

CIVILITIES

A Play in One Act

by

Jane Riese

11749 Greenwood Avenue N. #100
Seattle, WA 98133-8100
(206) 361-5975

CHARACTERS:

JILL GREENWOOD

MME. NATALYA ZARINOVA

MARK FARRELL

Time: May through July, 1990

Place: Tacoma, Washington

Scene One: Jill Greenwood's apartment. Jill's desk, one chair. Lights up on Jill at her desk. Coffee, cigs, ashtray. Jill is paying bills. Jill is in her mid-forties.

Mark enters, sneaking up behind Jill with a huge bunch of daisies. He picks one daisy from the bunch and dangles it over Jill's head, just out of Jill's vision, like a spider dangling on a web. Jill lets out a yelp, Mark embraces her.

JILL

Sheesh! That thing's bigger than my head!

MARK

Reminds me of you.

JILL

Nah. Different shade of blond.

(She puts the flower in Mark's coffee cup)

MARK

That's my coffee!

JILL

...that died this morning...that's my pen!

(She removes pen from behind Mark's ear)

MARK

I needed it to write up shipping orders. Writes like a hypodermic.

JILL

(Trying pen) Now it writes like volcanic mud. Here.

(She hands him another pen)

MARK

(TRYING THE NEW PEN) Yeah, Okay. Should work for writing on baseball cards, too. The show's this Saturday.

MARK heads for kitchen.

JILL

Gatorade is in the fridge.

(Sorting through mail)

"City of Tacoma". I paid the light bill.

(Opens envelope)

How was work?

Mark

It was work. They've got me to the end of the week.

MARK enters with Gatorade.

JILL

(Stares at letter) My God.

MARK

Who the hell do we owe, now?

JILL

Gorbachev....?

MARK

Not if he didn't give you an estimate. What??!

JILL

(Reading) Thank you for applying for a position as delegate to the 1990 Goodwill Games of Women of Vision Symposium. Of 253 highly talented women of achievement who applied, you have been selected among twelve United States women to participate in the seven day conference with twelve women delegates from the Soviet Union. Our first orientation meeting...blah...blah...next meeting...blah...July 20th blah...blah...list of Soviet Delegation...blah...blah...culture and customs blah and blah...again, congratulations! Women of Vision of the City of Tacoma welcomes you! Sincerely, Julia Graham, President, Women of Vision.

MARK

Now, what? Why the Russians? Why are you picking on the Russians?

JILL

I don't know! It was intuitive...

MARK

It was intuitive! Yeah. That's how you got in to Olympia as lead advocate for disabled rights...that's how you got in to theatre. "The bust was late, so I auditioned for the school play" and you're an actress for the next twenty-five

years. It was intuitive!

JILL

(Laughs) Well?

MARK

So, what have you gotten in to now to change life as we know it?

JILL

Well. There was an announcement in the paper and I answered it. They needed women for the Goodwill Games Women of Vision. Delegation. I'm a woman. I like symposiums. I phoned. They sent me an application. I applied. It was intuitive.

MARK

Why did you get intuitive about the Russians?

JILL

They're Soviets now. I got to thinking that the ordinary Soviet people - the real people - don't want war - cold or otherwise - any more than we do. What better opportunity to prevent war and assure peace than for women of both countries to start to talk to each other

MARK

Women talk all the time.

JILL

We don't talk war - we talk alternatives.

MARK

War is part of the economy. Keeps us working. Pays the rent.

JILL

Start a war - it's good business. Felt that way when you got back from 'Nam, right?

MARK

I felt nothing.

JILL

Yeah. Right. The disabled Vets I worked with felt nothing when they applied for jobs up three flights of stairs and tried to rent apartments. Two steps to the front door and one rude landlord kept them out! Less than second class citizens. No big deal. Felt nothing.

MARK

Why weren't you born in to a world you don't have to change?

JILL

I'd be bored silly. You know? I want to know how the new Premier has changed our relations so quickly after nearly thirty five years of animosity. Disarming - in more ways then one. How did he do that? How do the Soviets feel about us now? Are we changing toward them? Is this change permanent? Is it even real?

MARK

It's all politics. Good P.R. boys.

JILL

I do want to know how the women feel. We don't get much press, so how do we know?

MARK

Why didn't you just do a Chekov play this summer.

JILL

They're going to hire me to play Masha - RRIGHT! There she goes, wheeling off to Moscow!

MARK

Hot Wheels chops the Cherry Orchard!

(He spins Jill around the living room)

JILL

Riding the wild Seagull!

MARK

So, crazy daisy. Why Russia?

JILL

This conference has to be more effective than my correspondence with the President.

MARK

You're pen-pals with the Prez?

JILL

I didn't tell you?

MARK

No.

(He begins a pillow fight with JILL)

JILL

Remember the early 80's? The awareness workshops and lectures about the dangers of nuclear proliferation when we both discovered that countries had the capacity to blow up the world fifty times over? Once was enough. I hate loud noises. At the outset of their first summit meeting on weapons disarmament I wrote a joint letter to President Reagan and Premier Brezhnev. I expressed an observation that the long-standing hostility between the two governments had been created not by the people of either country, but by the power conflicts between two governments. "We will bury you" and more recent references to the "Evil Empire" have not been friendly overtures. "Therefore, in the interest of the people of the world, I expect this momentous summit to result in the discovery and development of peaceful ways to share certain coveted power. Perhaps dismantling a deep fear which exists between two world leaders in the first step. Respectfully, Jill Greenwood. " Three months later I received a post card thanking me for my interest in issues which affect our great country. A mimeograph with a stamped Presidential signature. I wasn't after an autograph, I wanted a response. I wrote back, asking the President his thoughts about my first letter. Three months after that - Brezhnev was dead by then - I received another postcard thanking me for my interest in issues which affect our great country. With the same stamped Presidential signature. I wonder how he would have responded if I'd signed respectfully Jim Greenwood?

MARK

A note from Nancy?

JILL

Gulp your Gatorade, honey. It may be your last.

MARK

Hey, the Prez is a busy guy...

JILL

Well, yeah.

(Looking over the letter)

Ye, Gods. The chairwoman of the Soviet Woman's Committee is scheduled to come. Madame Natalya Zarinovna. Whew...the most powerful woman in the Soviet Union. A Communist to the rock-bottom of her gritty little gizzards. And the leading liberal poet of the country...Larina...I can't even prance her last name! Doctors, journalists...how did I get in to this?!

MARK

Think about it!

JILL

What?

MARK

You're a beautiful actress, and somebody there noticed the curb-ramps and level building entrances and elevators and accessible buses you advocated for.

JILL

Well, I didn't do it single-handedly! Sheesh, when I think of the inaccessibility of the 50's, 60's and 70's....yeah, we've made a difference. OUT OF THE SHUT IN SOCIETY! The only time I notice the chair anymore is at the bottom of a flight of stairs with an audition at the top. Hope the Americans with Disabilities act will make a big difference...at least in remodeling newer buildings.

MARK

How's that damn thing doing? Is Congress gonna get a grip and pass it?

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JILL

The Senate votes in July.

MARK

But, you flew in to D>C> - when? Last November? A week after I moved in!

JILL

Toward the end of July - in the middle of the Soviet Symposium!

MARK

So what are you women gonna talk about? The bunch of you gonna recycle warheads in to the color crayons?

JILL

Warheads in to works of art - don't get me started! There's an open public forum the last morning of the conference...I love for you to come...

MARK

Bunch of women griping about their men from sea to shining sea...

JILL

If I were compelled to gripe about you at a conference of such world import, you wouldn't be living here. I never gripe about you. I gripe at you...

MARK

Great woman...great, great woman...how does a non-traditional uptown woman like you live with a Gatorade Aide like me?

JILL

Walk softly...and carry a big daisy.

MARK

(Embracing Jill) Great woman...

Scene Two: The Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, 12:30 PM, July 20, 1990. At terminal window for Aeroflot Airlines landing from what was, in 1990, the Soviet Union. JILL is waiting for a plane.

JILL

Okay, Madame Zarinova, you dragging your feet? (Looking back towards other American woman) They're being patient, I am not. Twelve Soviet women dragging their feet! Aeroflot does not float! Three hours! Mark, if you'd come to the airport with me, we could have split, broken security and gotten a latte. Oh, no - twenty-four women might bore you. Then, what the hell do I do to you? Twenty-four intelligent, high-achieving women from the Soviet Union...could be a double tall. Twelve Soviet women for seven days - not boring. (Looking through notebook) A psychologist...a physical therapist...A journalist...the leading woman poet of the entire country...and Madame Natalya Zarinova, chairwoman of the Soviet Women's Committee. I hope that poet flies in...Larina...last name impossible - Stepanovnitstcka. This is going to be good. This is going to be good. Larina Stepanovnitstcka and Mme. Natalya Zarinova refuse to speak to each other in their own country...one attends an official function and the other declines...Mme. Zarinovna's been known to boot the poet out of several dozen speaking engagements...Right, put those liberal poets on a leash, they're lethal...the Seminar directors are going to keep those two on opposite sides of the conference room...now is not an opportune time for war to break out between a poet and a control freak! I can't wait to meet her...I'd love to know how she can write poetically and politically in the same breath. Poetic politics. What a concept. (Looks out the window) Oh, my God. Oh, my God...Sandy? Cecilia? There's a dot - it's headed this way. Oh, my God - it's a Aeroflot dot! Sandy! I'm a noodle knees...Sandy, is this one of those moments? You're life takes a spin at the moment of a plane landing and changes forever and goes on forever changed...like birth, or marriage?

Scene Three: The Airport one half hour later.

JILL

That one must be the poet, she's got that kind of face...which one's Mme. Zarina? We call her Madame Zarina, right?

Enter Natalya from behind quietly not knowing who to approach.

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NATALYA

Madame Natalya Zarinovna, Chairwoman of the Soviet Women's Committee.

JILL

Jill Greenwood of women of vision, goodwill games. Welcome to Seattle and Tacoma.

NATALYA

I am glad to meet you.

JILL

I am so glad that you are finally here. We've looked so forward to your arrival. You slipped in rather quietly...everyone, Madame Natalya Zarinova of the Soviet Women's Committee.

NATALYA

(Her speech is well-written, well-rehearsed) It is my pleasure to come to Seattle and Tacoma, Washington to meet the United States Women's Delegation to the 1990 Goodwill Games. I believe that at this Conference, there is much hope for reaching new understanding of our cultural differences, our different forms of government, and especially of our positions as women of our respective countries. I am pleased to be invited here, and I thank the women of Vision.

JILL

Madame Zarinova, I have a feeling we shall also discover many similarities among the women of the Soviet Union and the United States. So many women of true accomplishment have come with you. It will be such a joy to get to know all of you. (Interrupted by someone of the US Delegation) ...Eleven? They are taking a count. Is one of you still trying to find her way off the plane?

NATALYA

No. Everyone is here.

JILL

Everyone on the plane is with us. Okay. I'll check name. (She opens notebook) Oh! The psychologist has the poetic face, I wondered. Missing is Larina Stepanovnitstcka. (To Mme Zarinova) Where is Mme Stepanovnitstcka? Is she arriving on another plane?

NATALYA

No.

JILL

No? Is she coming at all?

NATALYA

No.

JILL

We were hoping for her -

NATALYA

Mme. Stepanovnitstcka is ill.

JILL

Ill? How is she? She's not in the hospital?

NATALYA

No.

JILL

No?

NATALYA

NO>

JILL

Then, we can arrange for her to fly here in a day or two when she's feeling better. And, we have doctors assigned to the conference to attend to anything she might need -

NATALYA

NO.

NOTE: From now to the end of the scene, Jill observes the mere civilities with Natalya, and Natalya with Jill.

JILL

(To the others) No...Larina Stepanovnitstcka is ill - and will not be coming to the Goodwill Conference. (To Mme. Zarinovna) You vans are here now to take you to the homes where you will be staying. Get some rest this evening...I will see you tomorrow at the first session.

NATALYA

Thank you, Jillya?

JILL

(Gently) Jill.

NATALYA

Jillya...yes.

JILL

Jillya...that's pretty...thank you.

Scene 3: Following day. Morning break, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington. Jill is seated, some distance from an unoccupied bench. Natalya enters quietly from upstage.

NATALYA

Hello?

JILL

Madame Zarinovna

NATALYA

No. You will not call me that.

JILL

Oh...I am sorry?

NATALYA

I am Natalya.

JILL

Natalya. Then I am Jillya...my name is prettier the way you say it.

NATALYA

You are pretty. And articulate.

JILL

Thank you. I appreciated what you said this morning. I didn't like hearing it, but I am glad you said it.

NATALYA

Law and life are so different. I discover that we have some laws which do not apply to living people.

JILL

So do we...and sometimes we ignore the laws which do apply. Especially in women's rights...it all looks good on paper...

NATALYA

But, both countries have such high goals for women. In my country, women must be so strong...for our men. Jillya, it is peculiar how in both systems the women must struggle equally hard to gain respect.

JILL

Well, men in both countries struggle, too...with their jobs with their self-

esteem, with their "manliness".

NATALYA

- and, with their women!

JILL

Yes! (noticing signal) I don't believe it - already, time to go in.

NATALYA

We will talk again...

JILL

I wonder! Our schedule is so full every minute - but yes, we will have our breaks, as brief as this one.

NATALYA

Americans, always in such a hurry...that part is true!

JILL

Always running to something or from something -

NATALYA

There is so much for us to understand in the next three days!

JILL

What would happen if we did? Understood one one-millionth of what there is to understand?

NATALYA

Our world leaders could not run their countries if we understood. In my country we attend this conference on the approval of men.

JILL

It's that way here.

NATALYA

This war between men and women...either both sides win...or both sides lose!

JILL

No one can tell me that the Soviets have no sense of humor!

NATALYA

Who has been spreading that rumor?!

SCENE 4: UPS atrium. The following morning. Natalya is waiting in the same spot that she and Jill met the day before. Jill enters.

NATALYA

I do not understand it!

JILL

Oh! I'm glad you're here - this is where I like to think during my breaks...

NATALYA

Then I am in the right place, for I am trying to think!

JILL

Why, what - ?

NATALYA

Your health system! With your insurance, as you call it, no one can afford it!
You can not afford poor health, and you certainly can not afford poor health!

JILL

Many of us can't afford a doctor, much less health insurance.

NATALYA

We also try, for good health...

JILL

It's one of our most expensive commodities.

NATALYA

And with our government, which takes care of everyone, we have long lines, sometimes a city block...and before the line, the waiting list, longer than a city block! If you outlive the waiting list, you might get medical care in perhaps a month...so many issues to examine, in two more days! What is your income?

JILL

What? Oh. Well, I'm an actress. I'm an actress-trying-to-make-it-in-Seattle.

NATALYA

Oh! Then what is your income?

JILL

Well, when I'm in a play or a film, my income is very good. Otherwise, I have a disability income based on earnings prior to a medical problem of a few years back. It takes care of my basic needs - unless my car breaks down!

NATALYA

Not many of us own cars - what is your income?

JILL

Natalya - this is just a little clue - this is a delicate issue here in the United States - you can ask anyone here at the Goodwill Conference, they won't mind - just no one else.

NATALYA

Oh. Than, what is it?

JILL

Around eight hundred dollars a month.

NATALYA

But, that is so much in rubles! Jillya?

JILL

Yes -

NATALYA

How does America love?

JILL

How does America - what???

NATALYA

We hear that - men and women here are - shallow in love - I find that difficult to believe.

JILL

Believe it!

NATALYA

Your nurse's demonstration this morning - of your best way to prevent health problems from love -

JILL

You mean condoms? Several of the women were concerned about AIDS in the Soviet Union - many of us have a friend, or relative - and our nurse just took off from there with her best preventative remedy - I am sorry it was embarrassing to you -

NATALYA

No! All of our women may not say so, but we thank you for your nurse's little - gifts.

JILL

You handled the situation so gracefully.

NATALYA

But, they are not for me - they are for my son - he can use them!

JILL

Well. Our nurse, member of Women of Vision is a very contemporary woman! (Signal for end of break) No again! In our families, Natalya, there is so much self consciousness among parents and young people - and criticism, and correcting of our children, just to get through a normal day around the house! When a serious issue comes up, such a new boyfriend, the young people just clam up - and look for answers from each other...

NATALYA

But you Americans, here at the conference, are so open and talk so much -

JILL

This is a magical time for us, Natalya, you just don't know - the very best in us has become a little - magnified...

NATALYA

And you are so caring about us. (Patting her purse) you care very specifically sometimes!

JILL

It's how America loves...

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SCENE #5: Atrium. Afternoon break. Natalya and Jill together.

NATALYA

(Intensely) Both countries are trying so hard - we will mutually try - at home, now we are gaining more freedom to speak and to re-examine our values, and to understand our many changes...

JILL

We change so fast, there is always something new - something we lose sight of who we are in the first place...

NATALYA

Right now, Jillya, Mother Russia is looking at herself through a new mirror...

JILL

Natalya - in looking at yourself so closely, please don't lose sight of your beautiful culture - don't lose what is Russian. You have Chekov, Tolstoy, Nureyev and Solsenitzyn - we have Rambo and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles!

NATALYA

And Thoreau and Thornton Wilder -

JILL

And Andy Warhol and Hollywood!

NATALYA

You are still a young country - play, explore, and grow up!

JILL

If I ever can come to Moscow, I don't want to see McDonald's Golden Arches on every street corner! (Signal for end of break) Agh! Time again!

NATALYA

I come to your McDonalds - much less expensive here for a Big Mac!

JILL

I want to take you to the Opera House, the Seattle Repertory Theatre...

NATALYA

Jillya! Both of our countries gaze in to the same moon written of by Shakespeare.

JILL

When I do come to Moscow, I shall reside at the Bolshoi Ballet, thank you veddy much!

SCENE 6: July 23, 1990. Atrium. Lunch Break. Natalya and Jill enter. Jill seems slightly on edge.

NATALYA

You are to be congratulated.

JILL

Why?

NATALYA

Your announcement, just minutes ago, about the American Wheelchairs Act?

JILL

Americans with disabilities Act. I sneaked out to my car radio on our morning break. I'm sorry I missed you, but I had to know.

NATALYA

Then, congratulations.

JILL

Thank you.

NATALYA

I look forward to your presentation this afternoon.

JILL

I'd better write it. Maybe I'll just speak from my news notes. (Looking at her notes). I don't know what it is about today, but some cosmic irony has ordained that you and the other delegates of the Soviet Union should be here, at the symposium of Women of Vision on a day Congress passed a major Civil Rights Acts.

NATALYA

You have your constitution, from - 1776?

JILL

That is the irony.

NATALYA

Please?

JILL

Discrimination, or benign exclusion, in employment and access to public buildings and public transportation on the basis of race, ethnic heritage, sexual orientation, religious belief or physical disability has been unconstitutional for the past two centuries.

NATALYA

So, you pass the same law? Over and over again? For two hundred years?

JILL

Yes! Essentially...The constitutional Amendments are becoming a reminder list. The inalienable rights of all people to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?...Black Americans riding the bus - oh, THEM? Women are earning equal pay for equal work - THEM? Gays and Lesbians, too - WHAT?! THEM?! Disabled persons working in theatre and film - oh, THEM? How did "those people" get excluded? When were "all people" replaced by "some people" in invisible ink? White-out!

NATALYA

You are so critical of your country - and you have so much.

JILL

I am critical of human savagery in all it's civilized forms.

MARK barges in - absolutely fit to be tied.

MARK

What the hell are you doing here?!

JILL

What do you think?

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MARK

I've been back at the apartment waiting for you! It's a fucking mile walk to here!

JILL

OH....shit! Get in the car now, I'll take you -

MARK

We've got fifteen minutes, and the job's in fucking Federal Way!

JILL

Oh, cheeze, my presentation. (To Natalya) I was supposed to run Mark to work on my lunch break - his car is in the shop. (She stares helplessly at Mark and her notes)

MARK

Well, come on!

JILL

My presentation -

MARK

Fuck the presentation! I counted on you, and once again -

JILL

Mark, stop it and get in the car - your cussing your brains out in front of Madame Zarinovna -

NATALYA

I would borrow Jillya's car and drive you, but you may find yourself working in Los Angles. Jillya - you go, and I will read your notes for your presentation. Everyone will certainly understand.

JILL

Oh, my God - thank you! (Hands notes to Natalya) I'll be back as soon as I can.

NATALYA

Such delicate handwriting - lice lace...

MARK

Her writing, it's fucking Russian, you can read it!!

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JILL

Your Gator Aide is nuclear dust!

NATALYA studies Jill's notes. Seconds later, Jill rushes in.

JILL

I'm so sorry - he's a sensitive guy, he really is - you'd love him -

(Rushing back out) I'm gonna kill him!

Two beats late Mark races in.

MARK

She's a great woman! She's kind, and sensitive, and the most intelligent scatterbrain I've ever loved in my life! I'll kill her!

NATALYA

Ah! How America loves!

SCENE 7: Mid-afternoon break. Atrium. Natalya enters with Jill's notes, quite proud she has presented them so clearly.

NATALYA

What was the comment for Jillya? Oh! Yes. From the American journalist - architects do not think about designing buildings accessible because people with disabilities don't get out. And people with disabilities don't get out because architects don't think. That's it.

JILL enters with a speeding ticket between her teeth.

JILL

Look what I got!

NATALYA

What is it?

JILL

A speeding ticket. \$75 dollars. A slice of American life! The speed limit is 55 miles an hour, and I ran seventy getting back here. All of a sudden out of nowhere, flashing lights and sirens. This cop - police officer pulls me over, writes up my ticket, and then proceeds to tell me that if the truck speeding past me hadn't been going so fast, he'd have pulled the truck driver over instead of me! Mark is not going to be a happy man. By the way, Natalya - he should have never barged through here cussing the way he did - not the best image of the American male for you to see.

NATALYA

Oh! How many Russian men have you met? Oh! Tempers! And vodka! But not my Vladimir, he is worse. When he is angry, he is a Sphinx. With a purple face.

JILL

What's he like when he's not purple? Do you have a photograph?

NATALYA

(Rustles in purse for photo) He is - pleasing. Works hard, lives with his work. It is necessary. Usually he is calm. It is good for me. (Shows photo to Jill)

JILL

He is very fine looking. Such deep, dark eyes.

NATALYA

Yes...

JILL

How did you meet him?

NATALYA

We...worked in the same building. And - we met - and, you would say - fell in love.

JILL

There's more than that!

NATALYA

Yes.

Jill senses not to inquire any further.

JILL

Well - thank you for understanding about Mark.

NATALYA

He was upset about getting to work. Work is very important to him.

JILL

You should have driven him to Los Angeles. And, parked him there.

NATALYA

But after I thought you had left, he came rushing back here to make certain that I knew that you are a - what did he say you are? - Oh! A great woman. You are a great woman.

JILL

He did it again! He does that! Just when I want to go right for his throat he gets darling on me! During our worst fights all of a sudden he'll park his huge eyes in my face and argue my side of the story! Understands how I feel better than I do! How do you leave a guy like that?

NATALYA

But, you did the same thing.

JILL

Oh. Well. That's different. Hmph! Thank you for reading my notes on the ADA. How did it go?

NATALYA

Very good! The American Journalist - Linda? Made some good comments, I made notes for you. Then presented the ecology - environmental concerns and what the people of your country are doing. All the recycle, it is impressive. All this being environmentally and politically and physically correct. I am impressed.

JILL

The homeless drop dead in the street and kids take guns to school to protect themselves against other kids. But as long as we recycle and quit smoking we are CORRECT!

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NATALYA

But, you are taking care of the planet. It is admirable.

JILL

We brag about cleaning up Puget Sound while some fifty thousand people in this city don't have showers to bathe in.

NATALYA

But you are doing something on long term with foresight.

JILL

We are not correct. We're smug. We've produced a sub-culture of self-righteous little finger-waggers.

NATALYA

Jillya! You must give your country much credit, it is deserved!

BELL notes the end of the break.

NATALYA

No! We talk! Today we break the rules. You are still a young country, with so many different kinds of people - it is almost impossible for you to keep control.

JILL

Is that the bottom line? Control?

NATALYA

Why, yes. Governments must keep order...

JILL

But, control. Are the people of your country children?

NATALYA

But - no! They are disciplined adults - you see their professions.

JILL

Then, what about control?

NATALYA

We all strive for unity, Jillya.

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JILL

I'm sorry, but the use of the word control implies that these women have to be watched - that you're compelled to monitor their thoughts and behavior.

NATALYA

I want to understand what you are saying...

JILL

Natalya, we've been trying to reach someone in the Soviet Consulate all morning to inquire about the health and well-being of Larina Stepanovnitstcka. No one seems to know.

NATALYA

She is fine.

JILL

She is fine? Then why is she not here? Are we to be petrified by a poet?
Scary lyrics?

NATALYA

She has too many confusing ideas, she is not controlled in her thinking, she
is not - appropriate speaker. Undisciplined. We cannot have revolutions.

JILL

She'd start a revolution - here?

NATALYA

I would put nothing past her.

JILL

You've not put her in jail...

NATALYA

She is fine.

JILL

But, the Soviet Consulate, for the first time, cannot communicate with us. At
the moment, Natalya, I would put nothing past you.

NATALYA

You speak out of turn about what you do not understand!

JILL

Then make me understand! That is a responsibility at this conference - you have somehow managed to bind and gag a poet, and take away her pen - the consulate is acting like they have no idea who she is!

NATALYA

You have said it yourself, time and again, that your country ignores its own original laws! Larina Stepanovnitstcka ignores laws! People read her poetry and they get ideas. We cannot afford another revolution! The Soviet Union would extinguish itself, sink between two oceans, collapse, lose any power whatever!

JILL

And possibly gain a freedom a feeling, a sense of self-respect, a rebirth your country has never experienced before!

NATALYA

Have you no regard for order, for structure?

JILL

Order, and structure, and discipline. Yes, as long as they don't come with oppressions attached! Natalya, I've read about the Bolshevik Revolution years ago. I played Anatasia in the Recognition Scene with the Dowager Empress - in the scene she recognizes her grand-daughter, something within that very staid, solid, heartbroken lady, cracks. And there stands the very core and depth of Maria Feodrovna, letting go, releasing all that is old, traditional, oppressive and meaningless. As she embraces Anastasia, she embraces the present.

NATALYA

Do you believe, Jillya, that I sincerely wish for a country of women, and men, and children, who have all that they need? Who are happy, and who are fulfilled?

JILL

No, (long pause) Not until they can express what they observe and feel with no fear.

NATALYA is absolutely silent.

Now I have really spoken out of turn.

Long silence.

NATALYA

(Softly) You do not understand, Jillya - that, like some of those in your country who represent government, we must live in shadows, and it is for the good of the citizens...

JILL

Both countries discreetly extinguish the voices they don't want to hear?

NATALYA

Will you continue to be flippant, or will you kindly listen?

JILL

What am I listening to? Vague, veiled undertones of government intrigue, or Natalya? Natalya Zarinovna?

NATALYA

You listen to one who - like those in your country - one who knows dark spaces of which we dare not dream while we sleep.

JILL

I am not a political sophisticate.

NATALYA

You are seeing merely the surface. You see control, you see power, and you equate that with me, with my position...

JILL

The women here are quiet around you. Intimidated. You are a lion among them.

NATALYA

Lions cry. (Silence) What you are not aware of - about me - is that one of those "extinguished voices", as you say - years ago would have been my husband.

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JILL

Someone other than Vladimir?

NATALYA

Other than Vladimir. From the University - a doctoral candidate. A romantic - a brilliant essayist. It was appropriate that my father should meet him. I was uneasy. My father was high in the bureaucracy under both Stalin and Krushev. His duty, among many, was to protect the political and economic

structure of Russia. I introduced Petrof. May father approached him with white lips and a piercing stare of his that melted glaciers, and turned abruptly out of the room. His late admonishment to me was "You shall not see him again." No one ever saw him. Perhaps two years ago I gained access to University records for that year. "Whereabouts unknown", "No longer attending the University" No other records. No certificate of death. No existence. It is not politics. It is survival! preservation! We protect our citizens, we protect Mother Russia!

JILL

And you must, at this time, protect her - and us - from poets.

NATALYA

I regard those people who think. I can not regard those who think out of line from who we must be. I protect Mother Russia and I protect the poet! I protect for her very life! I impose silence and I give her breath!

JILL

Who is going to protect you? From one arrogant, pushy actress from the US Delegation? I have managed to rip you to shreds, and I never, never meant to do that.

NATALYA

I remain. As you remain.

JILL

That is easy for me. I have a big mouth. Perhaps we should go back in - you might like some fresh tea.

NATALYA

No.

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JILL

Your new premier has done so much in so little time to create a new relationship with our country.

NATALYA

But, you President is hospitable, and considerate. He seems to want to be a friend.

JILL

The Soviet Premier seems to be a sensitive, philosophical sort of human being.

NATALYA

He must be careful of moving too fast, too soon. Your President has a good sense of humor.

JILL

But your Premier, on that first meeting, extended his hand first, and smiled first. I caught him in the act on nationwide television.

NATALYA

Your President has made us feel more comfortable with you -

JILL

But your leader started all this peace! He's the one who initiated the dismantling of our defenses - and then, what does he do on a subsequent visit to the United States? Leaps out of his limousine and starts shaking hands and embracing everyone - thereby giving some of our top twenty-five Secret Servicemen massive cases or coronary arrest! He has endeared you to us!

NATALYA

Are we arguing again?

JILL

Yes. And this time, I am right!

BELL signals end of break.

NATALYA

Oh! The next break is over! Perhaps we should go in...

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JILL

Natalya, what do we do?

NATALYA

I do not know. I wish I knew. Do we find answers today? Can we wait for tomorrow? I want happiness for my citizens in my lifetime, and I am less patient than you think.

JILL

I love the idea of your people writing and painting and composing and dancing without having to flee the country. The women here - every one of them, after the formalities were over, have become such vivid, passionate people...soft spoken and proper, yes - but their passion, Natalya -

NATALYA

Within struggle and discipline, Jillya, is passion given its birth - and

existence and inspiration.

JILL

Natalya, whatever you do - whatever becomes of our countries, please remain in my world.

NATALYA

Jillya, there are mirrors for Mother Russia of which I have never looked through and always, there is a new moon.

SCENE 8: Atrium. Early morning. Final day of the symposium. Twenty minutes before the Open Public Forum. JILL rushes in from one direction, NATALYA from the other.

JILL

This is it. I am sabotaging Aeroflot! No one goes to the airport this afternoon.

NATALYA

My dear! My suitcase is packed!

JILL

Then, you can just unpack and stay here forever! I'm stopping time if I can possibly do it.

NATALYA

Jillya! What are you saying?

JILL

I just took Mark to work, his truck's in the shop again - and I cried on him all the way up! The poor guy is soaking wet!

NATALYA

My dear!

JILL

And I cried all the way back here. Interstate 5 is under salt water! I'm not giving the farewell address, my mascara's smooshed!

NATALYA

Jillya, the whole delegation appointed us. Now, settle down!

JILL

Then they can appoint us to run our two countries, I don't trust anyone else! I'd better get past that one, I don't want to run the world, do you?

NATALYA

Not especially, but thank you for thinking of me. Jillya! We will meet again - and again! Perhaps the most...blessed...feature of friendship is the looking forward...

JILL

I'm putting the morning on freeze-frame. I want nothing to ever be normal or ordinary again! What if I forget you? What if some yahoo from Xanadu comes stomping over the world and separates us again? What if all of you

become as far away as you were before we met? And the American women become boring and self-centered and normal, as though you had never affected us?

NATALYA

Jillya, what time yesterday were you born? Our leaders have become friends but they will - chafe and sputter - until they find another enemy. It is in the nature of a human to need an adversary. Without an adversary, a man cannot be a hero. No? With good fortune, your country and mine will unite against the next enemy they create!

JILL

The Soviet Union and the United States uniting against the next jackass - excuse me! The next power monger! Natalya, we've got to preserve the magic. We expressed our finest levels of - whatever it was here - I'm afraid of returning to normal life.

NATALYA

You and your friend - Mark - have some fine level, as you say it - understanding.

JILL

I'm the biggest pain that man has ever known!

NATALYA

I hope so.

BELL rings 15 minute notice for the platform to begin.

I shall hear that bell in my dreams! I thought I would be late coming here. Such traffic jam as you call it! Every car trying to pass the other cars but all the other cars ending up at the same stop light.

JILL

Welcome to Friday morning in America!

NATALYA

And HONKING! AH! HONK! HONK! Thinking all the honking would push all the cars out of your way! HONK! HONK! And no one moves!

MARK enters carrying daisies.

JILL

Oh, hi. Natalya's honking - what are you doing here? I took you to work!

MARK

They let me off, but I have to go back at the 4:00 shift. Grabbed a ride from one of the guys. Am I in time for the forum?

JILL

Yes! Madame Zarinovna, this is my friend Mark Farrell.

NATALYA

I am Natalya. I am very happy for you to attend the forum. They have appointed Jill as a main speaker.

MARK

(Handing her the daisies) All right! (To Natalya) The last time I saw you, I was yelling at you and everybody - the men in your country aren't that rude, I'm sure.

NATALYA

You know a perfect Soviet man? Please introduce me!

MARK

You've got a sense of humor! (To Jill) I like this chick. (To Natalya) What are you doing after the Forum?

JILL

Mark!

MARK

Bet you haven't been to Benedetti's Spaghetti -

JILL

Mmmaarrkk!?

MARK

Oh! You can go, too -

JILL

Thank you! I'd love to join you two!

SIGNAL for the Forum to begin.

MARK

That's the Forum? I'll find a seat. Front row. (Leans to Jill whispering GREAT woman!)

MARK seats himself in the Forum audience. Natalya and Jill proceed to speaker's area.

SCENE 9: A fifteen minutes later. NATALYA is seated with a notebook in her lap. JILL is at podium.

JILL

...And in conclusion, though we did not solve all of the problems of womankind, or humankind, I am happy to report to you who have come to the Open Public Forum on the final day of the Goodwill Conference, that we discovered a communion of concern, and a communion of feeling which we are now assured is universal among women. So many of us grew up in the 50's and 60's during the raw chill of the Cold War. As an impulsive hypersensitive teenager, there were many times when I, like so many of us, felt threatened - felt an unnamable dread - and never dreamed that thirty years later I would be in the middle of embraces, and songs, and the celebrations of friendship that I have experienced during this past magical week. We are adult survivors of the Cold War, and we, Women of Vision of the Soviet Union and the United States shall triumph in our friendship right into the next century. My dear friends, you haven't even left yet, but I already miss you. And I already look forward to your return. Thank you.

JILL sits and NATALYA rises and goes to the podium.

NATALYA

My friends of the United States, my friends of the Soviet Union, and all of you who have chosen to attend its impressive Public Forum on our final day of the Women of Vision Conference. I shall be brief. (There is laughter) You are all laughing - everyone of you! I did nothing but Talk, talk, talk at all of these many sessions. I do not understand why they are laughing! My friends. Time was a tyrant during these last four days - so much to discuss and so little time. I wondered during this week, what would happen if time allowed us to strengthen our friendship and deepen our bonds? With the time that we did have together, at our official meetings and during our very special conversations, out too few private talks, we as women strove to create our own respect, and find validity to our voices. I cannot help but see a brilliant future for Women of Visions. Given time to develop our relationships and focus on world problems intelligently, then nothing in the name of compassion and human understanding would be out of our reach. We have made up our minds - we have decided - in the name of world peace, human survival and human fulfillment, in the years to come, we shall visit each other's countries, we shall reunite, we shall talk at length, and we shall have our precious time together. Aeroflot flies in both directions. In Moscow, soon, I hope to be at the airport searching for a dot in the sky, waiting to greet a flight coming in from the United States with all of my Women of Vision on board. My precious friends. Thank you for this momentous conference - and most deeply, thank you for your gentle love...

THE END