

fugue (Two Plays in One Act)

by

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This version of fugue is
intended to be performed
without intermission.

NOTES

The action of *Fugue* takes place in two locations: **The Park**, which is represented by a single park bench; and **The Apartment**, comprised of a couch, a desk and chair, a folding table and a mirror.

(The two sets may also be combined. In this case the park bench of *The Park* becomes the couch in *The Apartment*, with location indicated by lights.)

Where "MUSIC" is given in the text, the corresponding selection from Bach's *Art of the Fugue* is to be played. The theme alone will suffice, or the entire piece may underscore.

Contrapunctus I

MUSIC plays in the darkened theatre.

On the second repetition of the theme, lights come up slowly on The Apartment.

GRIGORY stands at the center of the room, listening to the music with closed eyes.

The third time we hear the theme, Ryder enters.

He wears a bathrobe and a pair of slippers. He carries a coffee mug. Carefully he unwinds a laptop power cord, connects a mouse, and so on-setting up his writing area ritualistically.

Meanwhile: as Grigory gets carried away by the music, he lets out an occasional exclamation.

(The movements of the two men are choreographed to play off one another: Grigory sighs as Ryder looks up; Grigory "conducts" Ryder for a moment, etc.)

As the fugue nears its conclusion and just as Ryder is settling in to write, A HAIRDRYER starts offstage. Grigory doesn't notice, but TRIGORIN storms in and shouts, with Ryder:

RYDER/TRIGORIN
TURN IT OFF!!

Grigory exits, turns the MUSIC OFF.

MARIE enters, with wet hair.

MARIE
I have to dry my hair.

RYDER
I have to write.

MARIE
Do you have to write, right now?

RYDER
Do you have to dry your hair right now?

MARIE
Yes!

RYDER
Why?

MARIE
Because. It's wet.

Marie exits.

A moment later, the HAIRDRYER starts again.

Ryder starts typing slowly.

Grigory returns.

TRIGORIN
Go and get your set Grigor. I have to make phone call.

GRIGORY
Right now?

TRIGORIN
Yes!

Grigory exits. Trigorin goes to phone and dials.

Ryder's CELL PHONE RINGS. He picks it up.

RYDER
Hello? Oh, hey Becca.

TRIGORIN
Hello! This is Trigorin Stepanovich Kalinksy, I am calling to see what time is appointment.

RYDER
Meeting? What meeting?

TRIGORIN
I make appointment last week.

RYDER
That's not until next week.

TRIGORIN
Next week? No. Is for today, I am certain.

RYDER
He's in town?

TRIGORIN
Because- I out of town next week.

RYDER

Tomorrow? No. No way. I can't do it.

TRIGORIN

Well, I coming today!

RYDER

It doesn't give me enough time, Becks! I have to completely rewrite the middle, I don't have an ending-

TRIGORIN

Yes, I coming today. What time?

RYDER

Of course he has other appointments.

TRIGORIN

Other patients! Do you know who you talking to?

RYDER

No, I don't. I'm just calling it *The Unnamed Man*.

TRIGORIN

You never heard of Trigorin Stepanovich Kalinsky?

RYDER

I know it's a bad title. The whole thing is bad. That's why I need another week-

TRIGORIN

You hear this?
(coughs intentionally)

RYDER

Yes, I hear everything you're saying, Becks, but-

TRIGORIN

You want to kill old man? Ah?

RYDER

I'm killing you? You're killing me!

TRIGORIN

Okay! Now we talking. What time?

RYDER

Yes, I do. I do want this deal.

TRIGORIN

Okay. I come this afternoon and wait.

RYDER

Okay. I'll do my best.

TRIGORIN

Thank you.

RYDER

Yeah. Thanks.

RYDER (cont'd)

(together)

See you then.

TRIGORIN

(together)

See you then.

They both hang up.

Grigory returns with an old wooden CHESS SET and begins to set the pieces up on a small table.

TRIGORIN (cont'd)

We start with Ruy Lopez. You need to learn Morphy line.

Ryder resumes typing.

Lights dim on The Apartment.

Ryder reads from the screen as he types.

RYDER

"We are in a city park."

Lights up slowly on The Park.

RYDER (cont'd)

"Early morning. Blue light. The birds are awake, but not the people. At least not many of them. A sparrow in a tree: his brown feathers against the bright oranges and yellows of autumn. A city worker in a green jumpsuit rakes a pile of dead brown leaves. An old woman comes upon a young boy on a park bench, a figure she recognizes but does not know. She speaks to him."

MARIE

For Channel Four News, this is Marie DiGiorgio. And remember: "Watch the news if you don't want to lose."

Lights out instantly on The Park.

Lights back up on The Apartment.

Marie stands next to Ryder.

MARIE (cont'd)

What do you think?

RYDER

What?

MARIE

For my sign off! I want a good sign off, you know. Like "Good night and good luck."

RYDER

Honey I'm in the middle of-

MARIE

For Channel Four News, this is Marie DiGiorgio. And remember: "If you want news, don't hit your snooze."

RYDER

I thought this was for the *evening* news?

MARIE

Yeah, it is.

RYDER

Then-

MARIE

Okay, how about "That's the news, according to Suze."

RYDER

According to who?

MARIE

Suze. I'd have to change my name for that one.

RYDER

Could you possibly leave me alone for a moment? I'm almost finished with this.

MARIE

Fine.

She exits.

Ryder takes a sip of his coffee, which is cold.

RYDER

Oh- honey? HONEY??

MARIE

(offstage)

WHAT!

RYDER

Could you bring me some more coffee?

Ryder returns to his laptop.

After careful study, Grigory moves a piece.

GRIGORY

Check.

TRIGORIN

You sure you want to do that?

GRIGORY

Don't want to lose so quickly, eh Papa?

Trigorin makes a move.

TRIGORIN

I not losing nothing. Knight fork... Check!

GRIGORY

Ha! I have an escape square.

Grigory makes a move.

TRIGORIN

Bishop pin-- Check!

Trigorin makes a move.

GRIGORY

Now I get your rook.

Grigory makes a move.

TRIGORIN

Discovered check!

Trigorin makes a move.

GRIGORY

... and mate.

He knocks his own king over.

TRIGORIN

It was good try.

GRIGORY

No it wasn't. My pawn structure is all over the place-

TRIGORIN

It was good game. You getting better.

GRIGORY

I never should have left my King out in the open-

TRIGORIN

Is okay. Is tricky line.

GRIGORY

Pawn-d6 was a mistake.

TRIGORIN

Ah?

GRIGORY

Pawn-d6 opened my left flank to attack. I should have-

Grigory starts to rearrange the pieces.

Trigorin stops him.

TRIGORIN

Grigor, my boy. Is not possible to *think* to victory.
You know who said that?

GRIGORY

Mikhail Tal.

TRIGORIN

Mikhail Tal!

GRIGORY

The greatest chess player in the world.

TRIGORIN

The greatest chess player in the world!

GRIGORY

For a year.

TRIGORIN

Ah?

GRIGORY

He was only world champion for a year, Papa.

TRIGORIN

Yes, but what a year! You know Tal was youngest chess player to win world championship? Younger than you!

GRIGORY

Mikhail Tal was highly inconsistent. Even Smyslov said-

TRIGORIN

Ah, Smyslov! He was ugly. Tal was *handsome*. And, he was not only world champion chess player-

GRIGORY

For a year-

TRIGORIN

-he was world champion, what you say- woman-killer?

GRIGORY

Ladykiller?

TRIGORIN

Yes! Ladykiller! He would look into crowd and *with his eyes* he would tell pretty girl his room number-

GRIGORY

I doubt that.

TRIGORIN

I would not believe it myself, but I saw it many times. Once, he seduce the beautiful wife of Irving Chernev *during* a game! Chernev force the draw, but when shaking hands he say "Mikhail? I believe you have my Queen."

GRIGORY

Yes, Papa, I know. So what's next? The Réti defense?

He begins to reset the board.

TRIGORIN

No, no. Let's go to park, ah? We will play there.

GRIGORY

Why not play here?

TRIGORIN

You need fresh air. You a growing boy!

GRIGORY

I'm twenty years old.

TRIGORIN

Yes! Still growing. You going to be big man, you see.

GRIGORY

Sorry Papa, but I'm pretty sure this is it.

TRIGORIN

Also: I have appointment.

GRIGORY

With the doctor?

TRIGORIN

Yes.

GRIGORY

That's not until next week.

TRIGORIN

(realizing his earlier mistake)

They call me, now they want me to come today. Doctors!

He makes a spitting gesture.

An awkward silence, as Trigorin readies himself and moves toward the door.

TRIGORIN (cont'd)

So, ah... you would like to come with me?

GRIGORY

No thanks.

TRIGORIN

What you going to do here? Play with yourself?

GRIGORY

Umm. You can't say it like that, Papa.

TRIGORIN

Like what?

GRIGORY

Nevermind. Yes, I'll play by myself. And- maybe practice the piano. Or listen to some music.

TRIGORIN

All you doing is listening to music! Sit in your room, listening and reading books, all day.

GRIGORY

I'm not bothering anyone.

TRIGORIN

Exactly! Twenty years old? You should be bothering everybody! But you only bothering me.

GRIGORY

Very funny.

TRIGORIN

Last weekend when I leave, I think maybe you will have party while I gone. But I come back, house is clean! No stains, no bottles! Only my is music all mixed up.

GRIGORY

I alphabetized it.

TRIGORIN

Grigor. You should be meeting girls.

GRIGORY

Yeah, well. It's not that easy.

TRIGORIN

Is not so hard, either.

A beat. Trigorin turns to leave.

TRIGORIN (cont'd)

Okay. I going alone to see doctor.

(spits)

My only son would rather spend time with Ba-rock music.

GRIGORY

Baroque music.

TRIGORIN

My only son does not want to see the outdoors! Does not want to come with his only father to see doctor.

(spits)

GRIGORY

Papa.

TRIGORIN

I live alone for many years, I go to doctor many times alone. Does not matter for me. Only so my son is happy.

GRIGORY

All right, *fine*. But if I go with you, can we stop by the music store on the way back?

TRIGORIN

You will practice Morphy line?

GRIGORY

Yes, Papa.

TRIGORIN

You will play with yourself in the park?

GRIGORY

Ahem. I'll drive.

Grigory starts to follow him out the door.

TRIGORIN

Ah-ah! Don't forget chess set.

Grigory returns for the chess set.

Marie enters. She searches around The Apartment.

MARIE

Have you seen my shoes?

RYDER

No.

MARIE

You haven't seen my black shoes? The ones I hate?

RYDER

I haven't seen them!

MARIE

They were just here.

RYDER

I didn't take them.

MARIE

I didn't say you did.

RYDER

Why don't you wear your other shoes?

MARIE

Which other shoes?

RYDER

The other black shoes.

MARIE

You mean my comfy black shoes?

RYDER

Yes.

She stops, looks at him.

MARIE

You really know nothing about women's fashion, do you.

RYDER

Just trying to help.

MARIE

You could try looking for my shoes!

RYDER

Honey, I don't think you understand. Becca called and-

Marie closes his laptop. Smiles cutely.

MARIE

Help me look for my shoes.

He gets up and begins to hunt around the room, following behind her.

MARIE

So Becca called...?

RYDER

And she wants to see a draft. Tomorrow!

MARIE

Let me guess: you don't have a draft.

RYDER

I'm very close, I just have to work out the ending.

MARIE

Can you possibly *not* look where I'm looking?

RYDER

Fine!

Ryder exits off stage. He returns a moment later, with her shoes and his cup of coffee.

RYDER

Here.

MARIE

Oh. Thank you.

She smiles cutely again, puts on the shoes.

He sits back down with his laptop, tries to focus.

MARIE (cont'd)

How do I look?

RYDER

Fine.

MARIE

You didn't look.

RYDER

I just saw you.

MARIE

You didn't see me with my shoes on!

Ryder looks at her, pointedly.

RYDER

You. Look. Fine.

MARIE

No, I don't. I look fabulous! Local political correspondent Marie DiGiorgio. I can't believe it.

RYDER

Hmm?

MARIE

Five years playing second fiddle to Paul Polanski, and I finally get to be on camera. It's really here.

A beat.

MARIE (cont'd)

I said, it's REALLY HERE.

RYDER

Hmm? Oh, yes. It is hard to believe.

MARIE

I just hope they give me a good story. I don't want to end up doing some crappy thing about duck migration. You know?

RYDER

Yeah.

MARIE

Some scientist at the University's been calling the station for weeks, telling us about this abnormal duck migration. But nobody wants to see a piece on duck migration. They want something with a human touch. Right?

RYDER

Sure.

MARIE

(testing him)

And I heard you can buy the entire island of Nova Scotia on eBay for like twelve dollars.

RYDER

Hmm. Good price.

MARIE

Honey!

RYDER

What?

MARIE

You're doing the spacey thing. I hate it when you do the spacey thing.

RYDER

Huh? Oh. Oh, shit. I'm sorry.

MARIE

Forget it.

RYDER

I know I'm being selfish, it's just I'm stressed about-

MARIE

(clearly it isn't)

I know. It's fine.

A beat, as she primps.

RYDER

And now you're doing the "it's fine" thing.

MARIE

What?

Ryder's temper flares violently.

RYDER

You do realize I'm sitting here working? I'm not just typing, I'm *working*. I'm trying to transport myself, trying to empathize with these fucking characters and understand what they're fucking feeling!

MARIE

I know.

RYDER

Okay, so. Duck migration is not exactly...

An awkward beat.

Marie crosses, picks up her briefcase to leave.

Ryder returns to working on his laptop.

Before she exits, Marie turns and says:

MARIE

You realize all my dreams are coming true, right?

And she is gone. Ryder shakes his head, takes a sip of his coffee. But it is cold again.

RYDER

Damn it!

He exits.

Lights dim on The Apartment.

Contrapunctus II

Music.

Lights up on The Park.

Old Woman wanders in from the audience. She wears a bright yellow rain slicker and has a stack of hot pink pamphlets, which she passes out.

OLD WOMAN

Try conscious evolution! It's the pause that refreshes.
The mind is a terrible thing to waste... join the
society for conscious evolution! Think different!
Conscious evolution!

She wanders into The Park and off stage.

The bench sits empty for a moment.

Contrapunctus III

Music.

Trigorin and Grigor enter The Park.

TRIGORIN

I am nineteen years old, remember. Younger than you!

GRIGORY

Yes, Papa. By exactly one year.

TRIGORIN

So! Here is scene. I am here, Nicolai here, Mikhail Tal in next room, he talking with someone from newspaper--

GRIGORY

The newspaper. English uses definite articles.

TRIGORIN

Yes, yes, was for some article, is not important. Now, young lady is just coming out of doorway-

GRIGORY

The doorway.

TRIGORIN

What you are, English teacher?

GRIGORY

Nevermind. Go ahead.

TRIGORIN

So. Young girl is behind THE doorway, so Nicolai cannot see her. And Nicolai is very drunk--you met Nicolai?

GRIGORY

The professor? Yes, Papa.

TRIGORIN

Yes, you remember! So. Nicolai lean toward me and say *kurite moju trubku*. You know what means?

GRIGORY

No.

TRIGORIN

Ach! Grigory my son, you should know THE language of THE fatherland. *Kurite moju trubku*, it means ah... "smoke my pipe." You see?

GRIGORY

No, Papa.

TRIGORIN

"Smoke my pipe." Ah... "kiss my penis with your mouth." You get it?

GRIGORY

Yes, yes, I get it. Ugh.

TRIGORIN

So Nicolai saying this, I waving my arms at him saying "Stop, stop! Red light! Red light!" but he think I am saying, "Yes, yes! She should kiss my penis too!"

GRIGORY

Uh-huh.

TRIGORIN

Now Mikhail Tal, from *other room* remember, sees already what is happening. His mind is like giant... ..mind. He see everything! He see this young lady, see she is very upset, he see me making this sign- immediately, he shout: "Fire! Fire in building! Everyone out!" Ah?

GRIGORY

But there wasn't a fire.

TRIGORIN

Ho ho! We all looking around, saying "What? What fire?" But Tal, he so convincing, you see, he is pushing us all out of door, reporter, young girl, everyone... finally we are outside hotel, all five of us-- no alarm, no fire truck, no smoke. No fire! And reporter? Very confused, he thinks we play a trick on him, but Mikhail is ab-so-lute gentleman. He take all blame on himself, he say there was pipe smoke from the other room, so on and so on, he caught glimpse of something in corner of his eye... So. Back to room. Everyone talking about fire. Everyone *completely forget* dirty talk in hallway, until the next morning! When Mikhail Tal say to Nicolai: "What girl would kiss *your* penis?"
(a hearty laugh, which ends in a short coughing spell)

GRIGORY

That's a funny story. Gross, but funny. Are you okay?

TRIGORIN

Fine, fine. But not finished. That week, Moscow paper write Mikhail Tal is taking drugs! They say he suffering hallucinations. But when he show up at tournament? Twelve move checkmate. No hallucination!

GRIGORY

What happened to the girl?

TRIGORIN

Ah?

GRIGORY

The girl in the doorway. What happened to her?

TRIGORIN

Ah, who can say? I go back to Kiev to marry your mother. I did not see Mikhail for another year.

GRIGORY

When he lost to Botvinnik.

TRIGORIN

Yes.

GRIGORY

And lost the world championship.

TRIGORIN

Yes, yes. Set up board. I show you how Mikhail use Bishop to control middle squares.

They sit. Grigory begins to set up the pieces.

Eventually Marie enters, carrying a microphone.

Her hair is an immovable object and her makeup is plastered on thickly; she's ready for broadcast.

She speaks to the microphone and listens on an earpiece, pressing her finger to her ear.

MARIE

Here? Here? Back? This way? Your right or my right? Paul? Hello? Paul? Did I lose you?

She exits again.

TRIGORIN

Ah, pretty girl!

GRIGORY

Yeah.

TRIGORIN

She look familiar.

GRIGORY

I don't remember her.

TRIGORIN

So! This position. Is white to move. Who stronger?

GRIGORY

Well, black has a decent pawn structure, but white has control of the center... white has one weak bishop versus black's two bishops, but the white Queen is better placed, and white can castle sooner than black-

TRIGORIN

Too much thinking! Who is stronger? Look at board!

Just then Marie returns, and Grigory is distracted. He is clearly smitten with her.

GRIGORY

Uh- I think-

MARIE

Okay, here? Yeah, I can hear you. Can you hear me? Testing, testing one two one two. This is good? What?

She turns to Trigorin and Grigory, at last.

MARIE (cont'd)

Oh! I'm sorry, I didn't see you there.

TRIGORIN

Is okay. You very pretty!

MARIE

Thanks. It's the makeup.

TRIGORIN

You are TV reporter?

MARIE

Yes. Well, I'm about to be. It's my first day.

TRIGORIN

Ah! Congratulations. You going to do great.

MARIE

Thanks, that's very kind of you to say.

TRIGORIN

You very smart, I can tell. Very smart, very pretty!

MARIE

Well, thanks. Is there any way I could talk you into-

TRIGORIN

This my son Grigory. He is great chess player. Also very smart. Very smart, and very handsome! No?

MARIE

Yes, well-

GRIGORY

Do you need us to leave?

MARIE

Well we were hoping to get a shot with the ducks-

GRIGORY

Sure, no problem. Come on, Papa.

TRIGORIN

I am Trigorin Stepanovitch Kalinsky. I learn to play chess from Mikhail Tal, the greatest chess player-

Marie presses her finger to her ear.

MARIE

What's that?

TRIGORIN

MIKHAIL TAL IS GREATEST CHESS PLAYER-

MARIE

Paul? What?

GRIGORY

Papa, come on.

MARIE

Lunch? All right. Sure. Uh- excuse me. We're taking lunch, apparently. So you don't need to move just yet.

TRIGORIN

Aha! Very good. Where shall we go?

MARIE

I'm sorry?

TRIGORIN

For lunch! You invite us for lunch, no?

MARIE

Oh. I think you misunderstood-

TRIGORIN

Okay, we invite you for lunch.

GRIGORY

PAPA!

MARIE

Thanks. I'm gonna eat in the van. But thank you.

TRIGORIN

Okay.

She exits. A beat. Grigory glares at him.

TRIGORIN (cont'd)

What. I invite her for lunch. What is big deal?

GRIGORY

You're twice her age!

TRIGORIN

I don't invite her for me, I invite her for you.

GRIGORY

For me!

TRIGORIN

Yes. What is problem? You no like blonde?

GRIGORY

It has nothing to do with her hair color!

TRIGORIN

I am friendly, I am talking. You just sitting and staring like this.

GRIGORY

You weren't *talking* to her, you were-

TRIGORIN

What.

GRIGORY

Nothing. Forget it. So who's stronger?

TRIGORIN

Grigory, what? I only talking.

GRIGORY

Forget it, all right? Who's stronger?

TRIGORIN

Black.

GRIGORY

Why?

TRIGORIN

Because! Is White's turn. White have superior position, but forced to create weakness. She is nervous, Grigor. I make her feel better. What is wrong with that?

GRIGORY

I don't want to talk about it.

TRIGORIN

You got nothing to learn? Got whole world figured out?

GRIGORY

I don't. Want to talk about it.

TRIGORIN

Even *Kasparov* don't know everything, Grigor!

He stands.

GRIGORY

Where are you going?

TRIGORIN

I have appointment! You stay here, I be back soon.

GRIGORY

You want me to come with you?

TRIGORIN

NO. You stay here, practice Réti defense! You no good at Réti defense, is best for quiet player like you.

GRIGORY

Papa, let me come with you.

TRIGORIN

I have been to many doctors, Grigor. You must practice! Practice or you never get any better. You understand?!

A tense beat.

GRIGORY

Yes, Papa.

Trigorin exits.

Contrapunctus IV

Music.

Grigory plays chess for a few moments.

Presently the Old Woman enters.

OLD WOMAN
Oh!

GRIGORY
Hi.

OLD WOMAN
Am I dreaming?

GRIGORY
What?

OLD WOMAN
Is it- what's your name?

GRIGORY
Do I know you?

OLD WOMAN
You look- very familiar.

GRIGORY
Sorry, I don't think I know you.

OLD WOMAN
And you play chess!

GRIGORY
Yeah.

OLD WOMAN
Is that the Réti defense?

GRIGORY
Umm. Yeah, it is.

OLD WOMAN
Knight to D6.

GRIGORY
Sorry?

OLD WOMAN
Knight to d6 forces pawn to e5, followed by e6, Bishop
to c3, pawn exchange-- then knight to c3 threatens b2.

GRIGORY
Oh. Yeah.

OLD WOMAN
I used to play.

GRIGORY

(moving the pieces, slowly)

Uh-huh.

OLD WOMAN

It's the simplest game, yet it's so complex.

GRIGORY

Right.

OLD WOMAN

Like love.

GRIGORY

I guess. I've never been in love.

OLD WOMAN

You will be. Would you like a pamphlet?

GRIGORY

Umm. Sure.

She hands him one. Then lingers, staring.

GRIGORY (cont'd)

Sorry. What's your name again?

OLD WOMAN

I am the voice crying alone in the wilderness.

GRIGORY

Oh.

OLD WOMAN

Good luck.

She exits.

Contrapunctus V

Music.

Grigory moves the pieces through the pattern again. This time he devises a little tune.

GRIGORY

D, E... E, C, C, B...

He produces a pen, writes on the pamphlet.

Marie re-enters, carrying her briefcase.

MARIE

Hey. So I was sitting in the van having lunch-

GRIGORY

He left.

MARIE

Okay.

GRIGORY

He had an appointment. So he had to go.

MARIE

Well... do you mind if I have lunch with you then?

GRIGORY

Really?

MARIE

Uh. Yeah, really.

GRIGORY

Yeah. Okay.

She sits. Takes a sandwich out of her briefcase.

MARIE

Sorry. Are you eating?

GRIGORY

I don't have a lunch. I'm not hungry. I ate.

MARIE

You look really familiar.

GRIGORY

I guess we all look familiar to someone.

She laughs. He laughs, too. A moment.

MARIE

Oh! You were at the chess tournament.

GRIGORY

No.

MARIE

Yeah you were! I talked with you and your father for the pre-air interviews. I knew I recognized you two.

GRIGORY

That wasn't me.

MARIE

You're sitting in front of a chess set.

GRIGORY

Am I?

She laughs again. He relaxes a little.

GRIGORY (cont'd)

Yeah. My Dad used to play chess with Mikhail Tal.

(realizing she doesn't know Tal)

Mikhail Tal was a Russian grandmaster. For a year.

MARIE

Right, I remember now. And- your Dad donated one of the champion's old chess sets to the tournament.

Grigory points to the chess set.

MARIE (cont'd)

You won!

GRIGORY

Yeah.

MARIE

Your father must be very proud.

GRIGORY

I guess. But I didn't even place at state.

MARIE

Oh. Well, there's always next time.

He puts the chess pieces away. A beat.

GRIGORY

You shouldn't be nervous.

MARIE

I'm sorry?

GRIGORY

You seem nervous. About going on the air.

MARIE

It's my first time on camera.

GRIGORY

Don't be nervous. You'll do great. You were great when you interviewed me. And- what Papa said, it's true. You're very pretty.

MARIE

That's very kind of you to say.

GRIGORY

And I'm not saying it just because you have the make-up on and everything. I thought you were really pretty that day we met.

MARIE

Well. I'm blushing!

GRIGORY

I can't tell. Because of the make-up.

MARIE

Trust me, I'm blushing.

She gestures at the pamphlet in his hand.

MARIE (cont'd)

She got you too, huh?

GRIGORY

Who.

MARIE

That crazy old lady? She got the whole crew.

Marie shows him a pamphlet.

GRIGORY

Yeah.

MARIE

What's that written on yours?

GRIGORY

This? Nothing.

MARIE

Is that music?

GRIGORY

No.

MARIE

Yes it is, it's music!

GRIGORY

It's just counterpoint. Set up a pattern, invert it.
It's practice, like studying mating patterns in chess.

MARIE

How long have you been writing music?

GRIGORY

Oh, you have to study for years to write music. I just mess around. I don't really know what I'm doing.

MARIE

You think Hendrix knew what he was doing?

GRIGORY

Hendrix? I'm not familiar- is he- eighteenth century?

MARIE

60s.

GRIGORY

Oh, so Vienna, or-?

MARIE

1960s. United States.

GRIGORY

Oh!

MARIE

You've never heard of Jimi Hendrix.

GRIGORY

No, I've definitely heard of him. I just can't remember who he played with. Was it the- Doors?

MARIE

He played with himself. By himself. He played by himself. He was left-handed? Played a right-handed guitar? Seriously? You don't know Jimi Hendrix?

GRIGORY

I *know* of him, but I'm not familiar with his work.

MARIE

You should check him out. He was a bad-ass.

GRIGORY

I will. I'll check him out.

He writes the name down on his pamphlet.

MARIE

How old are you?

GRIGORY

I'm twenty. Five. How old are you?

MARIE

Twenty-nine. No. I'm thirty-two. I don't know why I said twenty-nine. You're not supposed to ask a woman her age, you know.

GRIGORY

Right. Sorry.

MARIE

I'm Marie. Marie DiGiorgio.

GRIGORY

I remember. I'm Grigory.

They shake hands. Another moment.

MARIE

Grigory, I hope this doesn't sound- what?

She presses her finger to her ear.

MARIE (cont'd)

Really? Where? All right. All right, yes. I'm coming!

She packs up her lunch hurriedly.

Turns to Grigory.

MARIE (cont'd)

Hey. It was great to see you again.

GRIGORY

You, too.

MARIE

I have to go. I'm sorry.

GRIGORY

That's okay. I'll see you on TV.

MARIE

Yeah. What, Paul? Okay, yeah. I'm coming right now.

She exits, leaving her briefcase behind.

Grigory starts to work on the song again.

GRIGORY

(singing)

D E... E C... Ma-rie, Ma-rie...

He continues to write.

Notices her briefcase.

GRIGORY (cont'd)

Hey. Hey, you forgot your briefcase!

He picks it up and runs after her.

Leaving the chess set.

Lights dim on The Park.

Contrapunctus VI

Music.

Lights up on The Apartment.

Ryder reads aloud from the screen.

RYDER

"The chess set sits abandoned on the park bench. An old woman enters."

Old Woman enters. She reacts to her description.

RYDER (cont'd)

"She is ancient: wracked and ruined with age, her skin loose and sallow-"

OLD WOMAN

Hey!

RYDER

No, no.

(deleting, retyping)

"An old woman enters, who was a beauty in her youth."

OLD WOMAN

Uhhh....

RYDER

No, hang on-

(retyping)

"She was a *stunning* beauty in her youth, and time has only deepened the vibrant color of her charming eyes."

OLD WOMAN

Such a nice young man!

RYDER

"She is passing out religious pamphlets. She calls-

OLD WOMAN

Conscious evolution! The choice of a new generation.

RYDER

"She notices the chess set. Her hand clasps her heart.
She approaches the park bench..."

Old Woman does none of these things.

Instead, she approaches Ryder.

OLD WOMAN

Am I dreaming?

RYDER

Why?

OLD WOMAN

You look very familiar.

RYDER

I don't know you.

OLD WOMAN

But I know you.

RYDER

Then I don't remember you.

OLD WOMAN

I am the voice crying alone in the wilderness.

RYDER

I don't understand.

Old Woman crosses from The Park to The Apartment.

Lights change.

Contrapunctus VII

Music.

Ryder and Old Woman inspect each other.

(While Ryder is confined to The Apartment, Old Woman moves freely around the entire stage. She addresses both Ryder and the audience.

She can even drink Ryder's coffee.)

RYDER

Who are you?

OLD WOMAN

I'm your character.

RYDER

The Old Woman?

OLD WOMAN

Yes. And by the way I don't like being called that. I would prefer "older woman."

RYDER

Oh.

OLD WOMAN

I'm only sixty-three.

RYDER

Sorry.

OLD WOMAN

And what's with these pamphlets? And this outfit?

RYDER

Well, you're a symbol of organized religion-

OLD WOMAN

Oh, no.

RYDER

Yes. See, the point I'm making is-

OLD WOMAN

If I'm a symbol of organized religion, don't you think the pamphlets and the ad slogans are a little much?

RYDER

Maybe.

OLD WOMAN

You're hitting us over the head with it!

RYDER

Yeah, you're right. I should tone that down.

OLD WOMAN

I would. You don't want to embarrass yourself.

RYDER

No.

OLD WOMAN

Also: it's a little confusing.

RYDER

What is?

OLD WOMAN

The whole thing! The different worlds, the sense of time, what's real and what's not. It's not very clear.

RYDER

Yeah, you're right.

OLD WOMAN

I mean, what's it supposed to be about?

RYDER

I'm- not sure.

OLD WOMAN

You're not sure!

RYDER

No, I mean it's- about death.

OLD WOMAN

Overused.

RYDER

And transcendence. Personal, you know- transcendence.

OLD WOMAN

Transcendence of what?

RYDER

Transcendence of, you know- of yourself, and of- death? Oh, God. It's horrible, isn't it?

OLD WOMAN

Okay forget the theme. What happens? What's the plot?

RYDER

Well there's this writer, and he's working on a script-

OLD WOMAN

Ugh! Don't tell me this is one of those self-indulgent scripts about a writer trying to finish a script?

RYDER

No, no. This writer falls asleep on a park bench, and- when he wakes up, he has no idea who he is.

OLD WOMAN

Great, there's one we haven't heard: amnesia!

RYDER

No, not amnesia. He enters a fugue state. It's like amnesia, but you don't know you have it. Instead of forgetting who you are, you invent a whole new identity. So- he wakes up and he ends up- inside his own story, sort of- he finds this briefcase and he takes on this identity based on what's inside-

OLD WOMAN

And then?

RYDER

Well, there are these chess players. And- one of them is sick. And there's this Old Woman wandering around, sort of handing out answers. And then in the end, uh- you know, it all comes together, and everything- uh-

A beat.

OLD MAN

You have no idea.

RYDER

Oh my God. What is it about? What the fuck is it about? It's horrible, isn't it? The whole thing is useless!

OLD WOMAN

Not the whole thing. Just the characters, the theme, the plot... and a lot of the dialogue is not very good.

RYDER

Oh, God, oh, god!

OLD WOMAN

Now don't freak out on me.

RYDER

I can't do this. I thought I could do this, but I can't! I can't do anything! I am a total failure.

OLD WOMAN

Relax, you're not a failure. Just go back to the fundamentals. Why did you choose these characters?

RYDER

I don't know.

OLD WOMAN

Okay. *How* did you choose them?

RYDER

I don't remember anymore. They started talking, and-

OLD WOMAN

And?

RYDER

And I listened!

A beat.

OLD WOMAN

That sounds very hippy dippy.

RYDER

This from the woman talking about conscious evolution!

OLD WOMAN

Fair point.

RYDER

This has never happened to me before.

OLD WOMAN

I've heard that line, before.

RYDER

I'm the reliable writer. I'm not great, but I turn in manuscripts on time. And Becca respects me for that. But this one- this one is different.

OLD WOMAN

Finally realizing you can't keep writing the way you live your life? Wrapped in a blanket of self-denial?

RYDER

That's not how I live my life.

OLD WOMAN

Then finish it.

RYDER

I can't!

OLD WOMAN

Why? What are you trying to prove with it?

RYDER

I'm not trying to prove anything, I'm just saying-

OLD WOMAN

Then why can't you let it go?

RYDER

Because... Becca needs a draft by tomorrow-

OLD WOMAN

Tell her you can't make it. It's that simple.

RYDER

No, I can't- look, you're the one that made me start doubting it, all I was working on was the ending-

OLD WOMAN

Am I making you doubt it? Or is it your own lack of confidence? Maybe something to do with your father?

RYDER

Don't psychoanalyze me. This isn't about that. This is just a beautiful, simple meditation on life and death-

OLD WOMAN

Since when is life beautiful and simple?

RYDER

I'm not saying it is, I'm saying-

OLD WOMAN

Since when is madness as cute and harmless as going through somebody's briefcase? Or handing out pamphlets?

RYDER

First, it's not madness, it's a fugue-

OLD WOMAN

How many fugues have you been in?

RYDER

None. It's just a device-

OLD WOMAN

A device! You think I'm fucking around here?

RYDER

No! I'm not fucking around, either.

OLD WOMAN

The problem with your generation of writers is they don't know how to die on the cross. You want to write madness, but you haven't gone mad! You haven't let yourself go mad! How can you imagine madness when you keep yourself protected? When you try to keep your writing separate from the world, and the world separate from your writing! You have to die to be reborn.

RYDER

You know that's all very Romantic and ideal but trust me, at the end of the day writing is work.

OLD WOMAN

You know what a writer used to be? A writer used to be a prophet. The voice crying alone in the wilderness! The voice speaking Truth to Power!

RYDER

Now you're just stealing my lines.

The Old Woman begins to make sexual noises.

She begins as the man: low moans of pleasure.

RYDER

What are you doing?

The Old Woman adds some more feminine sounds, as the masculine grunts get more and more urgent.

The tones become more and more complex as the "couple" approaches climax...

A beat.

RYDER

Okayyyy...

OLD WOMAN

Language and sex are inseparable. "Touch me there, yes... now go faster but not so hard..." You see? Language springs from the creative force. Like DNA.

RYDER

Wait a minute. I didn't write this.

OLD WOMAN

The notes that rise and fall, the pauses for breath, they are the rhythm of two lovers intertwined. Language is form applied to chaos, just like music. Language is evolutionary, just like DNA. When we speak we are learning and creating and becoming. When we speak we are creating life. In the beginning there was nothing, and then there was the word.

RYDER

None of this is in my book.

OLD WOMAN

It isn't in your book, but it's in you. This is the secret you're hiding on the page in plain sight.

RYDER

It's not as if I don't value the word or value language. But in this day and age, you can't labor in solitude for years while you work on your magnum opus! You have to be constantly churning out new content. You have to blog, you have to Facebook, and tweet, and-

OLD WOMAN

If you want to be a real artist you have to die alone, the victim of your own genius. Ask anyone!

RYDER

No! That's an antiquated notion left over from the eighteenth century, and I refuse to accept-

OLD WOMAN

Then why do you keep your wife at arm's length?

RYDER

What? This has nothing to do with-

OLD WOMAN

It has everything to do with it. You think your personal life has to be a wreck in order to be taken seriously.

RYDER

No I don't! That's what you were saying. I was saying-

Ryder's cell phone RINGS.

Old Woman disappears.

Ryder answers his cell phone.

RYDER

Hello?

Lights up on The Park.

Marie stands there, on her phone.

MARIE

Thank God you're home!

RYDER

Of course I'm home.

MARIE

I need my briefcase.

RYDER

What?

MARIE

My briefcase! It has all my notes on this fucking duck story, can you bring it down to The Park for me?

RYDER

No.

MARIE

What? Why not?

RYDER

Because I'm working. I told you, I don't have time-

MARIE

Take a break! Take an hour break, bring me my case-

RYDER

Honey, I'm up against a deadline right now-

MARIE

You know, dear, if you were in the same situation-

RYDER

I don't want to get into this with you right now. Okay? Come back and get it yourself.

MARIE

If I don't have my briefcase-

RYDER

I'm sorry. I have to go. I have to get back to work.

He hangs up on her.

Lights down on The Park.

Old Woman reappears.

OLD WOMAN

That was cruel.

RYDER

She knew what she was getting into when she married me. She knows how I am when I write.

OLD WOMAN

Misery is not the only prerequisite for genius, Ryder.

RYDER

Fine. Perhaps I keep Marie at a certain distance-

OLD WOMAN

Perhaps!

RYDER

But she'll understand. When the story is finished, she'll understand.

OLD WOMAN

And what if she doesn't?

RYDER

Then she'll forgive me.

Ryder's CELL PHONE RINGS again.

Ryder sends it to voicemail.

OLD WOMAN

Not going to get that?

RYDER

No. I need to finish this! I need a good ending!

OLD WOMAN

Not everything ends nicely.

RYDER

You want to know the truth? If I don't finish this, I don't have anything. Okay? I don't have friends, I don't have family- I've pushed everyone, and everything in my life away to make space- for *this*. So if I don't write, I don't have anything. Is that what you want to hear? That I'm a miserable failure at everything, except this? Now can we finish this script? Hello?

Under the previous, Ryder has followed the Old Woman into The Park and she has disappeared.

RYDER (cont'd)

Hello? Hello!

Lights down on The Apartment.

Contrapunctus VIII

Music.

Ryder notices the chess set.

RYDER

Am I... dreaming?

Trigorin enters.

TRIGORIN

Okay, Grigor! Let's go home.

RYDER

Are you talking to me?

TRIGORIN

Who are you!

RYDER

I don't know. Do I know you?

TRIGORIN

You look familiar.

RYDER

Are you sure?

TRIGORIN

Of course I am sure! You are friends with Grigory?

RYDER

Your son?

TRIGORIN

Yes.

RYDER

Umm- yes. Yes, I am.

TRIGORIN

You lying. He not have friends.

RYDER

I'm not lying.

TRIGORIN

Where you meet him?

RYDER

I- can't remember.

TRIGORIN

Okay. So you lying, or crazy. GRIGOR!

He starts off.

RYDER

Wait. What did the doctors say?

TRIGORIN

Ah?

RYDER

The doctors. What did they say?

TRIGORIN

Ach! Doctors.

(spits)

You play?

RYDER

Not very well.

TRIGORIN

Set up pieces, I teach you.

Trigorin sits across the board from Ryder.

Ryder sets the pieces.

Silence as they select sides: Ryder presents two closed fists to Trigorin. Trigorin chooses one.

Ryder opens his palm revealing a white pawn.

Trigorin makes the first move.

TRIGORIN

They want me to come back tomorrow. More tests.

RYDER

What kind of tests?

Ryder makes the next move.

TRIGORIN

Ah! Knight's game. This going to be interesting.

He makes another move.

RYDER

Why do they want you to come back?

TRIGORIN

Ah?

RYDER

What are they testing for?

TRIGORIN

I have cancer.

He moves.

TRIGORIN (cont'd)

You see how I draw your pawns out? What.

RYDER

You know for sure?

TRIGORIN

Ach! They can't say nothing for sure. Have to call tonight for the results, but I already know results. Doctors!

(spits)

You control center, but I have strong attack King-side. You will see. Well? You going to move?

RYDER

What kind is it?

Ryder moves.

TRIGORIN

In my lungs.

Trigorin moves, produces a pack of cigarettes.

RYDER

And you're having a cigarette?

TRIGORIN

I smoke, crazy-man. For twenty years, I smoke.

RYDER

But you have lung cancer!

TRIGORIN

Yes! Is what happens.

He lights a cigarette.

TRIGORIN (cont'd)

Anyway, not going to get MORE cancer.

Ryder makes a move.

TRIGORIN (cont'd)

Ah-ah!

Trigorin taps a piece.

Ryder makes a different move.

TRIGORIN (cont'd)

Hmm.

RYDER

So- if it is cancer- what happens next?

TRIGORIN

Start treatment, they say. I will lose hair, get sick.
If it work, maybe I live few more years. Otherwise...
not so long. Is interesting move!

RYDER

I'm sorry.

TRIGORIN

No, is good. You may get pawn, but e7 going to be-

RYDER

I mean about the cancer. I'm sorry about the cancer.

TRIGORIN

Why? I have cancer. Okay. I dying. So? What you think
was going to happen? You think you never going to die?
No! You get to the end, you die. Is how things go.
Check!

He makes a move.

TRIGORIN (cont'd)

I have no regrets.

RYDER

Good. Check.

He makes a move.

TRIGORIN

"Only way can learn big game is make big mistakes."
Know who said this?

RYDER

Mikhail Tal.

TRIGORIN

You know Mikhail Tal?

RYDER

Greatest chess player in the world.

TRIGORIN

Yes. For a year. Check.

RYDER

You sure you want to do that?

TRIGORIN

Yes.

Ryder makes a move.

RYDER

Check.

TRIGORIN

Knight fork. Check.

RYDER

Ha! I have an escape square.

TRIGORIN

Bishop pin. Check.

RYDER

But I got your rook.

TRIGORIN

Discovered check... and mate!

He knocks Ryder's king over.

TRIGORIN

You not a chess player.

RYDER

No, I'm not.

TRIGORIN

Who are you?

RYDER

I don't know. I don't remember.

TRIGORIN

You not a friend of my son?

RYDER

No. No, I came here to do something-

Trigorin starts to pack up the set.

TRIGORIN

Ah yes. Crazy people always very busy.

RYDER

I'm not crazy!

TRIGORIN

Ha! You not crazy? I not Russian.

RYDER

There was a woman- handing out- something. Or she was looking for something...

TRIGORIN

Yes, crazy-man. We all looking for something. I looking for my son.

RYDER

I'm sure he's looking for you.

Trigorin has packed the set up.

TRIGORIN

No. He is young. He looking for himself. Goodbye.

Trigorin moves offstage, with the chess set.

Ryder sits heavily.

Contrapunctus IX

Music.

OLD WOMAN

(off stage)

C-c-c-catch the wave! Conscious evolution!

Ryder looks up.

RYDER

That voice!

He runs off stage, in search of her.

A moment later Grigory enters.

He carries Marie's briefcase.

GRIGORY

Oh. Shit.

He searches around the bench.

GRIGORY (cont'd)

Shit! Was this it? Or was it--

He runs off the other direction.

Contrapunctus X

Music.

Old Woman enters.

OLD WOMAN

This is your brain. This is your brain on conscious evolution. Any questions?

She looks around hopefully.

No one in sight.

She sits on the bench.

Grigory returns.

OLD WOMAN

It's you again!

GRIGORY

Uh- hi. Did you- happen to see a chess set here?

OLD WOMAN

You lost your chess set?

GRIGORY

God, I hope not. Papa would kill me.

OLD WOMAN

Your father.

GRIGORY

Yeah, he gave it to me.

OLD WOMAN

How much do you know about DNA?

GRIGORY

Umm. I know it's the building blocks of life?

OLD WOMAN

That's right, the building blocks of life.

GRIGORY

Yep. The building blocks of life.

OLD WOMAN

DNA stands for deoxyribonucleic acid. It's a sequence of chemical bases paired with their opposite bases. Each chemical base is represented by a letter, and only certain bases bind with others. So A only binds with T, and C only binds with G. Do you want a pamphlet? It's easier with a pamphlet.

GRIGORY

I already have one. Did you see a TV crew around here-

OLD WOMAN

DNA is the only difference between you, me, and this park bench. It's the only difference between the earthworm and the earth. Between a tree and a rock. The whole world is divided into just two categories: things with DNA, things without DNA. And everything without DNA is fuel for everything with it.

GRIGORY

That's one way to look at it, I guess.

OLD WOMAN

That's the only way to look at it! When you stop to look at a plant, or a tree, or a wild animal-- you are a beautiful, complex strand of DNA that's looking at itself. You're DNA looking in the mirror.

GRIGORY

Uh-huh.

OLD WOMAN

And when- two people see each other, and speak to each other, the words they exchange are another kind of DNA. Language determines evolutionary success just as much as strong legs and good eyes-- the better we are at using language, the more we can manipulate others, misrepresent our intentions, lie and cheat--

GRIGORY

That's the, uh: "Society for Conscious Evolution?"

OLD WOMAN

We're having a free class tonight. Will you come?

GRIGORY

Umm- probably not. I have a busy evening planned-

OLD WOMAN

Of course. You're a young musician.

GRIGORY

I'm not a musician.

OLD WOMAN

Careful, young man. We are exactly what we say we are.

GRIGORY

Okay.

OLD WOMAN

I hope you find what you're looking for.

GRIGORY

Thanks.

The Old Woman exits.

Grigory sits on the bench.

He pulls out the pamphlet, starts writing.

GRIGORY (cont'd)

D, E... E, C... C, G... C, E... A, G... Ma-rie, Ma-rie,
What you mean to me...

Contrapunctus XI

Music.

Trigorin enters.

TRIGORIN

You! Stupid, stupid boy!

GRIGORY

What? What's wrong, Papa?

TRIGORIN

You leave chess set!

GRIGORY

I know, Papa. I'm sorry.

TRIGORIN

You know who give me that set!?

GRIGORY

Yes, Papa. I'm sorry.

TRIGORIN

Sorry! You always sorry!

GRIGORY

Are you crying, Papa?

TRIGORIN

Yes, I crying! Crying for my son! My son who knows nothing! My son who is afraid of the world, afraid of making mistake, my son who is afraid, afraid, afraid!

GRIGORY

Papa, I-

TRIGORIN

I try to give you best life, Grigor. I try to teach you everything. But you not happy. I don't know why. Maybe you not happy with what I teach you, or maybe you not happy because I not know everything you want to know.

GRIGORY

It's not that.

TRIGORIN

Then what is? Tell me now! Why you sad all the time? Why you no like to play chess together anymore? Because you afraid of losing to your father?

GRIGORY

No. I'm afraid of beating you.

TRIGORIN

Ah?

GRIGORY

I used to think you were superhuman, Papa. There was nothing you couldn't do. But now I see- there's lots of things you can't do.

TRIGORIN

Like what!

GRIGORY

Have a relationship, for one.

TRIGORIN

Bah. Your mother is difficult woman!

GRIGORY

You're a difficult man. And- you've spent your whole life living in the past, remembering the glory days when you were on top of the world. I used to be so afraid that I would never have glory days like that.

TRIGORIN

Yes, they were glorious days, Grigor!

GRIGORY

But now I see that you were just using those memories to hold yourself back. To keep yourself safe.

TRIGORIN

That's not true.

GRIGORY

Yes, it is. All my childhood, you talked about the past so much you never paid attention to the present.

TRIGORIN

You mean I never pay attention to you!

GRIGORY

Yes. Because after me, the glory days were over.

TRIGORIN

What you saying, exactly?

GRIGORY

I'm saying... I'm not a chess player! I never have been, but I've been too afraid to tell you because I'm terrified of what you'll think of me.

TRIGORIN

Are you more afraid of losing to me or beating me?

RYDER

Both.

TRIGORIN

I am only man, Grigor! I love two things in my life: chess, and you. You no like chess? Okay. I understand. But you are selfish boy. Selfish, scared, *little* boy. If I am difficult man, okay. At least I a man. You not. Maybe never will be. I go to get car.

GRIGORY

Papa-

TRIGORIN

Enough! I am getting car.

Trigorin exits slowly.

Grigory tears his pamphlet into several pieces, lets them fall beneath the bench.

OLD WOMAN

(offstage)

A mind is a terrible thing to waste! Try conscious evolution!

Contrapunctus XII

Music.

Ryder enters.

He pauses in front of the bench.

RYDER

Hey. Are you okay?

GRIGORY

Do I know you?

RYDER

No. But I know you. You're Grigory.

GRIGORY

How did you know my name?

RYDER

I... am not sure. How did I get here?

GRIGORY

I don't know, you just came in.

RYDER

Yes, but- what am I doing here?

GRIGORY

I don't know, guy. But I'm kind of having a moment.

RYDER

This is so familiar to me. A young chess player-

GRIGORY

I'm not a chess player.

RYDER

No, you're not. You're a musician.

GRIGORY

Yeah.

RYDER

And I'm a writer.

GRIGORY

Okay.

RYDER

And that's my briefcase.

GRIGORY

No, it isn't.

RYDER

No it isn't, it's my wife's. That's what I meant.

GRIGORY

Your wife?

RYDER

Yes. My wife, Marie. Have you seen her?

GRIGORY

Marie DiGiorgio?

RYDER

Yes, exactly!

GRIGORY

I've been looking all over for her.

RYDER

Yeah- I guess I have, too. Haven't I? I was looking for someone. I can't... the voice of one crying alone...?

Grigory picks up the briefcase, examines it.

GRIGORY

What's it say?

RYDER

Huh?

GRIGORY

If this is your wife's briefcase, what's it say?

RYDER

It says "What you mean to me." I had it engraved for her birthday two years ago.

GRIGORY

Sorry. She didn't tell me she was married.

He hands the briefcase to Ryder.

Trigorin returns.

TRIGORIN

Okay, let's go. Car is waiting. Ah! You again?

RYDER

Me?

TRIGORIN

Yes, crazy man. We play chess, you remember?

RYDER

No.

TRIGORIN

Right. Too much crazy for remembering. Come, Grigor.

GRIGORY

Yes, Papa. Let me pack up the set.

TRIGORIN

No. Leave it.

GRIGORY

Ah?

TRIGORIN

Leave it. Leave for crazy man to play with himself.

GRIGORY

Um. Are you sure?

TRIGORIN

Yes. Is old. And music store closing!

GRIGORY

Okay.

(to Ryder)

Will you say-- "thanks" to your wife, for me?

RYDER

Yes.

Trigorin and Grigory start off.

Trigorin whispers loudly to him.

TRIGORIN

Why you saying "thank you" to his wife?

GRIGORY

We had lunch together.

TRIGORIN

Poydi k chertu!

GRIGORY

Don't swear, Papa.

They exit.

Ryder sits on the bench.

He examines the chess pieces.

Presently his CELL PHONE RINGS.

RYDER

Hello?

Lights up instantly on The Apartment.

Marie is there, searching for her briefcase.

MARIE

Where the hell are you!

RYDER

I'm... in the park.

MARIE

You're in the fucking park!? I thought you had this big deadline!

RYDER

Yeah, I'm not really sure how I got here-

MARIE

I just got back to the apartment. I still can't find my damn briefcase!

RYDER

Oh, it's here.

MARIE

You have it?

RYDER

Yeah, it's right here.

MARIE

Did you have it this whole time?

RYDER

No, this kid-

MARIE

Grigory?

RYDER

Yeah. How do you know him?

MARIE

Nevermind. STAY THERE, I'm coming back.

RYDER

Something very strange is going on, honey-

MARIE

I'll say. But I don't have time to get into this, Ry.

RYDER

No, listen-- I was at the apartment, I was in the middle of writing when you called-

MARIE

Did you not hear what I said?

RYDER

No, I know. And I want to say: I'm really sorry. I know I've been- out of touch. I know I've been blocking you out, and that's not right. I shouldn't let my writing take over my life like that. It's not fair to you. It's *your* day, and I've been obsessing, and that's not right because it's your day. It was- I think I'm just under a lot of stress? Because Becca called, you know, and she wanted to see a draft and I didn't have a draft. And as it turns out, I still don't have a draft, but-

MARIE

Do you know what you're doing right now?

RYDER

What.

MARIE

You're apologizing for being self-obsessed and obsessing about yourself while you do it.

RYDER

Okay. You're right. I'm sorry. Again.

MARIE

NO. You know what? You fucked up. This was a big day for me. A *huge* day. And you fucked it up. So I'm done.

RYDER

You're- done?

MARIE

I'm staying with my sister tonight.

RYDER

You can't- no, that's not what happens. We have to make up, because- because I've got it figured out now. My writing- I feel this need to suffer for my writing, so I drag you into it even though there's nothing wrong. I create drama between us, and I get that now so-

MARIE

So we have to what? Reconcile? You think you get to just fuck things up over and over and then fix them over and over and I'll keep taking you back?

RYDER

Well. Yeah.

MARIE

That's not how it works. I'm tired of that. I'm tired of us.

RYDER

So. What are you saying?

MARIE

I guess I'm saying- I'm done.

RYDER

You're not serious?

MARIE

I need to be with someone who's all there. Not someone who's there just part of the time, or who's partly there all the time. I can't live life in your shadow.

RYDER

Honey, let's talk this out at least-

MARIE

There's nothing to talk about. Not everything has a happy ending, Ryder. Some things are just over.

She hangs up.

Lights out instantly on The Apartment.

RYDER

Wait, Marie- Marie?

Contrapunctus XIII

Music.

Old Woman enters.

She looks totally different: plainly dressed, and much older. But pink pamphlets peek from her coat.

RYDER

Wait. Am I dreaming?

OLD WOMAN

I'm sorry?

RYDER

It's you!

OLD WOMAN

Excuse me, I'm late for-

RYDER

You're the voice! The voice crying alone...

OLD WOMAN

I think you have me confused with someone else.

RYDER

Don't you recognize me?

OLD WOMAN

Of course. You're that writer. Aren't you?

RYDER

Yes.

OLD WOMAN

I've read all your books.

RYDER

Thank you.

OLD WOMAN

But I'm certain we've never met.

RYDER

Yes. You're right. Sorry, I was mistaken.

OLD WOMAN

Are you working on anything new?

RYDER

Uh. No.

OLD WOMAN

That's too bad.

RYDER

Sorry, I need to make a call-

OLD WOMAN

Where did you get that?

RYDER

Hmm?

OLD WOMAN

That chess set, there. Where did you get it?

RYDER

Oh. It was a gift.

OLD WOMAN

May I-?

She reaches for it.

Carefully, she turns it over.

OLD WOMAN (cont'd)

Oh!

She faints.

Blackout.

Canon Per Augmentationem In

Contrario Motu

Music.

After the first statement of the theme, lights come up on The Apartment.

On the second statement of the theme, Ryder enters with wet hair. He wears a bathrobe and a pair of slippers. Carefully, procedurally, he performs the ritual of setting up his writing area.

But his hair is dripping onto his laptop.

Frustrated, he gets up and exits the room.

We hear the sound of a HAIRDRYER start up.

Trigorin and Grigory enter. Trigorin, exhausted from the day, stretches out on the couch.

Grigory exits with a bundle of new CDs.

The HAIRDRYER stops and Ryder returns.

He sits at his laptop.

RYDER

"An old Russian man, once a master chessplayer, lies on his couch. The room is bare. He begins to cough--"

Trigorin begins to cough.

RYDER (cont'd)

"--gently."

Trigorin's cough gets worse.

Ryder looks over at him.

RYDER (cont'd)

"He begins to cough loudly. He is dying."

Trigorin looks over at Ryder, spits on the ground.

RYDER

"The phone rings."

Ryder and Trigorin's phones start to RING.

Trigorin gets up, answers it.

Ryder picks up his cell phone.

RYDER

Hello?

TRIGORIN

Hello!

RYDER

Hey, Becca.

TRIGORIN

Yes. Is him.

RYDER

It isn't done.

TRIGORIN

Ah? You have results?

RYDER

Because I just can't do it.

TRIGORIN

Why you can't tell me now?

RYDER

I know. I'm sorry, Becks. I do have a new idea-

TRIGORIN

You want another appointment?

RYDER

I'm not sure what it's about, yet. Maybe chess.

TRIGORIN

Okay, when. Next week?

RYDER

Next month? That doesn't give me much time.

TRIGORIN

Tomorrow! Is bad news?

RYDER

No, it's great news. I'm just not sure I can-

TRIGORIN

Okay, I see you tomorrow.

RYDER

Yeah, I'll do my best. No. I'll finish it.

TRIGORIN & RYDER

Goodbye.

Two very different moods.

Trigorin moves back to the couch and lays down.

Ryder checks his watch. He picks up a remote control and points it at the audience.

Lights up instantly on The Park.

Marie holds the microphone, faces the audience.

The Old Woman stands nervously near her.

A beat. Marie presses her finger to her ear.

MARIE

Thanks, Jim. I'm here at Eliot Park, where we have what may be one of the greatest love stories ever told. The woman standing beside me is Eva Miller. But twenty years ago she was Ivanka Ilyitch, and one of a group of young Russians who followed the legendary Mikhail Tal on his whirlwind tour of Russia during the 1960s.

Trigorin sits up, watches the TV.

TRIGORIN

Eva?

MARIE

Ms. Miller emigrated from Russia over twenty years ago. And today, on the bench behind me, she found an artifact from her past.

TRIGORIN

Eva!

Grigory enters.

GRIGORY

Papa? Are you all right?

Trigorin picks up the same remote, points it at the audience.

Lights out instantly on the Park.

GRIGORY

Are you okay, Papa? You look sad.

TRIGORIN

Just thinking.

GRIGORY

Remember, Papa: "You can't think yourself to victory."

TRIGORIN

Yes. Yes, you right. You very smart boy.

GRIGORY

Would you mind if I put on some of my new music? I got a new recording of *Kunst der Füge*.

TRIGORIN

Kunster fuge?! *Kurite moju trubku!!*

GRIGORY

Art of the Fugue, Papa. It's Bach's final masterpiece.

TRIGORIN

Bach! More Ba-Rock music. Go ahead, play it.

Grigory exits, briefly.

Contrapunctus XIV

Music.

Grigory returns.

GRIGORY

So what did the doctor say?

TRIGORIN

(spitting)

Doctors!

GRIGORY

What did he say.

A beat.

TRIGORIN

He say everything okay.

GRIGORY

Everything's okay?

TRIGORIN

He say my heart is so strong, he want me to come back tomorrow to study me.

GRIGORY

They want you to come back?

TRIGORIN

You got good genes, Grigory! Sharp mind, strong heart!

GRIGORY

Like a bull.

TRIGORIN

Yes. But short fingers! No good for piano.

GRIGORY

Well. Jimi Hendrix played a right-handed guitar.

TRIGORIN

(pure joy)

Ah! Jimi Hendrix?

GRIGORY

Yeah. I got his CD, too. And someone named John Lennon?
Do you know him?

TRIGORIN

John Lennon!

GRIGORY

He was a piano player, too.

TRIGORIN

Yes, yes! You have Elton John?

GRIGORY

Who?

TRIGORIN

Okay, Grigor! Take these names: Elton John, Stevie
Wonder, Keith Emerson, David Bowie...

A beat.

TRIGORIN (cont'd)

No. Later. Who is this?

GRIGORY

It's Bach.

TRIGORIN

Is very repetitive.

GRIGORY

It's a fugue.

TRIGORIN

Ah?

GRIGORY

A fugue is a musical form. It's similar to a round,
where each person starts at a different time and sings
the same part over and over?

TRIGORIN

Like drinking song!

GRIGORY

Yeah. But a fugue has just one part, the theme, that
keeps repeating. When you listen, you can try to follow
the theme, and hear it every time it repeats, or you
can just enjoy the way all the parts come together...

TRIGORIN

Ah! Yes, I hear it.

GRIGORY

Bach is the unquestioned master of the fugue. He could sit down at a piano and improvise one off the top of his head. And this is his ultimate demonstration of the form. Fourteen interlocking fugues and four canons, all based on that single theme. One is an inversion, one is an augmentation, one is a diminution- there are double fugues, triple fugues, mirror fugues... but this is the best. The end of the sequence, the fourteenth fugue. It's unfinished.

Lights dim on The Apartment.

Lights up on The Park.

Marie is finishing her report. The Old Woman stands beside her, holding the chess set.

MARIE

And there you have it. A single chess set, travelling through countless hands and across the Atlantic Ocean to end up here, where it was found today by the original owner. She gave it as a gift to her old lover, and identified it today by the initials carved on the inside edge, a thirty-year old inscription promising love everlasting. For Channel Four News, this is Marie DiGiorgio saying, "I'll see you on TV."

GRIGORY

The fourteenth fugue is interesting for many reasons.

In The Park: Marie holds her pose, waiting.

In The Apartment: Ryder picks up his phone, dials.

MARIE

And we're out. Great. That was great. Thanks, everyone. And thank you so much, Eva.

OLD WOMAN

What happens now?

MARIE

What do you mean?

OLD WOMAN

Will you call me? If you hear from him?

MARIE

Oh. Yeah, if someone calls the station-

Her phone begins to ring.

She takes it out.

OLD WOMAN

Do you need to take that?

MARIE

No.

She puts it back in her pocket.

Lights dim on The Park.

Lights up on The Apartment.

GRIGORY

One of the most intriguing is that Bach actually signs his name musically.

Ryder speaks to his cell phone.

RYDER

Hey Marie. It's me. Ryder. Just wanted to let you know, I watched your report. You looked really great. Really. You did a great job. And: you should be proud of yourself. All right. That's all. I'll be up late. So. Maybe we'll talk.

He hangs up.

GRIGORY

Towards the end, he literally uses a four-note sequence: B- A- C- H. And it's the first time that sequence appears in any of his work.

Lights up on The Park.

Marie is putting things away in her briefcase.

OLD WOMAN

Do you get a lot of phone calls?

MARIE

I'm sorry?

OLD WOMAN

When a story like this airs, do you get a lot of calls?

MARIE

Oh. I don't know.

The Old Woman runs her hands across the chess set.

OLD WOMAN

It would be so wonderful to see him again. After all these years.

MARIE

Yeah.

OLD WOMAN

Are you married?

MARIE

Um. That's a difficult question.

OLD WOMAN

Yes, marriage is the *most* difficult question. Is it better to gradually become less who you are, or to live out your years alone?

MARIE

What do you think?

OLD WOMAN

I think either way, you're going to hurt. You're going to regret. Either way there is beauty, and sadness. And beauty in sadness. It's love we're here for, though.

Lights dim on The Park.

Lights up on Ryder's apartment.

Ryder reads aloud from what he's writing.

RYDER

"Father and son listen to music. While the old man sleeps, his son talks about his passion for-"

Lights dim on The Apartment.

Lights up on The Park.

OLD WOMAN

-a sequence of chemical bases that are paired with their opposite bases. So when they're separated, either one can re-create the entire sequence by bonding with their opposite base pairs again.

MARIE

Uh-huh.

OLD WOMAN

Here, take a pamphlet. It's easier with a pamphlet.

She hands her one.

Lights up on The Apartment.

GRIGORY

But Papa, this is what's truly remarkable. In just a few moments the fugue stops suddenly. That's where the manuscript ends.

OLD WOMAN

What the Society for Conscious Evolution believes is that our ideas are as dual as our DNA. For every concept we have, there is an opposite concept.

RYDER

"The father loves his son. The son loves his father."

OLD WOMAN

And these concepts are represented in our brain by exactly the same chemicals which make up DNA. Which means if you could put the right ideas in the right order- if you could have exactly the right thoughts-

RYDER

"In the same room, a writer confronts the blank page."

MARIE

You know what? I'm sorry. I'm really not interested.

OLD WOMAN

You're not interested in expanding your consciousness and saving the world?

MARIE

(awkwardly)

I guess, not really. I have to get home to my husband.

RYDER

"He wants to apply structure to a shapeless world."

GRIGORY

And there's a hand-written note in the manuscript, that says: "At the point where the composer introduces the name BACH in the countersubject to this fugue, the composer died."

Lights out on The Park.

RYDER

"But he understands that is the vocation of madmen."

GRIGORY

Many people have tried to finish the fugue. But you know what? I think it's done! It's exactly as Bach intended it to be: open-ended. Like life.

The music ends.

In the silence, Grigory turns to his father.

GRIGORY

Papa?

A sudden RUSH OF WIND blows the scattered pieces of Grigory's torn pamphlet from under the bench and into the audience.

Blackout.

THE END