

Michael Chekhov

(Afternoon) February 21, 1938

CHARACTERIZATION

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The Possessed: The scene in the son's room.

The son is alone. He is seeking, searching, for the truth, but does not know which way it lies, and what kind of truth it is he seeks. He is always looking through, listening through, touching through. Try to imagine this state of going through everything, searching for something. Try to increase this activity in him - through everything: perhaps there? perhaps there? perhaps there? Imagine how he walks, having this psychology inside him. How he speaks. How he listens to something. Try to increase this ability in him to see and to touch things through.

From this point of view, try to imagine him speaking to himself as if there were two people in the room, although he is alone. He asks questions of somebody who is present only in his imagination, and from this ability to go through everything, he gets the answer. Imagine him speaking aloud, with this ability to go through time, space, walls, the masks of other people, etc. Imagine him speaking aloud, being alone.

He puts the question before the imaginary spy, who always comes to him. "Wait. Wait. Wait one moment. You say there are two kinds of people in the world - the usual and the unusual. The unusual have the right to overstep certain rules which are made only for the usual or average

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person." He speaks as if the spy himself were speaking, and then he replies, "Of course, now I see that you are this unusual person, and it is very comfortable for you to allow yourself certain privileges." There is a great conflict between the two images in his mind, great tension. Between the two sentences there is a bridge when the son says, "Leave me alone. Why do you pursue me?" Then, after he says, "Oh, it's very comfortable for you," there is another bridge when he tells the spy that he hates him because he always shows him a dreadful grimace of himself - always his worst self. (Try to embroider this psychology as a play between one real and one unreal, invisible person.) Now find the bridge to the moment when the mother enters the room and he says, "No, Mother, you can't help me."

Then the spy is announced, and with rage and passion the son shouts, "Send him away." But the spy enters. In this picture he wears the mask of a real spy, both in the deep and the superficial sense. In his mind he is questioning: "What is he thinking? Why is he silent? Where are the papers?" He sees and smells and tastes everything.

When the mother comes into the room, the whole thing must be hidden. The son hides his suffering from her, although he is suffering deeply, deeply inside. He only shows his suffering when alone.

He is very gentle and soft with his mother, but he never asks for anything - he always gives an order. The mother is warm towards him, but she is also giving an order and waiting for the answer to it - not begging. At the end of the play she begs when she asks him, "You will come back, Nicholas?"

When the mother speaks to him and asks him to tell her what is the matter, she knows that she is speaking of the gravest thing in his life. She is speaking to his heart - she doesn't even need to look at him. Their hearts are speaking. Try to find this warmth of the heart.

The son must find transitions from one scene to another; there must be transitions in every moment on the stage.

The bridegroom's character: He is a very handsome and gentle person. Beautiful in body and face, but without humor. He takes everything seriously - that is his whole tragedy. He is not a funny figure. (Some people who are without a sense of humor are funny, but he is not because he is really good.) He is the guardian angel of the person he loves, and he loves this girl. She is manifold in her character, and he is straight. The best human feelings live in him. He is the constant incorporation of the question: "What can I do for you?" She tries to find the deepest part in his soul, which she can't find. This is the connection between the two. This is the fundamental thing between

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these two characters when they are together. He is like a wall for her, although he is not a bit stupid - only completely lacking in humor. It is a tragic thing for them both. She loves him because he is, in a certain way, a hero - an ideal, but without humor. Therefore, their love is so tragic. She loves him - but where is he? She can't find him. When he kisses her, it is warm and pleasant, but...? Sometimes she is angry with him and she can't explain what she wants to do. She wants to awaken something in him, but it is not there.