I wasn't married.

VANYA: Were you dreaming in the documentary form?

SONIA: That's not funny.

VANYA: Really, I thought it was. You are 52, and you're not married.

SONIA: Whose fault is that?

VANYA: Is the answer supposed to be me?

SONIA: There isn't any answer. And if I pine for you, that's my business.

VANYA: Don't pine for me. That's ridiculous. I'm 57 and I've told you for many years, I'm not interested in you in that way. I... march to a different drummer.

SONIA: Why must you march to a drummer at all? Why couldn't we both... walk to the sounds of a piccolo?

VANYA: What? I don't know what that metaphor means. Besides you're my sister.

SONIA: We're not blood relations. I am your adopted sister. So I can pine if I want to.

VANYA: Look I think your pining after me is a tired reflex. I don't think you even like me anymore.

SONIA: I agree with you. It's a reflex with me now. It comes from our living together. There's no one else in the house. Ever since mother and father died. And Masha left me and you to take care of them while she was off gallivanting, having a life. Don't you feel angry at Masha, that she's had a life?

VANYA: Yes, I do. But it's too late now to do anything about it. I must say, I always admired you for doing your duty and taking care of our elderly parents, even though you were adopted. You put Masha to shame, in my opinion.

SONIA: Thank you, I appreciate that.

VANYA: Of course she had a successful acting career, and you basically didn't have anything *else* to do.

SONIA: Well, a moment ago you gave me a lovely compliment. And now... oh let's not talk. I'll keep my sadness to myself.

VANYA: Alright, you do that.

(Brief silence. After a while she sighs very heavily, once, twice, maybe three times.. VANYA ignores it for a while, but then doesn't.)

VANYA: Your sadness is very heavy this morning, Sonia. Can you lighten it any?

SONIA: No.

VANYA: Could you go to a different room?

SONIA: Leave the morning room? But I'm in mourning for my life.

VANYA: I hope you're not going to make Chekhov references all day.

End

*Spike *Masha
*Vanya Sonia Nina

Side 6

27

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 20 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 on stage?

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 on stage, 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 on stage?

MASHA: My favorite role on stage. 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 don't you do the opposite of a strip tease, and put your clothes back on, and then you can show Nina the audition you did. I coached him.

SPIKE: Oh, okay.

(he starts to put his clothes back on)

First I have to take my shoes off, so I can put my pants back on.

(he takes his shoes off)

And now it's time for the jeans.

(he pulls on his jeans, but very seductively; gyrating his body)

But I'm not going to zip the zipper up all the way. Not just yet.

(Everyone has been staring at him, not quite sure what else to do. VANYA moves closer and sits on the floor, watching him unabashedly.)

MASHA: Maybe we don't need to watch Spike while he's dressing.

SPIKE: No it's all right, I don't mind.

(MASHA gets focused on arranging some of the furniture for the upcoming audition. SPIKE is getting into his reverse strip tease.)

I'm going to leave the zipper a little undone. Because I know I'm going to tuck in my shirt when I get to putting that on.

SONIA: Should we leave the room until he's finished?

SPIKE: No, I'm almost done. Now I could do the shirt first, or I could do the belt first. I think I'll do the belt.

(He kind of plays with the belt before putting it on. Or he puts it on, but makes a big deal of it... MASHA re-focuses on him as he does more sexual gyrating...)

MASHA: What are you doing? Are you insane?

SPIKE: *(he was just obeying)* You told me to do a reverse strip tease.

MASHA: Did I? Well I'm sure I didn't mean it. Just get dressed for God's sake.

SPIKE: Okay, okay. *(to NINA)* The older generation is all uptight about their bodies.

MASHA: Okay, now your clothes are back on, very good, thank you. We all had a lovely time.

SPIKE: Gosh, you're in a weird mood today.

NINA: Well maybe I should be going.

SPIKE: No. I was going to show you my audition. Unless you don't want to see.

NINA: No, I'd love to see.

(Everyone sits down to watch him.)

SPIKE: The original series *Entourage* is about this young actor who's making it big in the movies, and it's about the guys who hang around him –his friends, his manager, his agent. Everyone wants a piece of him.

NINA: I'd be so nervous if I ever had to audition. But I'd be so thrilled too.

SPIKE: Yeah, it's tough to audition. I was real lucky to have a pro like Masha coach me.

MASHA: Yes, let's get to the audition now.

SPIKE: So I was auditioning for the spin off series *Entourage 2*. And it has a different set up because in this one there's an up and coming actor who's starting to make it big in the movies, but he's played by somebody else, so the implication is it's another character.

MASHA: It's not an implication. He is another character.

SPIKE: *(kind of laughs, realizes he got confused)* Right. I know that. His name is Bradley Wood, and he's the lead. And in *this* version, his entourage is this old dame who's his agent, and this young guy on coke who's his manager, and his best friend from high school who's a girl who has a crush on him but she has this disease that gives her convulsions so she can never kiss anybody, cause she gets convulsions. And I live next door to a rabbi who's played by Judd Hirsch. But he's not on every week.

MASHA: Yes, yes. Let's move it along, pacing, pacing.

SPIKE: Okay, and he's been having an affair with his older agent lady, but he's thinking of moving on to another agent. So the scene is between Bradley Wood and his lady agent.

NINA: I see.

SPIKE: Okay he comes into the room, and the manager is there. "Hey, good looking. How's tricks?" And Masha used to read the other lines. Do you remember them, Masha?

MASHA: Kind of. But I think you should try to do it as a monologue... we'll all intuit what the other lines are.

SPIKE: Oh, okay.

(He likes the challenge. He changes his body language, and begins the scene, maybe unbuttons his top three shirt buttons)

Hey, good looking. How's tricks? *(dutifully ad-libs listening to make it a monologue)*
 What? Who told you that? Hey, don't cry. Come on, give me a smile. Besides it's not definite. *(pointedly listens)* Well... yeah, it's true, I did meet with some agents at CAA. I thought they were real impressive. I mean, they can call up Sandy Bullock, they can call up Julia Roberts. You gotta face it, you don't know that caliber of person. What?

(he listens)

What about loyalty? What about my career? What about my getting ahead?
 Yeah, I know you put in a lot of time with me. But I put a lot time in with you too. And I don't know... I think I might like CAA better. What?

(listens)

Oh, that. Well, yeah, just cause I go to another agent doesn't mean we have to stop sleeping together occasionally. Well I think it's occasional. I mean I sleep with other people too. I want to be successful, I can't just sleep with one old broad all the time. Oh, I'm sorry, don't cry. I think of "old broad" as a term of affection.

(listens)

Oh yeah? Well fuck you!

(He bows, smiles.)

MASHA: Wasn't that good?

(MASHA leads the applause. NINA is sincere and thinks it was good. VANYA and SONIA are a touch shell shocked but applaud anyway.)

NINA: Oh that was wonderful. I can sense great things in your future.

SPIKE: Yeah, cool. Thanks.

(Enter CASSANDRA.)

CASSANDRA: Luncheon is served. It's Campbell soup and tuna fish sandwiches. I was only asked to make lunch for 4, but I did stretch it to 5, though the sandwiches are a little skimpy with the tuna fish. *(exits)*

MASHA: Well, the lunch sounds repellent, but shall we go in?

NINA: *(to MASHA)* Oh you're so kind to invite me to lunch, but I mustn't impose any further. And you did invite me to the costume party, so I'll come back for that, shall I?

MASHA: Yes, dear. That would be lovely. Why don't you come over at 7:30, it's just a little ways away, at the Dorothy Parker house.

I remember him talking about the seed falling on the good soil, falling on the bad soil, the seed falling on rock. In other words, build your life on a strong foundation.

Of course, I haven't done that. But I meant to. Bishop Sheen said I should. I guess I got lost. But it was interesting to hear him talk that way. It was *articulate*. I don't think much is articulate in the world anymore.

And I'm saying this all in retrospect. I didn't think it when I was 10. I was just trying to get through life one day at a time when I was 10.

(to SPIKE) And I didn't have a life ahead of me where I was going to be almost cast in "Entourage 2." But I guess you're having a good life, and I had foolish one.

Tell me, do they have any older characters on "Entourage 2"? Do they need someone in their late 50s, who has had a useless life and is looking back feeling bitter? Might I audition for that part? Could you check?

(MASHA is worried about VANYA. She crosses to him.)

MASHA: Vanya, darling, you seem overwrought, and you're talking way more than usual. Do you not want to go lie down somewhere?

VANYA: I have the remainder of my life to nap. I'm not done yet.

WE LICKED POSTAGE STAMPS! We didn't have answering machines. You had to call people back. (MASHA moves away.) We ate Spam, just like the soldiers in World War II did. (to SPIKE) Have you heard of World War II?

We played Scrabble and Monopoly. We didn't play video games, in some virtual reality, where we would kill policeman and prostitutes as if that was some sort of entertainment.

The popular entertainment wasn't so insane back then. It was sometimes corny, but sincere. We all saw the movie "Davy Crockett" and wore coonskin caps.

That may not sound sane, wearing those caps, but it was very innocent. And we *all* did it, there was a solidarity about it, unlike being alone in your room killing prostitutes in a video game.

We followed *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*. Which starred the real life Ozzie and Harriet Nelson.

But "Adventures" was a strange word for the show because it was *extremely* uneventful. They did things like ...make popcorn in the kitchen. Or ...look for missing socks.

In retrospect they seemed medicated.

It was a stupid show, but it was calming. You didn't feel it was stirring people up and creating serial killers.

I'm sorry I'm getting off the point. But my point is the 50s were idiotic but I miss parts of them. When I was 13 I saw *Goldfinger* with Sean Connery as James Bond, and I didn't get the meaning of the character name of "Pussy Galore." Went right over my head.

Nowadays, three year olds get the joke. They can barely walk and they know what Pussy Galore means.

The weather is changing, the culture is very weird. I'm not a conservative, but I do miss things in the past.

I Love Lucy was pretty wonderful. And the whole country watched it. We saw *Davy Crockett*. And *The Mickey Mouse Show*. Boys just past puberty would fixate on Annette Funicello.

We didn't identify with rock stars, we identified with Mouseketeers. Annette, Darlene Gillespie, Cubby O'Brien.

My favorite was Tommy Kirk who was one of the Hardy Boys on the Mickey Mouse show. Later he starred in Disney's "*Old Yeller*," about a boy and his dog. His father was fighting in the Civil War, but Tommy was the one who took the responsibility for being the grown-up. Not his mother or younger brother.

And initially he didn't want the dog, but then he bonded with it. And at the end of the film *Old Yeller* gets rabies and foams at the mouth, and poor Tommy Kirk has to shoot his dog, crying his eyes out as he does so.

It was a traumatic moment in our national past. A shared one.

I wondered what happened to Tommy Kirk, and I did a Google search and I learned that sometime after he was in *Son of Flubber*, Walt Disney found out that Tommy Kirk was gay and he fired him. He dropped his contract.

Meanwhile Tab Hunter was gay too, but HIS studio just saw to it that he went on pretend dates with starlets. They didn't fire Tab Hunter. They starred him in movies opposite Sophia Loren, for God's sake. Tommy Kirk on the other hand was mistreated, and I TAKE IT PERSONALLY. As I expect he does too.

He stopped making movies. He took drugs for a period. And then later he got better and became a minister. And now he runs a rug cleaning business. I guess he's alright.

But he's had to go through the same changes I have – no more licking of postage stamps, no more typewriters or letters, no more shared national TV shows like *Ozzie*

*Cassandra

Side 8

48

Vanya offstage Masha

VANYA: Oh God, what are we going to do about the house?

SONIA: I am a wild turkey. I have not lived. I am a wild turkey.

VANYA: Me too.

(They stare ahead, not too happy. Music, lights dim.)

Scene 2 – Lights up. Morning. CASSANDRA comes into the house, looks around quickly to see that no one is downstairs yet..

She is holding some odd Mardi Gras-like stick with colored streamers on it, and is going around the room, shaking it. We can assume she's doing some magical or superstition-related, a "cleansing" ceremony.

Then she picks up a little Snow White doll – the doll is dressed pretty much the same as MASHA was dressed last night.

CASSANDRA takes out a pin, and sticks the doll.

MASHA: (from upstairs, screams) Aaaaaaaaaaagghhhh!

(CASSANDRA is surprised and encouraged that the pin sticking worked so quickly. Encouraged, she sticks the pin in the doll again.)

MASHA: (from upstairs) Aaaaaaaaaaagghhhh!

(CASSANDRA looks at the doll and gets close to its face. She moves the doll up to her forehead. She is visibly sending her thought waves to MASHA through the doll.)

CASSANDRA: Did your brain hear that, you sexy killer, you?
(sends in some additional thoughts)

"I do not want to sell the house, I do not want to sell the house. And whenever I do think of selling the house, I get a little pain." (sticks a pin in the doll again)

MASHA: (off-stage) Aaaaaaaaaagghhhh! Vanya! Vanya, come here.

CASSANDRA: Oh, it's bad to use voodoo, but it's for a good cause.
(imparts this thought to the doll:)

Beware of selling the house. You have more money than you need, you greedy movie star. Don't toss your brother and your sister into the trash pile. *(said with a rhythm)* It's a bad chile that puts its loved ones on the trash pile. It's a bad chile that puts its loved ones on the trash pile.

VANYA: *(off-stage)* Masha, what's the matter?

MASHA: *(off-stage)* There's something wrong with the bed. Or the sheets. There are pins in them.

CASSANDRA: Ooooh, I'm thinking of selling the house. *(sticks pin in doll)*

MASHA: *(off-stage)* Aaaaaaaaggghh.

VANYA: *(off-stage)* But you're not even near the bed.

MASHA: *(off-stage)* I'm not making it up.

VANYA: *(off-stage)* Wait, I need coffee, do you both want some?

~~SPIKE: *(off-stage)* Yeah, man, that'd be good.~~

MASHA: I can't figure out what this is.

VANYA: *(off-stage)* I'll be right back.

(CASSANDRA realizes VANYA is about to come downstairs, she looks at the doll and tries to hide it. VANYA enters and she quickly puts the doll behind her.)

VANYA: Cassandra!

CASSANDRA: Beware!

VANYA: Of what?

CASSANDRA: Everything.

VANYA: Why are you here? This isn't one of your cleaning days.

CASSANDRA: I'm worried about you and Sonia. I had presentiments last night. Masha must not sell the house. The market is still soft anyway, doesn't she know that? But it's a bad thing for her to do, she needs to watch over you and Sonia. I'm tired of foretelling the future, but then the bad things happen anyway. I want to *change* the future, I want to *change* this situation.

VANYA: Well, goodness, that's very generous of you, Cassandra. I appreciate your concern.

CASSANDRA: You're welcome. Why don't I go make that coffee for you?

VANYA: That would be nice, thanks.

(The conversation has relaxed CASSANDRA and she forgets about the doll behind her back and lets her arms hang at her side as she starts to go to the kitchen.)

VANYA: Wait a minute, what's that in your hand?

CASSANDRA: Nothing.

VANYA: What is that doll you're holding?

CASSANDRA: It came in a cereal box.

VANYA: Cassandra, is that a voodoo doll?

CASSANDRA: Good God, is that what this is?

VANYA: That's the exact costume that Masha wore last night. How did you know that?

CASSANDRA: I'm psychic. Also, I saw Spike hang it up in the bedroom yesterday.

VANYA: And is that why Masha has been screaming this morning?

CASSANDRA: I really couldn't say.

VANYA: I don't approve of voodoo. Though I admit I'm sort of impressed. You stick the pin in the doll and Masha feels it?

CASSANDRA: It's just a pin prick, but it makes its point.

VANYA: Well don't do it anymore.

CASSANDRA: All right, I won't. You wanna try?

VANYA: No.

CASSANDRA: You sure?

VANYA: No I don't want try.

CASSANDRA: Go ahead, try.

VANYA: Well.... It doesn't hurt much, right?

CASSANDRA: That's right. I send her thought waves about the house, then I zap her. I'll tell you when. "I want to sell the house."

(CASSANDRA points, and VANYA sticks a pin in the doll. No noise upstairs.)

VANYA: Oh, it didn't work.

CASSANDRA: That's odd. Well, it just proves my other worldly powers. Here, let me do it. Masha, listen to my brain: "I want to sell the house." *(sticks pin in the doll)*

MASHA: *(off-stage)* Aaaaaaaaagghhhh!

(VANYA is amazed, and CASSANDRA is pleased. They look excited and happy, maybe laugh even. Or do a happy celebration dance.)

Right at this moment, SPIKE comes in wearing a t-shirt and underpants, and wearing un-tied sneakers. He's amused that they seem so happy.)

SPIKE: What are you two so happy about?

VANYA: Nothing.

(CASSANDRA realizes she's holding the doll, quickly puts it behind her back.)

SPIKE: What's behind your back?

CASSANDRA: *(pretending to see something behind him)* Oh my God! A bat! Look out!

(CASSANDRA dramatically points behind him. SPIKE turns around. The second he does CASSANDRA throws the doll to VANYA, who hides it behind his back. SPIKE turns back, a bit confused at their motion. VANYA suddenly waves the Mardi Gras streamer stick up and down in front of SPIKE's face, and surreptitiously throws the doll to CASSANDRA, who quickly puts it in her bag. SPIKE is slightly confused but still amused at their seeming playfulness.)

SPIKE: What bat?

CASSANDRA: It must have flown upstairs.

*Sonia *Masha
Vanya Cassandra

Side 9

19

SONIA: Yes I did.

MASHA: Oh darling, sensitive, tedious Sonia. You can't face life, can you?

(SONIA begins to respond, but MASHA stops her.)

Ne, don't answer. You can talk at 4:30.

SONIA: Why 4:30?

MASHA: That's my nap time. (when SONIA looks horrified) I'm kidding, I'm kidding. 4:30 is the cocktail hour, a half an hour early. I usually have a Black Russian. And a drink as well. Oh, I'm amusing myself, sorry.

(focuses back on her story)

Anyway, as I was saying that movie, *Sexy Killer*, really changed my life – it took me from being a respected actress to being a global celebrity. And there is a difference. "Fame, thou glittering bauble." Who said that?

VANYA: Captain Hook

MASHA: The real Captain Hook?

VANYA: There wasn't a real Captain Hook. He was just in *Peter Pan*.

MASHA: "Fame, thou glittering bauble." Such an interesting thing for a pirate to say.

And then they begged me to do a sequel, and it seemed inescapable to me. We made 5 of them. And those movies made me millions. But my point was the theatre lost a great tragic classical actress when I didn't play my namesake Masha in that famous acting teacher's production of *Three Sisters*. That's my point!

SONIA: You keep talking about this famous acting teacher. Who are you referring to?

MASHA: Derek Seretsky.

SONIA: Who?

MASHA: Derek Seretsky. Maybe he wasn't famous. He was famous to me.

VANYA: When did you study with him?

MASHA: Oh, many years ago, I can't remember dates or decades. I just live. I recall I had three fabulous sessions with him. He taught a combination of Stanislavskian sense memory mixed with Meisner repetition technique.

I'd say "Oh, Olga, let's go to Moscow" and he'd say back to me "Oh, Olga, let's go to Moscow?" And I'd say, "Oh Olga – let's GO to Moscow." And he'd say "Oh, oh, oh,

Olga, let's go to MosCOW." And then I said, "Ho, ho, ho, let's go to Moscow, Olga. Moscow, Moscow, Olga. Oh, Oh, Olga, let's go! "

I'm sorry, this is sounding incredibly false as I'm saying it. It makes one think I would've been horrible in *Three Sisters*. Maybe I would have been. *(suddenly shouts emphatically)* No, no, I would've been great! Let's not talk about it anymore. Let's talk about something else. Sonia, what's new with you?

SONIA: I'm not allowed to speak until 4:30.

MASHA: Everyone's so touchy here. No, you can talk.

SONIA: How old is Spike exactly?

MASHA: Let's talk about something fun. We're going to a party tonight, and a costume one at that. I love costume parties.

SONIA: We don't have any costumes to wear, Masha.

MASHA: Yes, you do. I asked Hootie Pie to organize some costumes for both of you, and they're in the car.

VANYA: *(worried)* Hootie Pie?

SONIA: *(worried)* Who is Hootie Pie?

MASHA: Why do you both look frightened?

(Enter CASSANDRA, she's clearly been listening just off-stage.)

CASSANDRA: I was right! Didn't I say Beware of Hootie Pie? I saw this coming, I warned you, but did you listen?

MASHA: Who is this person?

CASSANDRA: I wonder, could I get your autograph? My niece is a big fan of yours, she loves all those *Sexy Killer* movies.

MASHA: Oh how nice. I'd be happy to give her an autograph.

CASSANDRA: Make it out to Rebecca Sue, If you would.
(hands MASHA a small card to sign)

MASHA: All right. Becky Sue.

(MASHA signs the card, gives it back to CASSANDRA)

MASHA: Give my best to your niece. And who are you?

VANYA: This is Cassandra, she's our cleaning woman.

CASSANDRA: They never listen to me. I warned them about bats, and then there were bats. I warned them about breaking a toe, and a toe was broken. And this morning, I had a sense that Vanya and Sonia must beware of an entity called Hootie Pie.

MASHA: Well, she's not an entity.

VANYA: What is she then?

MASHA: She's my new assistant and completely devoted to me.

SONIA: It might be fun to go to a party, Vanya. I've wanted to see the house Dorothy Parker used to live in. Do you know her suicide poem? It was very witty, at the same time it actually made you want to kill yourself.

MASHA: You know, I'm feeling rather hungry after my long drive. *(to CASSANDRA)* Would you mind making a light lunch for all of us?

CASSANDRA: I am a cleaning lady. I am not the cook.

MASHA: Could you not make us a modest repast? A salad nicoise. An artichoke quiche perhaps. I would certainly pay you something for your trouble.

CASSANDRA: I don't want to.

MASHA: Alright. Give me back that autograph I gave you.

CASSANDRA: No.

MASHA: Yes.

CASSANDRA: All right, I'll make you lunch. *(exits, grouchy)*

MASHA: Don't feed us your anger please.

SONIA: I'm starting to like the idea of a party. A party could be fun. Maybe I'd meet someone. Or in any case, the people there wouldn't know me and wouldn't have a bad impression of me, and maybe I could be witty at the party, and make new friends. What do you think, Vanya?

VANYA: *(thinks it doubtful, but tries to agree)* Uh, sure.

MASHA: I'm going as Snow White. I wanted Spike to go as Prince Charming, but I think he's going as a rap star. You must talk him into Prince Charming, would you, Vanya? And Hootie Pie came up with good ideas for both of you. Vanya, you can be one of the seven dwarfs, we think you should go as Grumpy.

VANYA: I don't want to go as Grumpy.

MASHA: It suits you.

VANYA: No. If anything I should go as Doc. The one with the wire rim glasses and the beard. I think I look like him now that I'm older.

MASHA: Well I suppose you can be Doc. He's not as memorable as Grumpy.

SONIA: What costume did you bring for me?

MASHA: Hootie and I thought you could go as Dopey.

SONIA: What?

MASHA: You know, the dwarf Dopey. And he's clean shaven, so you wouldn't have to wear a beard.

SONIA: I don't want to be Dopey!
(starts to cry)

MASHA: Darling, Sonia, forgive me. Which dwarf do you want to be?

SONIA: I don't want to be a dwarf!

MASHA: But, darling, I only brought two dwarf costumes. That's all Hootie Pie made up for me.

SONIA: Fuck Hootie Pie!

MASHA: Well, who do you want to be then? Goodness, all this fuss over costumes, it's just a party for heaven's sake,

SONIA: I don't want to go as your dwarf. I want to go as... Jean Harlow. Or Marlene Dietrich.

MASHA: Well I must say. I'm the one who was invited, and I'm going as Snow White. And obviously the rest of you should go in a costume connected to ME. Snow White is the central figure. I can't have you traipsing around, pathetically trying to be Marlene Dietrich.

VANYA: Oh dear. This is getting out of control. Masha, Sonia doesn't want to be a dwarf and I must say I understand her feeling. I don't mind going as a dwarf, I'm happy to be a dwarf. But isn't there some other fairy tale figure that's appealing that Sonia could go as.

MASHA: No, it has to be from *Snow White*, it has to be connected. 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 second hand 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.)

MASHA: Spike! Spike! We need you up here.
(she comes back in to the room)
He can't hear me. Do you have a gong or anything?