

Liu: She's terribly disappointed in me . . . She'd always hoped for an attractive daughter. She thinks I was some sort of genetic mutation.

Nick: That can't be it—

Liu: But it is!

Nick: No one could ever feel shortchanged by *your* looks. (Beat.)

Liu (softly): Thank you. (Beat.) Or yours. You look like—

Nick: Nothing ever happened to me, I know—

Liu: It's your charm! Nicky Tabula rasa, that's what I'll call you!

Nick: Please don't.

Liu: It's a good name!

Nick: It's the wrong name.

Liu: I don't think so.

Nick: Trust me.

Liu (softly): I don't think so. (Pause. They look at each other. Offstage: Eva's voice calls musically: "Lili . . . Lili . . .") Oh God!

Nick: Who is that?

Liu: Her. She's come back.

Nick: So?

Liu: She's going to send Olivia for me now. Or come herself. She'll take me back to the house.

Nick: The house?

Liu: Yes. Over there.

Nick: Is that—is that yours?

Liu: Yes. Of course.

Nick: Where we are now—is this your property?

Liu: (Beat. Nick colors, starts foraging for his clothes.)

Nick: God, I'm sorry—I'm very sorry—I had no idea.

Liu: No—no—it's fine.

Nick: If I had known, I'd never have . . . just sprawled out here like this—

Liu: Don't go—

Nick: It's just . . . that house doesn't even look like a house, really, I thought it was . . . I don't know . . . a boathouse. Or something . . . and it certainly doesn't seem to go along with this land and so I—I—

Liu: Stop, please . . . stop. (He is dismissed by now; he stops.) Look—please—you'd want to please—come see me sometimes? There's only one—I can't speak to anyone—and the very stern with me and—oh, please, would you, would you please . . . come see me?

Nick: Lili—
Liu: (while going to her suitcase, PLIVIA enters, stands a little away from them.)

OLIVIA (gently): Lili . . . (Liu looks at her, looks back at Nick. Then she goes to Nick, takes his face in her hands, and kisses him. They part and she walks off with OLIVIA. NICK stands there.)

SCENE 2
↓

Liu, Eva, and OLIVIA are breakfasting outside.

EVA: . . . and, then, we all repaired to the club where the most mystifying entertainer held forth . . . if only I could remember his

name! He was . . . how do you say it . . . *crossed-eyed*, with vast jowls and this idiotic, juvenile voice, and, of course, his language was quite improper, and what he said was simply nonsense, yet those around me *howled*, as though these were the pearls of Oscar Wilde being thrown before them. Unutterably fascinating! I wanted you to be there, Lili, to assure me I had not *lost* my mind.

Liu: Uh-huh,

EVA: Everyone asked after you at dinner—aren't you hungry, why aren't you eating? Olivia has prepared for us a lovely porridge. (Lili *lakes a bite*.) That's good. At any rate, I had a pencil with me, my little gold pencil, and I recorded my impressions of the event on a cocktail napkin, lest I forget them. What an extraordinary evening. Yet, not at all . . . untypical . . . for the region. Ve-e-e-ry strange.

OLIVIA: Would you like me to make something else, Lili?

Liu: No.

EVA: That darling Mindy Kahkstein was there. A *m-a-o-u-r* peculiar girl. One of those American girls who can't seem to get used to their bosoms. To show or not to show. To slump or stand erect. You feel these are her sole concerns. She asked after you.

OLIVIA: Would you like milk instead of coffee, Lili? I'll get you some.

Liu: Coffee's fine.

EVA: And, of course, I spent time with Libby Kahkstein—a woman who is *trai chers*, but not, I think, intellectually robust. And, once again, she disgraced herself at table. Why, when I tell you what she ate, and in what quantities! The *salad*—served at the beginning—barbaric, anyway, but Libby tore into it like a savage woman. And the Russian dressing—not just a dollop, either, but *gobules*—Gobules?—*Globules*. Then the consommé, then the *derma*, smothered in gravy and onions, then the fillet mignon—a streak the size and shape of a jackboot also smothered in gravy. With a vast baked potato, into which Libby Kahkstein scooped not merely sour cream and chives, but five pats of butter. *Plus asparagus* with hollandaise. *Plus*, infinite

numbers of buttered rolls, with seeds popping everywhere. *Plus*, sherbet between courses. *Plus*, barrels of cream soda. *Plus*, coffee with heavy cream and parfait. Then—*then*—after the meal was over, and there was a little desultory dancing—out came this enormous Viennese table. And Libby Kahkstein—using every ounce of energy available to her simply to transport her laden bulk—helped herself not *once*, not *twice*, but *three* times. To Napoleon, sacher torte, and a large plate of little cookies. *Incrayable!* But, my darling, why aren't you eating your breakfast?

Liu: I don't know.

EVA: You must . . . you must keep up your strength. Next time, you will come with me. It will please me to have you by my side, just for your humorous way of looking at things.

Liu: I don't want to go.

OLIVIA: I'll make you some dry toast.

Liu: I'm perfectly all right. Please leave me alone. (Beat.)

EVA: Now, Lili, we are only trying our best—

OLIVIA: It's all right.

EVA:—our very best to help you, my darling—

OLIVIA: Nobody ever died from missing breakfast.

EVA: And if we misspeak ourselves sometimes, that's—

Liu: I don't need anything. Thank you. And I'd rather not be asked. (Beat.)

EVA: Well, then, my darling, you shan't be. (Beat.)

Liu: Thank you. (Liu *slips quickly a moment. Eva and Olivia remain sitting*.)

EVA: But . . . you must . . . I'll, you must come *out* a bit—

Liu: Why?