

DEV. The next day. Down by the lake. Con sent Nina a note. (*Dev somehow has a copy of it. He reads it to us.*) "Meet me. Noon 30. The Place. Con."

10. Hope Dance

Nina is waiting by the lake. It's just about 12:30. She waits. There could be a song or some music here. Then, almost by default, she talks to us...

*NINA. So, there's this story of his called "The Tiny Sacred"—it's in his first collection, from when he was even younger than Conrad is now, I think—and there's this little orphan girl in it. Her name is Annabelle, but they call her The Thimble. Isn't that great?

And she has... consumption, or something, so she lives mostly in her tiny little room, mostly in bed, and she creates these imaginary worlds within worlds in the swirls on her bedspread and things like that...

But when things are particularly bleak... she does the Hope Dance. On her bed. All alone. At night. The Hope Dance. Don't you love that?

So when I was maybe, oh, twelve or thirteen or so, after one particularly terrible day—you know, evil step-father, drunken rage, poor me, blah blah blah—one night I just got up on my bed in the middle of the night and... I did it. I did the Hope Dance. And I instantly felt better. *He* gave that to me. He gave me that *giff*. And now he's right here. And... and he seems to *like me*. Me! While he was talking to me last night and I got weak in the knees. That's a thing that actually happened. My knees got *weak*... he touched my arm right here for, like, two seconds, and I swear it *burnt me*. I mean... What am I supposed to do with that?

(She hears something that might well be a gunshot... off someplace... it startles her, changes the course of her thinking, not necessarily knowing why...)

I love Conrad, I do, he's great... And he loves me so much it seems...

(Maybe confessing quietly something she has never said out loud before.) Well... it seems kind of *rude*... or *awkward* not to love him back.

And I do think he's totally amazing and really talented, but...but...
(Mash appears...) *

11. Can I Help You?

MASH. Oh.

NINA. Oh, hi. Were you—

MASH. What?

NINA. Looking for Connie?

MASH. Why?

NINA. You weren't?

MASH. No, I—whatever.

NINA. You were?

MASH. Yes. What about it?

NINA. Nothing, I just... I haven't seen him. He should be here soon, though. He asked me to meet him here.

MASH. Of course. Okay... *(She goes to leave...)*

NINA. Mash?

MASH. How can I help you?

NINA. How can you—? Umm...

MASH. Don't stress it. I was being *ironical*.

NINA. I know. I'm not stupid.

MASH. I never said you were.

NINA. I didn't say you / did.

MASH. I know you're not stupid.

NINA. And I know you're not.

MASH. Okay. We're neither of us stupid. So... how can I help you?

NINA. I just wanted... I just wanted to say... I'm *sorry*.

MASH. For?

NINA. You know... "All The Things."

MASH. You're sorry?

NINA. Yes.

MASH. For "All The Things"?

NINA. I am. *(Beat.)*