

Monica Raymond
from *The Owl Girl*

ACT 1, SCENE 9

ANJA upstairs alone in STEL's room. The electric light overhead is blazing, along with several lamps. ANJA has pulled an enormous pile of clothes from the closet and thrown them on the bed. She is trying on various combinations in front of a full-length mirror. STEL enters.

STEL

What are you doing here?

ANJA

It's my house, too, you know.

STEL

But those are *not your clothes!*

ANJA

You have everything I need. Except perfume.

STEL

I hate perfume. It's just nasty chemicals. If you want to smell nice, you can rub yourself with roses. Or cinnamon.

ANJA

Thank you. I will do that. Do you have some?

STEL

No! And if I had, I wouldn't give it to you.

ANJA

Why not?

STEL

Because I don't even know you. You barge in, throw my things around. I prayed that things would be all mixed up, but I never thought it would happen so soon.

ANJA

I saw you. You were on the roof. I was in my owl. But you never saw us. You can't pay so much attention to what's in the sky, or you'll miss what's on the ground.

STEL

You broke in. My father will kill me. I was supposed to be sentry.

ANJA
My brother had the key.

STEL
Your brother?

ANJA
He said we would be welcome.

STEL
Your *brother*? He's here? Where? Are you *Anja*?

ANJA
Mmm. Yes.

STEL
He said you never grew! In seven years—how can that be? Wait—

STEL grabs ANJA and drags her to the doorway.

Stand there.

ANJA
Why?

STEL
Because that's the line, see, that you came up to—look, look, you're exactly the same.

ANJA
I don't want to grow. I don't plan to.

STEL
Don't you want to? Become a woman?

ANJA
I want to put on silk and beads on my ankles. And I'll go chink, chink, chink in the marketplace. The soldiers will come to me. And I'll twine round them, in their uniforms—

STEL
You'll be a prostitute.

ANJA
Not quite. You see, they won't pay. And they won't live, either.
(*hooting softly, like an owl*) Did you hear that, up on the roof? That was me.

I like to fly.

STEL

No.

ANJA

I did. I could never have passed through all the checkpoints. He's different. He's good to everything, so everything owes him something. But me, I'm bad, so—I had to find another way.

STEL

Could you do it again? Now?

ANJA

(practical) Probably not. It's Granny does it, and she doesn't think we should mix. She says you're devils.

STEL

Jackals. That's what they say here.

ANJA

We say devils.

STEL

Where's your brother? Is he here?

ANJA

Yes, but he may not want to see you, when he hears how bad you've been to me.
(charged pause) These clothes look like you never even wear them.

STEL

I don't care for them. My great aunt Zizi likes to get them for me because all the time she was in the camps, she dreamed of clothes like these. She can't believe I like just the one blue shirt and pants.

ANJA

Camps are what we were in--

STEL

Maybe these are the kind of things you care about when you can't have them, and then once you can, you see that it doesn't matter that much at all. Maybe after you've had—

ANJA

Can I have this? And this? And this?

STEL

You can have it all, except for what I really wear.

ANJA holds out the small jar of salve.

ANJA

Do you want to try some of this? It's supposed to keep your skin young.

STEL

My skin *is* young.

ANJA

(seductive) Don't you want my brother to—Granny says all the beautiful girls—

STEL

He doesn't care about that.

ANJA

He *does*. Or he *will*.

STEL obediently takes some of the salve and rubs it on her face, looking in the mirror.

ANJA

I can't believe you could choose anything and you wear just that flat dull blue.

STEL

I like it. It's like the sky. And it leaves me free to think about other things.

ANJA

Only a human being would choose that. *(showing her the light on the velvets)* See how the colors change? When you look at animal fur, from down by the skin to the tip of the hair, it's different, every bit.

STEL

I don't want to be an animal.

ANJA

I do.