

the beginning of

BULGARIAN RHAPSODY (from **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

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Time: The present

Place: A modest Bulgarian home

Characters: VASILKA, a middle-aged Bulgarian woman
TATIANA, Vasilka's daughter, 20ish (pronounced "Ta-tee-AN-a")
STANIMIR, Vasilka's husband
PLAMEN, their neighbor
DESLAV, Vasilka's brother
KEN, Vasilka's American cousin

As the play begins, VASILKA, a middle-aged Bulgarian woman of modest means, is tidying the modest living room of her modest Bulgarian home. Her tidying is more a result of anxiety than need. She calls out.

VASILKA

Are you ready yet?

TATIANA (o.s.)

Almost.

VASILKA

He should be here any second.

TATIANA (o.s.)

I know, I know.

VASILKA

For our American cousin, you better look *perfect*.

TATIANA enters. She's dressed to give a man an unmistakable positive signal. She wears thick make-up and a dress with its top buttons unbuttoned.

TATIANA

How do I look? You think he'll find me attractive?

VASILKA

If he likes frigid nuns.

TATIANA

I don't want to be too forward.

Vasilka unbuttons some of the buttons of Tatiana's dress.

VASILKA

He'll only be in Bulgaria a few days.
This is no time for subtlety.

TATIANA

But what if he prefers virgins?

Vasilka rebuttons the buttons.

VASILKA

You're right. Let's not overwhelm him.

TATIANA

I don't think they still have virgins in America.

VASILKA

Then there must not be a market for it.

Vasilka unbuttons a couple of buttons.

TATIANA

Oh, Mama. What if he doesn't like me?

VASILKA

Simple. You'll change.

TATIANA

And what if he still doesn't like me?

VASILKA

Then you'll have to get a job.

TATIANA

Mama, wake up. Ever since Communism ended, there are no jobs.

VASILKA

Did you check the newspaper today?

TATIANA

Yes. There were only seven want ads.

VASILKA

So?

Tatiana picks up a newspaper.

TATIANA

"Prostitute, Prostitute, Prostitute,
Drug Dealer, Drug Dealer, Drug Dealer."

VASILKA

That's six.

TATIANA

"Executive secretary."

VASILKA

Ahh.

TATIANA

"Skills include prostitution, drug dealing,
and typing sixty words a minute."

VASILKA

Your Aunt Zelda could teach you to type.

There's a knock at the door.

VASILKA (cont'd)

Coming.

Vasilka checks the room one last time and unbuttons another button on Tatiana's dress. There's another knock.

VASILKA (cont'd)

Coming.

Vasilka opens the door. In the doorway is her neighbor PLAMEN. He's dressed as sophisticated as possible for a man who has no sophistication.

PLAMEN

Hello.

VASILKA

Oh, it's you.

PLAMEN

This is how you greet your neighbor?

TATIANA

We were hoping you were Mama's cousin.

VASILKA

Stanimir's picking him up at the airport.

PLAMEN

Where's Desislav? Doesn't he want to meet his cousin?

VASILKA

I haven't heard from my brother in weeks.

PLAMEN

Really?

VASILKA

For all I know, he's dead. Or his phone's been disconnected.

PLAMEN

Oh.

TATIANA

How do you think I look?

PLAMEN

I can honestly say you look so beautiful that only the fear of your mother killing me prevents me from lunging at you.

TATIANA

Oh, good.

PLAMEN

(to Vasilka:)

Does your American cousin know you're –

VASILKA

He'll find out soon enough.

PLAMEN

Are you sure he's single?

TATIANA

We don't even know if he's heterosexual.

Plamen unbuttons a couple of buttons on his shirt.

TATIANA (cont'd)

What are you doing?

PLAMEN

I'd rather be a gay American than a straight Bulgarian... How rich do you think he is?

VASILKA

He's American.

PLAMEN

Not all Americans are rich.

TATIANA

Really?

PLAMEN

I read an article about it. Only 10% of Americans are really wealthy. The other 90% are upper middle class.

TATIANA

Mama, what's for dinner tonight?

VASILKA

I'm hoping my cousin will take us out.

TATIANA

What if he doesn't?

VASILKA

Then we'll have leftovers from last night.

TATIANA

But last night we went without food. I didn't eat anything.

VASILKA

And whatever you didn't finish, we're having tonight.

TATIANA

Mama!

PLAMEN

You better finish it tonight, or you'll have leftovers all week.

There's a knock on the door. Vasilka checks the apartment. Tatiana unbuttons one button. Plamen sees this and unbuttons one button. Tatiana unbuttons one more button. Plamen unbuttons one more button. They both start furiously unbuttoning. There's another knock.

VASILKA

Coming!

(to Plamen, then Tatiana:)

You, button up, or I'll kick you out. Tatiana,
I want you to look like a non-virginal but
shy girl who will put out for the right man.

Vasilka opens the door. Her husband STANIMIR enters with her American
cousin KEN. Stanimir carries Ken's suitcase.

VASILKA (cont'd)

Hello, welcome.

STANIMIR

Ken, I would like you to meet your cousin
Vasilka, and our daughter Tatiana.

Vasilka smiles. Tatiana curtsies with a bow, revealing deep into her dress.
Ken is overwhelmed by the view.

STANIMIR (cont'd)

And this is our neighbor Plamen.

PLAMEN

Hello.

Plamen curtsies, too.

KEN

Hi. Stanimir, you didn't tell me you
had such a lovely wife and daughter.

STANIMIR

The wife's taken.

PLAMEN

Your trip must've been exhausting.

STANIMIR

Would you like a seat?

VASILKA

A drink?

TATIANA

A full-body massage?

