

VANDA

(She shakes herself out for a second, doing vocal exercises.)

KAAA! KA-KA! KA-KA! INK. SPOT. INK! SPOT! Okay, I'm ready. Turn around. Go on, turn around. You're reading and having your coffee, you don't see me.

(THOMAS turns his back to her.)

Okay. Morning in Transylvania. Morning in Transylvania.

THOMAS

Whenever you're ready.

VANDA

Knock knock knock.

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*Come in.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

(a perfect, polished accent)

*Herr Doctor Severin von Kushemski?*

(THOMAS turns and "sees her.")

*I am Vanda von Dunayev. I'm staying in the room above yours. I'm sorry to disturb you. I found this book in the birch grove last night.*

(Holds out her script.)

*A copy of Faust, with your bookplate inside. It was sitting at the fountain by that statue of Venus.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*Thank you, I was just asking the maid about that.*

VANDA

*I would have sent it by Maid, but I also found this rather provocative bookmark inside...*

(Takes a "card" from the "book.") *Is*

*it a Raphael?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*It's a Titian. "Venus With Mirror." A favorite painting of mine.*

VANDA

*Yes, your Venus is as well-thumbed as your Faust. Is she faithful?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*I'm sorry?*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*To the original.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*To my mind, that woman is Venus. It's a faithful copy of the painting, if that's what you mean.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*I can certainly understand your fascination. The plush red velvet. The dark fur outlining her naked body. The bracelets cuffing her wrists. Her golden breasts. The picture's ravishing. But is Venus covering herself with the fur – or is she opening the fur to reveal her glories?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*We'll never know. Both, I suppose. Well, thank you for returning it.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*I also couldn't help noticing this intriguing poem scrawled on the back. "To Venus In Fur." Did you write this poem?*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*It's just a bit of doggerel...*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*Doggerel. Hardly...*

*"To love and be loved – ah, what bliss!*

*And yet there glows a greater joy:*

*The torment of that woman's kiss*

*Who makes us her slave, her footstool, her toy,*

*Who renders me a cringing cur,*

*My goddess, my dictator, Venus in fur..."*

*Interesting sentiments. I'd guard this bookmark well, if I were you.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*I appreciate your discretion.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*Here's your Faust with your Venus, all safe and sound. And behold. You're complete again.*

*(A pause.)*

*Well...*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*Would you like to sit down, Frau Dunayev?*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*Thank you.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*May I take your fur?*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*That's very kind.*

(He takes the shawl off her.)

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*It's Tartar, isn't it. Caucasian sable. Probably from Kazakhstan.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*Caucasian sable from Kazakhstan. Precisely.* – Kushemski stands there staring at the fur in his hands.

(She waits for him to stare at the shawl.) *You're trembling, Herr Kushemski!*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*I'm sorry. May I ring for something?*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*Some coffee would be lovely.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*You can have mine.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

(mimes taking off gloves) *How nice. Two sugars, thank you.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

(mimes pouring) He pours her coffee.

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*I hope I haven't disturbed you, trodding across your ceiling with my heels.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*Not at all. Trod with your heels as hard as you like.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*So you're a poet, Herr Kushemski. A dreamer.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*A dilettante, if anything. In my life I've stretched a score of canvases but painted nothing. You might say I live the way I paint and write poetry. As an amateur.*

VANDA/DUNAYEV

*Your knowledge of fur seems more than amateur. You knew my stole intimately and you two had only just met.*

THOMAS/KUSHEMSKI

*The love of fur is innate. – I'll skip all this.*