

The Attic

by

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Cast of Characters

MAUREEN:

60's

ONYA:

20's

MUNDY:

50's

Place
Attic

Time
Day

2.

Setting: The play takes place inside an attic room with a large window stage center, a bed beside it and various boxes, furniture pieces and objects scattered about.

At Rise: The play opens with Maureen showing the room to Onya.

MAUREEN: There's a draft that comes from that window, it's good for the fresh air, but around three or four in the morning it becomes bothersome. (*She points to a cardboard box.*) There's extra quilts in these boxes. (*Takes out thick blanket from one of them.*) Double up with this and you'll do alright. There's running water at the sink, but let it run about ten seconds to let the rust out first. (*Looking out the window.*) It's a nice view when the sun rises. (*Sighs.*) Can't do anything about the rats. They're in and out, as they please. Best thing to do is be friendly with 'em, especially Frankie, he's the biggest of them all, like a big shaggy dog in size and he knows it. How long will you be staying?

ONYA: As long as you'll have me.

MAUREEN: You do good work?

ONYA: I like to think so.

MAUREEN: Tell me.

ONYA: Tell you, what?

MAUREEN: Said you rake leaves, clean windows and do laundry. What else can you do?

ONYA: Whatever you need help with I imagine.

MAUREEN: I hope you know how to make yourself useful. I don't like barking orders and giving instructions. Especially when they aren't followed.

ONYA: I'll make myself useful.

MAUREEN: Leave things as they are. Don't want any shocks when I visit here unexpected. No men!

ONYA: No need to worry about that.

MAUREEN: This ain't no flophouse. My grandfather *built* this house with his bare hands. Sure this house needs a good scrubbing every now and again. What home doesn't? (*Sniffs the air.*) What's that smell? Indian food?

ONYA: I'm sorry.

MAUREEN: You ate Indian food?

ONYA: No, I -

MAUREEN: The spices come through the pours.

ONYA: I haven't had any -

MAUREEN: Odors aren't permitted in this room. Once my allergies act up I change into another breed of human.

ONYA: (*Nods.*) No Indian food.

MAUREEN: I have nothing against Indian food per se or any spicy food for that matter. I love all traditions. I'm a grand traditionalist. I've studied ancient cultures and civilizations by the dozen. I respect all walks of life! Point being that you could very well be someone who gives off the wrong scent after eating a meal, ANY MEAL, and I'm not patient on tolerating any weird smells. I like clean air, clean people and quiet. Even though there are some cultures that like to roll around in the mud, but if they come out smelling all peachy, then who am I to say squat. It's the stink! The stench of life I can't stomach and if you prance around my home spreading your odor then I will be forced to boot your ass out. We understand each other?

ONYA: Do you have a bath?

MAUREEN: So you can soak your skin?

ONYA: Well, I -

MAUREEN: There's a tub. Do you have worms?

ONYA: Worms?

MAUREEN: Under your skin. If you use my tub, I don't want to catch anythin' from you.

ONYA: I don't believe I have worms.

MAUREEN: Do you scratch your skin?

ONYA: No. Never.

MAUREEN: You never scratch?

ONYA: Not that I'm aware of, no.

MAUREEN: That's suspicious.

ONYA: It is?

MAUREEN: Oh, yes. Hmm. No skin rash?

ONYA: None that I know of -

MAUREEN: I'll give you this one chance. Only one. You'll be under ruthless observation for the first, uh...twenty days. That's right. I'll give you twenty. Twenty days of close examination and if you pass, well, then you can breathe a sigh of relief. Alright, what else? Don't keep the lights on during the day. Nothing I hate more than keeping the lights on when the sun is already frying. Leave your shoes at the front door. Don't want any dirt from outside coming in. Uh, what else, AH YES, absolutely NO CANDLES. I've put out way too many fires in my time to make room for one more, not if I can help it.

ONYA: Yes.

MAUREEN: Can you paint?

ONYA: What do you -

MAUREEN: You start tomorrow, the shed needs painting. White. Gallons of paint are in the basement. It's your job to get them out. There's tape and plastic sheets you can use to avoid spilling any paint on the grass. You mow lawns?

ONYA: I can mow -

MAUREEN: Mow the lawn before you paint the shed.

ONYA: Okay.

MAUREEN: Early, too. None of this sleeping until 1PM nonsense. We need you at the crack of dawn!

ONYA: I'm an early riser.

MAUREEN: Good! That's just what this home needs. A couple of tough nails handling things, but don't overstep me, don't you ever mistake me for a fool or a peasant. Sure, I'll get down on my knees and scrub them floors, I'll fix the crooked shelving when it falls apart, I'll glue together the vase when it shatters, I'll mend clothes, iron clothes and fold clothes, but I'll not be taken for a fool of any kind. The dirt under my fingernails is MY choice. The pink blotches on my cheeks are MY choice. (*She stares at Onya.*) You're kinda pretty, did you know that?

ONYA: Um, thank you -

MAUREEN: Do you consider yourself attractive?

ONYA: Not really.

MAUREEN: Good! We like 'em wholesome here. Nothing burns my ass more than some ditz that likes to look at glamour magazines. Do you look at glamour magazines?

ONYA: I don't. I, I can't read.

MAUREEN: What's that?

ONYA: Can't read...

MAUREEN: You poor child...that's a troublesome way to live. My father used to read me bedtime stories, till one day he was struck in the head by a baseball..when he came out the hospital he lost all ability to read.

ONYA: I'm so sorry to hear that.

MUNDY shyly appears from the doorframe.

MAUREEN (*Noticing him.*): What do you want Mundy?

MUNDY: Who's the woman?

MAUREEN: Mundy, now you know better than to go around asking questions that don't concern you. (*To Onya.*) This here's Mundy, my brother.

ONYA: How do you do?

MUNDY: Fine.

MAUREEN: (*To Mundy.*) Onya is going to be staying with us.

MUNDY: I don't want her staying here.

MAUREEN: You have no say.

MUNDY: (*Blurting loudly.*) This is my house, too!

MAUREEN: ...Mundy, do I need to beat you with the broom?

MUNDY: No.

MAUREEN: Shouting in front of our guest is extremely rude. Did you know that?

MUNDY: Yes.

MAUREEN: Say you're sorry.

MUNDY: Sorry.

MAUREEN: Not to me! To Onya, say it!

MUNDY: I'm sorry, Onya.

ONYA: It's no trouble, really.

MUNDY exits.

MAUREEN: Don't mind him. He's just inquisitive but has the mind of a mule. He's as harmless as a tree. He takes up space is all. You won't find him making a contribution to anyone or anything around here. An existence that makes us all wonder WHY. He's the big WHY in the family. Do you have a WHY?

ONYA: A why? How do you mean?

MAUREEN: You have family?

ONYA: Not anymore.

MAUREEN: Running from something?

ONYA: Aren't we all running from something, Mrs. Maureen?

MAUREEN: You remind me of someone I know, can't quite put my finger on it, but it's there. You're here, and it's there. Do I remind you of anybody?

ONYA: I get a sense of who you are but I don't know how -

MAUREEN: Ah, you see, you feel it too.

ONYA: Fate.

MAUREEN: What?

ONYA: Could be fate that has brought us together.

MAUREEN: I have a will. You can kill me if you so desire, but I have a will written out by law, and this estate is protected. You'll get nothing.

ONYA: That's not what I want.

MAUREEN: No? Well, what do you want?

ONYA: I want you to love me.

MAUREEN: Love you? (*Confused, laughs mockingly.*) I don't know you.

ONYA: You do know me, you said so yourself a moment ago.

MAUREEN: There can be no love in my heart for you.

ONYA: I will remain here for as long as it takes.

MAUREEN: Forever is a long time.

ONYA: I know.

MAUREEN: You can't force anyone to love anyone.

ONYA: I believe you will eventually love me.

MAUREEN: I won't!

ONYA: One day, when you least expect it, when your heart forgets to protect itself, you will turn to me and innocently say, "Onya, I love you." And when you first say those words, it will be as if you heard someone else speak them. But slowly, your words will sink inside of you and cement themselves to your beating heart; you will no longer be capable of pushing them away; every fiber of your being will be invigorated by love; every pain you've ever held on to will willingly release itself and set you free. (*Beat.*) I will remain in this dingy, cold attic, year after year, for however long it takes...I will repaint your shed over and over again, I will follow your rules, I will do all the things you want me to do, but I will never leave, not until the day comes when love wins...

MAUREEN: You can think what you like. We have dinner every evening at six. Don't ever be late...

ONYA: I won't.

MAUREEN shuffles her way out of the room.

ONYA sits on the bed and looks out the window.

END OF PLAY