

VANDA 3

VANDA. *Of course.*

THOMAS. Too trite?

VANDA. If he's gonna be reading when he meets Vanda, he can't be reading here. Just hand out library cards, why dontcha.

THOMAS. He's writing in his diary.

VANDA. I like it. He's sitting at the desk with his back turned. Maybe the fireplace flickers up and we see Venus in the raw curled up like a cat, draped revealingly in a fur.

(She lies back on the divan.)

So drape me. You're the director.

(He comes over and drapes the "fur" over her, then starts away.)

Revealingly.

(He comes back and re-drapes her, more slowly, lingering a moment.)

Now go to your desk. Go on. *In character.*

(Thomas "assumes character" and goes to the table.)

Write in your diary. Write something.

THOMAS. I am.

VANDA. *Out loud.* This is *theatre*. How else we gonna know what you are? It's the top of the show, the lights are just coming up. All we hear is the sound of an old clock. Tick. Tick. Tick. TICK...

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *"October 22nd, 1870. 2:02 A.M. I am staying at a springs surrounded by woods and wilderness. There's no moon tonight, nothing but darkness and silence..."*

(Vanda does a bird whistle.)

"No, wait. I hear..."

(She whistles again.)

"...a sparrow."

VANDA. A nightingale.

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *"A nightingale."*

(Vanda screeches.)

"...and the howl of a lovesick cat. I don't know why, I feel so terribly alone, and lonely. So sick at heart, so unfulfilled. Will no one draw me

Start

out of this abyss that bears my name? Severin von Kushemski.”

VANDA/VENUS. *Guten Abend, mein Herr.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Well, well. Have the Germans invaded again?*

VANDA/VENUS. *I hope I do not disturb...*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Not at all. Hail, Aphrodite!*

VANDA/VENUS. *Zo, you haff not forgotten me?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Forget you? My oldest and dearest enemy?*

VANDA/VENUS. *You are zo sweet. You don't vant to kiss my hand?*

(He does so.)

Nice. Ja, but Thomas—Did I say Thomas? Whoops!—Ja, but Severin. It's so cold in here. Every time I visit you I am catching cold.

(Sneezes.)

You see? Already I have pleggum in ze tubes.

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Maybe if you didn't fly around naked all the time.*

VANDA/VENUS. *Ja, but I am Venus. I must be all ze time naked, or who knows me? You don't want to take those off those scratchy clothes and come cuddle? There's room here—under my mink.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *No, thank you.*

VANDA/VENUS. *But I brought this mink especially for you, from Olympus. It's heavenly. You see ze label? “Made In Heaven.”*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Why would I be so interested in your mink?*

VANDA/VENUS. *Oh, Severin, I know your little hobby. Your predilection for fine pelts. It's disgusting. You don't want a woman, you want her coat. You ought to marry a raccoon.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Better a raccoon than any woman I've ever met.*

VANDA/VENUS. *Ja, but ziss mink und me, ve make you ze perfect wife.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Yes. And then you and your mink leave me to cuddle with some other man. Like any mortal woman would.*

VANDA/VENUS. *Ja, but if—under my mink—I open my thighs... you would not have me?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *This isn't Pompeii, you know. This is civilization.*

VANDA/VENUS. *And what is that, syphilization?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Civilization means that we don't spread our thighs to just anyone. We have principles.*

VANDA/VENUS. *Ja, ja, you modern men, you want your principles by day, but by night you want to dance naked around a fire. Und me you turn into a demon, you are so afraid of love.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Love. Is that what you're offering?*

VANDA/VENUS. *Eh-heh.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Power, that's what you want. You want to have me, and then put your foot on my neck like every petty tyrant in Pompeii. Well, I have a civilized duty to resist you!*

VANDA/VENUS. *And you still think you can? You think you will not bend to me?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Never.*

VANDA/VENUS. *You dare to resist me?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Yes, I dare.*

VANDA/VENUS. *You little piece of nothing! You dust! You dare to resist a goddess?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *The same way I've resisted you for years. Ever since one of your sex first taught me the cruelty of women.*

VANDA/VENUS. *Severin, I will have you crawling to me on your knees. I will have you begging.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Never.*

VANDA/VENUS. *You are mine already, and you will be mine for all time to come.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Never!*

VANDA/VENUS. *Ze proof, as they say, is in ze pudding. Auf Wiedersehen, mein Freund. I'll be back—And then, poof, she vanishes!*

THOMAS. *Wow.*

VANDA. *Not bad, huh.*

(Vanda changes the lights back.)

THOMAS. Wow.

VANDA. You could write that up and stick it in just like it is.

THOMAS. So to speak.

VANDA. I thought I'd add a little Marlene Dietrich...

THOMAS. No, it was great. It was brilliant. This is a totally different side of Kushemski.

VANDA. Yeah, here he is with Venus in the middle of the night and he's all, *No, no, you bitch*. Next morning with Vanda, he's like, *Take me, pleeeeeeze*.

THOMAS. You could bring the lights down on that, lights back up to morning, knock knock knock, and there's Vanda. Like Venus in disguise.

VANDA. Taking her revenge. **STOP**

THOMAS. It's great.

VANDA. So is it you?

THOMAS. What...

VANDA. This. Is it you? Kushemski-Novachek, Novachek-Kushemski.

THOMAS. No, this isn't me.

VANDA. Or maybe you're Vanda.

THOMAS. This play doesn't have anything to do with me.

VANDA. Uh-huh. You're just peeping over the fence. You're just the writer. Sorry. "Adapter."

THOMAS. Why do people always think a playwright has to be the people he writes about?

VANDA. Because playwrights do that shit *all the time*. You put me in a play, I'll fuckin' kill you.

THOMAS. Can't I just write characters?

VANDA. Sure. And you just *happened* to find these characters in this ancient German S&M novel, Herr Doktor Novachek.

THOMAS. It's a famous book.

VANDA. So you didn't have an "innocent instant" when you were twelve?