

ANDREA PASS

THE WANDERING DOG

PROLOGUE

Early morning. Kornél stands alone on the street in the dim pre-dawn light (his clothes give him the appearance of an old-fashioned figure). He's irritable, anxious, as if he's being followed. He reaches into his bag, but then doesn't take anything out. He looks around, steels himself, and reaches in again. He pulls out a stuffed dog. He drops it without looking at it, then quickly turns to walk away. His determined steps become uncertain, he slows, turns around. He looks at the stuffed animal, reconsiders: he goes back to the dog and leans down slowly, fearfully, keeping his distance as he cautiously pets it. Edina appears (an elegant young woman), she and Kornél lock eyes. The man gets scared, he quickly turns to leave in the opposite direction, but on stage right finds himself face-to-face with Mama. Kornél starts as if he'd been caught red-handed, runs off.

EDINA: (calling after Kornél) Sir! Sir, you left your dog here!

Edina goes over to the dog, picks it up off the ground.

Mama also walks over.

MAMA: (to the dog) Poor little thing...what kind of daddy does that? Is he leaving this precious little animal here? (beating the dirt off of the dog in Edina's hands) On the dirty sidewalk, in other dogs' filth...give him a good wash, dear! 90 degrees should do nicely!

Misi rushes in.

MISI (in a panic) Mother, what are you doing here?

MAMA What? Weren't we coming to the kindergarten?

MISI Even so, don't wander off like that! Sophie?

MAMA What about her?

MISI She's not lost, is she?!

MAMA My granddaughter? Misi, what do you take me for? She's long been inside, playing with the others. (to Edina) Excuse me. My son-in-law. Székesi... (she can't remember) Sorry. Kékesi Mihály.

MISI (to Edina) Excuse me. Her son-in-law. Kékesi Mihály. (they shake hands). Pleased to meet you.

EDINA Németh Edina.

MISI: (leaving) If you'll forgive me, I need to go check on my daughter... (to Mama) Come on, Mother!

MAMA: I'll "come on" when I'm good and ready.

MISI: *(to Edina)* Would you mind staying here for a bit?

EDINA: Of course.

MISI: Thank you so much! I'll be right back!

Misi rushes off.

MAMA: Nice boy. But he's starting to act like my daughter. *(changes the subject)* Is he coming to visit you?

EDINA: Who?

MAMA: The Wandering Dog.

EDINA: *(looking at the dog in her hands)* Oh, you mean this?

MAMA: Of course him.

EDINA: It's the first time I've seen it.

MAMA: You don't have a child in the kindergarten?

EDINA: It's my little boy's first day. It's hard to leave him here.

MAMA: *(referring to the dog)* Then how did you come by him?

EDINA: I found him here just now...

MAMA: *(snatching the dog from Edina's hands)* It's best if I take him in to the children. Sophie could hardly sleep all night, she was so excited to meet him.

EDINA: Oh, it's a shared stuffed animal for the kids?

MAMA: He's not just any stuffed animal! But you'll see. You'll have your turn.

EDINA: ...our turn?

MAMA: Later, when he goes to stay with you. He can climb trees. Sing. Make pancakes. Shave, since he's a boy dog. Still, no one looks out for the poor thing. *(pets the dog)*

Very slowly, the stage lights come up, we see a living room, a kitchen counter in the background. The furniture indicates we're in the 1950's. Misi is sitting inside at the table.

MAMA: *(talking to the dog)* They just can't behave, can they? But you're there and you see everything...

MISI: *(cutting her off)* Mother, let's come inside!

MAMA: *(to Edina)* Please excuse me! I must be on my way. I'm coming Misi, I'm coming. *(she steps into the living room, sets the dog down on the couch)* I was just bringing some raisins from the kitchen.

MISI: This is the kitchen, Mother!
MAMA: Oh stop worrying all the time!

Edina "makes eye contact" with The Wandering Dog for a bit longer from outside, then leaves.

PART 1

MISI + MAMA

Misi is working on a wood carving, Mama is nibbling on raisins as she watches her son-in-law work.

MAMA: What's it going to be?
MISI: Garden gnome.
MAMA: That big?
MISI: Yep.
MAMA: *(looks at the gnome)* And where are you going to put it?
MISI: In a museum.
MAMA: What for?
MISI: I'm having an exhibition.
MAMA: Where?
MISI: In Zalaegerszeg.
MAMA: Is it a gnome exhibition?
MISI: No, this will be the only gnome.
MAMA: And what else will there be?
MISI: Elves, fairies, goblins...can I not get you something?
MAMA: Like what?
MISI: You should have something proper to eat!
MAMA: I can go to the kitchen myself. When is Sophie getting home?
MISI: In a few minutes.

Mama eats some raisins.

MAMA: Fix his nose! I wouldn't put something like that in my garden!
MISI: Sure.

MAMA: Sophie?

MISI: She'll be here soon. *(shows her the gnome)* Any better?

Mama examines the statue at length.

MAMA: Is it a garden gnome?

MISI: Yes.

MAMA: Who's going to buy it?

MISI: No one.

MAMA: Then what are you making for?

MISI: An exhibition.

MAMA: This?

MISI: This.

Silence.

MAMA: Sophie?

MISI: They'll be here soon.

MAMA: *(standing up)* Are you still working?

MISI: Still working...

Mama watches as Misi works.

MAMA: Pinocchio?

MISI: This? ...Sure.

MAMA: For Sophie?

MISI: Yes.

MAMA: But why make him so ugly?

MISI: He's not done yet, Mom.

MAMA: Well of course not...keep working on him!

Mama slowly goes to leave, then turns around, stops.

MAMA: Misi!

MISI: Yes?

MAMA: What did I get up for?

MISI: I don't know, sorry.

MAMA: *(thinking)* Well look at that, I'm losing my mind...

Mama goes over to the dog, pets its head.

MAMA: Ah, right! I wanted to make some eggs.

MISI: You won't be able to. The stove isn't working.

MAMA: The stove? How could the stove not be working?

MISI: I don't know, Mom...it just isn't.

MAMA: Why don't you kids get it fixed?

MISI: We're working on it, Mom...

Mama goes back to Misi, sits down next to him, watches him as he carves.

MAMA: What are you working on?

MISI: ...On a...piece of wood.

MAMA: Why's that?

MISI: I'm not really sure Mom...I'm a sculptor, I guess.

MAMA: Well I know that! But what's it going to be?

MISI: A gnome.

MAMA: You're so talented!

MISI: Mom...

MAMA: Just accept the compliment!

MISI: *(modestly, quietly)* Thank you...

MAMA: *(doesn't understand)* What's that?

MISI: *(louder)* Thank you!

Pause.

MAMA: What?

MISI: Nothing, just mumbling to myself...

MAMA: Well don't just mumble, I'm here too!

MISI: I know, Mom, I know...

Klaudia, Misi's wife, arrives, we hear her from outside:

KLAUDIA: Sophia, shoes off! ...I said, shoes off!

Klaudia comes into the room.

KLAUDIA: *(to Misi)* Was everything okay?

MAMA: Of course it was! Why wouldn't everything be okay?

MISI: We had a good time, right Mom?

KLAUDIA: The repair guy called. It's gonna be 250 for the stove.

MISI: Okay.

KLAUDIA: For that much we could just buy a new one.

MISI: Then let's buy a new one.

KLAUDIA: With what?

MISI: With the money we would've paid the repair guy.

KLAUDIA: *(shouts)* Sophia, wash your hands!

MAMA: *(happily)* Sophie's home?

Mama leaves.

KLAUDIA: **It's a new expense every month with her.**

MISI: She doesn't do it on purpose.

Misi continues working on his carving, Klaudia stares at him in disbelief.

KLAUDIA: How can you be so calm?

MISI: I dunno... *(considers it)* Must be because of my work.

KLAUDIA: What?

MISI: Sometimes even I'm amazed how calm I am.

KLAUDIA: *(uncomprehending)* What are you talking about? What does that have to do with anything?

MISI: You asked why I'm so calm.

KLAUDIA: And that's your answer?

MISI: *(reconsidering)* Okay, well it could be my low blood pressure...

KLAUDIA: Are you doing this on purpose?

MISI: What?

KLAUDIA: How can you be this cynical?

MISI: Me?

KLAUDIA: Yes, you!

MISI: Honey, what's the matter?

KLAUDIA: Do you have to drink in front of Sophia?

MISI: Me?

KLAUDIA: The kids in her class are already singing about tipsy Uncle Misi!

MISI: Me? I hardly ever have a beer. I suppose last night I had a single glass.

KLAUDIA: Well there you go!

MISI: But I was alone, no one else was home.

TOGETHER: *(slightly sarcastic)* Just the Wandering Dog?

Klaudia and Misi look at each other, then turn toward the dog. Silence.

KLAUDIA: Or maybe *I'm* the idiot.

Klaudia leaves Misi there, sits down on the couch, takes the dog, shoves it behind the pillows, and turns on the TV.