

SEARCHING SEPI

by

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SYNOPSIS

As Nicholas sits in his living room, lamenting the writing and submission of his "worst poem ever" and promising to himself that he would never ever write poetry, Corstreil arrives. She claims to be a higher spirit and thinks Nicholas is not a human, but Sepi, her Excavate (a spirit out of a deceased human) boyfriend, whom Corstreil has been searching for all eternity. Corstreil wants to drag Sepi out of Nicholas's human body and get married with him, even if it meant killing Nicholas's human self! Nicholas must reveal his deepest, human nature to prove that he is indeed Nicholas, a human, and not a spirit hiding in and using his body.

CHARACTERS

CORSTREIL- Female, age: 20-50 years, frail looking

NICHOLAS- Male, age: 30-50 years

TIME

Present, an evening.

SETTING

A basement (a couple of chairs, a small table, maybe. That's more than enough.)

AT RISE: NICHOLAS is sitting on a small couch with a sheaf of paper and a pen in hand. His phone is on the table. He looks severely distressed, depressed, devastated. NICHOLAS looks at the paper and groans-

NICHOLAS

How? How did I think of this as poetry?

CORSTREIL appears as NICHOLAS groans. She smiles.

NICHOLAS

How could I send this to a journal- and Jim is the editor? Oh, my, gawd! What was I thinking!

CORSTREIL

Aha! Finally! There he is! My dilapidated, discontinuous, discombobulated fruit tart!

NICHOLAS

I mean- c'mon!

NICHOLAS recites from the paper.

NICHOLAS

*"She danced across the lavender-laden landscape
She traipsed unwittingly straight into my heart-"*
This is bullshit!

CORSTREIL

Oi! Sepi!

NICHOLAS

How could I submit this trash for publication?

CORSTREIL

Sepi!

NICHOLAS

Plain, simple trash! This is like the worst poem ever!

CORSTREIL

Sepi! Get your skinny ass off the demented couch now.

NICHOLAS

Are- (looks around, finds nobody) are you talking to me?

CORSTREIL

No! I'm talking to the unseen stars that laugh at your trivial predicament in this basement!

NICHOLAS

Trivial predicament! This is a matter of my dignity, my prestige, my life. Do you know what Jim told me? Hold on! Who are you? How did you get into my basement?

CORSTREIL

Through the door, dummy! Then I took the stairs.

NICHOLAS

Oh, did I leave the door open again? Sheila would-

CORSTREIL

Of course, you left the door open! Did you think I came through the wall? This body can't pass through physical barriers, you know!

NICHOLAS

I know you couldn't come through a wall- I mean, unless-

NICHOLAS suddenly stops. His eyes bulge.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Are you breaking in? Like an armed robbery? We have security systems installed- I warn you, ma'am-

CORSTREIL

Are you as stupid as you look? You are, aren't you?

NICHOLAS

Hey! I am a scientist! I have a PhD in-

CORSTREIL

I don't care! Stop messing around. I have had enough of your tomfoolery! Let's go.

NICHOLAS

Let's go! Where? Ma'am! You can't just walk into somebody's house and demand them to just go, even if the stupid owner forgets to shut the door!

CORSTREIL

Stupid owner, indeed!

CORSTREIL slowly circles
NICHOLAS.

CORSTREIL (CONT'D)

And it looks like you closed the door really tight.

NICHOLAS

No, I didn't! Otherwise, you wouldn't-

NICHOLAS stops mid-sentence. He gets uncomfortable, a bit worried too. He eyes CORSTREIL warily as she silently moves around him in a cat-like manner, breathing down his neck, examining him intensely.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CORSTREIL

I hope you remember how to open the door.

As NICHOLAS speaks, CORSTREIL monitors him with unflinching eyes, carefully checking something.

NICHOLAS

Of course, I know how to open a door. I mean, it was just that once. I was- like- I was thinking so hard- I always think hard, you know. There are always problems in the laboratory where I work- and then, there are my writings, my poetry- well, I want to think of these as poetry- though, they just might be trash- but I digress. I was thinking hard on that day, too, and I kept turning the key in the wrong direction- are you Sheila's friend?

CORSTREIL

What?

NICHOLAS

Sheila told you the story, didn't she? Whenever I can't do something, Sheila would say, "How many PhD does it take to change a light bulb, honey?" or "How many PhD does it take to open a door, honey?" Ha ha! She must have told you about the door- huh!

CORSTREIL

I am getting a bit worried about you!

NICHOLAS

No, no, I'm fine! Thank you! I mean, I have a very stressful job- and I try to write-

NICHOLAS shows the paper and pen, then shrugs.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

And then I went to meet Jim! At his editorial office! I thought having your father-in-law as an editor would help your chances! But- you know-

CORSTREIL points at NICHOLAS's body.

CORSTREIL

How long have you been hiding here?

NICHOLAS

Hiding!

NICHOLAS thinks CORSTREIL is talking about the house. He extends his hands to point vaguely around him.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

This is my home! I bought it-

CORSTREIL

You can't buy a human body, Sepi.

NICHOLAS

Who is Sepi?

CORSTREIL

It doesn't matter how many times you call it your home- it is not! I understand you miss your old human body-

NICHOLAS

Old human body! What are you talking about?

CORSTREIL

Don't be so coy with me, you wascal! I've been looking for you all over the universe.

NICHOLAS

All over the universe! For me!

CORSTREIL

Of course, you!

NICHOLAS

I don't know if I would take it as a compliment! Wait! Am I in danger? Am I being kidnapped? But I am just a quantum physicist! I don't make weapons or spy gadgets. My work has no military value. But then- we humans always find a way to weaponize everything. Don't we?

CORSTREIL doesn't answer but
keeps looking at NICHOLAS.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Um, may I ask why you were looking for me, ma'am?

CORSTREIL

Seriously! Who do you think will marry me tonight? Priest Bam's shriveled Poltergeist cousin?

NICHOLAS

Marry you! Tonight!

CORSTREIL

You should be ashamed of yourself! Making a beautiful spirit like me run all over the place to find her would-be husband! What kind of wascal does that?

NICHOLAS

Ma'am, I think we've a misunderstanding here-

CORSTREIL

We've a misunderstanding- everywhere! From the final edge of the aurora to the inner depth of the Siren's lair- always! Why're you avoiding me? Why did you run away? Am I not good-looking enough? Am I not- wait! Sepi! Are you in love with Sankini? That migrating, illiterate, irresponsible, invisible-

NICHOLAS

Ma'am, please! I am not Sepi! And I am married!

CORSTREIL

Huh! Could've fooled me! (Mimicking) I am not Sepi! And I am married! Married to whom, may I ask? (CORSTREIL gulps.) Did you already marry Sankini? If I find that you ran away and shared the rat piss and cow dung-

NICHOLAS

Shared what?

CORSTREIL

The rat piss and cow dung. It's- it's an integral part of our fusion- marriage, as you know it. You can't fuse without the ceremony. As long as you don't share it with Sankini- you are not fused to Sankini, are you? Tell me you're not, Sepi! I am going to kill-

NICHOLAS

Easy, easy! I am not married to any Sankini, if that is what you mean.

CORSTREIL

Huh! Good for you!

NICHOLAS

In fact, I am not sure that I know any Sankini!

CORSTREIL

You broke contact with her! Oh, Sepi! I love you so so-

CORSTREIL embraces NICHOLAS
and kisses him.

Despite all his protests,
NICHOLAS is powerless in front
of this frail girl.

NICHOLAS

No- no- please- no-

CORSTREIL makes a face.

CORSTREIL

You-you even taste different! Yuck! This stupid human body is
already ruining you.

NICHOLAS

Ma'am! Don't you ever try to- um- manhandle me!

CORSTREIL giggles.

CORSTREIL

Why? You didn't like the kiss? Was it too spicy? Oh, I didn't
burn your lips again, did I? This human body is so frail-
(CORSTREIL points at her own body.) it is extremely difficult
to contain my fire within-

NICHOLAS

Yeah, keep your fire to yourself. And whatever perfume you
wore, or whatever you ate- I don't want to be rude, ma'am-
but you smell kind of- gross! Yikes!

CORSTREIL

That's the human senses talking, Sepi! It's my Gossamershine,
wielded with the fire of the other realm-

NICHOLAS

Gossa- wait! Isn't gossamer a spiderweb?

CORSTREIL

Yes! When the moon smiles on it, the gossamer emits a
strange, beautiful, melancholic fragrance- it makes you wish
for your beloved-

NICHOLAS

Yeah, yeah! Find your beloved somewhere else- (in an
undertone) batshit, crazy woman!

CORSTREIL

Oh, Sepi! I'm so happy that you broke contact with Sankini!
Now we can get fused- get married, as you used to say-

CORSTREIL tries to embrace
NICHOLAS, who jumps out of her
reach and extends the paper
and pen as if these were his
sword and shield.

NICHOLAS

Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! No marriage- and never- never fusion,
whatever that means!

CORSTREIL moves toward
NICHOLAS and says in a sultry
voice-

CORSTREIL

Why? There is no more Sankini. Just you and me-

NICHOLAS

Not you, never you, whoever you are! I am already married to
Sheila!

CORSTREIL stops.

CORSTREIL

Sheila! Oh, that human girl! Kind of fat-

NICHOLAS

Don't you ever call my wife fat!

CORSTREIL licks her lips
carefully and then continues
without paying any attention
to NICHOLAS.

CORSTREIL

She has a heart issue- and she has been very sad since she
lost the child, and- (CORSTREIL points at NICHOLAS)- this
human body has not been giving her much attention.

NICHOLAS

How do you know so much about us?

CORSTREIL

I tasted her faint signature on your lips. She isn't very happy with you, you know!

NICHOLAS

I am not sure what's going on here- but- (in a suspicious tone) you are not exactly Sheila's friend, are you?

CORSTREIL

And you are definitely more stupid than you look, Sepi.

NICHOLAS

I AM NOT SEPI!

CORSTREIL

You still want to continue this charade?

NICHOLAS

How many times do I have to tell you! I don't know what your deal is, how you entered- what you want- but I am not Sepi! I don't even know any Sepi-

CORSTREIL

Fine! Then who the hell are you?

NICHOLAS

My name is Nicholas! I am a scientist. I work at- Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! I'm the one who should be asking questions. An unknown woman who suddenly appears in my home out of nowhere-

CORSTREIL

I am not coming from Nowhere! I never go there, full of scums and filth-

NICHOLAS

Coming from nowhere! I didn't mean- like- it's -it's not a place- it's, it's like a figure of speech! You look like you are from this part- but- who are you? What do you want with me? Where are you coming from?

CORSTREIL

You know who I am, and you know perfectly well where I am coming from.

She tries to kiss NICHOLAS again.

CORSTREIL (CONT'D)

And you know what I want. I want you. I really, really want you, Sepi.

NICHOLAS resists frantically,
though without much success.

NICHOLAS

I have no idea what you're talking about! Stop trying to- um- no stop, just stop.

NICHOLAS extricates himself
from CORSTREIL's grasp.
CORSTREIL seems to be rather
enjoying herself, making
NICHOLAS squirm.

NICHOLAS

(Panting) Answer my question before I call 9-1-1.

CORSTREIL

Fine -ask your questions if you know what to ask! You've never been good at asking questions.

NICHOLAS

I'm a scientist! My entire life, my whole career, everything is built on asking questions.

CORSTREIL

These games are getting tiresome. But go ahead, ask your questions -quickly, if you can. We've a long way to jump, float, and fly.

NICHOLAS

Jump, float, and fly! I don't understand half of what you're saying.

CORSTREIL

Is that a question? Definitely more stupid than this body looks.

NICHOLAS

Stop calling me stupid!

CORSTREIL

Then stop showing your stupidity and ask your questions.

NICHOLAS

Ma'am! If you are not Sheila's friend -and not my friend either -I'm sure you're not my friend -then you're not invited today!

CORSTREIL

Still not a question!

NICHOLAS

I- hold on.

NICHOLAS silently frames the question in his head.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

If you're not invited and you're still here, then- I mean- do you know that you're trespassing?

CORSTREIL

Oh, is that your question?

NICHOLAS

I don't know who you are and what you want. But I would like you to leave now- unless you have something you must finish here. Do you need anything here?

CORSTREIL

Wow! That's another question!

NICHOLAS

I'm not joking! We're busy! Sheila'll be back soon, and then I have to help her with cleaning, even though I'm in no mood to do anything now.

NICHOLAS looks at the papers despondently.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

I would rather not waste my time on a trespasser.

CORSTREIL

You think I am a trespasser?

NICHOLAS

Of course, you are. Did you take permission before entering? You just saw an open door-

CORSTREIL

Is that any different than what you are doing?

NICHOLAS

What?

CORSTREIL

I asked, is that any different-

NICHOLAS

I heard you just fine!

CORSTREIL

Then answer me. Is that any different than what you are doing with this body?

CORSTREIL pokes NICHOLAS on the chest. Though it was a playful poke, NICHOLAS almost falls.

NICHOLAS

Easy there! You are strong!

CORSTREIL

Once you come out of this body, I can show you how strong I really am. You shouldn't meddle with a human body, anyway!

NICHOLAS

What do you mean- meddle with a human body?

CORSTREIL

Did you take permission before you entered? Before you subdued the owner's spirit? Before you took possession of all his senses and started enjoying the joys of human flesh?

NICHOLAS

What?

CORSTREIL

At least, I'm possessing this body for a reason, for a purpose- not just for fun!

CORSTREIL makes a face.

CORSTREIL (CONT'D)

I hate all these gunk- blood, bone, all the gooey pooey stuff floating around- and there's so many germs! Everywhere! Germs on the skin, germs in the mouth, germs inside the gut- even germs in the-

SHE points at her vagina!

CORSTREIL (CONT'D)

Yikes, yikes, yikes! Tripple-yikes-yukkity-duckity human body!

NICHOLAS

What the hell are you talking about? Who are you?

CORSTREIL

Now he asks me who I am! Can you imagine the audacity! This worthless wascal fled from the marriage podium right when Priest Bam was about to anoint his invisible forehead with cowdung and rat piss-

NICHOLAS

Who was doing hu ha with what?

CORSTREIL

Priest Bam is still frozen- he'd be like that until midday tomorrow, and then the whole arrangement will be null and void. Let's go, Sepi-

NICHOLAS

Oh, not again! I'm not Sepi!

CORSTREIL

Just leave this fleshbag and come out of the body, Sepi-

NICHOLAS

FOR THE LAST TIME, I AM NOT SEPI. I've never seen you in my life, and I am not going to marry you.

CORSTREIL

Seriously!

NICHOLAS

Sheila is my wife. In fact, today is our wedding anniversary. We are short on ice cream.

(MORE)

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

That's why she's out there, buying some things- we need to clean the house. We'll have some friends for dinner-

CORSTREIL

You are too enamored with the human tit-bit!

NICHOLAS

I am a human!

CORSTREIL

Are you now?

NICHOLAS

Of course, I am! What's wrong with you?

CORSTREIL

There's nothing wrong with me! I am happy- ecstatic to find you!

Before NICHOLAS stops her,
COSTREIL kisses him again. AND
then makes a face as if she
had a sour taste in her mouth.

CORSTREIL (CONT'D)

I just wish you'd leave this human nonsense and get going. If this is the sense of humor coming from the body- should be, tastes so gross- I should like to remind you that I hate humans and the human sense of humor.

NICHOLAS

You hate humans and the human sense of humor!

CORSTREIL

Of course, I do!

NICHOLAS shakes his head.

NICHOLAS

Enough of this already. What do you want?

CORSTREIL

(Sarcastically) You mean this much stupidity- and you still want me to believe that you're not Sepi?

NICHOLAS

No, I'm not. And I am afraid- you're not what you say you are.

CORSTREIL

Of course, I am not this body. And I haven't told you who I am. But you already know that from the kiss, you must have tasted my fire, didn't you? But it's true that I am here for you- I have been searching for you for so long- even the limitless time feels stretched.

CORSTREIL smiles. Then
continues in a dreamy voice.

CORSTREIL (CONT'D)

Banu made a beautiful firefly necklace. She said she'd fix the stars into my gossamer gown- oh, I'll look so beautiful! (She looks at NICHOLAS expectantly.) Well, dummy, now's your cue to say, Oh, Corstreil, you're always beautiful!

NICHOLAS

You are- Corstreil?

CORSTREIL

Who else would I be? Oh, I get it. You want me to come out of this body?

NICHOLAS

What is this constant talk about coming out of the body!

CORSTREIL

I just don't want to kill this human shell.

NICHOLAS

Kill!

OSTREIL

Sepi! Unlike you Excavate, I am a higher spirit!

NICHOLAS

Exca- hu ha?

CORSTREIL patiently explains.

CORSTREIL

I am created as a spirit! This frail human body can't hold me without losing its life force. If I leave it now, just to show you my true self, the body'll just fall and burn. The inner soul is already so dim-

NICHOLAS

Ma'am, you really need help-

CORSTREIL

I'm getting annoyed! Enough's enough! Snap out of it.

NICHOLAS

You need a doctor, maybe a shrink. Let me call 9-1-1. They can get you to the ER-

NICHOLAS reaches out for his phone. CORSTREIL springs toward NICHOLAS, trying to grab him. It is almost shocking to see such catlike agility from that frail-looking body of hers. NICHOLAS barely evades her and topples behind the couch!

CORSTREIL

It's not the time for your silly games, Sepi. Come here. NOW!

NICHOLAS

Maybe *I* need help. I need to call 9-1-1. This crazy woman is going to kill me-

CORSTREIL

That's not a nice thing to say! I will never kill you! I want to get fused! You really don't recognize me?

NICHOLAS

No! Not at all! I've never seen you in my life-

CORSTREIL does a strange sort of hop and skip, like a dance move. NICHOLAS peeks out to watch. CORSTREIL smiles and looks at NICHOLAS expectantly.

CORSTREIL
Now?

NICHOLAS
Nope!

CORSTREIL
Seriously?

NICHOLAS
Yes!

CORSTREIL
Oh my creators! You must be possessed!

NICHOLAS
Possessed!

CORSTREIL
Yes, you've been possessed! That's the only explanation. That explains everything.

NICHOLAS comes out in a hurry.

NICHOLAS
Possessed!

He looks around, especially behind the couch, as if the things possessing him are hiding there.

NICHOLAS
Possessed by whom? I mean, by what?

CORSTREIL
By the human, of course! Can you feel him?

CORSTREIL pokes NICHOLAS in his chest.

CORSTREIL
Is it still there? Deep inside? The slow embers? The spirit of the body you took! Can you feel it?

NICHOLAS

For the last time, I haven't taken over anything! It's me- me, plain, old, Nicolas.

CORSTREIL

This is why spirits should never mingle with humans- the yucky blood, bones, all the gunk floating around- I told you! I told you repeatedly- but no! (Mimicking) I am an Excavate- nothing will happen, Corstreil- just a bit of fun-

NICHOLAS

What the fudge is this Excavate you keep talking about?

CORSTREIL

Excavate- a spirit that comes out of a dead human.

NICHOLAS

Who are you?

CORSTREIL

I'm Corstreil-

NICHOLAS

No, I mean, what are you?

CORSTREIL

Sepi! I am Corstreil, one of the higher spirits, a princess of the realm! I am created as a spirit- a beautiful, golden spirit of the Pure Flame-

NICHOLAS

Ma'am, you need help! Let me call 9-1-1-

CORSTREIL

Will you please come out? Or do you really want me to kill this human and drag your ass out of there?

NICHOLAS

Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Nobody is killing anybody-

CORSTREIL

Then come out- come out now. Before you completely forget how to be free and get eternally stuck in this human body.

NICHOLAS

I am the human body!

CORSTREIL

He's trapped! Oh, my Creators! He's really trapped. Oh, poor Sepi! How long have you been struggling inside this shell?

NICHOLAS

Um, if you mean, how old I am- I am-

CORSTREIL

No, this is bad, very bad. I have always heard that human flesh has a strange power, and once you get used to the pleasure of the flesh, the power within it is almost impossible to relinquish.

NICHOLAS looks at the audience
and whispers-

NICHOLAS

Do you understand a word of what she's saying?

CORSTREIL ponders for a moment. NICHOLAS slowly moves towards the table and picks up his cell phone. He is about to dial when CORSTREIL suddenly shouts-

CORSTREIL

Yes! That's the only way.

NICHOLAS almost drops the phone, but manages to juggle and finally catches it.

NICHOLAS

What's the only way?

CORSTREIL

Go, climb that building, and jump from the roof.

NICHOLAS drops the phone.

NICHOLAS

What?

CORSTREIL

Go, climb the building-

NICHOLAS

I heard you.

CORSTREIL

Then?

NICHOLAS

I cannot jump! I'll be dead!

CORSTREIL

That's the whole point! I wouldn't have to touch you! The body will die- you'll be free- of course, there will be another Excavate to deal with. But we'll take care of that later-

NICHOLAS

You're joking, right? Please tell me you're joking-

CORSTREIL

Nope! No joking! I'm dead serious. (She laughs.) Did you hear what I just said? I am dead serious- ha ha-

She pushes NICHOLAS towards
the door.

CORSTREIL (CONT'D)

You didn't get it? I am not exactly alive- not like the humans- I can't be dead- ha ha- yet, I'm dead serious-

Despite the size disparity,
NICHOLAS is completely
outmatched.

NICHOLAS

Wait- what the- what are you doing?

CORSTREIL

Taking you to the roof of that building-

NICHOLAS

No- please- no, stop! Please stop! I'm afraid of heights-

CORSTREIL stops. For the first
time, she looks confused.

CORSTREIL

You what?

NICHOLAS

I am afraid of heights. Even the thought of height makes me nauseous. I have a severe case of acrophobia.

CORSTREIL

But you are coming from a long line of Excavate Jumper. Your dad jumped from the fifth floor- your mom from the seventh- your grandpa, thirteenth- all of them killed themselves by jumping from the roof of some buildings-

NICHOLAS

How do you know so much about my family?

CORSTREIL

You really don't remember what I went through to arrange our fusion?

NICHOLAS

I have no idea!

CORSTREIL nods thoughtfully.

CORSTREIL

Sepi is afraid of many things- lilac-laden meadows, unwittingly entering into a human's gunky heart- but not height, never height-

NICHOLAS

How many times do I have to tell you? I am not Sepi. I am Nicholas-

CORSTREIL

Fine. I have heard enough of your nonsense. Prove it.

NICHOLAS

Prove what?

CORSTREIL

Prove that you're not Sepi, and I'll leave you alone. But if you can't-

NICHOLAS

If I can't?

CORSTREIL's joviality and playfulness vanish. She looks at NICHOLAS- a cold, cruel stare. The air suddenly feels heavy with tension. CORSTREIL spits out each word, emphasizing each syllable.

CORSTREIL

I. Will. Kill. You.

NICHOLAS gasps.

CORSTREIL

Literally break this fragile human shell and drag Sepi's spirit out, even though I hate to touch the blood and bone of humans- they are so gross- so obnoxious to us higher spirits-

NICHOLAS

You serious?

CORSTREIL

Do you think this is a game? Do you have any idea what situation you created when you left me on the podium? They already gave me so much grief that a higher spirit is fusing with a wandering Excavate.

NICHOLAS

Not again! Can you please explain about these higher spirits and excavates? I have no idea-

CORSTREIL

Sepi! You really don't remember anything! The sooner you leave this body, the better.

NICHOLAS

But what is an Excavate?

CORSTREIL

An Excavate is a spirit that comes out of a dead human-

NICHOLAS

You mean, a ghost?

CORSTREIL

Yikes! Of all the terms, you had to choose the most vile, uncouth, disgusting one!

NICHOLAS

It's a ghost, isn't it?

CORSTREIL

A specter- wraith- phantom- yes, okay, yes- it's a ghost!

NICHOLAS

And you are not a ghost?

CORSTREIL

How dare you! I am a pure spirit, Sepi! I was created as a spirit, a golden flame of the other realm. We higher spirits are much above these wandering Excavates- we are created as an embodiment of pure beauty-

NICHOLAS

Created by whom?

CORSTREIL

Created by- I am forbidden to tell that! And anyway, you wouldn't understand.

NICHOLAS

Try me. I've a PhD.

CORSTREIL

How many PhDs do you need to open a door?

NICHOLAS

No, I'm serious. Try me. It's a fascinating story.

CORSTREIL

You've no idea! The humans are dying like flies these days. All these Excavate spirits -lawless, dangerous -they are just flooding our realm-

NICHOLAS

Aha! Now you're talking! So there is this quantum space-right? We are living in this dimension- and you are the inhabitants of another-

CORSTREIL gets very aggressive
and utters in a low,
threatening growl-

CORSTREIL

Don't try to explain the ethereal beauty of our realm with
your stupid science. Your science has no idea- no notion of
the things out there-

NICHOLAS

Okay, okay! Get a grip! What suddenly got into you?

CORSTREIL

I'm the princess of another realm! I'm not your plaything.
You're lucky that I am giving you a chance to keep this human
body alive. Banu or any other higher spirit would already
have killed and dragged Sepi's ass out of that macabre,
grotesque flesh-

NICHOLAS

Okay! I'm sorry, jeez! I apologize. Um, so what happens when
the humans die?

CORSTREIL

The Excavates are lawless- they bear the same characters as
their old human souls- corrupt, broken, dangerous! They keep
pushing and pushing the real inhabitants- us, higher spirits-
pushing and pushing us out. They are everywhere now. You have
no idea!

NICHOLAS

Oh, I do! Believe me, I really do know how it is to be pushed
around. So, you can't fight or expel these Excavates?

CORSTREIL

Every time a higher spirit touches an Excavate, the
Excavate's lawless spirit burns-

NICHOLAS nods thoughtfully.

NICHOLAS

That's why you said that you've burnt Sepi's lips when you
kissed him-

CORSTREIL

And the higher spirit loses a part of it.

NICHOLAS

What?

CORSTREIL smiles.

CORSTREIL

Nobody knows how, nobody knows what happens to us. But both the Excavate and the higher spirit lose their power, their true selves, their true identity-

NICHOLAS

Isn't Sepi an excavate?

CORSTREIL smiles again, she has a beautiful smile.

CORSTREIL

Yes, he is.

NICHOLAS

And yet... I thought you wanted to marry- I mean, get fused with this Sepi.

CORSTREIL

A princess of the higher realm, and I fell for this lawless Excavate. There has never been a true fusion between an Excavate and a higher spirit-

NICHOLAS

And he left you?

CORSTREIL

At the fusion podium. Everybody told me that he was never interested in me- that he wanted Sankini-

NICHOLAS

Another Excavate?

CORSTREIL nods.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

His girlfriend- or spirit friend-

CORSTREIL

But Sepi agreed! He agreed to fuse with me! Everybody told me that he was lying.

(MORE)

CORSTREIL (CONT'D)

That he had no intention of fusing with me. I would lose all my power, I would lose myself, maybe vanish into oblivion. Everybody told me that this whole thing was a very bad idea-

NICHOLAS

You really love Sepi, don't you?

CORSTREIL

I do not have a human spirit! I have never been a human! I don't know what love is. It's Sepi who keeps telling me this- and that about love- unreal, ethereal- beautiful. Sometimes he talks about me- (CORSTREIL makes an ugly face)- most of the time about his Sankini-

NICHOLAS

Wow! Is he a teenager? Raging hormones-

CORSTREIL

I hate that spirit.

NICHOLAS

Sepi or Sankini?

CORSTREIL doesn't seem to hear.

CORSTREIL

I have no idea what love is, but I want to find out.

NICHOLAS

But then, when the time came, Sepi left you- and maybe, just maybe, fled with this Sankini. That's what you think, don't you?

CORSTREIL

Enough! Now go on. Prove that you're really Nicholas. NOW!

NICHOLAS

Okay, okay!

Nicholas brings out his wallet and flashes his Driver's License.

NICHOLAS

Here.

CORSTREIL

I am not amused.

NICHOLAS

What?

CORSTREIL

A piece of paper! That's it!

NICHOLAS

This is my driver's license! What more do you want? I can also show you my passport-

CORSTREIL

Those might work in a human court, but not here, not with me. I want to see what you are-

NICHOLAS

I told you I'm a scientist.

CORSTREIL

That's how you earn your livelihood. I want to know who you are inside- the real you.

NICHOLAS

You want to cut me up-

CORSTREIL

I want to know what makes you *you, Nicholas*, and not Sepi. I want to know the inner things, the real things, things that matter! Humans have a strange way of continuing without caring what's happening inside. You value this mortal shell so much, you forget that the fragile soul inside is all that matters- all that makes you who you are. I want to know what makes you *you, Nicholas*.

NICHOLAS

What makes me *me*?

CORSTREIL

Yes!

NICHOLAS

I mean, I am just me- I don't do sports- don't - wait- no, never mind!

CORSTREIL

What?

NICHOLAS

I can- I mean, I thought I could-

CORSTREIL

You could- what?

NICHOLAS

Write poetry! At least I thought I could. Huh! Who am I kidding? I know shit-

CORSTREIL

You are a poet?

NICHOLAS

I won't go that far-

CORSTREIL

That's an inner thing! Perhaps, the most intimate, inner expression of the soul! That would do! Recite one that you wrote! Now!

NICHOLAS

It's not very good- I mean, I can tell you one- the last one I wrote-

CORSTREIL

Let's hear your last one. (Childishly) Now! Now! Now!

NICHOLAS

Okay, okay!

NICHOLAS recites from the paper.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

*"She danced across the lavender-laden landscape
She traipsed unwittingly straight into my heart-"*

CORSTREIL

You wrote this?

NICHOLAS

Yes, I did! I know- it's just-

CORSTREIL

Beautiful! It's so beautiful! Wait! How am I supposed to know that you really wrote it? We higher spirits don't usually pay attention to what humans write. And humans are notorious fakers. You might just be reciting something from another famous poet.

NICHOLAS

You think this could be a famous poet's writing?

CORSTREIL

I think many a thing, and I believe none. You have to write something now- something in front of me- right now.

NICHOLAS

Right now?

CORSTREIL

Right this moment. Write something- about me-Yes!

CORSTREIL is ecstatic with
this idea. She shouts
childishly.

CORSTREIL (CONT'D)

Me! Me! Me!

NICHOLAS

Okay, okay! Get a grip. What did you say your name was again?

CORSTREIL

Corstreil! Now go on-

NICHOLAS starts writing.
CORSTREIL peeks at the paper.

CORSTREIL

Is it done?

NICHOLAS

Give me a minute-

CORSTREIL

Sure thing!

CORSTREIL walks a few steps.

CORSTREIL

It's already a minute, isn't it? You done, yet?

NICHOLAS

Get a grip, girl! I just need a few moments.

CORSTREIL

A few moments- sure.

CORSTREIL walks a few steps
and turns to NICHOLAS.

CORSTREIL

That should be enough! I mean, I am a higher spirit! Time has
no meaning for me! But you must have had more than a few
moments-

NICHOLAS

Okay, okay.

NICHOLAS recites.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

*Her fiery eyes provide peace and solace,
Her cherry lips become my festive ale,
She is the best, my most favorite spirit
She is Corstreil, Corstreil.*

CORSTREIL blushes.

NICHOLAS

(Ruefully) I know- it's trash-

CORSTREIL

It's beautiful! Nobody ever said anything so nice, so
beautiful about me.

NICHOLAS

Not even your Sepi?

CORSTREIL flashes a sad,
melancholic smile.

CORSTREIL

Sepi was never mine. He left me at the podium. Maybe, he
really wanted Sankini all along-

NICHOLAS

How long have you been searching for him?

CORSTREIL

Time has no meaning for us, human.

NICHOLAS looks at her.

CORSTREIL smiles again, sad
but beautiful.

For a very long time- from your human perspective. I have looked at the edge of the universe where no spirits have ever ventured- it's just a ball of fire. Changes color constantly. I have dove deep into the ocean- searched every nook and crevices, talked to every sea creature- they don't want to talk to us anymore. They're afraid- always afraid-

NICHOLAS

Oh, Corstreil. I am so sorry!

CORSTREIL

Can you recite the poem again, please?

NICHOLAS recites again.

NICHOLAS

*Her fiery eyes provide peace and solace,
Her cherry lips become my festive ale,
She is the best, my most favorite spirit
She is Corstreil, Corstreil.*

CORSTREIL

Nope, you can't be Sepi. Even if you fed Sepi those exploding firecrackers, he'd not be able to vomit something remotely resembling a poem.

NICHOLAS

This might be my last one. Nobody likes my poems anyway.

CORSTREIL

Who is this nobody?

NICHOLAS

The editors of the magazines where I submitted. I submitted it to many places, but only one actually responded. Jim.

NICHOLAS adds after a brief
pause.

And he is also my father-in-law.

CORSTREIL

What did he say?

NICHOLAS

I don't want to talk about it.

CORSTREIL

Tell me-

NICHOLAS

I don't want to!

CORSTREIL

Seriously!

CORSTREIL touches NICHOLAS's forehead. NICHOLAS stiffens. A faint smile lights up CORSTREIL's face. Against his wish, NICHOLAS assumes the mannerism of the grumpy, old editor and says in a gruff voice-

NICHOLAS

(In a severely mocking, condescending tone) Son, let me be clear. We can't publish this- this gem- this is just bull- I mean, this is bloody brilliant, wonderful, excellent! But what will happen to the other authors? The public will not read anything else! They will force us to only publish your awe- some, awesome- why just some, let's make it full- yeah, awef- I mean, full-of-awe writing! What will happen to diversity? Equity? Your talent is much too big for our small journal, right, son? You get the idea, don't you? Now, fuck off-

CORSTREIL bursts out laughing.

NICHOLAS looks ashamed.

NICHOLAS

I'll never write again. I can't create poetry. This is just trash- like the worst thing ever.

CORSTREIL

Nope! You can't be Sepi!

NICHOLAS

Yeah, I heard you.

CORSTREIL

No spirit, even an Excavate, would ever leave something just because somebody else told them to. Do you think a vampire would not suck your blood because I forbade them? Or a poltergeist would stop throwing things around because I said that they're childish? A Banshi will stop screeching and wailing if I tell her she's being a nuisance?

NICHOLAS

But nobody cares! Nobody likes my-

CORSTREIL

You do things because you like them. Because you can't *not* do them. Because it's who you are. Not because of what other people tell you. Can you continue without creating? Even if you think your writing is shit?

NICHOLAS

But what if nobody ever likes my-

CORSTREIL

Then you show it to somebody else. Show it to me. I love your writing. One day, I'll love to come to you with Sepi, and we'll float and twirl under the starlight and listen to your poetry-

NICHOLAS

You- you- you sure you'll find Sepi?

CORSTREIL

Of course! I'll keep looking for him until I find him. The search makes me who I am, human. And I am Princess Corstreil. Anyway, I'd better get going. And you, human- you continue doing what you love and don't let anybody else tell you otherwise! See you soon, I hope. Goodbye, Nicholas- Oh!

(MORE)

CORSTREIL (CONT'D)

And Nicholas- Sepi- Ipse- self- you've already found yours!
Don't lose it- don't let it go-

CORSTREIL leaves.

NICHOLAS

Goodbye, Corstreil! I hope you find Sepi, someday.

Nicholas picks up the papers
and pen and reads softly-
*"She danced across the lavender-laden landscape
She traipsed unwittingly straight into my heart-"*

He scrunches his eyebrows.
I think I can make it better, no? Sure? Just some changes-

He looks at his wristwatch.
Enough time before Sheila returns. Let's polish this one up
and get something new going- about a forlorn princess and her
lost love- yeah, baby! Then I will see where to submit these-
those editors wouldn't know what hit them-

NICHOLAS starts writing
furiously.