Local Deity

A Ten-Minute Play

By Margaret O'Donnell

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

VIVI	16, non-binary, open race Imaginative, guileless, cheerful, open New at the face-mask factory
KEL	67, female-identifying, open race Tired, irritable, doesn't like cats Vivi's fellow worker and assigned mentor
AUNT PEARL	40s, Female-identifying, open race Brisk, practical, oblivious Factory owner, Vivi's aunt
SWIZZLE	A cat Snarky, larky, loves to have fun The local deity

NOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT:

… indicates unvoiced action, at the director's choice.

/ indicates an interruption in the dialogue, either by the speaker themselves or another speaker.

All music can be substituted by similar music, to respect copyrights.

A face-mask 'factory' in Aunt Pearl's garage. Swizzle, a large cat, crouches on the floor of the garage playing with a ball of yarn to the beat of the music. (Not Read: Start music - Don't Lose Ur Head,which plays for 14 seconds.) When Swizzle hears people coming, they turn off the music, collapse on the floor, and put their head on their paws, playing innocent.

Aunt Pearl and Kel enter the garage

AUNT PEARL

(carrying a stack of papers and setting them on Kel's worktable)

They'll be here any minute. They're a smart kid. Okay? I told my sister I'd give them a chance. You'll be great as a mentor. (*looking around*)It's a mess in here! Clean up, will ya, and I'll go see if they've come.

KEL

Since when can't I keep up with the orders? Huh? This place is too small for two people! And this mess / it's that cat. It gets its hair into everything. And it shreds the tulle!

AUNT PEARL

Oh, Swizzle? Swizzle's fine. We need them out here for the rats. And be nice to Vivi. Teach them all your tricks and tips. (*as she exits*) And give Swizzle their food…

Aunt Pearl exits the garage.

KEL

(cleaning up half-heartedly and throwing things into corners)

And give Swizzle their food! No way. Fat cat's probably eatin' up all the birds in the neighborhood -

Swizzle knocks over a stack of cat food tins and makes faces at Kel. Kel puts on music and starts making masks. (Not read: Start music - Sweet Caroline,which plays for 19 seconds. Kel sings and sways along to the music and makes masks with great efficiency. Swizzle dances.) Kel aims a ball of yarn at Swizzle, irritated with their antics. Swizzle dodges it with glee.

Aunt Pearl and Vivi enter the garage.

AUNT PEARL

And here they are! Kel? Kel!

*(waving her hand in front of Kel and motioning her to turn down the music, which Kel reluctantly does.)*Vivi, Kel is my right hand woman. She'll be your on-the-job instructor. She'll get you all set up, won't you, Kel?

KEL

(indistinct grumbling)

…

AUNT PEARL

Great! We do important work here, Vivi, essential work. Our masks combat the virus! Remember that. After Kel's brother got sick, we converted to anti-COVID masks overnight, back in the spring. That was our wake-up call. So, onward, team!

Aunt Pearl exits the garage.

Kel turns the music on again, continues making masks, and ignores Vivi. (Not read: Start music - Respect,which plays for 15 seconds.) Vivi puts down their backpack and stands awkwardly looking around.

KEL

Do you even know how to use a sewing machine?

VIVI

Um, yes. I make costumes for Cosplay/

KEL

I have no idea what that is. Masks are simple! Just follow the patterns. And look around. You'll find the fabric.

Kel throws some paper patterns on Vivi's table, and returns to her own work. Swizzle sidles up to Vivi and rubs against their leg.

VIVI

Oh, hi there Kitty! (*petting Swizzle*) What a beautiful cat you are.

SWIZZLE

Oh yes I am! Smart of you to notice. And it's Swizzle, by the way. Not Kitty.

VIVI

Swizzle! I love your name.

SWIZZLE

(*dancing rapturously*)

You can hear me! Oh joy! No one in my entire domain has heard me in so long!

VIVI

(*playing with Swizzle*)

Your domain? Are you the garage cat?

SWIZZLE

(*huffily)*

Absolutely not! I'm the local deity. I drop in here from time to time to keep things moving. Like this.

Swizzle bats a ball of yarn at Kel's feet; Kel kicks it away with a mutter, not looking up.

VIVI

(looking thrilled)

You're the local deity! I've never met a deity before. I had no idea there were local deities. Wow!

SWIZZLE

Yep. You just gotta be able to see us. And hear us. Her *(indicates Kel with their chin)* she couldn't see a deity if one bit her on the ankle. Which I have, by the way. I've been trying to get her to loosen up for a looong time. Tough, tough job, though.

VIVI

You look like you'd be hard to ignore. And who would want to, anyway?

SWIZZLE

(with a swagger, very pleased)

Exactly! (*beat*) I'm the deity for this entire place. This garage, a couple of big gardens, three houses, and a storage unit. Lots of trees. And, the sidewalk.

VIVI

Wow! That's impressive.

SWIZZLE

Well. I've got a few minutes. Want me to show you the ropes? Don't wait around for *her* to do it.

VIVI

Yes! I'd love it!

SWIZZLE

Okay. First supplies, then techniques, and then we'll learn some of Pearl's patterns. And then. (*dramatic beat)*We'll design our own masks!

Kel's music changes to the next song. (Not read: Star music - Twist and Shout, which plays for 9 seconds.) Swizzle and Vivi work together, rocking out to the beat of the music. The pile of masks grows. They pick up supplies from the floor so the garage is much tidier. They draw designs. Kel looks at them from time to time, with suspicion. Suddenly, Kel turns off the music.

KEL

(examining one of Vivi's masks and throwing it down)

What do you think you're doing? I'm supposed to be teaching you! This is all wrong! It's…it's…silly!

VIVI

Silly? They're supposed to be serious, then? I'm sorry. I didn't know.

KEL

Of course they are supposed to be serious! This is a serious business. People are dying, you know! Pearl's gonna be furious when she sees how much material you've wasted. You better get rid of these before she comes back. Hide them!

VIVI

(beginning to pack up the masks)

Okay.

Aunt Pearl enters the garage.