

VANDA 4 THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *See what your nature is. Or change your nature.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV. *Can I not make you be reasonable?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *It's not reason that I'm after. You said you would forgo no possible experience.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV. *And you would have me eat my words.*

START THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *I'd have you prove you meant them.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV. *Severin, don't you see? Don't you understand you'll never be safe in the hands of a woman? Of any woman?—Now this part is so sexist it makes me, like, scream.*

THOMAS. *It's not sexist. What's sexist about it?*

VANDA. *"You'll never be safe in the hands of a woman"?*

THOMAS. *That is from the book.*

VANDA. *I don't care what it's from. It's sexist. The whole thing's really kinda trite, when you think about it.*

THOMAS. *What's trite?*

VANDA. *He gets spanked one day and bingo, he's into whips and chains?*

THOMAS. *Apparently it happened to Sacher-Masoch.*

VANDA. *Did it happen to you?*

THOMAS. *No.*

VANDA. *So how do you know?*

THOMAS. *To me, this is a play about two people who are joined irreparably. They're handcuffed at the heart.*

VANDA. *Yeah, joined by his kink.*

THOMAS. *No. By their passion.*

VANDA. *His passion.*

THOMAS. *You're denying her passion. That's sexist, too. She's as passionate as he is, and this play is about how these two passions collide.*

VANDA. *What age are you living in? He brings her into this, and she's the one who gets to look bad, she's the villain.*

THOMAS. *There are no villains in this piece. It's a plea for people*

to understand that. This is a chemical reaction. Two people meet and ignite each other. It's not making some general statement about men *or* women.

VANDA. Sex, class, gender, pal.

THOMAS. It's about a woman who recognizes something in herself—possibly—and about a man who until he meets her is forced to hide his true self away.

VANDA. Yeah. This *prig*.

THOMAS. Why are you putting him down like this?

VANDA. She's this very nice, this *innocent* person who comes wandering in.

THOMAS. You don't understand, you don't understand.

VANDA. She *says*, "You've corrupted me."

THOMAS. *Is she innocent? Or was this desire for domination always there? Maybe Kushemski just brings it out of her?*

VANDA. Yeah, maybe she's just a woman. This is like some old Victorian Teutonic tract against *Das Female*. He forces her into a power play and then he blames her.

THOMAS. That's not it all, that's not what this play is about at all.

VANDA. And *the play* blames her.

THOMAS. It doesn't blame her.

VANDA. You don't *see* that?

THOMAS. How does it blame her?

VANDA. It's blaming her on every page, in every line! What happens at the end? She humiliates him one last time, she gets Count What's-his-name to slap him around, she leaves Kushemski there with his dick in his hand, and she gets blamed like it was all her fault! Like he didn't want it in the first place! Like he wasn't asking for it! I think old Kushemski's hot for the Count, that's what I think.

THOMAS. How can you be so stupid? Really? How can you be so good at playing her, and be so fucking stupid about her? And about everything else in this play. You fucking idiot. You fucking idiot *woman*. Yes. Idiot *woman*. Idiot *actress*.

(Pause.)

VANDA. I think you owe me an apology, buster.

THOMAS. I'm sorry.

VANDA. Excuse me?

THOMAS. I'm sorry. I got a little carried away.

VANDA. Well. Can't take back what's been said.

(She takes off the dress and gets into her leather skirt, packing up her things to leave, wearing her leather skirt and bra.)

THOMAS. You might say this play is about...beware of what you wish for.

VANDA. Because she might come walking in the door. Don't fuck with a goddess is what it's about.

THOMAS. If you will. Sorry. What's modern for "if you will"?

VANDA. "Whatever."

THOMAS. Whatever.

VANDA. Good thing there's no such thing as a goddess, or you'd be fucked, boy. **STOP**

THOMAS. All right. Yes. You're right. I take all your points. Could we read on? Would you mind? Vanda?

VANDA/DUNAYEV. *Don't you understand you'll never be safe in the hands of a woman? Of any woman?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *You and I are adventurers, Vanda. We're explorers of the spirit. We're expanding the limits of human nature.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV. *Your nature is diseased. It was poisoned by the Countess. Now you're reaping the effects.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *You adore the effects, just as I do.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV. *No.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *You love having me in your power.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV. *No.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI. *Tell me anything you would have me do, anything in the world, and it's done.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV. *I called you a dreamer, but dreamer is too petty. You're a fanatic. You're a mad visionary. You'll go to any lengths to realize your dreams.*