

I
HATE
MARTHA

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Los Angeles. Yesterday and last night.

2pm Pacific
Wilshire Boulevard

“You’re a triple threat. No, no, no, you’re a quadruple threat. A QUADRUPLE threat!”

“A quadruple threat!”

“I can’t stand it, it’s so exciting. Everybody loves the concept.”

“Quadruple!”

“Everybody, and I mean everybody. We love it. The production companies love it. The studios love it. The networks love it.”

“LOVE!”

“I can’t stand it. I’m so excited, I’m going to throw up. I just can’t stand it, I love it so much. Do you see me? Can you see me right now? I’m sitting here like a fanzine Twitter Instagram Snapchat follower groupie, can’t standing it. I think I might faint.”

“It’s going to be the second coming of the British Invasion.”

“That’s right! The second coming of the British Invasion.”

“Second coming.”

“Bigger! The second coming of Christ!”

“You’re going to be bigger than the Beatles being bigger than Jesus.”

“So much bigger! Listen, I love those guys. LOVE! Even the dead ones. They’re great. But they’re not now. You are NOW. Celebrity chefs are the new rock stars.”

“Everybody loves chefs.”

“And it’s so much bigger than rock stars. Everybody eats.”

“Every. Single. Person.”

“Everybody on the planet. Not everybody listens to music.”

“Hardly anyone.”

“Music is over.”

“Forget it.”

“Eating is NOW. And everybody at some point or another cooks.”

“You have to eat. You have to cook.”

“It’s universal.”

“Even I cook!”

“Even he cooks. Can you imagine him cooking?!?! Abe cooks. Our Abe.”

“Not everybody can make music.”

“Oy.”

“But everybody can and does make food.”

“Exactly. Cheffing is so much more accessible. Relatable. Universal. The opportunities are so much bigger.”

“The opportunities are infinite.”

“Infinite! That’s the right word. That’s why Abe is in this meeting. I couldn’t live without him. Isn’t he amazing? Not as amazing as you are. But amazing! There are so many things we can create together. Consider the possibilities. The TV show is just the beginning. I can see books, movies, endorsements, cooking schools, lifestyle vacations.”

“Don’t even talk about the merch.”

“Don’t even talk about it! It sullies the whole thing! That’s not what this is about! The cookware, the utensils, the apron sets, the appliances.”

“Don’t mention it!”

“Not another word! The exotics...”

“Of course, the exotics! Well, just one word on exotics!”

“Exotic stoves are back. They are now. Hot like a rocket. Like you.”

“They’re multicultural.”

“Multicultural, multidimensional, multinational, multi-international, multi-global.”

“It’s a movement.”

“An entire movement!”

“Got to do it. Have to do it. And you are the perfect person/vehicle!”

“Perfect person/vehicle!”

“The whole world is a market now, and the whole world is listening to your message.”

“You can’t just do a convection oven these days and leave it at that.”

“Impossible!”

“Even Julia Childs wouldn’t do it that way now!”

“Who, by the way, we LOVE!”

“Love, love, love, love!”

“Slow cooker, yes. Of course.”

“No question.”

“But that’s obvious. Exotics are what’s next. I’m talking about the comal for the Mexicans. Hibachi and kamado for the Japanese.”

“Branded.”

“Fully branded, designed by the top designers. Designed by YOU. With your style and panache.”

“Your élan.”

“Exclusive from Nigella.”

“A new, contemporary, British domestic goddess take on the hibachi and kamado.”

“Think of it as a hibachi-kamado combo!”

“Look at the mockups!”

“Can you stand it? I can’t stand it. I can’t even breathe! I need an emergency ablation!”

“Never mind the look. If you don’t like the look, we can scrap it. We don’t want you to feel as if we’re getting ahead of you. We can tear it up. In fact, let’s tear it up right now just in case! I don’t want to see it!”

“Yes, scrap it! We’ll do a complete redesign with you whenever you want! You are leading this process. You decide everything. YOU are the domestic goddess.”

“You! The domestic goddess genius!”

“A tandoor for the Indians.”

“Tandoor is right on the edge of exotic nowadays, anyway!”

“Right on the edge.”

“Lo Trau for the Vietnamese.”

“Ddukbaegi for the Koreans.”

“Burjiko for the Somalis.”

“Indoor horno for the yoga crowd.”

“Indoor imu for the beach crowd.”

“Kyoto box for the eco kids.”

“You ask me, the eco kids are lunatics, but what tastemakers!”

“Sometimes. Depends. Could be they’re lunatics or could be they’re geniuses.”

“You’re right, it depends.”

“But tastemakers they are!”

“You’re right!”

“No, you’re right!”

“Let’s face it: SHE’s the one who’s right! Am I right?!”

“Yes!”

“Samovar for everybody.”

“What’s hotter than a Nigella samovar?!?! Can you think of anything? Can you see it? Love it!”

“Foukou for the Greeks.”

The Cypriots.

“Pardon me?”

The Cypriots.

“Great people! Huge! Great island. Love the Cypriots. What about ‘em?”

The foukou is from Cyprus, not Greece.

“Aha! Who knew!?! A whole new demo. Abe, write that down!”

7:30 pm

N. Robertson Boulevard

“I don’t know how you do it. You look radiant every single time of day or night.”

Benefit of being a domestic goddess.

“True, true, but still, I’d kill to look half as good half the time. Martini?”

Happily.

“Let’s see if I can get the waiter’s attention.”

Easily.

“Hello, how may I help you?”

“Two martinis, please. Vodka. Olives. Up. How’d I do?”

Exactly.

“Excuse me, but aren’t you...”

“That’s Nigella, yes.”

“I was going to say! OMG. I can honestly say, we see a lot of people in here, but I am so excited to meet you. You are just fabulous. My mom is going to just about have a hissy fit of jealousy when I tell her.”

Thank you.

“No, seriously. My mom, like, worships you.”

Yes, actually, she does. Nice lady.

“I’m probably going to get fired for this, but can I just sneak a little photo with you so I can send it to her? She is absolutely going to die.”

She won’t die for some years. Yes, let’s take the photo. Remember to broaden your smile when you look in the camera. Broader is better!

“Thank you, thank you, thank you. Two martinis coming up. I swear it. Mom can’t get enough of you or Martha. All day long she talks about you two!”

Your mother is a tasteless cunt.

“You are such a star here. They are so ready for you.”

I have to say. I fairly like it in America.

“How’d it go today?”

And LA. I like Los Angeles. The only thing you hear about LA is that it’s all zany, superficial nits. They have a point, I suppose. But what a breath of fresh air on the other hand. It’s so much less stuffy than nearly everything else I’ve experienced.

“I have a feeling we may lose you to sunny California.”

I’m thinking about it. I haven’t felt like this for a long time. I love the nervous, inventive energy of the place. The mad, transactional people who occupy it. The instantaneous love that is sparked, declared, and then evaporated. It’s all so untruthful that it makes for its own kind of predictability. Its own authenticity.

“Trite.”

Okay, maybe. How about this: their rituals are so much lighter than anyone else’s. Seems true when I tell you. The lightness feels like a relief.

“Sounds breezy.”

Yes, it does, doesn’t it, now that you say it. Like the first moments of falling in love.

“Are you glad you and Charles split?”

Oh, never mind that. Like Rome, late days.

“What?”

Such pious shit they put me through, though. Made the spring into a perpetual winter of enforced virginity.

“What?”

I'll have another martini.

“Good! Me, too! So how'd it go today?”

They seem eager to move forward.

“They've been calling nonstop since you left.”

They want me to sex it up.

“Sounds good to me. What does that mean?”

They think I can show more bosom. Flirt more with the camera.

“No reason not to, I suppose.”

They think sexy will be my trademark. Martha is maternal. Nigella is sexy. That sort of thing.

“Well?”

2:30 am Pacific
W. 8th Street

“You ready for another?”

Yes, thanks.

“You’re not driving or nothing, are you?”

No. Don’t know how to drive. Never driven anything mechanical in my life.

“How come you speak Korean?”

This is Korean?

“Have you been in here before?”

No. Do you have soju?

“Yes. Lots of it. Want some? I feel like I’ve seen you somewhere before.”

You have.

“Oh! You’re that woman on TV! You’re the domestic goddess! Nigella, right?”

Very nice to meet you.

“Wooooowwww. What brings you here? We don’t get a lot of celebrities in here.”

I’m thinking of moving to the States.

“That’s amazing! From where?”

London.

“Wow. I’ve always wanted to go to London.”

I’m here to set up a new show. They want to call it ‘Nigella cooks America.’

“I wish I had your life.”

What do you think of that? 'Nigella cooks America.'

“Very cool.”

Thank you. I'm sort of ambivalent at the moment.

“I'm a righty.”

Is that the soju?

“Yes, would you like some?”

Please. Thank you. It's delicious.

“How long have you lived in London?”

Oh, too, too long. A dog's age by now. Yes, well, I should look forward to putting down new roots somewhere. I've always felt compelled to move on after a time. Ever since my first home. Gave up my room and struck out on my own. I've been on the move ever since.

“What did you parents say?”

I'm not very close to my parents.

“Ooooh. That's so sad.”

Sort of. I lived with my brothers and sisters. They weren't disappointed when I left. One of my brothers actually took my place in no time. They all said I was setting up to keep the flame somewhere else. But the truth is I had never felt very much at home. I was restless.

“I really wish I could go to London.”

Yes, never really fit in at home. Never felt I was enough of a self-promoter. Funny I should say that now, I suppose. And there was always so much drama. All the time. I couldn't handle the dealing, the drama, the cunning.

“And Dubai.”

Never stood up for myself enough. Never found my own voice. Tended to fade into the background. The Last Pushover. It took me a long time to fix that.

“Yeah, I really want to visit Dubai.”

What is in Dubai for you?

“And Berlin. I am desperate to go to Berlin.”

Oh, you’ll like Berlin. I knew a fellow in Berlin once. His name was Weyland. Huge muscles. Savage.

“Sounds amazing.”

Yes, it was, in a way. Workaholic, though. The Germans always felt they had something to prove when we met.

“That’s too bad.”

I suppose they were right, really.

“So you’re going to be like the new British Martha?”

Kiss both sides of my ass.

“I’m sorry, I don’t understand.”

I know for a fact that that peasant pours Cointreau on everything.

“You want Cointreau? We have Cointreau.”

Wouldn’t touch the stuff. Chief ingredient is hate.

“Now you’re making me laugh!”

More soju, bitch.

“Here’s another kind, from the southern city of Busan.”

That pirate whore wouldn’t know how to cook her way out of a men’s prison. Julia Child’s successor. Goat’s balls! I can tell you from first-hand experience that most of her food reeks of Cointreau and tastes like Turkish camel dung.

“Who are we talking about?”

I am most certainly not the British Martha. I wouldn’t cross the street to urinate on a British Martha if she were engulfed in flames.

“Oh.”

She has the decorating sense of Norman Rockwell's institutionalized wife. There's not an ounce of originality or actual creativity anywhere to be found in her entire being. Even the felony she committed was run-of-the-mill insider trading. Nothing new, nothing dramatic.

“Who is Norman Rockwell?”

Dead painter. More soju. Thank you. And her mannerisms! Her insufferable, quiet-mouthed, bourgeois cooing. Cooing about the salad. Cooing about the linens. Cooing about the nosegays. Who the hell wants to walk around sounding like a fucking mourning dove all the time?

“Do you want kalbi? We make good kalbi here.”

I will give it to her: she does know how to can. She came up through canning, you know. Big secret about Martha. Rose up via excellence in canning. She can can to beat the band. But what is that about? Does the world really want to know how to thrift?

“I want to know how to be more thrifty. Seems to be a big problem these days, spending too much money.”

You are not a real Korean. Your mother was a Vietnamese bank clerk.

“When you talk like that, I can't understand you. Are you sure you don't want to stop drinking?”

She met your father on a sightseeing tour of Pyongyang.

“I don't know what you're saying, but you make me laugh. How come your makeup doesn't get messed up when you're so sweaty?”

I am a REAL domestic goddess, whoresdaughter!

“I like canning.”

I am thinking about coming back to kill you later in life when you are at your most happy.