

Introduction

When I first decided to write this play, it was the fall of 2021 and the first semester in person after Covid. I was enrolled in Prof. Rosemary McLaughlin's Intro to Playwriting class and was assigned to write journals on my observations of the return to a more normal life. These could be anything such as overheard conversations, song lyrics or story ideas and I would mostly write about the differences Covid had brought, but I couldn't think of anything substantial enough to turn into a story. One day while cleaning my room at home, I stumbled across a travel journal from my 2017 trip to Romania when I attended my uncle's wedding. It was detailed, with vivid descriptions of people using horse carts next to cars on the roads, my impressions of the countryside, the sights I saw at tourist attractions and the experiences of what it was like to witness my culture in a way I had only heard about secondhand. I'm glad I documented these experiences because with it, I was able to use this experience as a backdrop to write my own story that would become this play.

My goal as an artist has been to write plays that are entertaining while still having a deeper message that leaves the audience with questions to ponder and discuss afterwards. I want to do this because I believe the best way to change people's minds, and thus society is through art. It's essential to protest politicians and advocate for issues, but after a while these become exhausting for everyone. There always seems to be a never-ending list of new problems trending on social media and people start to feel they're being guilted into supporting them by making social media posts. This constant pressure to prove how "woke" they are makes protestors seem biased and fickle.

At best, people roll their eyes at those who are protesting their personality and at worst, people get into heated arguments online that sometimes lead to extreme cases where personal and financial issues are released online. Because of this, I think it's more effective and safer to spread ideas through entertainment as more people consume entertainment than news. People are more open to consuming new genres of entertainment and they are more likely to listen to and believe in something if they are being entertained and most people aren't entertained but protests aren't very entertaining. As a result, I find art

to be the best way to introduce new ideas to a wider range of people. Putting social messages in entertainment can be a slippery slope into propaganda. Traditionally, entertainment was produced by the media but now content created by influencers is being consumed by an ever-increasing portion of the youngest people in society. On the surface, this seems harmless but it's even more dangerous because young people are more likely to believe in the things they like without thinking deeply about it. In recognizing that danger, I tried to write the play in a way that isn't preachy, it just tells a story but through that story the audience is able to understand the messages. I made sure that the messages I was weaving into my play were ideas that I believed in, so I wouldn't accidentally express support for something that went against my messages. At times it was difficult since there are some characters who genuinely believe they are right because everyone believes they are the heroes of their own stories, so I had to find a way to show the audience that these characters were villains by the lines they spoke.

The social issues I decided to focus on in my play were sex trafficking, intergenerational trauma, alcoholism and the growing negative influence of social media, set in a coming-of-age story that takes place in Romania. I chose these issues because I relate to some of these within my own family and all are issues that affect Romania, both in 2017 and today. Romania is also the perfect backdrop because it's a culture that is both familiar, the post-communist land of Dracula, but exotic as many Americans haven't heard much more than those two facts. Because of this, my intention was to write a play where, in the protagonist's mind, Romania is the stereotyped land of vampires that then delves deeper into the reality to emerge a more well-rounded and mature person.

For those who have heard of Romania, after vampires and communists the next fact they know about is the poverty. This is because Romania was never a prosperous country due to its long, bloody history. As a result, Romania has always been a melting pot of different ethnicities and customs from Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the Balkans, but not in the same way as America. Romania was never a land of opportunity, which is why there are so many social problems. Despite being located in Europe with affluent neighbors, Romania is on the verge of Third World status. Western Europeans see Romania

as a slum country and its people as undesirable migrant workers coming to steal jobs or engage in crime. Ideas that are very similar to opinions some Americans have about South American migrants.

Romania's bloody history began about 3,000 years ago when the land was settled by Slavic and Scythian tribes. In 335 BCE, Alexander the Great invaded parts of the region, renamed it Thrace and brought the Roma from India to settle the region. During the Roman Empire, it became known as Dacia and was conquered by Emperor Trajan. During the Middle Ages, the Dacia became known as Wallachia and for the next 600 years, Wallachia was continuously invaded by a long laundry list of warlords, including Hun, Mongol and Rus tribes. Then in 1476 the Ottomans, led by Sultan Mehmed II subdued the country by defeating Vlad Țepeș, Romania's most famous king and the inspiration for Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The Ottomans continued to rule until 1881 when Romania became an independent country, but that didn't last for long. After WWI, Romania became part of the Eastern Soviet bloc and in 1947 remained communist until 1989 with the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu. Today, Romania is an EU candidate but it's still economically disadvantaged because oligarchs sold off manufacturing assets to get rich and everyone who could find a way out, did.

Due to the complicated history of Romania, the wealthier European neighbors see Romanians as untrustworthy which can be seen in their treatment of Romanian immigrants. It's a self-fulfilling cycle because when people are poor and infrastructure is terrible, they don't have marketable skills, so the only way they're able to make a living is through crime. While there are some who try to make an honest living by becoming construction workers or maids, the unfortunate reputation of Romanians who engage in crime tarnish the rest, so companies are less likely to hire anyone who is Romanian. It's even harder for Romania's young women immigrants who are often tricked into sex trafficking by being recruited for opportunities abroad such as maid, waitress or nanny jobs.

While I've had the privilege of being born in America and never had to deal with these struggles, sometimes when I casually mention I'm half Romanian, I either get people who have no idea on which continent what Romania sits, or I get negative reactions from Europeans. They either look at me in disbelief and say, "You're too (educated, nice, respectable, hygienic, ect.) to be a Romanian!" or are

shocked and suddenly treat me like I'm untrustworthy. Eastern Europeans look at me with pity and men have said "I hear Romanians are a lot of fun" to imply loose morals compliment saying "No wonder Romania is the land of prostitutes. You're so beautiful!" as if women should be flattered to be objectified and abused.

Because of these experiences, I wanted to play with the negative stereotypes associated with Romania by setting the play set as a dark comedy. With the antagonistic characters taking stereotypes to flamboyant extremes. The Gheorghe character genuinely believes he's the reincarnation of Vlad Țepeș and represents Romanian vampire stereotype. He's bigoted against Hungarians and Turks due to an ancient grudge which is a nod to the historical context and emphasizes the fact that "an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind". His plan is ridiculous and creates more harm than good, so he represents dealing with generational trauma by saying, "If I had to suffer, so do you". Gheorghe wants revenge on the world, whether it's the Russians who imprisoned him, the Hungarians and Turks who betrayed Wallachia or his own family who are powerless against him.

Ivona represents the flamboyant extreme negative stereotype associated with Romanian women who manage to avoid being prostituted. She's a vain, narcissistic gold digger who has no qualms about stealing, manipulating, murdering and even profiting from the suffering of other women, including those in her own family. In communist Romania, women played a large role in running the black market since many of the men were imprisoned. I tried to play with the power dynamics of traditional heterosexual relationships by making Ivona feel indebted to her husband because he provided her with an escape from her provincial life. Culturally, women of her generation were taught that even when they are the primary breadwinners they need to be obedient to their husbands. I've observed this trend among immigrant mothers in America, so while Ivona is an antagonistic character, I wanted to show that she's "long suffering". Even so, despite being financially independent she chooses to remain dependent on Gheorghe who is a bad person and that fact makes her even worse.

I also wanted to invert the stereotypes for the positive Romanian characters in order to show that people are not always as they seem. Viviana is a bubbly beautician, so it's easy to dismiss her as ditzy

since she doesn't have a university degree and isn't very fluent in English. People who aren't native English speakers struggle because people assume that if you can't speak properly, you're dumb. What these people don't realize is that speaking multiple languages requires constant code switching to translate thoughts into words that make sense in a different language. A person who speaks a second language on a basic level is actually using more brain power than someone who's fluent in only one language. Viviana shows her intelligence by being the voice of reason for the majority of the play. Despite being a hyper feminine ideal, she's strong, in both body and spirit, she's nurturing and sweet but will fight tooth and nail to protect her family.

Ionuț could be easily dismissed as stoic, gruff and uneducated because works a manual labor job, gruff, uneducated but despite these outward appearances, he's funny, romantic and nurturing. Like Viviana, he never got a university degree and while she's more "worldly" because she's exposed to more international pop culture, that doesn't mean that Ionuț is closed minded and stuck in his ways. He's street smart and can think critically enough to not fall for Gheorghe and Ivona's lies. Ionuț's self-aware of the advantages being a man gives him and does his best to protect the women in his life when needed, while also stepping back to let these women lead when they know more than he does. He's the kind of man that holds other men accountable for their actions and is appalled by Gheorghe and what he tried to do with Mariana. Ionuț serves as an example of the masculine ideal since he's a "-man's man-", physically strong and a provider while remaining noble.

By incorporating varying levels of English fluency for the characters, I wanted to show that there are different ways people learn English and the grammatical mistakes the characters make are representative of those made by Romanian speakers. What helped me decide on the varying levels of fluency was to analyze each character's backgrounds. Gheorghe sees himself as a proud Romanian "-intellectual-" and lived in America, so he's fluent but has a very thick accent. Ivona is also fluent but her accent is less thick since status is very important to her and she tries hard to be seen as a professional. Ionuț has a heavy accent and speaks English on an advanced intermediate level since he has practice

talking to his cousin Daria every week but Viviana speaks basic English because she only learned it in high school, movies and social media.

Through either accentuating or inverting the stereotypes of the Romanian characters, I tried to show that stereotypes in general are ridiculous and that while there are some Romanians who are terrible, there are also Romanians who are good, just like with any culture. That way, I'm not falling into offensive stereotyping of a "-less sophisticated-" culture like the movie *Borat* did for Kazakhstan, but I'm also not putting Romania on a pedestal and saying that everything and everyone there is enlightened.

Since the intended audience are Americans, I didn't invert or accentuate stereotypes and instead tried to create complex characters that can be recognized in everyone's families and across cultures. Daria is a first-generation Romanian immigrant in America, so she's a mix of the two cultures who means well but can be controlling and over nurture her daughter to the point where it's stifling. This is a common trauma response among people who were neglected as children and while that's understandable, the more she clings, the more Mariana tries to rebel and escape. Despite this, Daria and Mariana still have a close relationship, so I wanted to show that their issues are a work in progress because all families are complicated. Despite mostly breaking away from the generational trauma, Daria's toxic habits pass onto her daughter, so she continues to pass it, just to a lesser extent. She resents having her parents holidays like Easter, but her well-meaning husband convinced her that Mariana should get to know her grandparents, so she puts up with it knowing that Gheorghe and Ivona can't be trusted. Since she's been in America most of her life, Daria's character doesn't have an accent but when she's upset or flustered, I imagine her slipping from time to time but not into full Romanian phrases like the other characters.

John is also a flawed character, who on the surface seems like a chill, goofy man who doesn't think too deeply about things and entertains his daughter, but he's also battling alcoholism. Due to his stressful office job, he doesn't have much time to spend with his family and when he's off the clock, he's too tired to do anything so instead he relaxes with a beer. Over the years, having a cold beer after work turned into a few and then a whole case until he now it's at the point where he lives to drink. His job just funds his drinking habit and he feels resentful when his wife and daughter spend money towards

necessities. Despite being a slave to his addiction, I didn't want to portray John as a villain with the usual toxic traits alcoholic's traits such as beating his wife or daughter. The humor in his alcoholism is because drunk people act in weird ways, but there's an undertone of tragedy, which allows John to simultaneously stay a positive character while setting up his addiction to ruin his life and affect the lives of his loved ones. The most interesting aspect of comedy is that under the funniest jokes there's always a tragic deeper meaning, like Pagliacci who puts on a happy face to be funny to the audience but is secretly in anguish due to his wife's infidelity.

Then there is Mariana, the protagonist because she's the person who can either continue or break the continuation of the intergenerational trauma, a tough problem to fix as she's got it coming from all sides. The grandparents suffered economic hardships under communism that caused them to become exploitive opportunists who abused and used their own daughter, who in turn became an over-nurturing mom who's built a codependent relationship with her daughter but there's also John, who has his own issues of only seeing his worth as a provider and his struggle with alcohol. Ionuț and Viviana have the least amount of trauma in the family but are still impacted by Ionuț's crazy aunt and uncle who try to destroy their wedding and Viviana realizes too late the kind of family she's marrying into. While Ionuț and Viviana aren't poor, they lead a more modest lifestyle than Mariana who eventually becomes more aware of her own privilege.

Mariana was actually the most challenging character for me to write because she's the youngest, so I had to find a way to make her seem naïve without being helpless. I struggled through multiple drafts where her character didn't seem to have any agency, particularly in the draft where I added a third act where she goes on exchange to France and suffers her own trauma. I ended up cutting that part because it seemed forced to cram into this play and it didn't match the Romania theme. Also, it seemed too much like "-pain for pain's sake-" and lost much of the dark humor so I decided to save it separately to use the idea for a separate future project.

I tried to give Mariana more agency through the ways a 16-year-old would try to act to feel powerful. I tried to avoid the trope of the young teenage girl who is more adept and powerful than adults

because it's overdone and unrealistic- but I also didn't want her to be passive. My solution was to have her try to advocate for herself in small ways, such as convincing Viviana to not call the police based on her ideas of corruption and that she can handle things herself because she's a big girl now or having her try to push Gheorghe out of the bathroom door herself because she doesn't want to seem weak by calling for help. These are realistic things a teenager with little experience would think are good ways to be more in control of a situation, but anyone who's older would see them as ineffective and unrealistic, which adds more truth and humor to the story.

I made her an aspiring influencer because I reflected on what I was like at 16 and saw that the way I used to talk and joke around with my friends was a perfect way of showing how her inner thoughts came out in her videos and how it contrasted to how she spoke to her family. Teenagers have been conditioned by social media to be obsessed with taking pictures and posting them online, so it fit for her to think "Pics or it didn't happen!" – and this explains why she would have monologues of exposition while she's recording. By having Mariana be a wannabe influencer, I wanted to imply that she knows some of the dangers the influencer path can lead her to do. Recent reports claim that Instagram influencers are being paid by Dubai oil barons to fly over and initiate their pre-teen sons. This is coupled with the irony of how in disadvantaged countries, men pay to abuse minors, while in developed countries, men pay women to abuse minors.

I also wanted to leave the audience wondering whether Mariana might fall into the trap one day, despite saying she would never do that, since social media validation can lead people down dark paths. In leaving the audience wondering, they can insert their own conclusions if she's emerged from this situation wiser, or she's playing a dangerous game by accepting Ivona's money. Does that acceptance lead her to ultimately become the next star at Angel Films, or does she become a famous fashion influencer, forgetting her own story to end up getting paid to molest a minor, just like someone once paid for the opportunity to molest her?

My goal for this play was to bring more attention to the social issues of intergenerational trauma, sex trafficking, alcoholism and social media in a way that uses my cultural heritage as a framework. I

hope that everyone who sees this play, whether on stage, in a production, on screen or just by reading this script, will get a taste of what it's like to grow up ethnic but still white in this ever-globalizing world, along with all of the joys and struggles that come with the process of blending the best parts of The Old World into the best parts of The New World.

Drew University

College of Liberal Arts

Tears and a Wedding:
A Dark Comedy by Alexa deBinder

A Thesis in Theatre Arts

by

Alexa Hinkle

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Summary

Mariana, a 16-year-old Romanian American girl, attends her uncle's wedding in the old country. Amid the culture shock at finding that the old country isn't as old as she thought, Mariana begins to explore her heritage. Her plans of using her trip to become a social media influencer is derailed when generational trauma pays a visit. Mariana must enlist the help of her uncle and his fiancée to avoid getting trapped in the same bad situation that her mother endured 30 years before. This play explores the issues of social media, alcoholism, intergenerational trauma and sex trafficking, told as a dark comedy using Romania's cultural heritage as a backdrop.

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Tears and a Wedding

written by

Alexa deBinder

Website: www.alexadebinder.com

E-mail: debinder@pm.me

CHARACTER LIST:

MARIANA: 16-year-old American girl, white or mixed ethnicity. Young and excitable, she's adventurous, impulsive and funny. She sees the world with fresh eyes but then becomes disillusioned which turns her cold, self-isolating and mistrustful. She needs to mature and find a healthy medium between the two extremes.

DARIA: 45-year-old Romanian–American woman, white. She's Mariana's mother and had a terrible life growing up with abusive parents but despite this, preserved and made a good life for herself. Will do anything to ensure a better life for her daughter. Nevertheless, she has an explosive temper which she has trouble controlling. She speaks perfect English without an accent.

JOHN: 46-year-old American man, any ethnicity. He's Mariana's father and works a white-collar job but comes from a blue-collar family. He thinks himself a "simple" man. Down to earth and goofy with his daughter, he doesn't think about anything in life deeply. His workaholic tendencies turned him into an alcoholic, as a result he's either working or hanging out at the bar with his buddies.

GHEORGHE: 85-year-old Romanian man, white. He's Daria's father and studied ancient and medieval Romanian history at Universitatea din București but was sent to the Gulag for organizing a protest against communism. He went crazy from being tortured and now works in the Romanian black market operating in America. He thinks himself as a "mad" genius and tries to use his intellect to charm everyone to participating in his schemes, no matter the atrocity. Genuinely believes he's in the right because he's the reincarnation of Vlad Țepeș. He speaks fluent English with a heavy Romanian accent.

IVONA: 70-year-old Romanian woman, white. She's Daria's mother and used to be the most beautiful girl in the village but wanted riches and prestige, so she moved to Bucharest to marry Gheorghe. She uses her status as an American to scout country girls for a modeling agency that's a front for pornography. Snobbish and shrewd, she thinks she can control her husband and use him to further her agenda. She speaks fluent English with a Romanian accent.

IONUȚ: 30-year-old Romanian man, white or mixed ethnicity. He's Daria's cousin and works as an auto mechanic. On the surface he seems gruff and rugged, but is actually romantic, funny, nurturing and protective. He speaks formal English with a heavy Romanian accent.

VIVIANA: 25-year-old Romanian woman, any ethnicity. She's Ionuț's fiancée and works as a beautician. Bubbly, hardworking, generous and wholesome but mess with her or her family and she'll fight you with her fists or her wits, whichever the situation calls for. She speaks basic English with a heavy Romanian accent.

PRIEST: 90-year-old Romanian man, any ethnicity. His goal is to achieve world peace and end suffering. He has worked at the same rural church his entire life, so he's seen it all, but it still wounds him when he witnesses family drama. He speaks basic English with a heavy Romanian accent. *Can be double cast with John, the Man or the Cashier.*

MAN: 55-year-old Hungarian man, any ethnicity. He grew up poor on the outskirts of Pest and backstabbed his way to the top so he could live and work in Buda. He has more money than he can use, so he spends it to watch innocent beings suffer-whether it's gambling on cockfights or paying to rape a teenage virgin in Romania. He speaks basic English with a heavy Hungarian accent. *Can be double cast with John, the Priest or the Cashier.*

CASHIER: Romanian, any ethnicity, any gender, any age. They are the child of the grocer and hate their job. As a result, they are indifferent to any violence that occurs but suddenly become lawful when there's a chance that someone might shoplift even one small piece of candy. *Can be double cast with Daria, John, the Man or the Priest.*

ACT 1

SCENE 1, EARLY JUNE IN THE US. MARIANA AND JOHN ARE RIDING IN THE CAR ON THEIR WAY TO A RESTAURANT.

JOHN

So, um, you and your mother don't like, hate each other anymore, right?

MARIANA

That was like, last week! But no, I don't hate her.

JOHN

Well sorry for asking! I was just wondering, that's all. Your mother does get anxious and worried, something that you too-

MARIANA

Yes! Yes, I KNOW that I "take after her in that respect"-

JOHN

Hey, I'm not trying to start anything, I'm just pointing it out-

MARIANA

Well maybe I wouldn't be like that if you'd just let me go to Romania!

JOHN

Mariana, don't start-

MARIANA

Why won't you let me go?! What, you expect me not to get to know that side of the family?

Never seeing my uncle's wedding and get in touch with my roots and-

JOHN

Mariana! It's not that we don't want you to do these things, it's just that-

MARIANA

What? That mom won't be able to constantly hover around me all the time, controlling my every move?!

JOHN

No, it's just the logistics-

MARIANA

We can figure that out!

JOHN

Look honey, first there's the question of where you'll stay-

MARIANA

With Ionuț!

JOHN

Okay, but do we know him that well? No-

MARIANA

Mom does!

JOHN

Does she? He's her what, second cousin? Let's see...Ah! Daria's cousin so that makes him your 2nd cousin twice removed...I think? -

MARIANA

I just call him uncle Ionuț.

JOHN

Whatever, he's not that closely related-

MARIANA

Mom talks with him every week!

JOHN

Huh, so that's why the phone bill keeps going up!

MARIANA

I should be good to stay with Ionuț then, right?

(Beat)

JOHN

(Sighs)

I don't know, even if he does his best in looking after you, I just worry about sending you so far away all alone-

MARIANA

I know! I know. Like, intellectually I understand why you and mom are both like this, since it would be "baby's first time away from home, yada, yada, yada" but emotionally, I need some space from this family!

JOHN

That's for sure.

(To MARIANA)

Well, there's still the question of money since it is pretty expensive.

MARIANA

Isn't the restaurant we're going to kinda expensive?

JOHN

What?! No, the Pub is an affordable family place, with a chill, relaxed atmosphere where all my buddies hangout-

MARIANA

Yeah, a bunch of old geezers that are 125!

JOHN

Fine I'll turn around and take you home!

MARIANA

No! No, it's ok, I'll stop. I'm sorry.

JOHN

But we sure do piss away a lot of money, on food- but not on the pub, nah not at all. That's a basic human need! But on bullshit like-

MARIANA

Wait so I can't go?!

JOHN

Well-

MARIANA

But I have to! Dad, I understand it's expensive and you need to use the money for important things-

JOHN

Like the Pub! -

MARIANA

Yea-ah, but I can't just stay at home forever! I wanna explore! Learn some Romanian! Go sightseeing! Meet a tall, dark and handsome man to experience love for the first time until he breaks my heart-

JOHN

WOAAAHHH there!! Don't go off with some dude, remember what I taught you-

MARIANA

"Men will always leave you sad and pregnant in the end"-

JOHN

That's your mother talking. I mean more like "focusing on boys will be a distraction to your life and future career". Besides, if a guy broke your heart, I'd fly all the way over there and track him down with my machete and use his skin to make a tent-

MARIANA

WOAH, it's not Call of Duty!

JOHN and MARIANA burst out laughing.

MARIANA

But also, ughh!! My life is SOOOO BORING, I wish something interesting would happen for once!

JOHN

(Chuckles)

Careful what you wish for. Boring is good. 'May you live in interesting times' is actually a curse. So be careful!

MARIANA

Okay? So, what if I want some crazy drama to happen? At least I'll feel SOMETHING instead of being numb all the time.

Awkward silence. Then JOHN suddenly points out of the window.

JOHN

Look a monkey!

MARIANA

Where?!

MARIANA eagerly looks around but doesn't see anything.

JOHN

Hahaha made you look!

MARIANA

DA-AD!!

JOHN

What? You used to love that game as a kid, it always cheered you up.

MARIANA

Yeah, it did actually.

(Beat)

We should find time to hangout more!

JOHN

Didn't you just say you wanted to go to Romania?

MARIANA

Wait so I can go now?!

JOHN

(Sighs)

Well, I'll talk it over with your mom, if she thinks it's fine for you to stay with Ionuț then you can go.

Just try not to spend too much when you're over there, I have enough expenses I gotta take care of without adding anything new-

MARIANA

I know, I promise I won't buy ANYTHING!

JOHN

No, no you can buy souvenirs, just watch how much you're spending.

MARIANA

So, like only buy stuff if it has sentimental value or if I absolutely love it, don't waste money on those tchotchkes the scammers sell by the side of the road?

JOHN

Exactly.

MARIANA

Gotcha.

(Beat)

We should still like, make plans to go do something together so we can bond before I go off to college and don't have time for you anymore. You don't wanna end up like the dad in that song, the uhh-

JOHN

Oh yeah! The ahh...the uhh-

MARIANA

"Cat's in the Cradle"!

JOHN

Yes!! Henry Chapin is the man! Here, lemme put it on right now...

JOHN reaches to turn the car stereo on.

MARIANA

Well, actually, can we like, make some plans on things to do? Then we can listen to the song!

JOHN

Look, I wish we could, but I'm just swamped with work-

MARIANA

You've been swamped with work since I was BORN.

JOHN

True, but that's what happens when your mother can't keep a job. I literally have no idea why...Huh, probably because she has a master's in history, like what can you get with THAT.

MARIANA tries to sound polite but fails.

MARIANA

Well maybe if you go out less, we could use that time to do something together, since it's kinda unhealthy to drink a lot.

JOHN

I know, I know, alcohol is my cross to bear, we all have one, that's for sure. Apparently for your mother it's trying to control everyone and for you miss, it's thrill seeking-

MARIANA

I'm working on that!!-

JOHN

Whatever. Besides, what would we even do? We don't have anything in common.

MARIANA

I wonder why.

(Beat)

Well, we did Tai Chi once, we could try again?

JOHN

The place was really far.

MARIANA

Biking?

JOHN

You have the energy for that?

MARIANA

Yeah!

JOHN gives MARIANA a suspicious side eye.

JOHN

Don't you sleep in 'till noon?

MARIANA

Maybe you can teach me to scuba dive? You used to do that with your dad!

JOHN

Yeah, that would be fun...Hmm we'll see then, we don't exactly live by the ocean and scuba is a whole certification process to go through.

MARIANA

Yeah, I guess so. Well, we can totally start that up again when I get back!

JOHN

Hmm, yeah, I guess so.

MARIANA

Like by then, you should have plenty of time to renew your certification and get all of the equipment ready so then I can get registered too, right? That way I'll have something fun to look forward to after the trip!

JOHN

Sure.

JOHN pulls into the parking lot.

JOHN

The parking lot is fuckin' swamped. As USUAL, this is what happens when we wait until 5'oclock to get dinner-

MARIANA

You expect me to eat dinner at 4:30?!

JOHN

Well all my buddies eat dinner at 4pm-

MARIANA

Because they're a million years old and go to bed at 7'oclock! Besides, aren't you usually out 'til midnight anyways?

JOHN

Can you go in and check to see if there's two seats open at the bar?

MARIANA

Sure.

MARIANA EXITS the CAR and JOHN looks out the window anxiously while he picks at the wheel.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2. DARIA IS SITTING ON THE COUCH WATCHING TV WHEN JOHN ENTERS STUMBLING.

DARIA

I see you've been at the pub for-

(Daria checks her watch)

Let's see, 5 hours?

JOHN

Well, uhh my buddies and I decided to go to the, uh, Tippling house and we stayed there for umm...awhile watching the game until Mike heard that...that the Saloon was having an uh...\$2 special on Canadian beer there...yeah so, we went there and... yeah.

DARIA

You're not setting a great example for Mariana.

JOHN

But she's in her room just...playing on her phone or something.

DARIA

Maybe if you were around more then she'd spend more time with you instead of scrolling through her social media 24/7!

JOHN

Well, I know but I'm just, uh...super busy, yeah. Anyway, teenagers don't like...hanging out with their parents. They just wanna to use the uh...computer and social stuff so it's fine!

DARIA

There's ibuprofen in the cabinet over the sink, take two and go to bed. You have work in the morning.

JOHN

Yeah, yeah, I know, I'll do that! But also, like uh, you don't have a job, so-

DARIA

Actually, I do! But I guess an ESL teacher doesn't count?!

JOHN

Yeah, exactly. That's not like...a real job...but hey that's what you can get with an uh...master's in history, which is like umm, hahaha, that's like a Master's in, I don't know, useless-

DARIA

OHH, so only a loser is interested in learning about the past and educating future generations to prevent society from repeating the same mistakes, instead of practical things like pub crawls!!

JOHN

(Hiccups)

I-I'm not trying to-

(Hiccup)

start anything I-

(Hiccup)

just wanted to talk to you about-

(Hiccup)

DARIA

About how you're disappointed in me, our marriage-? As if you're the only one who has any complaints?! Because I-

JOHN holds up his finger telling her to "wait" while he holds his breath trying not to hiccup.

DARIA (CONT.)

You know what, I-I can't take this. You come home from work surly, so Mariana avoids you. But I try to connect with you and sympathize. All in an effort to make you feel better, so you can participate in our family. But even when I do, the only thing you want is to spend all your free time out drinking. Only come home like this?! If I knew you'd turn out like this, I would have never married you!!

JOHN

Mariana wants to go to Romania!

DARIA

Excuse me, WHAT?!!

JOHN

I know, right?! She wants to go to the wedding. I think it's an AWESOME idea, hahaha!

DARIA

NO no no no no no. Are you fucking kidding me?! She absolutely CANNOT go! All alone! She'll get kidnapped!!

JOHN

That's what I thought! But she uh, told me that Ionuț will take care of her.

DARIA

(Sighs)

Yes, I don't doubt that he'd try. But you don't understand, it's different over there-

JOHN

Yeah, it's so close to Iraq! Wait, no that's not it, uh...North Korea?...Ah! Russia!

DARIA

I'm not worried about the politics, it's no more dangerous than here; I'm more worried about what my parents might try in their-.

JOHN

Ivona! Ahh I miss her, remember last Easter when she-

DARIA

YES, I remember and I have ZERO plans of inviting either one of them back!

JOHN

What? Huh, well I know Gheorghe is a little weird, but he's a nice guy.

DARIA

(Huffs)

Of course YOU think that! You'd think the devil himself is 'not so bad' if he bought a round of beers at the Pub.

JOHN

They're her grandparents! They wouldn't even think of hurting her!

DARIA

I find your lack of faith disturbing.

JOHN

Did you just quote Darth Vader?! Oh my God babe, I absolutely love when you do that!

JOHN runs over to kiss DARIA but stumbles.

JOHN (CONT.)

Goddamit! Come on Daria, just let Mariana have some fun for once!

(Beat)

DARIA

(Sighs)

She does need to get out into the world at some point and learn how to take care of herself. As much as I wish I could, I won't be able to protect her forever.

JOHN

Absolutely.

(Tears up)

Ah! Our little baby is all grown up now!

DARIA

Not yet, she's just a teenager! This could be good opportunity to safely expose her to real world problems without us. I'll warn her about everything ahead of time and stress that in no uncertain terms should she TALK TO HER GRANDPARENTS UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE!

JOHN

Hey, I just thought of something, WE should go to the wedding with her!

DARIA

(Sighs)

I wish, but I've seen this episode before. Tomorrow you'll cry poverty again.

JOHN

Okay, yeah I guess all we can do is uh, make sure Mariana doesn't talk to them, yeah.

DARIA

That's literally what I just said.

JOHN

I'll let her know tomorrow, she'll be so happy!

(Beat)

DARIA

Yes, yes she will.

JOHN

Alright well I'm gonna go hit the sack now, you coming?

DARIA

After I finish this episode.

JOHN kisses DARIA.

JOHN

Goodnight babe, love you.

DARIA

Love you.

JOHN EXITS while DARIA continues watching her tv show.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 3. MARIANA IS IN BAG CHECK AT JFK AIRPORT AND IS ABOUT TO GO THROUGH TSA.

DARIA

MARIANA! Come get your carry-on!

MARIANA

But I'm already carrying this small one!

DARIA

Fine! TSA will just LOVE me leaving it here and instead of you going to the wedding, we'd all end up on the no fly list! -

MARIANA

Fine! I'll TAKE IT.

MARIANA is about to trudge through before DARIA stops her again.

DARIA

Mariana!

MARIANA

Yes?!

DARIA

You can't take the water with you so you have to finish it out here-

MARIANA

I'll be late! –

DARIA

That's why we came five hours early, so you have plenty of time!

MARIANA

Ughh!! Okay fine.

DARIA

And do you have a granola bar with you?

MARIANA

Huh? Oh I don't know-

DARIA

It's an eight-hour flight with a 3-hour connection, which means you'll be traveling for the next 12 hours, at least. You don't want to starve! –

MARIANA

I'll be fine! I'll just get chips or something-

DARIA

That's NOT going to-

JOHN ENTERS and hands MARIANA a \$20 bill.

JOHN

Here Mariana! Just take this and buy whatever you need.

MARIANA

Thanks dad!

DARIA

Take these granola bars too. It's always good to have extras and you never know when you'll need them.

MARIANA

Alright.

MARIANA opens a suitcase and puts the granola bars inside.

DARIA

So do you have everything?

MARIANA

Yeah-

DARIA

Where is that extra suitcase! John where is it?!

JOHN

She doesn't NEED another suitcase!

MARIANA

(Laughing)

For real.

DARIA

Mariana! Remember what I told you?

Mariana sobers up and nods.

JOHN

Okay! Well, I guess I'll go back and fetch that mystery suitcase that might have a bom- never mind, in an airport you should never make jokes about-

DARIA

Come on! The agent is ready to check in her bags!

JOHN

Huh, I do remember seeing that mystery suitcase, I don't know where I could possibly- shit!! I took it in the men's room with me!

JOHN smacks himself on the forehead and goes into the bathroom.

DARIA

Okay, so you have your passport?

MARIANA

Yes.

DARIA

And your boarding pass?

MARIANA

Yep.

DARIA

How about your sleep mask? –

MARIANA

YES I have it. Mom, stop fussing!

DARIA

Well I'm not the one who can't sleep unless its pitch black so that's why I asked!

(Silence)

MARIANA

Well the good thing about this trip is that you won't be constantly following me around and hovering.

DARIA

Exactly, so that's why I want you to be prepared. So make sure you're safe because it's not like I have invisible drones keeping tabs on you.

MARIANA

I'm pretty sure I'll be okay.

DARIA

I hope so.

JOHN returns with the mystery suitcase.

JOHN

Here it is! I accidentally left it in the men's room, haha my bad.

DARIA

Well you're lucky it didn't get stolen or reported! And then what would Mariana do? She'd be screwed!

(Turns to MARIANA)

DARIA (CONT.)

Do you need help taking these to the counter?

MARIANA

Mo-om, stop fussing!

MARIANA takes her luggage to the bag check while DARIA and JOHN stay.

DARIA

And remember what I said about Grandma and Grandpa, they might seem innocent but remember what they did last Easter-

MARIANA returns.

MARIANA

Yeah, yeah. Don't go anywhere alone with them-

DARIA

Roll your eyes at me all you want, but I've told you about the horrible things they did during my childhood-

MARIANA

Yes and I'm sorry it happened but I'll be ok, really! I'll have lots of fun hanging out with Ionuț and his fiancée, so the only contact I'll have with them will be at the wedding. So don't worry.

MARIANA hugs JOHN tightly.

JOHN

Love you too, peanut.

MARIANA

Thank you, love you too.

MARIANA hugs DARIA and sniffles.

DARIA

Love you, have fun.

MARIANA

Love you too.

DARIA

Alright! Well, are you ready to go?

MARIANA

Y-Yeah, as ready as I'll ever be, I guess.

MARIANA starts to leave.

DARIA

Don't forget to text us when you land!

MARIANA

Will do!

MARIANA starts to walk away but then turns back.

MARIANA

Oh! Don't forget to feed Chocolate Truffle! I don't want her to starve-

DARIA

I will. At least she won't mind my fussing!

MARIANA

Haha, bye!

JOHN and DARIA wave as MARIANA walks through TSA.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 4. MARIANA STANDING BY THE CURB WHICH IS AT THE EDGE OF THE STAGE AND IS FACING THE AUDIENCE. SHE IS WAITING OUTSIDE THE AIRPORT IN BUCHAREȘT, ROMANIA. THERE IS THE SOUND OF A CAR PARKING AND HONKING AS IONUȚ AND VIVIANA ENTER FROM STAGE LEFT.

IONUȚ

Alo, Mariana!

MARIANA

Oh my God, hi Ionuț!! So nice to finally meet you! I can't believe I've heard your voice literally every week of my life but never actually seen you before!

IONUȚ

Aha, yes the same for me as well. Daria has told me much about you.

MARIANA hugs IONUȚ.

VIVIANA

Alo, I am Viviana, I am for Ionuț...uuh...what is word...um...fiancée!

MARIANA

Hi! Nice to meet you!

MARIANA hugs VIVIANA.

MARIANA

Oh my God, I LOVE your hair!

VIVIANA

Thank you! I do myself.

IONUȚ

Yes! She is first place winner in Bacău county hair show and she even did hair for Miss Romania 2016 winner!

VIVIANA

Aww iubire, just dyed and curled it-

MARIANA

But that's awesome!! Can you do my hair sometime-

VIVIANA

I would like to do! –

MARIANA

Okay great because I wanna dye it green so I can look like-

A loud doppler zoom as Viviana pulls Mariana away from the edge of the stage and into the middle.

Then IONUȚ looks stage left, waves an arm up and starts swearing in Romanian.

IONUȚ

(Cursing)

Măgar! Te bag în pisda musai!

VIVIANA

Iubire! Not in front of girl!

MARIANA

Huh?

IONUȚ

(Apologetically)

Îmi pare rău. Welcome to Romania with crazy taxi driver. Our international airport is nothing compared to New York, but-

MARIANA

No! It's great! New York is boring as hell to be honest; I like it here better! Ahhh I am SOOO excited! I have a whole list of things to do!

MARIANA whips out her phone and IONUȚ eyes for pickpockets.

IONUȚ

Shh. Mariana do not have your phone out here-

MARIANA

I wanna see: Bran Castle, Dracula's home in Transylvania- even though my mom says Peleş Castle is much better, hahaha. Oh! The Carpathians, the Danube Delta and the CREEPIEST forest on EARTH!

I saw this video online that said the Hoia Baci forest is the most haunted forest in the world!

Because-

IONUȚ

(Gestures for MARIANA to put the phone away)

Haha, yes we will make sure to take you to each place, but first we need to get your luggage in the car!

(Eyeing around him)

Before anyone else does.

MARIANA

Oh yeah! Hahaha sorry I totally forgot about that, I'm like SOOO tired! It was like, an 8 hour flight with a 12 hour connection and I didn't sleep at ALL even though my mom gave me this eye mask, which I didn't use because I thought it was dumb and-

VIVIANA

Mariana!

MARIANA

Oh! I'm sorry, here I'll help you.

They all walk towards stage right where four chairs are set up in the configuration of a car. VIVIANA goes behind the chairs and gestures to open the trunk, then takes the carry-on as MARIANA takes the small bag and IONUȚ takes the mysterious suitcase.

VIVIANA

Are you OK, iubire?

IONUȚ

(Cursing)

Dumnezeu! Is so very heavy. Mariana, what did you put in here?!

MARIANA

Ohh, uhhh haha, just some-

IONUȚ drops the suitcase and everything falls out. IONUȚ picks up the items to put back inside.

IONUȚ

Blue jeans? Cigarettes?! Shaving kits?! Bourbon?!?! Dumnezeule Mariana, are you following a boy into the army? –

MARIANA

NO! My mom made me bring those things because...she said it would make getting through customs...easier...

IONUȚ

(Laughs)

Ahh!! Has not been that way for thirty years!

MARIANA

Oh, okay. Umm, well please take anything you want since I don't use any of that!

VIVIANA takes a few cartons of cigarettes and a blue jean jacket.

VIVIANA

Thank you very much, Mariana!!

MARIANA

Of course!

IONUȚ holds up a pair of blue jeans.

IONUȚ

Zeu Mariana! Most of these blue jeans are even too big for me!

VIVIANA

Ahh, is OK! I sew all into big blanket, iubire!

VIVIANA blows IONUȚ a kiss which he catches like it's a baseball and they all laugh. IONUȚ takes a few cartons of cigarettes and shaving kits as they pack everything into the car. Then they all get into the car, IONUȚ driving, VIVIANA in the front passenger seat and Mariana is in the backseat. IONUȚ turns on music.

MARIANA

You guys listen to Despacito over here?!

IONUȚ

Oh I am sorry! Here, we can play anything you like!

IONUȚ hands MARIANA his phone.

MARIANA

Oh no it's okay! I was just surprised since, you know, I thought everyone listened to Zamphir, King of the Pan Flute!

VIVIANA

(Chuckles)

Yes, all people over 75.

MARIANA

Ohhh, okay haha. Well um, can I just put on some Zamphir for my video? Then we can go back to real music. I told all my friends how quaint it was and they're dying to hear.

IONUȚ

Oh, OK.

MARIANA

Don't worry it'll just be a quick thing for my story.

VIVIANA

Oooo! What is username, I can follow.

MARIANA

Wait, you have social media here TOO?!

IONUȚ

Yes, unfortunately Romanians are just as obsessed with selfies as Americans.

MARIANA

Ahaha well I try to post more than JUST selfies but umm, I do admit it's kinda hard at times. But here, Viviana let me type it in and I'll follow you back!

VIVIANA and MARIANA trade social media info while IONUȚ puts on Zamphir's pan flute music.

MARIANA (CONT.)

(Filming)

Hey everyone! Guess what?! I'm in RO-MANIAAAA!! The country of vampires- not the sparkly kind, the vicious AS FUCK kind- awesome music of course- aaaaand love!!! Or is that Paris?

Anywho!! Here is my uncle IONUȚ!

MARIANA turns the camera to IONUȚ and he waves awkwardly.

MARIANA (CONT.)

And here is his fiancée VIVIANA!

Turns the camera to VIVIANA. VIVIANA flips her hair, smiles and waves.

VIVIANA

Alo!

MARIANA turns the camera back to herself.

MARIANA

Aren't they ADORABLE?!! They're getting married! Which is why I'm in Romania, so I can be in their wedding!! And get in touch with my roots by experiencing the authentic Romanian way of life. Anyway, that's all for now! Stay tuned for more updates! Mwah! Oh! And don't forget to like and follow!

MARIANA does a peace sign and sticks out her tongue goofy while she ends the video.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Okay, just posted it to my story.

VIVIANA

Oh! I look OK?

MARIANA

You look beautiful! No worries, really.

VIVIANA

(Watching the story)

OK, I get shy for camera sometime, haha!

IONUȚ

Hey! So since you film video, please can we change music? I am sorry but can only listen to grandpa music so long.

MARIANA

Oh! Sorry of course!

MARIANA turns off the music and switches it back to "Despacito" and they all bop their heads and

MARIANA rolls down her window.

MARIANA

ROMANIAAAA HERE I COME!! WOOO!!!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 5. MARIANA IS LAYING ON A FUTON NAPPING IN THE LIVING ROOM OF A TINY SOVIET APARTMENT. THE LIVING ROOM IS MOSTLY BARE EXCEPT FOR AN EVIL EYE CHARM HANGING ON ONE OF THE WALLS. VIVIANA ENTERS.

VIVIANA

(Whispers)

Mariana?

MARIANA slowly wakes up and rolls over to face VIVIANA.

MARIANA

Yeah?

VIVIANA

How are you feeling?

MARIANA sits up with a groan.

MARIANA

Much better, I gotta say, napping on a couch really hits harder than in a bed, especially a futon with all the embroidered Romanian throws.

VIVIANA

Haha, well I am happy you like tradition design, but I prefer more- modern style. This belong to my mother.

MARIANA

Oh well I think it's really cool.

MARIANA stretches.

MARIANA

But anyway, I think the humidity and sunlight just really gets to me, if it was golden hour all day every day, that would be perfect. Especially since that's when you can take the best photos.

VIVIANA

Well, here is lemonade, drink so you do not stay...dehydrated.

VIVIANA places the glass and pitcher on the coffee table and MARIANA starts chugging her drink.

VIVIANA (CONT.)

Slow!! Or you make stomach sick!

MARIANA

Sorry. It's just so refreshing.

VIVIANA

(Chuckles)

I am glad you like.

MARIANA starts slowly drinking the lemonade and then places it down again as VIVIANA sits down next to her.

MARIANA

But thank you so much for taking me to Bran Castle today!!

VIVIANA

Aww, cu plăcere! Next time we go Castle Peleş, with no parking lot in courtyard.

MARIANA

Ah it's alright, in America, literally EVERYTHING is a parking lot so I didn't even notice!

VIVIANA

Haha, you are very kind.

MARIANA

Besides, I got the coolest pics! I got to live my lifelong dream of being a vampire princess! But not the Twilight kind, EWW no, the "authentic" kind, wearing the sheepskin vest!! I LOVE it, it's so warm and fuzzy, thank you so much for buying it for me!!

VIVIANA

Cu plăcere! Is part of tradition winter dress- not so for wearing now hahaha, but I am very happy you appreciate. Vest will keep you very warm when winter is cold.

(Beat)

Artisan who make tradition crafts...dying but young people not wanting to learning art. So soon Romania tradition will go. It makes me very sad.

MARIANA

That's terrible!! Ughh I wish I could do something to help.

(Beat)

MARIANA (CONT.)

Ah! I'll learn how to make the outfits!

VIVIANA

(Laughs)

Maybe! Then you introduce our culture to America!

MARIANA

And have every cheap ass store sell it for \$2? No thanks.

MARIANA and VIVIANA laugh.

MARIANA (CONT.)

But I could make my own shop and sell it online or something...eh, well see, there's still plenty of time for me to figure it out. But ughh just thinking of it makes me miss Romania already!!

VIVIANA

But, you have time to explore and by time you go, you will be sick of Romania!

MARIANA

No I could NEVER be sick of Romania- it's so beautiful, with rolling fields, grazing sheep and forests in the mountains.

VIVIANA

But is like that in rest of Europe too, no? And America, I think.

MARIANA

Yeah, but from what I've seen so far in the Swiss nature account I follow, it's more like a storybook with fairies, trolls and cows- like I saw a video of this, like cow parade thingy they do there- and America is country in a "yee-haw!" type of way - just kidding! America is too big for just cowboy vibes I guess- while Romania is more like OG Grimm's with vampire's, witches and wolves.

VIVIANA

Da, yes I see. No wonder top Romania industry is Dracula tourism!

MARIANA and VIVIANA laugh.

MARIANA

Oh god, does that mean I'M super cringey? I did take like, um, a hundred pics and used captions like "Romania is fang-tastic", "This vest makes me look stab-u-licious" and "Seeing Dracula was like love at first bite".

VIVIANA

Oh no, everyone is like it! I umm, never go to New York and have shirt with...sequin picture of red, white and blue eagle flying over...Statuia Libertății and say, "In God We Trust". I wore when first I met Ionuț. Dumnezeu! What was I thinking?!!

MARIANA and VIVIANA laugh.

MARIANA

Well he must've thought it was super cute on you because now you are getting marrriiiiieedddd!!!

VIVIANA

Hahahaha yes! I am very happy I can meet you and to be flower girl!

MARIANA

I'm so glad I could meet you too!!! Ahh soon you and Ionuț won't be in the same house as me anymore, I'll die. Wait!!! Can we go see him at the mechanic shop now?? PLEASEEE?

VIVIANA

I think you are feeling sick?!

MARIANA

I'm fine! I just wanna go over and take a car out to drive around town!

VIVIANA

We can go tomorrow because, well your grandparents will soon come here.

MARIANA

Wait, WHAT?!!

VIVIANA

Is not OK? They will arrive in 10 minutes. I wake you to see if you are feeling OK.

MARIANA

Oh no no no, I am NOT seeing them!!

VIVIANA shakes her head in confusion.

MARIANA

Sorry, I know I seem rude, but umm, my mom told me I shouldn't talk to them when she's not around.

VIVIANA

Why no? Do they...hurt you? Zeu, I not believe Ionuț no tell me! Must I to knock heads together?! If need, I will!!

MARIANA

Huh? NO! No it's okay...well it's a-ahem- LONG story but aha well they're kinda like bad people.

VIVIANA

Oh! As you say 'spill tea'!

VIVIANA and MARIANA laugh. VIVIANA pours another glass of lemonade for MARIANA and one for herself as she listens intently.

MARIANA

Okay, so basically, my mom never really liked them that much, but whenever I asked her why, she would just tell me all of these crazy stories. Some strange things like making her work 35 hours a week in middle school...at a Pizzeria...run by the Romanian mafia...who pretended to be Italians...and then this other time when Grandma cooked her pet rabbit and forced my mom to eat it for dinner.

VIVIANA crosses herself.

VIVIANA

Dumnezeu!

VIVIANA takes a pack of cigarettes out of her bra and starts stress smoking.

MARIANA

I know, right?! Then! Last Easter they came over to my house like they always do, but this time Grandma looked at my bunny Chocolate Truffle and said "Zhat is gudt stu!". My mom was PISSED and literally threw her out the door! Meanwhile, my dad was in the backyard drinking beer with Grandpa who was having an agreement-

VIVIANA

Wait. You mean argument?

MARIANA

No! An AGREEMENT, like

(Mocking Dracula voice)

"Gheorghe! You are a GENUIS!" "YES!! YES I AM!!

(Normal voice)

but NOT WITH MY DAD. With someone invisible!

Viviana curses with a cigarette hanging from her mouth

VIVIANA

Nebunu!

MARIANA

Yeah! And then he proceeded to fire up a chainsaw and chase this...invisible thing around the backyard while shouting a battle cry

(Mocking Dracula voice)

"In the name of Wallachia, banish the infidels!"

VIVIANA

How can someone BE like that?!

MARIANA

I have NO IDEA, but yeah, they're not really the kind of people I wanna spend a lot of time with, since they don't really fit my "vibe", ya know?

VIVIANA

Is bigger problem than not "fitting vibe"! Terrible people!

MARIANA

Yeah, but like we're kinda used to it-

VIVIANA

USED to it?! Zeu! Sorry Mariana, I not imagine...uh...living with terrible people to become normal. I will MAKE them to leave-

MARIANA

No it's okay! It'll be fine. I'll just hear them out.

VIVIANA

(Sighs)

OK, if you say but I stay with you and have melesteu in cupboard if they try being terrible people.

MARIANA

I don't think we'll need a gun! But um, thank you Viviana, I really appreciate it. Welp, time to go see what my crazy grandparents want!

VIVIANA

They are more than ONLY crazy!!-

MARIANA

Relax! Honestly I'm kinda excited for what kind crazy bullshit they're gonna say, it's like I'm the star of my own reality tv show!

VIVIANA

(Cursing)

Nebuni! Ionuț should not hide this from me!

MARIANA

Maybe umm, he thought you wouldn't wanna marry him if you knew he had a crazy aunt and uncle?

VIVIANA

Haha, da, he is lucky I am already in love.

VIVIANA puts out her cigarette.

VIVIANA

If you change mind, have melesteu in cupboard left side, next to pots.

VIVIANA takes away the empty glasses and is about to EXIT but accidentally bumps against the wall and the evil eye charm that was hanging falls to the ground and shatters.

VIVIANA

AHHH!

MARIANA

OH MY GOD ARE YOU OKAY?!

VIVIANA

Yes, yes I am OK.

MARIANA

(Looks at the evil eye)

Oh no! The evil eye, it's broken! It was so pretty!

VIVIANA

Is no problem, I can replace. Problem is, only break when evil come.

SCENE 6. AFTERNOON. MARIANA AND VIVIANA ENTER THE KITCHEN OF THE SOVIET APARTMENT, SO TINY THAT SOMEONE COULD TOUCH BOTH WALLS WITH THEIR ARMS OUTSTRETCHED. GHEORGHE IS SITTING WITH HIS WIFE IVONA BY HIS SIDE. THEY ARE SMOKING CIGARETTES AND SIPPING LIQUOR FROM TINY GLASSES.

GHEORGHE

Hai Mariana! Hohoho!! Nice to see you!!

MARIANA grudgingly hugs him.

GHEORGHE (CONT.)

Now, sit down here. Come! SIT!

GHEORGHE pulls out a chair for MARIANA.

VIVIANA

(To MARIANA)

NO!

(To GHEORGHE)

She will stay by me.

MARIANA

(To VIVIANA)

It's okay! I'll be fine, really. I'm just going to hear what they have to say!

VIVIANA

If say anything worth listening.

MARIANA ignores VIVIANA and sits down next to GHEORGHE.

GHEORGHE

HAHAHA!! Would you like some țuică?

IVONA

Gheorghe!! She has only 16 years!

GHEORGHE

Ahhh, it's okay, I drank when I was in the womb of my mother!

IVONA

I can tell.

GHEORGHE

So! Grandma and I are taking you to a hotel in the woods where we can get ahhh...2 rooms?

GHEORGHE glances over to IVONA, she nods.

GHEORGHE

Da 2 rooms, one for us and one for you. It's a very nice hotel with a BEAUTIFUL view, where you can see Castelul Bran! The abode of the glorious Vlad Țepeș! Or, as the "Americans" say-

(Southern American accent)

"Drahculah".

(Back to thick Romanian accent)

You like him, da? –

MARIANA

Yeah we just visited there today-

GHEORGHE

Da! He's a true Romanian hero!! LIKE ME!! HAHAHA!! Everything I do every day of my life is for the HONOR of Wallachia! The GLORY of Dacia! I will continue to FIGHT until I IMPALE every Hungarian and Turk with my BIG-

IVONA

Gheorghe!

GHEORGHE

What?!

IVONA

You are, talking again.

GHEORGHE

Arghh!!

(Beat)

As I was saying to you before this IMPUDENT WOMAN interrupted me. At the hotel in the woods, you can go to the bar and drink as much as you like and then you'll take men to your room-
IVONA stomps on his toe. She keeps doing this throughout the scene and before each time GHEORGHE cries out "aiii"!

GHEORGHE (CONT.)

Aiii!!- my friend to your room to watch tv. You are a dancer too, da?

MARIANA

Actually, I'm a fashion influencer.

GHEORGHE

DA PERFECT! We have this dress for you to wear and you can join Ivona's modeling agency, they are always looking for beautiful young virgi-aiii! Girls to take off-aiii! Put on clothes for men-aiii! Themselves! Because fem-mi-nis-m-iagra is when women do things for themselves!! Right?

IVONA shakes her head and huffs.

IVONA

You can stay for one day, 2 days, a week. Come back for the wedding, or not...you can stay as long as you like...

MARIANA looks terrified so VIVIANA gestures to the cupboard encouragingly but MARIANA shakes her head and mouths "it's fine". GHEORGHE notices this and becomes more aggressive.

GHEORGHE

What? You do not want to go? HAHAHA!! Silly girl! You HAVE to go. It will be very nice, don't worry! We leave for the hotel in one hour. Viviana, you come with us to the grocer...and Mariana, when Grandma and I come back, you MUST be ready to go. No waiting around!! It is very urgent and I'm giving you plenty of time to prepare. You HAVE to wear the nice dress- NOTHING!! But the nice dress. You have to look pretty for men-aiii!! My friends- or else they will not buy- aiii!!- spend time with you. Okay papușă?

GHEORGHE EXITS with IVONA and then calls back to MARIANA.

GHEORGHE (CONT.)

DO NOT ESCAPE!! I AM WAITING!! HAHAHA!!

VIVIANA

So THAT is grandparents, huh?

MARIANA

Yeah, aren't they crazy?! Grandpa is like-I don't even know-and Grandma, oh my God what was she even wearing?! Like ma'am, "the 80's called and they want their shoulder pads back!"

VIVIANA

Haha! And her hair,

(Shudders)

Ugh! Must have colony of bee, no wonder her brain is buzzing with such crazy ideas!

MARIANA and VIVIANA laugh.

VIVIANA

But in serious, do you need melesteu? Because this not correct!

MARIANA

Actually, yes! But you can go with them, don't worry, I got this!

VIVIANA

GO with them?! No! I call Ionuț, we report to police. I cannot leave you in danger!

MARIANA

SHH shh it's okay, you go with them so they don't get suspicious, I've got an hour so just go with them to buy me some time. It's all good. And besides, I hate to generalize, but...aren't the police kinda...corrupt over here?

VIVIANA huffs.

MARIANA (CONT.)

They are in America too! Sorry, I know it's not just a Romania thing. So, how about we handle this ourselves first and if we still need help, then we'll contact the police or something.

VIVIANA

OK, well do not wait to call if need me. I know great place to hide bodies.

MARIANA

Um, cool! I'll keep you updated then. Pa!

VIVIANA

Pa iubire.

VIVIANA EXITS.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 7. THE STAGE IS CUT IN HALF, THE LEFT SIDE IS DARK WITH VIVIANA AT A GROCER WITH GHEORGHE AND IVONA. JOHN, DARIA AND IONUȚ ARE SITTING ON STOOLS AT THE EDGE OF THE STAGE FACING THE AUDIENCE. THE RIGHT IS A SMALL BEDROOM WITH MARIANA CROUCHING IN THE CLOSET OF A BEDROOM WEARING A GIANT BALLGOWN. SHE UNLOCKS HER PHONE AND STARTS RECORDING A VIDEO.

MARIANA

Hey guys! So update on my super cool trip to Romania-

(MARIANA points the camera towards her dress)

MARIANA (CONT.)

What the HECK is THIS?! Like I just-I look like a meringue pie, like EWW!! I mean, meringue pies taste good but they don't really make cute outfits? I totally can't "slay" in this, like seriously, it's the ugliest thing I've ever seen-and that's saying something, cuz I've seen some really wack!

MARIANA (CONT.)

Shit-this is the most atrocious, hideousist-that's not a word-but yeah like why do they even have this here? Is this what makes the pedos dicks' hard-shit! I shouldn't say that, no yeah I shouldn't have.

Ughh!

(MARIANA points the camera in selfie mode back towards her face)

MARIANA (CONT.)

Thank God no one can hear-or see-me right now-except you guys but I know you won't judge!-cuz other people would make sure I get cancelled and since I look ugly right now they'd be like "haha Mariana deserves to be cancelled" cuz we all know that pretty privilege helps prevent people from being cancelled-for the most part.

(A beat)

But anyway, my GRANDPA is like, trying to "take me on vacation" to a "hotel in the woods" - yeah! More like SELL me to a BROTHEL!! Cuz he wants me to "take men to my room to watch tv and drink as much as I like". Like seriously, what is this, some sort of movie?! Sometimes I wonder, I'm sure you all do too haha. But I DID tell dad that I wanted to have an exciting life, but not like THIS! I guess mom wasn't overreacting when she said she didn't want to have anything to do with these crazies anymore.

MARIANA ends the video and then tries to make a call.

MARIANA (CONT.)

NO SERVICE?!! Ughh!! Why don't they have any - oh yeah, I'm in the middle of the Romanian countryside - duh!

MARIANA frantically looks around for a phone and only sees a rotary dial phone on a table. She picks it up, holds it backwards, it doesn't work. MARIANA tries spinning around the dial, but it keeps whirring back. Frustrated, she slams it down.

MARIANA (CONT.)

How does this even work...

MARIANA picks it up again and eventually dials the correct number and it starts ringing.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Please pick up, PLEASE pick up!!!

No response. MARIANA starts to pick out another dress to wear but can't find anything she likes.

Calls again, no response. Calls a third time, still no response.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Ughhh!! Now my own mom is ghosting me!! If dad doesn't pick up, then well...at least-I'll look DISGUSTING in this stupid ballgown before I go missing forever!

MARIANA starts calling JOHN, no response. She calls again, still no response. Calls a third time and still no response. MARIANA throws the phone across the room but the cord makes it bounce back and it hits her across her hands.

MARIANA (CONT.)

OWWWW!! ARGH!! You know what, if no one is helping me, LIKE USUAL, then I'll just take matters into my own hands!

MARIANA crawls out of the closet and bumps her head on the clothes rod.

MARIANA (CONT.)

OWWW! I swear this whole COUNTRY is cursed!! Wait, actually, it is, Vlad Țepeș legit impaled EVERYONE who lived in his capital JUST to spite the Sultan. That man really was the toxic ex who's like

(Mocking Dracula accent)

"If I can't have Romania, no one else will".

MARIANA runs and trips when her giant ballgown can't fit through the doorway. She tries to shove herself through but can't fit. Frustrated, MARIANA tries to wiggle out but still can't fit. She then sees a broom and uses the handle to strain into the kitchen's doorway from her doorway but she can't quite make it to the cupboard handle.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Come on, just a little more, just a TINY bit more...

MARIANA reaches further but her ballgown finally eases through the doorway and she falls down and drops the broom.

MARIANA (CONT.)

ARGHH!!

MARIANA looks up.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Oh hey Mr. Cupboard.

MARIANA stands up and reaches to open the cupboard and takes out a box. Then she struggles back through her doorway and returns to her room to sits cross legged on the floor. Her dress is so big that it puddles around her and she really does look like a meringue pie.

MARIANA opens the box.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Arlighty, so! A ROLLING PIN?!! Aww, I'll never get to be badass and shoot people! Well, maybe there's instructions for self-defense or something-

MARIANA unfurls a long dusty scroll.

MARIANA (CONT.)

LEGO INSTRUCTIONS?! WHAT THE-?

MARIANA throws the scroll across the room.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Wait...they're lego instructions!!

MARIANA strains to reach for the scroll.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Why did I tie this corset so tight?

MARIANA successfully strains for the scroll and starts reading.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Okay! So step number one. I...wack someone in the head with it. And step number two is...they die?

But how am I supposed to wack them? Is there a special flick of the wrist? Do I raise my arm high and then jerk it down like "HiyAHH!!!"-

MARIANA accidentally throws the rolling pin across the room and it knocks a vase off of the shelf, which shatters to pieces.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Oh shi-

The rotary phone rings. SPOTLIGHT on JOHN who's at the pub in the USA drinking a half full beer with a full glass on the bar next to it. There is loud background noise at the pub.

MARIANA (CONT.)

DAD!!

MARIANA hurries back to the closet and sits down again.

JOHN

Hey Mariana, I saw you called, what's up!

MARIANA

I tried calling mom but she wouldn't pick up. Grandma and Grandpa came and they talked about taking me to a "hotel in the woods" where I can take "men to my room to 'watch tv'" and when I said that I didn't wanna go they said they'd take me anyway. In an hour!

JOHN

Oh wow, uhh hmm, that's weird haha. Hmm, well I guess I'll call your mom and let her know, cuz I have uhh, no idea, yeah.

MARIANA

Can you at least tell me what I should do?!

JOHN

Huh?

MARIANA

(Under her breath)

Oh my God-

MARIANA (CONT.)

(To JOHN)

What should I do in the meantime in case mom doesn't pick up?!

JOHN

Uhh, hmm...

(A beat while he thinks)

Maybe...barricade yourself in your room? With the uhh...what's it called...ah! The dresser, or something. Anyways I'm uhh, busy getting lunch so I gotta go, love you!

MARIANA

Love you, bye.

JOHN hangs up. Spotlight on John turns off.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Wow, dad! SOO helpful. Anyways! Back to building the bunker!

MARIANA throws all of the knickknacks off of the dresser onto the bed and then tries to move the dresser. She then tries to lift up the dresser a little bit but it's extremely heavy. She eventually manages to drag it across the room and props it against the door. MARIANA hears the rotary phone ring and trips over a chair as she rushes to pick up.

MARIANA (CONT.)

Aww shi-hi mom, Grandma and Grandpa-

SPOTLIGHT is on DARIA who's also in the USA.

DARIA

Sorry I was in class. Y-your dad just told me. Where are they now?!

MARIANA

At the grocer. They took Viviana with them, so I'm here alone and Dad told me to barricade myself in my room.

DARIA

Okay, I'm going to let Ionuț know so he can stop them. Don't worry, they won't take you. In the meantime, just stay brave. Oh, and take one of the curtain poles and use it as a club in case they break the door down. Love you.

MARIANA

BREAK THE DOOR DOWN?!!

DARIA already hung up. MARIANA stops barricading her door and goes to remove the curtains so she can take down the curtain pole. The spotlight stays on Mariana as we see her comically build her bunker. Spotlight on DARIA and VIVIANA who is at the grocer with GHEORGHE and IVONA in the background.

VIVIANA

Bună ziua Daria, did Mariana call you? She is in situation.

DARIA

Viviana! She said my parents are trying to kidnap her so they can sell her to some man at a hotel in the woods. Can you please call Ionuț to stop them? I never want them to speak to her ever again!

VIVIANA

Da, of course. At once! Do not worry, Mariana is home alone-

DARIA

WHAT?!

VIVIANA

She is safe! She told me to go-

(Eyes GHEORGHE and IVONA)

VIVIANA (CONT.)

Shopping with grandparents and was no arguing her, she is stubborn one. I call Ionuț now, Mariana will be OK because she have melesteu.

DARIA

I understand, but she-!

VIVIANA hangs up and the SPOTLIGHT on DARIA turns off. VIVIANA turns around to find that GHEORGHE was standing behind her the whole time.

GHEORGHE

WHO WAS THAT?!

VIVIANA

Oh! Just mother to remind I still never order cake for wedding. But we know how things go chaos near end. Now I go to bakery...across street.

IVONA

Then why did you say that you will call Ionuț and that Mariana is home alone but she is safe because she has the melesteu?!

VIVIANA

OH! Ummm...well-

GHEORGHE

Well what?!

VIVIANA

Mariana has severe...gluten allergy so... not sure if she get sick from breathing bakery air...much flour! Because, ah... if is one piece flour dust, she will die!! Horribly!! With groaning as she fall to ground...struggle for air, like this!

VIVIANA mimes having a severe reaction.

VIVIANA (CONT.)

- So! To prevent, ah... baker said yes something terrible WILL happen - terrible thing is her death! - if she go- so...ah...she stay home...alone...making gluten free cookies alone! - But she is stubborn one and want to go with me when we eventually go...so it took much...convincing to make her stay! So uhh...I have to call Ionuț so he knows not bring cake to apartment!

GHEORGHE

Okay, but be back soon!

VIVIANA sighs in relief.

IVONA

Da! We shouldn't have to suffer without you just because you are such an indecisive bride.

(To GHEORGHE)

Poor Ionuț! How will he cope having a wife who can't bake?

GHEORGHE grunts in agreement while VIVIANA walks to the other aisle. SPOTLIGHT on MARIANA turns off and SPOTLIGHT on IONUȚ turns on. IONUȚ is at the mechanic shop laying under a car doing repairs when his cell phone goes off.

IONUȚ

Dragă mea! I am busy repairing a 2017 Mercedes-Benz SL-Class, it is a once in a lifetime opportunity for me!

VIVIANA

Iubire! It is once in lifetime opportunity for Gheorghe and Ivona to kidnap Mariana!!

IONUȚ

WHAT?!

IONUȚ (CONT.)

(Cursing)

Zeu, I did not think my aunt and her husband were THAT crazy.

VIVIANA

My surprise, they are! They plan take her to hotel in woods!

IONUȚ

OK? It is in the woods, so what?

VIVIANA

So what?! They take Mariana, so can sell her to man.

(A beat.)

IONUȚ drops his wrench.

IONUȚ

Dumnezeu! Why did you not tell me this first?!

VIVIANA

Because you do not listen!! Thank God she is not stupid, so she call Daria and Daria call me. They will come in 45 minutes. But you must stop them.

IONUȚ

(Cursing)

Nebuni! Where are they?!

VIVIANA

The grocer down the road by my mother's old apartment.

IONUȚ crawls out from under the car and lights a cigarette as he picks up his jacket and keys.

IONUȚ

OK, I will come now. Call Mariana to check the closet for a box, inside is a secret weapon. I knew this day would come!

VIVIANA

Ionuț, next time, take my call more serious!

IONUȚ

I am sorry păpușă! I thought you were calling just to talk. But I will take care of this. Do not worry. Pa draga mea! (Blows a kiss)

VIVIANA

(Blows a kiss)

Pa iubire.

VIVIANA hangs up and SPOTLIGHT turns on MARIANA, who's in her room and drops the curtain pole in order to pick up VIVIANA'S call.

MARIANA

Ughh why am I like this? - Hi Viviana, so I'm guessing my mom called you?

VIVIANA

Yes, Ionuț will deal with grandparents. He say look for box in closet with secret weapon but he not say what it is.

MARIANA

What kind of box? Is it the melesteu because I already have that!

VIVIANA

(Cursing)

Nebuni!

(To MARIANA)

You look!! Ionuț is calling, Pa!

VIVIANA hangs up and SPOTLIGHT on her turns off.

MARIANA

Great! So now I have to look for a "secret weapon".

SPOTLIGHT on DARIA turns on while MARIANA picks up her call.

MARIANA

Hi mom. Did you feed Chocolate Truffle today?

DARIA

YES don't worry I wouldn't forget to do that, but now isn't the time to-

MARIANA

Sorry! Sorry I just completely forgot about her cuz I'm so busy with grandma and grandpa trying to sell me-

DARIA

(Sighs)

Ionuț is going to the grocer to deal with my parents. I called Viviana to tell Ionuț to tell you-

MARIANA

Yes! Yes, the whole family already talked to me!

DARIA

Look! We're just trying to keep you safe, if you don't like it then go to the "hotel in the woods" for all I care!

MARIANA

No no it's okay, I'm sorry!

DARIA

Look, just stay in your room. Hide in your closet if you have to, but this will be taken care of so don't worry. Just keep calm, ok? Love you.

MARIANA

I love you too.

SPOTLIGHT turns off on MARIANA and SPOTLIGHT turns on JOHN as DARIA calls him.

JOHN

(Burps)

Hey hun, what's up!

DARIA

Ionuț is on his way to deal with Gheorghe and Mariana is hiding in her room so it's getting handled.

JOHN

Ok great! Now you can relax! –

DARIA

RELAX?! She isn't in the safe zone yet; something could still happen! I can't believe I couldn't protect Mariana from this. If my parents make her do what I had to do then I will go over there and strangle them with my bare hands.

JOHN

Umm, sorry my thinking is uhh...a little slow at the moment but - Uhh, your parents made you do...?

DARIA

Look I don't have time to explain my childhood trauma to you AGAIN-

JOHN

Trauma! I'm sorry Daria. Here, how about you meet me at the Pub and we can drink a little and talk it through-

DARIA

I'm busy with class and Mariana, REMEMBER?!

JOHN

Oh yeah! Hahaha sorry! Okay well lemme know me know how it goes. See you later, love you!

DARIA

Love you.

They hang up and SPOTLIGHT on DARIA turns off.

JOHN

(To himself)

Hmm! I always thought Gheorghe was a little 'weird' but I didn't think he was THAT terrible. Ivona seems nice enough, but uh, Daria knows them better than I do.

(A beat)

Hmm, I guess that means no more Easter with them. I guess. Damn! Ivona used to make the best lamb roast!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 8. GHEORGHE, IVONA AND VIVIANA ARE SHOPPING IN A TINY, DILAPIDATED GROCER WITH ONLY ONE CASHIER AND TWO AILES OF PRODUCTS. IONUȚ ENTERS WITH VIVIANA STANDING BEHIND HIM SO SHE IS AWAY FROM GHEORGHE.

IONUȚ

GHEORGHE!

GHEORGHE

Ah Ionuț! Haha! Welcome, so nice to see you! Ahh I forgot you look just like your mother Rodica!

IVONA takes a step back and looks IONUȚ up and down.

IVONA

Yes, he's the spitting image of my sister.

GHEORGHE tries to pull IONUȚ into a hug but IONUȚ shoves him away.

IONUȚ

What do you think you are doing?!!

GHEORGHE

What do you mean what am I doing? I'm buying some corn meal to make mămăligă, haha!

GHEORGHE quickly starts scooping out corn meal from a barrel and tries to put it into a sack but is so flustered the corn meal falls on the floor instead.

IONUȚ

You plan to take Mariana to a "hotel in the woods"!

GHEORGHE

Da, why wouldn't I? What, I can't vacation with my granddaughter? Haha, here I will buy you some țuică so we can drink on this.

IONUȚ

Mine is better. And at that-place-you were going to bring men to her room to "watch tv" with her.

GHEORGHE

Ahh it's okay, they are my friends and besides, kids today like to play with the phone and watch tv.

IONUȚ

I am not stupid; I know what you are trying to do.

IVONA

And what would that be, hmm? I haven't seen Mariana since Easter. I just want to see my granddaughter and Daria told me that I should buy her new clothes for school.

IONUȚ

And Daria told me to make sure you both never see her again!

IVONA

And why is that? How could Daria be SO cruel towards her own mother?

IONUȚ

You plan to sell Mariana as a child prostitute!

(Silence)

GHEORGHE drops the sack and the corn meal inside spills onto the floor.

GHEORGHE

Ahh, it's not that bad-

IONUȚ

Măgar, the only way you will take Mariana is if I am dead!!

GHEORGHE

Okay so how-

IONUȚ flicks open a switchblade. CASHIER, if female, wearing a babushka or, if male, an ushanka, ENTERS the store, sees the switchblade but shrugs and immediately walks back outside, where they lean up against a wall and light up a cigarette.

IONUȚ

(Dangerously calm)

Look, I do not care how much your pedophile friend paid you for a "young virgin of 16 years" but if you even THINK about coming anywhere near Mariana again, I will put you in the ground.

Understand?

GHEORGHE

Well, he's not my friend-!

IONUȚ waves his switchblade menacingly and GHEORGHE gulps, quickly nodding. IONUȚ then puts the switchblade away.

IONUȚ

Good. Viviana? We go.

IONUȚ takes VIVIANA's hand and they walk towards the door.

GHEORGHE

So! I take it we're no longer invited to the wedding? -

IONUȚ takes a step forward and growls so ferociously that GHEORGHE stumbles backwards in fear.

IONUȚ and VIVIANA EXIT. The CASHIER ENTERS. GHEORGHE turns to IVONA and sighs casually as he stuffs his pockets full of candy. The CASHIER sees this and looks infuriated so they begin to dial the police.

GHEORGHE (CONT.)

Ahh, too bad. That snake promised us a lot of money. Oh! Maybe if we give the six hundred, ninety-eight thousand and sixty-five leu to Mariana, we can see her again!

IVONA

Hmm, I suppose we can. But Gheorghe, listen- if you didn't do all of - this, then we wouldn't have to deal with the situation in the first place!

GHEORGHE

Da, it was a mistake to make a deal with an infidel snake, my ancestors would be rolling in the grave!

(Crosses himself)

IVONA

Well! I suppose we'll have to...get rid of him. So no one will ever find the evidence to the plan, but it would have been better if you never tried to sell Mariana in the first place!!!

GHEORGHE

You don't want Mariana to get her money?

IVONA looks like she's about to strangle GHEORGHE but fights the impulse and takes a deep breath.

IVONA

No, I DO want her to get the money, but we could have found a different way!

GHEORGHE

Like what?!

IVONA is silent.

GHEORGHE (CONT.)

Exactly! Look- do you want to wait around until the police arrive or do you want to go? We can discuss this after we get the money.

IVONA

Why did I marry you?

GHEORGHE

(Seductively)

Because I have a big-

Police siren wails.

GHEORGHE (CONT.)

Time to go!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 9. GUEST BEDROOM. MARIANA IS HIDING IN THE CLOSET STILL WEARING THE GIANT BALLGOWN WHEN SHE HEARS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. MARIANA IMMEDIATELY JUMPS IN FRIGHT, TRIPS AND THEN PICKS UP THE ROLLING PIN BRANDISHING IT AS A SWORD.

MARIANA

(With false bravado)

WHO COMES THERE?!!

VIVIANA

Mariana! It is Viviana!

MARIANA drops the rolling pin in embarrassment.

MARIANA

(Normal voice)

Ohh! Uh okay, I'll let you in, just wait a sec-

MARIANA starts taking away all of the furniture that she formed a barricade with- the lamp, the chairs, the nightstand and the dresser.

VIVIANA

Mariana? Are you OK inside?

MARIANA

Yeah! Just hold on I'm- argh! -just moving some things!

The lamp falls on top of MARIANA'S head.

MARIANA (CONT.)

OWWW!!

VIVIANA

Do you make barricade?

MARIANA suddenly stops moving the furniture.

MARIANA

Yes.

VIVIANA

Maria-NAAA!

MARIANA starts moving the nightsand.

MARIANA

I know! I know! I'm sorry! My dad is the one who told me to do it and I just wanted to stay safe, ya know? But I'm almost done.

VIVIANA

(Cursing)

Nebunu! Mariana, That is what melesteu for! So you protect yourself with and not have tear whole apartment down!

MARIANA

I'm sorry, I uh, think I put everything back where it's supposed to be but if not-

MARIANA continues to speak but when she drags away the dresser, the only thing that can be heard is loud screeching.

VIVIANA

What are you say-? -AHHH MARIANA!!

MARIANA puts the dresser back in its place and then slowly opens the door and then sees a disgruntled VIVIANA.

MARIANA

VIVIANA!

VIVIANA softens up and hugs MARIANA tightly.

VIVIANA

I am very happy you are OK.

MARIANA

Me too! It's amazing how things turned out, leaving for vacation by myself was enough but this whole "hotel in the woods" thingy turned out to be the craziest time of all! But hey, hopefully that means nothing bad will ever happen to me ever again.

VIVIANA

Well, we not yet out danger. Ionuț just try to tell your grandparents give up selling you but is possible they ignore him and show to wedding, or even apartment since Gheorghe really crazy!

MARIANA

Wait, so that means there's STILL a chance I get sold?!

VIVIANA

I am sorry. Now I am here with you and Ionuț will return when he finish repair. You do not need face alone.

MARIANA

Thank you Viviana, I really appreciate it.

They hug.

MARIANA

So, uhh, does that mean I have to hide in my room AGAIN?!

VIVIANA

(Chuckles)

No, no, I know to use melesteu and protect. Now we watch TV!

MARIANA

Ah yess! I've always wanted to see Bondarchuk's "War & Peace"!

VIVIANA

Oh, OK.

MARIANA

Unless..you don't want to?

VIVIANA

I am not fan of soviet cinema, with films 8 hours. I like, uhh..."Romania au talent"...

MARIANA

Ooo what's that about?!

VIVIANA

Is umm...reality singing contest...

MARIANA

That's AWSOME!! It's like "The Voice" in America! Okay I'm totally down to see that.

VIVIANA

Great! I will pop the corn!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 10. THE WINDOW OF "THE HOTEL IN THE WOODS". THROUGH THE WINDOW WE SEE THE SILHOUETTES OF GHEORGHE ENTERING A ROOM WITH A BODY BAG OVER HIS SHOULDER WHILE A MAN IS SITTING ON THE BED.

GHEORGHE

Bună seara! How are you enjoying your stay in great city of Târgoviște?!

MAN

Eh, I much prefer Buda, but I am not here for scenery.

GHEORGHE

Hmmph, well, why didn't you stay in Buda then?!

MAN

They do not offer what I seek there.

GHEORGHE

Well if you think we are SO beneath you, then why didn't you just go to Pest? It's right across the river from Buda! All you have to do is cross a bridge!

MAN

You think I am too stupid to cross bridge?!

GHEORGHE

Da!

MAN

Well I am not! Even in Pest, even THERE they do not have what I need! So, do you or NOT have my young virgin of 16 years?

GHEORGHE

Hahaha da!! She's right here, just like you requested! –

MAN reaches over but GHEORGHE slaps his hand away.

GHEORGHE

BUT! First you must, offer some...compliment to Romania.

MAN

Urghh!! Just take my money!

GHEORGHE

(Cursing)

Ungur! You think I care about the money?! What I care about is the national heritage of my country, the admiration of this ancient and magnificent city, the abode of the glorious Vlad Țepeș!

MAN

I am better betting on cockfight in Pest!

GHEORGHE

If that is so, then go back to your country and make love to a cock instead of a girl!

MAN

Fine! I like how this was - the Forest of Corpses.

GHEORGHE

(Gasps)

You think we are some sort of bloodthirsty heathens?! There is more to this place than that! `

MAN

OK! I like how...girls are very sexy.

GHEORGHE

Hmph, good enough, I was a fool to think a snake could think of anything less base!

MAN

And only filthy dog provides me with service I seek! I do not work from rags to riches only to waste time in Romania!

GHEORGHE

More like backstab your way to power and riches like all Hungarian traitors!

GHEORGHE and the MAN growl at each other before they start laughing and hug. The man pours liquor into two small glasses.

MAN

Come my friend! Have pálinka!

GHEORGHE suddenly stops laughing.

GHEORGHE

No, I already drank!

MAN

Ah, this? Are we mortal enemies STILL?

GHEORGHE

Your Matei Corvin abandoned Vlad Țepeș in Romania's hour of need!

MAN

Because he not want to be involved in stupid brother spat?

GHEORGHE

But together we could have pushed out the Ottomans and lead a Christian crusade to recapture Constantinople!

MAN

This 600 years ago! None of us alive then! Right?

(Beat)

GHEORGHE

(Grunts)

Da. The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Open the bag.

MAN

OK! OK! Hahaha I can finally have my way with her!!

The MAN opens the bag and IVONA jumps out with a knife and stabs him to death.

MAN (CONT.)

Wait!

(Sobbing)

NO!! NO!! Please let me have last night worldly pleasure with virgin pure before I die!! PLEASE!!

IVONA

(Cursing)

Te bag î pisda musa! Shut up and just die already!!

IVONA kicks the MAN in the face and starts stabbing harder.

MAN

AAAAHHHHHHH!!!!

IVONA

(Pauses)

Ughh my hand is aching, why is he taking so long?!

GHEORGHE

Da! That's what she said!

IVONA

(To GHEORGHE)

Măgar!!

IVONA is about to stab GHEORGHE but the MAN falls silent.

GHEORGHE

Is he dead?

IVONA turns him over with her foot.

IVONA

Finally!! He was going to keep me up all night!

GHEORGHE

Da, haha. That's what she-

IVONA looks like she is about to stab him.

GHEORGHE

You did a very nice job, da!

IVONA

I know, I still have a body like Nadia Comăneeci.

IVONA struts to the bathroom to clean up. GHEORGHE sits on the bed, lights up a cigarette and checks her out.

GHEORGHE

Why do your eyes look like you cut up some ceapa? This is such a good idea you had! The măgar is dead, so let's celebrate this!

IVONA

(Huffs)

I ruined my manicure and had to suffer through listening to you squabble over a war from 600 years ago!

GHEORGHE

I couldn't let him tarnish the name of our ancestors! He needed to know my superiority over him before his death!

IVONA

Men sure love to talk, why was I ever attracted to you? All you ever do is squawk like some rooster on tin roof!

GHEORGHE

WAS attracted? You still are! Da?

IVONA

How can I be attracted to a man who makes ME take care of HIM?! You're the one supposed to work and purchase my Manolo Blahnik pumps. But NO! Instead, I work to clean up YOUR messes because YOU decided to sell Mariana!!-

GHEORGHE

Again? We can talk on this later.

IVONA

Go find the money while I clean up.

GHEORGHE opens the suitcase and starts counting the money.

GHEORGHE

Do you think Daria will let us see Mariana again?

IVONA

Depends on how much money we find.

GHEORGHE

Six hundred, ninety-eight thousand and sixty-five leu?! OH-HO!! We'll definitely see Mariana again!

IVONA

Good. Next we'll go to the wedding. But first, I need to change because ONCE AGAIN I ruined my Lagerfeld dress to help YOU! You know, other wives have their husbands buy them Valentino every week.

GHEORGHE

You can have the Hungarian's Mercedes now! It's a 2017 SL class! Isn't that enough riches for you?

IVONA

Hmph, it is nice, but I don't see why I can't have that AND a Fendi fur without these horrible blood stains, they'll never come out.

GHEORGHE

I think it's sexy, seeing you covered in the blood of our enemy.

IVONA

GHEORGHE!

IVONA quickly looks around to make sure they are alone.

GHEORGHE

What? No one's here, that is precisely why we chose the place.

GHEORGHE pats his crotch.

GHEORGHE

My man is growing for you.

IVONA

Is a wonder it still works at your age.

IVONA steps over the dead body and GHEORGHE pulls her onto his lap.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 11. MARIANA AND VIVIANA ARE SITTING ON THE COUCH INTENTLY WATCHING TV IN THE LIVING ROOM, THIS TIME WITHOUT THE EVIL EYE ON THE WALL.

IONUȚ

Hello!!

VIVIANA

AHHHH!!!

MARIANA

HELP!!

VIVIANA picks up the melesteu and MARIANA covers until they see it's IONUȚ.

VIVIANA

Iubire! I am sorry!

IONUȚ

Haha, it is OK papușă!

They kiss.

MARIANA

IONUȚ!!

IONUȚ

Mariana!

They hug.

IONUȚ

Are you OK?

(Looks to the tv)

Of course you are, busy watching "Romania au talent".

MARIANA

Hey! It's really good!

IONUȚ

Did you find the secret weapon?

MARIANA

(Points to VIVIANA)

Uhh, you mean the melesteu?

IONUȚ

Aha! So you have not! Well! Then I will bring it to you!

MARIANA

Wait - Does that mean my grandparents are STILL trying to sell me?!

IONUȚ

Oh no! Sorry I did not say. They will not bother you since I forbid them from seeing you ever again and Gheorghe seemed terrified. That man was shaking like a wheat grass in a thunderstorm, ha.

MARIANA

Thank God! But I don't know, I feel a little guilty about ghosting them.

VIVIANA

Do not worry! They are terrible people, so you do what is best for you!

IONUȚ

Exactly! Besides, I did not want Gheorghe and Ivona at the wedding to begin with. It is too expensive to provide enough wine for them to drink!

They all laugh.

IONUȚ

Do you still want to see the secret weapon Mariana?

MARIANA

Oh yeah, totally!

IONUȚ EXITS to go get the "secret weapon".

MARIANA

(To VIVIANA)

So tomorrow I can go visit Ionuț at the mechanic shop?

VIVIANA

(Chuckles)

Yes, today he have repairs for 2017 Mercedes Benz.

MARIANA

Awww hell yeah!! I can't wait to drive that beaut around!

VIVIANA

Sorry. Ionuț already finished, since tonight man need go important event in Târgoviște, improving Hungarian-Romanian relations.

MARIANA

Oooo so the car belongs to like a super-secret agent!!

VIVIANA

Haha maybe!

IONUȚ RETURNS.

IONUȚ

I FOUND IT!

IONUȚ opens a wooden box and pulls out a garlic wreath.

IONUȚ

(Proudly)

Usturoi! I swear that man is a vampire or something.

They all burst out laughing and MARIANA pulls out her phone to take a photo of the garlic wreath.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

SCENE 1. THE STEPS OF AN ORTHODOX CHURCH. A FANFARE IS PLAYING AS THE DOORS OPEN AND IONUȚ AND VIVIANA STEP OUT HOLDING HANDS. MARIANA FOLLOWS BEHIND THEM ALONG WITH THE PRIEST. GHEORGHE AND IVONA ARE STANDING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STEPS AND ONCE THEY ARE SPOTTED, EVERYONE ELSE GASPS IN HORROR.

IONUȚ

What are you doing here?!!

GHEORGHE

HAHAHA!!! RELAX!! I'm just here to see Mariana, where is she?

IONUȚ

You will not see her!!

GHEORGHE

I will!!

(Looks to MARIANA)

Oh look! There she is!! Oh no! I can see her! Whatever will you do Io-

IONUȚ takes the rolling pin out of his back pocket and jumps down the stairs and raises it to beat GHEORGHE. Before IONUȚ is able to, the church bell is rung and everyone falls silent. The PRIEST walks down the steps, pushes his way in between IONUȚ and GHEORGHE and then speaks.

PRIEST

(Calmly)

Now, there is no shouting outside God's house. He does not want us to fight with each other, especially in family. Ionuț, put down the melesteu.

IONUȚ grunts in anger and stuffs the rolling pin back into his back pocket before walking up the stairs again with the PRIEST.

GHEORGHE

IONUȚ!

IONUȚ

WHAT?!

PRIEST

What did I just say? -

GHEORGHE

DON'T WORRY! I already gave up taking Mariana on vacation, I just wanted to tell her something, but I can tell you instead when you are finished with the procession!

IONUȚ

OK, but remember what I said!

GHEORGHE

Da, da, I will be waiting for you at the reception!

IONUȚ

You are not invited to the reception!

GHEORGHE and IVONA start to walk away.

IVONA

(To GHEORGHE)

You see Gheorghe, this is why I don't like going to church with you.

GHEORGHE and IVONA EXIT.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2. THE WEDDING RECEPTION. THE LEFT HALF OF THE STAGE IS A HOTEL BALLROOM AT NIGHT. IONUȚ AND VIVIANA ARE DOING THEIR FIRST DANCE AND MARIANA IS WATCHING THEM BY THE CHOCOLATE FOUNTAIN. SHE IS STUFFING HER FACE WITH CHOCOLATE COVERED STRAWBERRIES AND FILMING ON HER PHONE. THE RIGHT HALF OF THE STAGE IS A RESTROOM WHERE GHEORGHE AND IVONA ARE STANDING, SMOKING CIGARETTES AND DRINKING SHOTS OF LIQUOR.

GHEORGHE

Da! This is the food of the Gods!

IVONA

We only believe in one God, remember? The father of Hristos-

GHEORGHE

You impudent woman! I'm honoring Zalmoxis, the Seer of Sarmizegetusa Regia, Dacia's palace illuminating the world of life!

IVONA

The last time we worshiped him was 3,000 years ago! -

GHEORGHE

And we should start again! Why do you think Romania has strayed so far from her Dacian principles?! Someone must lead her back to the old ways! -

IVONA

(Mutters)

Not this again-

GHEORGHE

Besides! We are descended from Roman emperors! Well, I am, not you! Because if you were, you wouldn't dishonor our heritage!

IVONA

Oh pardon me! Somehow I'm "dishonoring" Wallachia or Dacia or what? All because I didn't support your plan in selling Mariana! –

GHEORGHE

What do you mean? You killed the măgar, da?

IVONA

Yes, because I had to think of a way to cover your tracks and it was the first thing I thought of! Dumnezeu!

GHEORGHE

You wouldn't have had to do that if we just took Mariana to him-

IVONA

So you think she's expendable? Just like Daria? Just like...me?

GHEORGHE

Da.

IVONA

(Cursing)

Măgar!!

IVONA goes to strangle GHEORGHE but he shoves her away and continues to drink while she weeps.

IVONA (CONT.)

To think I wasted my beauty and youth. My life on YOU! –

GHEORGHE

Ivona, are we going to give Mariana the money or not?

IVONA

Why do you care? You don't find value in her!

GHEORGHE

Da, but you do. So to get you to shut up, I'm willing to give her the money.

IVONA

You monster!

GHEORGHE

Scorie!

IVONA

Futu-ți Paștele și dumnezeii mă-să de nenorocit!!

MARIANA ENTERS.

MARIANA

WHAT THE FUCK?!

GHEORGHE

Hohoho Mariana!!

MARIANA

Get the HELL OUTTA HERE!!

MARIANA looks in her pockets for the melesteu but doesn't have it so she tries to shove GHEORGHE out the door.

GHEORGHE

Are you aha, having fun at the wedding?

MARIANA

More fun than at your "hotel in the woods"! Now get your crazy ass OUT!!

GHEORGHE

Ah, WHAT?!

MARIANA can't drag GHEORGHE out so she gives up. As soon as she lets him go, GHEORGHE starts drinking the țuică right out of the bottle.

MARIANA

You two were going to take me there! Right grandma?

IVONA

Ahaha yes! It would have been a nice family vacation with our papușă!

IVONA smothers MARIANA in a hug and kisses her head vigorously. MARIANA finally manages to break free and tries to drag her out but GHEORGHE stands in front of the door and blocks her exit.

MARIANA

Ugh! Well instead of kidnap-taking me there, how about you go to hell! –

GHEORGHE

Da!! I will take you tomorrow! –

MARIANA

NO! I meant, aha um, like...I don't want anything to do with you crazies!

GHEORGHE

That infidel Ionuț poisoned your mind to turn you against us!

IVONA

How could he be so cruel to his aunt?!

MARIANA

Look, if you're not gonna leave, then I will-

MARIANA shoves GHEORGHE out of her way.

IVONA

No come back!

MARIANA stomps away to the chocolate fountain and IVONA runs out chasing her. IVONA catches up to MARIANA.

IVONA

Mariana! I am here to give you the money!

MARIANA

Aha! You WERE trying to sell me to a brothel then! And you wonder why I'm upset?!

IVONA

No! No not at all, we, well ahh...talked to the man-Gheorghe's friend who owns the hotel in the woods, ahaha and he decided to make an... ahhh...generous donation!

MARIANA is unconvinced.

IVONA

He has a young daughter at home so that's why he was so generous, asking nothing in return once he found out you were unable to go.

MARIANA anxiously holds a strawberry in the chocolate fountain but gets chocolate on her hand instead. IONUȚ finishes dancing, sees the situation and kisses VIVIANA on the hand before stomping towards MARIANA.

MARIANA

So, you're telling me that all of a sudden some random dude was SOO generous because I wasn't available to be sold-OH NO SORRY, "get paid to go on vacation?" Like what, you're pretending I'm one of those influencers who gets paid to "vacation" in Dubai in exchange for "hanging out" with some oil baron's preteen son?! Because we ALL know what that's code for. And the fact that he has a daughter too!! Like what the-?! You know that's worse, right?

IVONA

Mariana, I know Gheorghe is ah...crazy, so I am asking you as woman to woman. Do you want me to give you the six hundred-ninety-eight thousand and sixty-five leu or not?

MARIANA

Oh my God! -Six hundred-ninety-eight thousand and sixty-five leu?!!

IONUȚ

(Cursing)

Dumnezeu Mariana, that's only 15 dollars American!!

(To IVONA)

No. Do not THINK about approaching Mariana again!

IVONA

Please, I'm only trying to make a wrong right!

IONUȚ

Then you should think on that before helping Gheorghe plan this wrong.

IVONA

He made me. I didn't want to; trust me I hate him as much as you do!

MARIANA

Then why the fuck would you stay with him? Like no offense but that's kinda pathetic that you've been with him all this time.

IVONA

We took some breaks! –

IONUȚ picks up IVONA and carries her out.

IVONA

AHHH!! PUT ME DOWN!!

IONUȚ puts her down outside the door and spits on the ground.

IONUȚ

Du-te dracu! Do not come back!

IVONA

You're like my sister. Maybe Daria will let me give her the money since it seems your heart is cold as Gheorghe's!

IVONA EXITS.

MARIANA

So apparently I'm the one who's crazy for asserting boundaries after they tried to sell me?!

MARIANA (CONT.)

(Chuckles)

Okay grandma.

IONUȚ

It is the logic of narcissists.

MARIANA

Thank God she's gone now.

(Realization)

Wait, so basically they sold me for ONLY 15 FUCKING DOLLARS?!!

IONUȚ

Yes, they are such fools.

MARIANA

And so rude too! I'm worth much more than that! Much more. What I am can't be bought like cheap trinkets.

IONUȚ

Exactly! It is unfortunate they knew where we are having the reception, but from now on they will not bother you anymore.

MARIANA

I sure hope so, though you never know I guess, seems like apparently NO ONE is trustworthy these days!

IONUȚ

(Coughs)

Well, now the dance floor is open so come and dance away your troubles!

MARIANA

Oh cool! I'd love to get a few videos of me dancing the Hora din Moldova. Can we put on some Gheorghe Zamphir again please?

IONUȚ

Fine, just this once. Besides, the "King of the Pan Flute" is not what how we want to dance the Hora.

We listen to something lively, like a brass band.

MARIANA

Oh okay, well I'm fine with whatever!

IONUȚ

We will put on good music and then Viviana and I will show you how the Hora is really done!

MARIANA

Great!! Because, hey, a win is a win!

IONUȚ

Wait! Did you see Gheorghe? Wherever Ivona is, he is always close behind.

MARIANA

Ohhh, yeah he's like...in the women's restroom.

IONUȚ

Dumnezeu I knew he was a pervert!

MARIANA

Well I mean, he DID try to sell me to a brothel sooo...I'm not surprised.

MARIANA and IONUȚ laugh as they walk to the bathroom. GHEORGHE is passed out drunk.

MARIANA

Wow that's the first time I've ever seen Grandpa this quiet before.

IONUȚ

Haha, this will be the first and last time we see him like this.

MARIANA

Or see him ever.

IONUȚ hoists GHEORGHE over his shoulder and MARIANA opens the door as they EXIT.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 3, IT'S MIDNIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WOODS IN THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS. GHEORGHE IS EAGERLY DIGGING A HOLE WHILE IVONA STANDS SMOKING A CIGARETTE NEXT TO THE BODY BAG AND WATCHES HIM.

GHEORGHE

(Takes a rest)

Ahh, this reminds me of a simpler time.

IVONA

Didn't they try to work you to death in the gulag?

GHEORGHE

I said simpler, not better!

IVONA

Look Gheorghe, just finish so we can get rid of him, this rotting corpse stinks so badly, I'm starting to get a headache!

GHEORGHE pulls IVONA close.

GHEORGHE

Ahhh, Ivona, Ivona! Why all of this complaining? We are on a date!

IVONA shoves GHEORGHE away.

IVONA

A DATE?! WE haven't been on a date in 50 years and NOW you take me to the woods to dig a hole for a filthy corpse!

GHEORGHE

Da!! Not just ANY woods! Hoia Baci forest! I know, it's so romantic. Ahh, I remember we spent our first date here!

IVONA

No, our first date was when we got our marriage license at the primărie.

GHEORGHE

Our SECOND date then!

IVONA

THAT was at our new house where I watched you drink an entire bottle of țuică and then you acted like a complete măgar!

GHEORGHE

Doamna Ivona!! I DID take you here before!

IVONA

That was BEFORE we were together, on the Day When the Birds are Betrothed. I was still working at that humid and filthy factory with my sister.

GHEORGHE

And that was not a date?! Were you NOT my bride?

IVONA

No! You were just my friend's brother who chased me for a kiss!

GHEORGHE

(Bursts out crying)

But I loved you!!! You were my bride, MY bride!!

(Jealous)

Have you ever been to the forest with other men before?!

IVONA

Oh shut up Gheorghe! You only love yourself and NO I did NOT go into the woods with any man except you, why would I want other proști when I can BARELY put up with you?!

GHEORGHE is satisfied by this response and happily starts digging again.

IVONA (CONT.)

But why do you care?! We've been married for fifty years, have a child and even a grandchild too!

What does it matter?

GHEORGHE abruptly stops digging.

GHEORGHE

Fine! I wish for the days when I was running away from the gulag and the wolves were howling directions home!

IVONA

Well, the wolves should have howled directions to somewhere else, like China!

GHEORGHE

But 'Dacia' means wolf! In the legend of "The Great White Wolf", Zalmoxis turned his most pious priests into wolves to protect his people from invaders.

GHEORGHE throws the shovel to the ground.

GHEORGHE (CONT.)

Hand me the măgar!

IVONA opens the body bag in disgust. GHEORGHE takes out the corpse and throws it into the hole.

IVONA

Should we say a prayer?

GHEORGHE

Ungurs have no soul.

IVONA

Neither do you, Turku!

IVONA spits at him and GHEORGHE continues filling the hole.

IVONA

So, all this because they sent you to the gulag?

GHEORGHE stops shoveling.

GHEORGHE

What?!

IVONA

You know, all the senseless violence your entire life!

GHEORGHE

(Spits)

If you want to know about REAL violence, ask the Russians, you saw how they treated me.

IVONA

So just because a few bad people in a corrupt government mistreated you. You do all of these stupid things because you want to punish the world?!

GHEORGHE

Why do you care? I treat you just fine.

IVONA

Mmm hmm, I see.

(Beat)

Well, listen to me Gheorghe! You can't take the money! We must give it to Mariana.

GHEORGHE finishes burying the corpse.

GHEORGHE

Ahhh, Mariana this, Mariana that. Come here, I want to see you better.

GHEORGHE tries to wrap his arms around IVONA, but she moves his arms away.

IVONA

You said we could talk after the wedding...funeral- so now it's time! Why did you think it was a good idea to sell Mariana?!! I didn't want to in the first place, but you convinced me, saying it would be advantageous- for what exactly?!! Learning how to dig a grave? Yes! Because guess where I am taking you next!!

GHEORGHE

(Seductively)

Shh, shh it's okay, I wasn't actually going to sell her, it was a trick!

IVONA

A TRICK?! You found the man on Craigslist!

GHEORGHE

Bu-N-no, y-you did!! How could I? I-I don't know how to use the-the World Wide Web!!

IVONA

Oh really? Then explain that time I found an advert for "strong men looking to fight the Turkish and Hungarian infidels for the honor of Walachia" on our joint email, hmm?

GHEORGHE

W-well, I, ahh...Who cares! You should know by now that I will do anything, ANYTHING for the cause, so if that means selling our granddaughter or whatever, then so be it!

IVONA

What cause?

GHEORGHE

Arghh!!! Do you not listen to a thing I say?! You were just complaining that I'm too focused on reviving Wallachia by ridding the world of Hungarians and Turks?

IVONA

Why are you so obsessed with that?! You know, sometimes I wonder about you.

GHEORGHE

And I to you! –

IVONA

Besides, how would you rid the world of Hungarians and Turks just by selling girls? It is more effective to kill them-

GHEORGHE

I'm not bloodthirsty like you Ivona! By encouraging these men to sin, I'm tempting them into defiling their own character and the honor of their ancestors! Once that is achieved, my wolf pack of strong Romanian men will rescue the girls and expose these dishonorable actions.

GHEORGHE (CONT.)

So everyone will ridicule the Hungarians and Turks! Then the world will shun them, so they die in squalor! And Romania can stand strong as a shining example of moral purity!

IVONA

There are better ways of reviving Romania's honor than seeking revenge for an ancient grudge.

GHEORGHE

How? And didn't you just say that we should kill them all?!

IVONA

Who cares about Romania's honor, as long I have my jewels and furs, which you STILL forgot to buy me-

GHEORGHE

You produce Angel Films. Buy your own jewels! –

IVONA

It's better when the man pays, it's an embarrassment I have to pay for you!

GHEORGHE

So what! Mariana is safe, so we can finally have some time to...celebrate our victory. You know, this is the same forest where Dragobete lives with his lover in a cave. That's why all the trees are curved to the East, they want to be close to the lovers.

IVONA

Isn't this the same forest where all the souls of the people impaled by Vlad for his "Forest of Corpses" rest? That's why all the trees curve towards Târgoviște, to their life in the city. The last time these miserable souls were happy. The vengeful spirits make people who enter get lost for years, only to return feeling as if they left only five minutes ago.

GHEORGHE

Da. As I said, a very romantic place. Dragobete even means 'drunk with love'.

GHEORGHE tries to kiss IVONA, but she turns away.

IVONA

I'm not in the mood for that.

GHEORGHE

You should be lucky I'm still in the mood for you! You used to be so beautiful, the most beautiful girl in the village, with such thick black hair and green eyes like emeralds-

GHEORGHE strokes IVONA'S cheek and then drops his hand.

GHEORGHE

But now you are old and ugly.

IVONA

And you are cruel and disgusting! Yes, I remember you too. You used to be so charming, I thought you were an intellectual coming to save me from my boring life at my family's farm to take me to the big city where I could finally live in opulence! Instead, you turned out to be a terrible person who would sell his own family! I should have listened to my sister and stayed far away from you.

GHEORGHE

(Nudges IVONA)

Haha come on; you think I'm a bad boy.

IVONA

Shut up! You're eighty-five!

GHEORGHE

You can't completely regret marrying me! If it wasn't for me, you would still be stuck on that farm.

Never made it to America!

IVONA

Maybe that would have been better! At least I had people who loved me! Instead, I chased money and ended up with a husband who doesn't love me and a child I didn't want!

GHEORGHE

What do you mean I don't love you?! I sold Daria for you!! You said you didn't want a child, so I was going to get rid of her –

IVONA

-You can't sell children! Why couldn't we just let my parents raise her? They would have been happy to take her! But no, you only think of money, money, money!!!-

GHEORGHE

-But you told me to get rid of her! –

IVONA

I changed my mind!

GHEORGHE

Then why didn't you tell me?! You said I should sell her, so I asked my friend. You know, the one who helped me escape the gulag. And he told me of a Turk who would pay a good price. The baby would have been taken at the hospital and then we could have left and continued with our lives! –

IVONA

I never would have gotten pregnant if you stayed at the gulag.

GHEORGHE

Why, so you could go instead? If they came for an intellectual like me, then they certainly would have come for a stuck-up woman like you! And why are you upset? The man didn't end up buying her, we couldn't settle on a price, so it worked out for you and your 'changed mind'.

IVONA

Then. When we escaped to Italy, you poisoned her and she almost died! So, you tried to abandon her at the hospital! And once we made it to America, you sold her to that man until she finally stood up for herself but you broke her wrist with a golf club! –

GHEORGHE

-And you cooked her bunny!

IVONA

-Because I was tired of caring for another THING and we needed meat because you spent all our money on another one of your crazy plans!

GHEORGHE

Ha, you think you're better than me, but we are the same-

IVONA

-We are NOT the same!! I didn't let the gulag brainwash me into being a monster! But yes, only a monster like you would think it was a good idea to sell his own child and now his grandchild too! –

GHEORGHE

-Well, maybe you would be like this too but no, your life is too easy, you never suffered a day in your life!

IVONA

OHHH NO no no! I've always suffered because "A good wife must stand by her man" but what did that get me? A măgar like you to beat my daughter and sell her?!! You actually believe you're the reincarnation of Vlad Țepeș?

GHEORGHE

Da.

IVONA smacks her forehead in frustration.

IVONA

Of course you think so! You're intent on copying his level of brutality!! Look, I can't handle you or your circus anymore, I am DONE!

IVONA drops to the ground and weeps over the grave. GHEORGHE wraps his arm around her back, but IVONA is too weak to fight him.

GHEORGHE

Ivona, we have gone through this many times. We have even been married and divorced four times; do you honestly think that this ends? Zalmoxis, Lord of Men has taught us that life is worse than death, but we are immortal and cursed to repeat it. Here, look at this.

GHEORGHE pulls out a photograph of them on their wedding day. IVONA refuses to look so

GHEORGHE grabs her face and makes her look.

GHEORGHE (CONT.)

Look, we were so in love back then and I still love you now. I'll always love you and only you. I have always been faithful to you, Da? I don't need anyone except you, only you, but you can't leave me, you can never, EVER leave me, you are mine forever.

IVONA grabs the photograph and rips it to shreds. GHEORGHE raises his hand, about to slap her across the face but IVONA doesn't flinch. Stunned, GHEORGHE lowers his hand. IVONA uses this moment to take the suitcase full of money and leaves.

GHEORGHE (CONT.)

You can't leave! You'll get eaten by vampires or get lost for centuries!

IVONA

May God curse you, so you grovel in the dust like a slug!

IVONA vanishes into the forest and EXITS, GHEORGHE remains kneeling by the grave in shock.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 4, IONUȚ IS DRIVING HIS CAR WITH VIVIANA SITTING NEXT TO HIM AND MARIANA SITTING IN THE BACKSEAT SILENTLY SCROLLING ON HER PHONE.

VIVIANA

Mariana, how are you?

MARIANA

I'm fine.

VIVIANA

OK, just let us know if you need anything. At wedding you look beautiful, I never see dress before.

MARIANA

Oh yeah, well I took the uhh, interesting, ballgown my grandparents made me wear and put my own spin on it. I can be a wizard with the sewing machine when I wanna.

VIVIANA

Yes you will be wizard for that! You are very talented.

MARIANA

Thanks.

(Beat)

Am I a slut?

IONUȚ

CE?!

IONUȚ swerves the wheel and almost crashes the car.

VIVIANA

No! Not possible, where do you get crazy idea?!

MARIANA

(Tearing up)

I don't know, my own grandfather thought I would do well as a prostitute so I don't know, maybe I just seem really easy or desperate. Like I know I have a "hyper" attitude and I'm obsessed with fashion so maybe I'm sending the wrong message, like I want every creep to hit on me? Especially since apparently I'm only "worth" \$15.

VIVIANA lights up a cigarette.

VIVIANA

No! No no no, it has nothing to do with you! Your designs are very beautiful and you have good eye for style, nothing to do with looking "cheap". Your grandfather, he is, um-

IONUȚ

(Mutters)

Un măgar prost care mănâncă cacat-

VIVIANA

Da! He is...very bad man. Do not think about what he say or think.

IONUȚ lights up a cigarette too.

IONUȚ

Gheorghe is the type of man who only thinks what is best for himself. Unfortunately many terrible men like to take advantage of young girls for sport, the younger the better. It is disgusting and Gheorghe wanted to make money off of the disgusting desires of these men. I wish I would have known Gheorghe was like this before, or I would have warned Viviana and he would not have come to the apartment.

VIVIANA

Yes, I am very sorry. I did not know he was nebun.

MARIANA

It's alright, yeah even the best people sometimes turn out to be absolutely horrible. Though Gheorghe was never the best guy ever.

IONUȚ

Haha, man who has agreements with himself should never be trusted.

MARIANA

Wait he did that with you too?!

VIVIANA

(Giggling)

I told him and dumnezeu, is very funny!

IONUȚ

(Chuckles)

Haha yes, if I ever end up doing that, please shoot me dead.

MARIANA

Even better!! I'll use a melesteu, I finally know how to swing it now!

They all laugh.

MARIANA

Well, thank you both for giving me a reality check, I don't know, I guess I just get really anxious about stuff sometimes.

VIVIANA

You went through terrible experience. I cannot imagine why is happening to you and it happen so much in this country!

IONUȚ

It happens so much everywhere, there will always be disgusting men.

(Joking)

Sadly I cannot kill them all.

MARIANA

I can!

(Beat)

Just kidding! I can't visit you both again if I'm in prison! I'll really miss you guys and Romania-

IONUȚ

Even with your terrible experience?

MARIANA

Yes! Because, well, life isn't perfect I guess. And at least I got those crazies out of my life. Besides, I have such cool pics for my page now, so it's totally worth it!

VIVIANA

Hahaha yes, "pics or it didn't happen!"

VIVIANA suddenly looks embarrassed.

VIVIANA

We invite you for visit again, anytime!

IONUȚ

Absolutely.

(Teases)

IONUȚ

I might even let you drive a Mercedes next time!

MARIANA

You better! Annnnnddd I trust you'll have some kiddos around by then?

VIVIANA

Mariana!

MARIANA

Better start cracking! I need some baby cousins to spoil! Or an excuse for me to keep on collecting Happy Meal toys so my mom will stop thinking I'm some sorta crazy hoarder.

IONUȚ pulls into the airport terminal parking.

IONUȚ

OK, are we ready to go?

MARIANA

I guess. Yes! I'm ready to go.

IONUȚ

OK, we will help you with the suitcases and say our final goodbyes before you go to customs.

MARIANA

Okay.

(Bursts out crying)

Fuck I hate saying goodbyes.

VIVIANA opens the door and hugs MARIANA.

VIVIANA

Is OK, we can talk, Now I have your social!

MARIANA steps out of the car.

MARIANA

That's true, I'll make sure to text you all the time!

MARIANA goes to hug IONUȚ.

IONUȚ

Hah, I am not much for social but, you can always ring me when you have time.

MARIANA

Of course, I'll never forget! Okay, I'm ready to go now.

IONUȚ and VIVIANA help take the suitcases with MARIANA as they step through the door to the airport.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 5. LIVING ROOM IN THE US, JOHN IS SITTING ON THE COUCH FERVENTLY TYPING ON HIS LAPTOP AS MARIANA ENTERS.

MARIANA

Hey Dad!

JOHN

(JOHN Doesn't look up)

Hi Mariana.

MARIANA

Did you get a chance to schedule the scuba diving stuff yet?

JOHN

Sorry, it's been really busy at work and I don't have time for that Mariana.

MARIANA

Oh, uh ok. Well, maybe we can go like bike riding?

JOHN

Look, I don't have time to do anything right now.

MARIANA

Okay.

JOHN

You can help me when I change the oil on the car.

MARIANA

Ah yes! I'd love to do that! When I was in Romania, I got to help Ionuț fix a flat tire!

JOHN

Well I was thinking more that you could hold the flashlight while I work.

MARIANA

Oh. Um, okay yeah sure I can do that.

(Beat)

I know how to use a wrench though! First you fit it onto the bolt, then you twist righty tighty, lefty loosey-

JOHN

Mariana I have to finish what I'm working on right now, so let's talk later, okay?

MARIANA

Okay.

JOHN

Do you have any idea on what you want to do for dinner?

MARIANA

Dinner?! It's 1 o'clock!

JOHN

Yes but you know how packed the Pub gets. So we have to figure out where we want to go ahead of time. That way we can show up early and get a nice spot at the bar-

MARIANA

The Pub AGAIN?!

JOHN

What do you mean again? You just got back home yesterday!

MARIANA

Yeah, but like, I don't know, we ALWAYS go there, I get so sick of eating the same food day in and

MARIANA (CONT.)

day out! Like in Romania they have all of these cool dishes but the food here, it's just like "chicken wings, burgers and fries, every single day!"

JOHN

Well if you don't want to go to the Pub, there are other options.

MARIANA

Like what?!

JOHN

The Tavern, the Saloon, the Tippling house, the-

MARIANA

Okay! The Pub is fine.

JOHN

If you don't want to go, you don't have to-

MARIANA

No no no, it's okay, I wanna go and spend more time with you. Then maybe afterwards we can work on the car and I'll hold the flashlight-

JOHN

I don't think I'll be able to tonight-

MARIANA

No problem! We can do that tomorrow, or this weekend, or next week or next year. Just as long as we finally get to do something together for once!!!

(Awkward silence)

JOHN

(Closes his laptop)

Okay, well we should get going so we can get a seat-

MARIANA

It's only 1 o'clock, remember?

JOHN

Oh! Yeah, okay. Well, I guess I'll just get going now so I can chill with my buddies until you're ready.

JOHN gives MARIANA a hug and kisses her on the head.

JOHN

Love you.

MARIANA

Love you too dad- Oh! Don't forget we're fixing the car tomorrow!

JOHN

Yep sounds good, Goodbye!

MARIANA

Bye.

JOHN EXITS through the front door and MARIANA stands in the living room alone. She wipes away her tears and then EXITS.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 6. MARIANA IS SITTING ON HER BED IN HER ROOM SCROLLING ON HER PHONE WHEN DARIA ENTERS.

DARIA

(Opens the door)

Mariana, can you start unpacking so we can wash your things and put them away?

MARIANA

Can't we do that later?

DARIA

What, because checking your social media is more important?! Fine, if you want to stink up your room with smelly clothes and live in filth, then that's on you!

MARIANA

Fine! I'll do it now!

MARIANA aggressively open a suitcase and throws out all of the clothes on the floor.

DARIA

Be more careful! Don't mess up your clothes!

MARIANA

Well you wanted me to do this now, so I'm doing it now!

DARIA

Look, if you rip up all your clothes, the only person that you're going to hurt is yourself.

MARIANA glares at DARIA and starts carefully putting the clothes into the laundry basket. DARIA sees the sheepskin vest and holds it up.

DARIA

Oh this is nice!

MARIANA

Yeah, Viviana got it for me, it's really nice. The only nice thing from there.

DARIA

Excuse me?!

MARIANA

Yeah, since everything else there is bullshit-

DARIA

Oh so now you're ungrateful?! Do you have any idea how much this costs?!-

MARIANA

I know, I'm sorry-

DARIA

-\$600!! And Viviana doesn't have the extra money to spend, you know. Especially with the wedding.

MARIANA

Oh-

DARIA

-And now you're going to act like an ungrateful brat when Ionuț and Viviana were so generous in opening up their home to you. Feeding you well and spending their honeymoon taking you sightseeing so you could take all your influencer pics!

MARIANA

I know! It's not them that's the problem, it's grandma and grandpa!

DARIA

Oh honey. We've cut them out of our lives, so you don't have to worry about them anymore.

MARIANA

I know but still, if I can't trust family, then who CAN I trust?! Like seriously, it was a mistake to go and an even bigger mistake to come back! I should just, like, run away or something, but where, I don't know, and it's not like I have the money either!

(Beat)

DARIA

You knew they were untrustworthy from the beginning, I made sure to warn you about them-

MARIANA

Yes and thanks for that, because if not maybe my stupid ass would've gone to the hotel in the woods and no one would have ever heard from me again. But it's not just about them, it's people in general, like what if-

DARIA tries to flick something out of MARIANA'S hair.

DARIA

You have a fuzzy there-

MARIANA

ARGHH! Stop! -anyway, what if-

DARIA

Hold still! It's almost out!

MARIANA

URGHHH!

DARIA gets the dust fuzz out.

MARIANA

ANYWAY, as I was saying, what if everyone else I meet from now on turns out to be some crazy?! Like how I will make friends in college without knowing if they'll secretly try to betray and murder me?!-

DARIA

You won't know-

MARIANA

-Or how will I know I won't be forever alone or that my only chances at love are to settle for some asshole who will either cheat or get tired of me and get rid of me by selling me to some hotel in the woods? –

DARIA

Who cares if you're forever alone? You're too young for romance anyways-

MARIANA

Or what if I'm a failure in life because I have such terrible luck so everything I try ends up going horribly wrong? –

DARIA

You're right, you can't know. You could try and still fail-

MARIANA

-Then what's the point??!! Of living, of trying, of anything!!! We all end up dead in the end, it's either kill or be killed!!

DARIA

Not exactly, BUT! If either way you're going to die in the end-because, believe me no one gets out of life alive-wouldn't you rather try instead of just quitting on life now?

DARIA (CONT.)

There are no guarantees in life but I can guarantee that if you quit now, you'll have no chance of happiness because you'll be too dead to be happy-

MARIANA

OH my GODDDDD, I don't wanna DIE, stop being so overly dramatic! I just won't get close to or trust anyone ever again!

DARIA

Then how do you expect to cope with living another 85 years of a meaningless existence? What, you're going to become an addict or something?!

MARIANA

Well Dad is! –

DARIA

And look how miserable he is!! He's either working or drinking to numb the stress of working. Do you want to end up like him?!!

MARIANA

No. He doesn't ever make time for us.

DARIA

So now you're going to isolate yourself from everyone just because my crazy parents tried to sell you?! Ya know, they did much worse-

MARIANA

I know! I get it, you win the misery Olympics, congratulations. You get miserable gold!

DARIA

No, I'm not bringing this up for your pity! I'm saying this because there were MANY times where I could've given up, accepted my fate and laid down and died, but I didn't. And, well, obviously my life isn't perfect, but it sure as hell is a million times better than it was before!

(Beat)

MARIANA

But how do I know if someone is trustworthy? Like, if they'll betray me? I don't wanna be hurt again.

DARIA

You want the truth or some Pollyanna there there, sweetie reassurance?

MARIANA

The truth please.

DARIA

Well, you'll never know!

MARIANA

Great.

DARIA

But there are definitely warnings to tell you if someone is bad.

MARIANA

Like what?!

DARIA glares at MARIANA.

DARIA

What told you that going to the hotel in the woods was a bad idea?

MARIANA

You warned me-

DARIA

And if I hadn't? You really didn't notice ANYTHING suspicious about that?

MARIANA

Yeah, I did! Like, go to a hotel in the woods where you can drink as much as you like and take a random ass man to your room to watch tv. Yeah. No thanks. That's weird as hell.

DARIA

Exactly! That's your intuition. Trust it.

MARIANA

But is there any way I can figure out if someone has it in for me?

DARIA

Not really, that's why Don Corleone says: The saddest thing about betrayal is that it never comes from your enemies, it comes from those you trust the most.

MARIANA

So I guess I just gotta constantly re-evaluate everything.

DARIA

Yep. The unexamined life is not worth living. You know, Socrates said-

MARIANA

-Oh my GOD MO-OM!

DARIA

(Laughing)

I know, sorry I'm a huge dork.

MARIANA

But I guess there were some red flags with grandma and grandpa. And if I look close enough, I can kinda see the warning signs, but even then it's not always obvious.

DARIA

And sometimes things will be out of your control, so you can't just expect only good things to happen from now on. Be active in choosing who you allow into your life and you can help reduce the number of times you'll be screwed over.

MARIANA

Okay that makes sense.

(Beat)

Thanks for the advice mom.

DARIA

Of course, how else can I put my master's in history to work? Now help me carry these dirty clothes downstairs so we can get a load of laundry going. And you still need to feed Chocolate Truffle, or do you expect me to keep doing that? Because she's not my pet-

MARIANA

Okay, Okay I'm coming, I'll do it now.

MARIANA and DARIA carry the laundry and EXIT.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 7, MARIANA IS HOME ALONE SITTING AT THE DINING ROOM TABLE SEWING WHEN SHE HEARS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. IVONA IS STANDING IN THE DOORWAY HOLDING TWO RED DYED EGGS.

IVONA

Hristos înviat Mariana!

IVONA hands her a red egg but MARIANA just stares at her in shock.

MARIANA

Oh, uhhh...grandma! Adevărat a înviat.

MARIANA takes the egg and IVONA and MARIANA hit the eggs together. MARIANA's egg breaks.

IVONA

Eyy!! You'll have good luck this year! You have been blessed by God!

IVONA crosses herself.

MARIANA

Well I should certainly hope so.

(Looks around)

MARIANA

Umm, where's grandpa?

IVONA

Oh! He's...ahh..nowhere to be found! He's gone forever! Because, well...I don't love him anymore. I'm going up to Maine to sell the vacation house, I have no use for it now that nebun has gone. Then I'll go back to Romania.

MARIANA

Oh, okay. Well, uh, good for you, I guess.

IVONA

Yes, I know. I finally got rid of that stupid man-

MARIANA

That's an understatement, more like that crazy man with psychopathic tendencies.

They laugh. MARIANA looks around.

IVONA

Trying to see if your parents are coming home?

MARIANA

Yeah-

IVONA moves past MARIANA and steps into the house.

IVONA

Be a good girl and make me tea, I take mine black, no sugar, a splash of milk, just a teaspoon of honey and a slice of fresh lemon. Okay păpușă?

IVONA shoves her fur coat into MARIANA's hands

MARIANA

Wha-?!

(Sighs)

Sure, whatever.

MARIANA hangs up IVONA's coat and then goes into the kitchen to make her tea as IVONA sits down.

IVONA

(Groans)

Aye-ya-yaie my back, I'm getting so old.

IVONA eyes MARIANA like a hawk.

IVONA (CONT.)

Never get old Mariana. So! Did you have a good Easter?

MARIANA

Oh yes it was nice, I just had dinner with my parents. It was nice for us to be together without any crazy drama, unlike...you know...

IVONA

Ahem, yes! It must have been SO NICE to have an ah, peaceful celebration honoring the resurrection of our lord and savior Jesus Christ!

IVONA Crosses herself

IVONA (CONT.)

Remember when you used to call me to say "happy Easter"? Why didn't you call yesterday?

MARIANA

Ummm...well you kinda –

IVONA

Ahaha, it's okay, I'm glad that at least now I get to see my granddaughter!!

IVONA pinches MARIANA'S cheek and MARIANA is quietly annoyed. The tea kettle whistles so MARIANA gets ups to pour IVONA tea. IVONA looks to the corner and sees MARIANA'S pet bunny there.

MARIANA

Don't even THINK about asking me to cook her!

IVONA

What? Mariana, I would NEVER say such a thing! I'm a vegetarian-

MARIANA

Who refuses to eat anything unless there's meat in? –

IVONA

I-I was just admiring how cute she is, just like you păpușă!

MARIANA

(Huffs)

Just as long as we understand each other.

(Awkward silence)

IVONA

Ahem! Well, how is school? Are you getting good grades?

MARIANA

Yes.

IVONA

How so? Care to explain?

MARIANA

(Sighs)

Focusing on setting up a good future for myself has been very therapeutic.

IVONA

Uh huh, I see. What else have you been doing with your time? No drugs or boys I hope?

MARIANA

What?!

(Beat)

MARIANA (CONT.)

I've been designing new clothes! My pics from the wedding got a bunch of likes and new followers, so now I'm expanding my brand. I've actually been able to clear my mind from all the drama that you caused at-

IVONA

Drama, ha-ha da, well you are an artist so you must like it then, yes?

MARIANA

Well, it depends. Sometimes the drama can be great and other times it can be really shitty and try to destroy my life, but hey at least my life is never boring!

IVONA

Y-yes! That's the spirit! Ah! That dress is very beautiful! You should wear it when you join my modeling agency!

MARIANA

Thanks, but I'm more of a designer than a model.

IVONA

But you still post pictures on the web of you wearing the clothes you make, no? My agency is very good at taking professional photographs for models! We even worked with Hermès.

MARIANA

When?!

IVONA

Oh! Ah, in 1985.

MARIANA

Have you done anything since?

IVONA

Oh! No, we have been focusing on ahem, more...profitable ventures.

MARIANA

Like shooting for Angel Films?

IVONA

Ye-WHAT?!

MARIANA

I looked it up, apparently sometimes the ah...auditions for the...um...models happen at various hotels in Transylvania.

IVONA

(Chokes on her tea)

Ahem da, you can always find beautiful girls in the beautiful woods, yes? So! How are your parents?

MARIANA

Well, my dad is...fine and my mom is teaching ESL online to international students who want to go to college in America.

IVONA

Very good, yes, Daria was always very smart. Smarter than me in many ways, I think. I used to be so jealous of her. Maybe that got in the way of our bond.

Awkward silence where MARIANA smugly witnesses IVONA'S realization but then steps in.

MARIANA

Well, you became an, uhh, modeling agent?...producer! Because you run an, uhh, film company?...So she must have gotten her intelligence and uhh...unconventional business ideas from you!

IVONA

Yes, Gheorghe did nothing, so it was ABSOLUTELY NOT from his side of the family!!!

They laugh.

IVONA (CONT.)

Well, he did manage to escape from the gulag so he might have a little bit of a brain. Did you know he walked all the way back from Siberia to Romania? He certainly was the most stubborn man I've ever met. But he was also the most crazy. All he ever caused was headache and heartache, so good riddance!

IVONA reaches into her purse.

IVONA (CONT.)

I have a gift for you.

IVONA hands MARIANA a check. MARIANA knocks it out of her hand so it falls to the floor.

MARIANA

Sorry, I'm not interested in your \$15.

IVONA

Ha-ha sorry I could not hear; I have old ears. What did you say păpușă?!

MARIANA

You know, when you and grandpa tried to kidnap me and take me to a brothel-or was it to become the newest model at Angel Films, I haven't figured out which one yet-while I was visiting Ionuț for his wedding?

IVONA

W-well it wasn't my idea!! It was all Gheorghe!!

MARIANA

Well, then I guess it's good you're not with him anymore.

IVONA

Listen! I am sorry. I won't try to sell you again, I promise!

MARIANA

So, you're giving me hush money to bribe your way back into my life?

IVONA

Ungrateful brat!

IVONA bends over to pick up the check from the floor.

MARIANA

It's ungrateful because I won't let you manipulate your way back into my life?

IVONA

Oh! I'm just an old woman, Mariana. Do you still have it in your heart to hold a grudge against me?

I'm going to DIE soon!

MARIANA

So, you're buying your way into heaven?

IVONA

(Fake tears)

Oh Mariana! Please, let me be a part of your life!! Daria won't even speak to me anymore and I don't have Gheorghe any longer! I'm so alone in this world! Please let me continue to see you!!

MARIANA

For only \$15? Yeah sorry I'm not some cheap whore, even if that's what you think of me.

IVONA

Ah. You didn't bother looking at it.

MARIANA picks up the check and is astonished.

MARIANA

\$160,000?!!

IVONA

It should help pay for college but I promise to give you whatever extra you need for tuition, okay draga mea? But! I will only do this if you continue to get A's with only the occasional B's. You must take photos of your designs, give me a 50% discount on all the designs you make and send email updates of your life. When you go on adventures, send me photos every day so I know what you're using my money for AND you must graduate with honors at the top of your class.

MARIANA

My high school doesn't have honors-

IVONA

Then college will do.

MARIANA

Hmm let's see, you're paying me to work towards my future and let you be in my life? SOLD! Well, I won't get a degree in mechanical engineering but I'll work hard, because fuck it! Anyone who thinks that selling their soul to the devil is beneath them has never been to hell.

IVONA

Hmph, I guess I'll have to accept that.

Silence but then MARIANA softens up a bit.

MARIANA

Thank you so much for this gift. Uh, would you like some more tea for the ride home?

IVONA

Oh, no, I'm okay, but thank you. Well, I hope you have a good graduation.

MARIANA

Thank you grandma.

MARIANA impulsiveness hugs IVONA and they are both shocked, but eventually IVONA hugs her back and MARIANA smiles.

MARIANA

Oh! One question.

IVONA

Yes?

MARIANA

Where did you get the money? Since, you know, six hundred ninety-eight thousand and sixty-five leu is only \$15.

IVONA

As you know, I'm the producer of a film company and modeling agency.

MARIANA

Okay, then why did grandpa want me to sell me so bad?!

IVONA

He was obsessed with a stupid...mission and for many years I tolerated his craziness because that's what a good wife is supposed to do. But no more worrying! He's gone now.

MARIANA

Okay, but how? Did he die? Did you get divorced, again? So did you finally walk away this time? My mom said you've been married and divorced 4 times. Like, I know it's hard to let go of an ex that you loved, but he's also like a terrible person-

IVONA

Gheorghe was-is...lost in the forest!

MARIANA

OH. So in, like, Hoia Baci forest?

IVONA nods quickly.

MARIANA

Okay, so he basically got eaten by vampires or is he like, lost for centuries?

(Quietly)

Or did, you know, something...else?

IVONA

Mariana, how would YOU get rid of a man like that?

IVONA EXITS.

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY

ROMANIAN PRONUNCIATION GUIDE: NAMES AND MEANINGS

Ionuț:

“Ee-you-nootz”, Romanian derivative of “Johnny”, meaning “God is gracious”.

Gheorghe:

“Jeh-or-jeh”, Romanian derivative of Saint George, meaning “farmer”.

Ivona:

“Ee-voh-nah”, Romanian derivative of “Jane”, meaning “God is gracious”.

Viviana:

“Vih-vee-ana”, meaning “full of life”.

Mariana:

“Mah-ree-ana”, meaning “of the sea”.

Daria:

“Dah-ree-ah”, Female derivative of Darius, meaning “powerful”.

Rodica:

“Roh-dee-kah”, meaning “fertile”.

ROMANIAN PRONUNCIATION GUIDE: PHRASE TRANSLATIONS

Bună ziua / seara:

“*Boo-nah zee-whah / se-ah-rah*”, meaning “good day / evening”.

Ce:

“*Ceh*”, meaning “what?”.

Cu bine:

“*Koo-Bee-neh*”, meaning “see you”.

Da:

“*Dah*”, meaning “yes”.

Doamna / Dumnezele:

“*Duo-ah-mnah / "Doom-neh-zeh-lee"*”, meaning “Lady / Miss”.

Dragă / dragă mea:

“*Drah-gah / meh-yah*”, meaning “dear one / my dear” (*feminine*).

Dragu / dragu mea:

“*Drah-goo / meh-yah*”, meaning “dear one / my dear”, (*masculine*).

Dulce:

“*Dool-chey*”, meaning “sweetie”.

Îmi pare rău:

“*Ee-mee pah-rey rah-ow*”, meaning “I’m sorry”.

Pa:

“*Pah*”, meaning “bye”.

Pálinka:

“*Pah-lin-kah*”, Hungarian apricot liquor.

Păpușă:

“*Pah-poo-shah*”, meaning “doll”.

Țuică:

“*Tz-ooee-kah*”, Romanian plum liquor, usually homemade.

Hristos înviat:

“*Krees-tohs ahn-vee-yaht*”, meaning “Christ is risen”. Traditional call greeting at Easter and the week after, known as 'Bright Week'.

Adevărat a înviat:

“*Ah-deh-veh-raht ah ahn-vee-yaht*”, meaning “Truly He is risen”. Traditional response greeting at Easter and the week after, known as 'Bright Week'.

Ceapa:

“*Ceh-ah-pah*”, onion.

Hristos:

“*Krees-tohs*”, Jesus.

Leu:

“*Leh-ew*”, Romanian currency.

Mămăligă:

“*Mama-lee-gah*”, Romanian cornbread.

Melesteu:

“*Meh-leh-st-ehw*”, a rolling pin.

Mulțumesc:

“*Mool-tzue-mesk*”, meaning “Thank you very much”.

Primărie:

“*Pre-mah-ree*”, City Hall.

Usturoi:

“*Oos-too-roy*”, garlic.

ROMANIAN PRONUNCIATION GUIDE: PEOPLE AND PLACES

Dragobete:

"*Drah-go-beh-teh*", the Dacian '*Guardian of Love*' who is traditionally celebrated on February 24 as '*The Day When the Birds are Betrothed*' when unmarried girls pick spring flowers in the forest while chased by boys who try to kiss them. Also known as '*Romanian Valentine's Day*'.

Matei Corvin:

"*Mah-tey Kor-veyn*", Matthias Corvinus, the Medieval Hungarian king who, despite an agreed alliance, refused to send aid to Romania when Mehmed II lead the Ottomans invasion of 1462. After his capture, Vlad Țepeș asked for his support in regaining the Wallachian throne but instead, Matthias Corvinus put him on trial for previously killing Hungarians and imprisoned him until 1475.

Vlad Țepeș:

"*Vlahd Tzeh-peh-sh*", the Medieval ruler of Walachia known as Dracula, '*Son of the Dragon*' also known as '*Vlad the Impaler*' in Romanian. He was the second son of Vlad Dracul and along with his younger brother, Radu, was raised as a royal hostage in the Ottoman court of Mehmed I to secure their father's loyalty.

Zalmoxis:

"*Zahl-mohx-ees*", the Dacian God-Priest, who is sometimes referred to as '*Lord of Men*'. He taught vegetarianism, reincarnation and that all warriors would enjoy eternal life in paradise with everlasting pleasure after their deaths. Some legends incorrectly translate this as "life is worse than death and people are eternally cursed to repeat it".

București:

“*Boo-koo-resht-ee*”, the modern capital of Romania, Bucharest.

Bacău:

“*Bah-cow*”, both a city and county in Romania.

Castelul Bran:

“*Kah-stehl-uhl Brahn*”, commonly known as ‘*Dracula’s Castle*’ is a stone fort in the Bran Gorge of the Transylvania Mountains. Vlad the Impaler was imprisoned there after being captured by Hungarians in 1462 after an unsuccessful negotiation with Matthias Corvinus, who had traveled for the meeting.

Castelul Peleş:

“*Kah-stehl-uhl Peh-lejz*”, a neo-Renaissance castle in the Carpathian Mountains of Romania.

Dacia:

“*Dah-chee-yah*”, historical region of Romania during the Roman Empire. The ancient Greeks thought of it as northern Thrace or Getae.

Pădurea Hoia-Baciu:

“*Pah-dooh-rah Hoy-ah Bah-chee-oo*”, the name of a national forest in north-western Romania where all the tree trunks are inexplicably curved to the east.

Sarmizegetusa Regia:

“*Sahr-mizeh-gheh-too-sah Reh-ghey-ah*”, the capital of Dacia before the Romans invaded. Located in a remote part of the western Carpathian Mountains, it served as Dacia’s political, military and religious center for over a century. Also known as the ‘*Romanian Stonehenge*’.

Târgoviște:

“*Tzar-guh-vees-teh*”, a city in Romania that served as the capital when Vlad the Impaler ruled. Located 50 miles north-west of București on the right bank of the Ialomița River.

Wallachia:

“*Wah-lah-kee-ah*”, historical region of Romania during the Medieval era. Was once the kingdom of Vlad the Impaler.

Buda:

“*Boo-dah*”, the old town of Budapest, capital of Hungary, located on the right side of the Danube River.

Pest:

“*Peh-sht*”, the newer and largest area of Budapest, capital of Hungary, located on the left side of the Danube River. After his release in 1475, Vlad Țepeș owned and resided in Pest before once again attempting to regain the Wallachian throne.

ROMANIAN PRONUNCIATION GUIDE: PROFANITY PHRASE TRANSLATIONS

Dumnezeu:

"*Doom-neh-zew*", meaning "Oh my God".

Măgar:

"*Mah-gahr*", meaning "asshole".

Nebuni / nebunu / nebun:

"*Neh-boo-knee / neh-boon-oo / neh-boon*", meaning "crazy people (*plural*) / insane".

Proști / Proșt :

"*Proh-sh-tee / proh-st*", meaning "idiots (*plural*) / stupid".

Ungar:

"*Oon-gahr*", meaning "greedy", (*pejorative*). Romanians still haven't gotten over Hungary not getting involved in the Ottoman invasion, coupled with Hungary conquering an eastern part of Transylvania later on.

Scorie:

"*Sk-or-piea*", meaning "bitch, shrew or hag".

Turku:

"*Toor-koo*", meaning "idiot", (*pejorative*). Romanians still haven't gotten over the Ottoman Empire conquering their lands.

Du-te dracu:

"*Doo-te dra-ku*", meaning "Go, you devil".

Futu-ți Paștele și dumnezeii mă-tii de nenorocit:

"Foo-tu-tze pasht-ele shi dun-meh-seh ma-tzi de nen-ohro-keet", meaning "Fuck your mother's Easter and her gods, you unbeliever". The ultimate Romanian "your *mamma*" insult. Unlike in Western Christian traditions, Easter is the holiest and most important holiday for Orthodox Christians and the matriarch of the family takes great pride in preparing the Easter feast meal, which often takes weeks of preparation.

Un măgar prost cara mănăncă cacat:

"Oon may-gahr prohst kara mah-nun-kah kah-kaht", meaning "a stupid asshole who eats shit".

Poster and Program



PIPS PRESENTS...
Tears and a Wedding
A STAGED CAPSTONE READING

...written by
Alexa deBinder
...directed by
Rawl Blackett

TIME:
March 22nd 6:30 PM-8:30 PM

LOCATION:
D-Lab, in the DOYO, Theatre Wing

Photo: "In the Quiet of the Forest", 1901, photographer unknown

Poster created by: Sabatino Nezaj, Drew student

PLAYWRIGHT NOTES:

The history of Romania is a bloody one: 3,000 years ago, the land was settled by Scythian and Slavic tribes. In 335 BCE, Alexander the Great invaded part of the region, renaming it Thrace and brought with him the Roma from India. During the Roman Empire, it became known as Dacia when it was conquered by Emperor Trajan.

During the Middle Ages, the territory became known as Walachia and for about 600 years, Walachia was continuously invaded by a long laundry list of warlords, including the Huns, the Mongols and the Rus. Then in 1476 the Ottomans, led by Sultan Mehmed II subdued the country and defeated Vlad Tepes, Romania's most famous king and the inspiration for Dracula.

The Ottomans ruled until 1881 when Romania became an independent country, but it didn't last long. In 1947, Romania became part of the Eastern Soviet block and remained communist until 1989 with the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu.

Today, Romania is EU candidate but is still economically disadvantaged because oligarchs sold off manufacturing assets to get rich and everyone who could find a way out, did.

As a result, Romania has always been a melting pot of different ethnicities and customs from Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the Balkans, but not in the same way as America. Romania was never a land of opportunity, which is why there are so many social problems.

Cover Photo Credit:

"In the quiet of the forest." Romanian woman - 1901, photographer unknown



Tears and a Wedding

Drew University

Wednesday, March 22, 2023 | 6:30p

**DREW UNIVERSITY
THEATRE DEPARTMENT**

Presents

TEARS AND A WEDDING

by
Alexa deBinder

with

Eli Hatcher
Kyriaki Kyrkopoulou
Krystal Lozano
Caden Newman
Saba Nezaj
Natalia Rakviashvili
Daria Yashnyk

Production Credit
PIPs

Stage Directions
Isabella Robinson

Directed by
Rawl Blackett

CAST

John
Man
Priest

Eli Hatcher

Ivona

Kyriaki Kyrkopoulou

Mariana

Krystal Lozano

Gheorghhe

Caden Newman

Ionuț

Saba Nezaj

Daria

Natalia Rakviashvili

Viviana

Daria Yashnyk