

DOROTHY AND ROSE

DOROTHY: Rose Almayevna, how is the cake coming for the Professor Charmaine Bigdaddichna?

ROSE: It is well, Dorothy Sophiovna. But I do not feel like tea today on the farm, here in St. Olaf.

DOROTHY: How about a drink?

ROSE: No, I do not want to start drinking this early, Dorothy Sophiovna. It is too hot. [Pause.] Dorothy Sophiovna, how long have we known one another?

DOROTHY: How long? Goodness, I'd have to think... I would say... Eleven years. Just after your husband died, global warming flooded Miami, our television show was canceled, and all of us moved to the farm, here, in St. Olaf.

ROSE: [Wistfully:] I remember the trees in Miami, Dorothy Sophiovna.

DOROTHY: Oh, the trees! Tell me about the trees, Rose Almayevna!

ROSE: They were filled with life and beauty... And coconuts. They would grow very tall, the palm trees in Miami, and had leaves only on the top, leaves which would shoot out like a bouffant hair-do or possibly a snow cone. They were grand and beautiful and because of them, the people in Miami would grow tall and slender with collagen, and wear a lot of gold jewelry and thong bikinis, and dance to Gloria Estefan, and eat spicy pork entrées.

DOROTHY: How I miss the palm trees of Miami, Rose Almayavna! How I miss natural grace and fluidity that they gave the people!

ROSE: But there are trees here, too, Dorothy, and we mustn't forget that they, too, have life and beauty, even if they do not have coconuts. [Pause; ROSE continues to work on her cake.] Gosh...

DOROTHY: Yes, Rose Almayavna?

ROSE: I was just thinking... Eleven years. We've known one another, Dorothy. That sure is a long time. Have I changed very much since then?

DOROTHY: Oh, yes. A lot. You used to be young and good-looking and now you're not. [Laffs!]

ROSE: Of course. [Completely flies off the handle:] Life is boring. It's stupid. It stinks.

DOROTHY: Oh, Rose, you're like a sister to me. You are so kind. But you are plain.

ROSE: Thank you, Dorothy. I take comfort in my plainness.

DOROTHY: I take comfort in your plainness, too.

DOROTHY AND BLANCHE

DOROTHY: Just calm down, Blanche. Where is your sister?

BLANCHE: On a walk. But look at this. [Produces a newspaper.] She's givin' a signin' of her book downtown this evenin'. By the time she leaves St. Olaf, she's gonna be more famous here than I am!

DOROTHY: Honey, only if they close the Sheraton. [Laffs!]

BLANCHE: And for what?!? She does what she has always done; she sits in the study from morning to night. Scribble, scribble, scribble. Pity the poor paper! And now she's written a novel. I can't believe she's ever read a novel, much less wrote one. She never shuts up about how unhappy she is, when the fact is she has the most amazing reasons to be happy. For twenty-five years, she was a professor, respected throughout Russia, lecturing and writing about art. And for twenty-five years, she did nothing but regurgitate other people's ideas about art, about realism, naturalism... And now she's retired, here, to the countryside, and it turns out she's a complete fraud. Charmaine had no money, so she turns to me, her sister. We had not spoke in two decades, and yet she relies on me to give her shelter! And what does she do? Walks around like Aphrodite stepped down from Mount Olympus, with her taut bosoms! She has no reputation whatsoever and has turned to writing immoral novels to keep her alive! Writing this trash, this FILTH in order to keep herself fed and clothed with the finest polyesters and rayons!

DOROTHY: It sounds like you envy her.

BLANCHE: I do!

SOPHIA: Disgraceful! Blanche, you know, in one of Ostrovsky's plays, there's a character with a huge mustache and no talent. That's you. [Laffs!]

DOROTHY: Ma!

CHARMAINE AND BLANCHE

CHARMAINE: The weather's lovely today...

BLANCHE: Lovely for hanging yourself!

CHARMAINE: Oh, Blanche! You crack me up!

BLANCHE: I wasn't tryin' to be funny, Charmaine.

CHARMAINE: I see! Well. It's very strange, isn't it? You start talkin', or Dorothy, or that old idiot, her mother: fine, wonderful, everyone pays attention. But I say one word and you all start feeling miserable. Even my voice is repulsive. All right, I agree! I'm an egotist. I'm a tyrant. But don't I have the right to a little ego in my old age? Haven't I earned it? I ask you, don't I have the right to a little peace and quiet, and a little respect from the rest of you?

BLANCHE: No one's denying you your rights. The wind's coming up. I'd better shut the window. It's going to rain. No one is trying to deny you your rights.

CHARMAINE: I have devoted my entire life to scholarship. I had my own office, my lecture hall, I had colleagues who treated me with respect -- and now, suddenly, it's gone. I sit here in this graveyard, surrounded by stupid people saying stupid things. But I'm still alive! St. Olaf -- it's like a prison. I sit here dreaming about the past...

BLANCHE: You remember that time Big Daddy caught us skinny dippin' with boys?

CHARMAINE: And you told him that it was just our bible study group just practicin' baptizin'. [Laughs.]

BLANCHE: It would have worked, too, if you hadn't come up screamin', "Hey, y'all! Things look bigger underwater!" [All laugh. Pause.] My goodness, it was like we were friends there. For a moment.

CHARMAINE: [Warmly:] Yes, it was.