

ELLSWORTH. Tomatoes. Tomatoes are the only laurels that await you.

MAGGIE. There won't be –

ELLSWORTH. Eggs. Hen fruit. In every purse. In every suit pocket.

MAGGIE. Then so be it. Ours will be a progressive production, one that reflects the true face of Providence. If the audience is too closed-minded to receive it –

ELLSWORTH. Closed-minded. The audience! You speak of them as if they are the enemy! The audience is all that matters!

MAGGIE. Agreed.

ELLSWORTH. Then how can you do this to them?

MAGGIE. Educate them, broaden them?

ELLSWORTH. If that's not what they want?

MAGGIE. I –

ELLSWORTH. Your job is to *cater* to the tastes of our audience, not to *broaden* them.

MAGGIE. I believe I can do both.

ELLSWORTH. Andrew would never dare to cast –

MAGGIE. I'm not Andrew.

ELLSWORTH. No, madam, you most certainly are not. And I shudder to think of how he will react when news of your scandalous behavior reaches him on the deck of his destroyer.

(MAGGIE is wounded.)

So? Are we finished?

MAGGIE. No. We have a scandal. So what? Let's have a scandal.

ELLSWORTH. I don't follow.

MAGGIE. What sells tickets? How are our ticket sales? Be honest, now.

ELLSWORTH. (*Grudgingly.*) Yes, fine, they're strong. Opening night, at least. Everyone wants to see it before it gets shut down.

MAGGIE. Whatever gets them in the door. Once they're seated, we'll have them. Word of mouth sells the rest of the run.

ELLSWORTH. You won't be satisfied until you've made me a laughingstock.

MAGGIE. Or a hero. A forward-thinker.

ELLSWORTH. You people – why must it always be forward-thinking with you? What's wrong with the now? Let's live in the now for once.

MAGGIE. I'm afraid forward-thinking is all that gets us there.

ELLSWORTH. Dear God. The great knowledge keepers of the stage. It's lucky you only have your own little worlds to play in. Heaven help us if you decide to join ours.

MAGGIE. So we're back in business?

ELLSWORTH. You're impossible.

MAGGIE. I'm beginning to think that's a good thing.

ELLSWORTH. Very well – if! – you get Celeste back. That's non-negotiable.

MAGGIE. I'm afraid she's knee-deep in Cinderella.

ELLSWORTH. Then you extract her.

MAGGIE. Very well.

ELLSWORTH. And Maggie? Speaking of laughingstock?

MAGGIE. Yes?

ELLSWORTH. I had Winifred read me some of her lines last night.

MAGGIE. Oh?

ELLSWORTH. There's a certain...death in faking laughter with your loved one, don't you think? A certain betrayal?

MAGGIE. I'll get her there.

ELLSWORTH. See to it. Or those tomatoes? I'll be first in line.