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# ...among other things...

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*University of Iowa*

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...among other things...

by

Michael Tisdale

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts  
degree in Theatre Arts in the  
Graduate College of  
The University of Iowa

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Thesis Supervisors: Associate Professor Art Borecca  
Associate Professor Dare Clubb

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Michael Tisdale

has been approved by the Examining Committee for  
the thesis requirement for the Master of Fine Arts degree  
in Theatre Arts at the May 2017 graduation.

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## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The seed for *...among other things...* was planted by Isaiah Berlin's essay "The Fox and the Hedgehog." In it, Berlin quotes Tolstoy's definition of history as: "Names and dates connected by fables." Tolstoy viewed history as a great ocean and each human life as a raindrop that disappears into it. He bucked against how a small number of said drops are deemed more significant, his point being, Napoleon would be nothing without the faceless multitudes who died in his name.

*...among other things...* is a portrait of three of Tolstoy's 'raindrops' – two that will be forgotten and one that will not. The play directs the audience to invest in the two destined for obscurity, a couple trapped in a sort of limbo, navigating, perhaps, the most challenging time of their lives. Late in the story, a seemingly insignificant third drop enters, visits, and abruptly exits. The couple's narrative finds its resolution and then the third drop returns and reveals its historical significance. I want it to feel like the audience is at a party where they spend a third of the time talking to an old gentleman. Their conversation is pleasant, intriguing, but seemingly inconsequential. Just before they leave, they are formally introduced to the old gentleman and his name is Albert Einstein. Immediately, this knowledge recontextualizes the whole evening for them. Should it?

Michael Tisdale

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANYA, Ukrainian, female, 30

THEO, American, male, 35

LEE, American, male, 20

BOBCHINSKY, Any nationality, Any gender, Ageless

DOBCHINSKY, Any nationality, Any gender, Ageless

## SETTINGS

An apartment in Moscow, October 1959

A park in Moscow, May 1962

## RUSSIAN PRONUNCIATION KEY

«j» represents a y sounds like in German  
«ja»; «y» represents the Russian vowel “bi”  
«kh» represents Russian “ch” as in “challah.”  
Zh is like the English “s” as in “measure.”  
The ‘ indicates certain soft consonants.

*A warm-colored, velvet curtain guards the set from the audience. There are two chairs, one on either side of the proscenium.*

*While houselights are still up, following any piped in announcements, we hear the MEOWING of a garrulous cat. Houselights fade and...*

*Someone in a BLACK & WHITE CAT COSTUME (circa 1950s Soviet Block - a papier mâché head, etc.) enters. The CAT has a large, WHITE STAR-SHAPED MARKING on its chest. Also, the CAT is 1) smoking a cigarette (would be great if the mask is rigged to blow smoke); and 2) carrying a stack of placards (which are as big as they need to be to be read by the entire house) and an easel. It puts down its load, drops the cigarette on the floor, extinguishing it with its foot. It sets up the easel and displays the cards for the audience, one-after-another.*

CARD 1

“MEOW”

*The Cat waves and encourages the audience to clap. When the Real Audience applauds - it is augmented by a recording of a larger live audience wildly cheering - the Cat flips to the next card...*

CARD 2

“SHUSH”

*The abovementioned recording cuts out when the audience stops clapping.*

CARD 3

“PLEASE...”

CARD 4

“...STOP ALL THE THINGS...”

CARD 5

“...THAT COULD DISTURB THE PERFORMANCE.”

*The Cat nods. Shows CARD #4 again, then CARD #5, then #4 again, then #5, then...*

*During the above, BOBCHINSKY enters carrying a carpet bag, takes a seat in the chair opposite the Cat.*

CARD 6

“UNDERSTAND?”

*Maybe the Cat makes the universal gesture of ‘cutting its throat with its finger,’ then... #4 again, followed by #5.*



*The Cat intimidates the audience with an intense scan, maybe points out a few suspicious individuals.*

*It waits. Maybe it's wearing a wristwatch and indicates "times-a-wasting."*

*Houselights begin to dim.*

CARD 6

*"MANY YEARS AGO... / Много лет тому назад..."*

Card 7

*"...IN THE CAPITAL CITY OF MOSCOW... / ...в столице Москве..."*

*As the curtain rises...*

CARD 8

*"...THERE WAS A UKRAINIAN WOMAN... / ...была украинка..."*

*Behind the curtain, we discover...*

*A flat in Moscow (on Triumfalnaya Ploschad.) In the main room is... the front door, a desk with a phone on it, a record player, a dining table with three chairs, a bed, a dresser, a half dozen rugs (strewn about the painted wood floor with no apparent strategy), and two windows on the wall opposite the door, above the bed. Lastly, near the front door, about four feet up the wall, a hat has been hung, beneath the hat is something resembling an intercom. Up Stage Center is a short hallway, which leads to the kitchen. In the hallway are two doors, one is a WC the other the toilet. From the audience, just inside the kitchen, one might be able to spy the edge of a bathtub.*

*A man and a woman are slow-dancing to silence.*

*The lights on them, which comes through the two windows, are dim but rising.*

CARD 9

*"...WHO DANCED WITH AN AMERICAN MAN... / ... которая танцевала с американцем..."*

*The Cat enters the playing space, goes to the record player and drops the needle.*

*"WE THREE (MY ECHO, MY SHADOW, AND ME)" plays.*

*The Cat goes back to the easel, flips CARD #9 over, it's SOLID RED on its backside.*

*The couple dances.*

*As they dance they whisper to each other.*

ANYA

*(barely audible)*

Spaseebo, spaseebo, mnogho spaseebo...

THEO

Shto? Dlya?

ANYA

Ti sohranili moyou zhiznh.

THEO

Ya lyublyu vas.

*LIGHTS OUT ON THE APARTMENT.*

### PROLOGUE

*The CAT flips two more cards.*

CARD 10

“PROLOGUE / Пролог”

CARD 11

“16th OCTOBER, 1959 / 16 октября 1959 года”

*LIGHT RISE on the same flat.*

*Smell of onions frying in butter.*

*On the record player, the NEEDLE IS SKIPPING at the center of an LP.*

BOBCHINSKY

Hello. Now is the 16th of October, 1959.

*Cat flips this last card, which is SOLID BLUE on its flipside.*

BOBCHINSKY

Thank you, Gleb.

*Cat nods and sits.*

BOBCHINSKY

We're in Moscow. This is a flat shared by Anya Pavlichenko and a man known as Theodore

Lozhen. She's Ukrainian, he's American. It's about to get-

*Someone retches off stage. And again.*

BOBCHINSKY

Noisy.

*ALARM CLOCK by the bed goes off.*

*A moment later, sound of a pull chain toilet flushing.*

*Skipping needle and alarm clock continue.*

*PHONE RINGS and continues ringing.*

*The toilet flushes again.*

*From the toilet, Anya enters. She wipes her mouth, checks her dress, assesses the scene, tries to switch off the alarm clock.*

*It won't stop, she break it.*

*Anya takes the needle off the record, switches off the turntable.*

*Anya stares at the phone, steps towards it.*

*It stops ringing.*

BOBCHINSKY

That's Anya. She doesn't matter.

*(catches the remark)*

Open mouth, insert foot.

She is as important as most people.*(watches her)*

*Anya picks up the receiver and listens.*

*Nothing. She hangs it up.*

*Silence. Finally.*

*A wave of nausea hits. She opens a window and breaths in air.*

*She sits on the edge of the bed, feels her forehead, her cheeks, breaths.*

*Phone rings.*

*Anya makes urgent steps toward the toilet, it's too late...*

*She spits up down the front of her pretty dress.*

*The phone continues ringing.*

ANYA

Enough! Please, stop.

*One more ring and Silence.*

BOBCHINSKY

If she's only "as important as most people," why're we watching? Because... her life brushes against a life that REALLY matters. IT matters a lot.

What's happening now is less than a day before said encounter.

ANYA

*(almost a whisper)*

Stop being selfish, Annushka

*(dry heaves)*

Oh god-

*(dry heaves)*

Oh god.

*(palms on her belly)*

Why now? Why here?

Nothing grows here

I'm so happy you're here

*Anya grabs the world around her to steady herself.*

BOBCHINSKY

Oh, Anya is pregnant.

Which is exciting in a pedestrian sort of way. She's nervous over breaking the news to Theo, the father, who's on his way home, few blocks away um...

*Anya strips down to the shift beneath her dress.*

*She uses the soiled dress to wipe her mouth, chin, and the floor*

ANYA

*(practicing)*

I am pregnant.

I am pregnant.

It's good news.

*Anya exits to the kitchen, tosses the dress in the tub and pours a little water over it.*

BOBCHINSKY

Anya believed she couldn't conceive. The termination of an earlier pregnancy had gone wrong, leaving her barren. Or so she thought. Theo doesn't know any of this.

*Anya enters with a glass of milk, chugs the milk.*

*She picks a dress from the wardrobe, puts it on, paints her lips...*

ANYA  
(practicing)  
There's something you don't know,  
When I was fourteen...

*She checks herself in a mirror, pinches her cheeks.  
She loses herself in the mirror.*

ANYA  
It was only a school girl crush.  
He was an opera singer. Another reason for you...  
To hate opera.

*A waft of smoke, presumably from the stove, sends her dashing to the kitchen.*

*The front door opens.*

*Theo enters.*

*He's wearing a coat, a hat, and carrying a loaf of old bread and a jug of wine.*

*Anya re enters waving the smoke away with a rag.*

THEO  
Excuse me, is this the right place?

*Anya jumps out of her skin.*

THEO  
Do we know each other?

ANYA  
(heart racing)

*Theo, you scared me-*

THEO  
What is your name?

ANYA  
Not now.

THEO  
All right, Notnow,

Is your favorite color (*color of Anya's dress*)?

ANYA

Please stop.

*Theo corners her.*

*(QUICK and CLEAR)*

ANYA

Stop!

THEO

Well?

ANYA

What?

THEO

You haven't answered my questions.

ANYA

No / I'm-

THEO

No? "No," what?

ANYA

No.

THEO

No?

ANYA

Yes: NO!

THEO

Oh! "Yes-no".

ANYA

*(correcting)*

No: No.

THEO  
Nono?

ANYA  
Yes.

THEO  
Yes?

ANYA  
No!

THEO  
No?

ANYA  
Yes.

THEO  
Yes?

ANYA  
Enough, Theo! Stop pleeeeeease.

*They freeze.  
She wraps her arms around his neck and kisses his cheeks.*

ANYA  
How's your day?

THEO  
What a day.

ANYA  
Yes?

THEO  
I'm in a mood.

ANYA  
Which one?

THEO  
Pick one. Anyone call?

ANYA

No. I'm in a good mood.

THEO

What's that like?

ANYA

You want to know why I'm in a / good mood-?

*He takes off just his hat.*

THEO

Yes! but... First things first: Did you ask?

ANYA

What?

THEO

At work, did you ask?

ANYA

What was I suppose to ask?

*Theo throws his hat.*

ANYA

Ask to do what?

THEO

Really, Anya-

ANYA

I'm sorry, Theo-

THEO

It's shocking...

ANYA

Remind me, please, I've-

THEO

Why bother?



ANYA

Why're you being mean?

THEO

I'm "mean"? You don't care enough to remember things we discuss, important things, which affect my future- OUR future. Do you know how... small that makes me feel?

*Silence.*

*Turns her back to Theo...*

ANYA

*(re: her dress)*

Please...

*Theo latches the back of her dress.*

ANYA

Thank you. You're always good at small things.

*She moves away...*

ANYA

Hungry?

*She exits into the kitchen.*

THEO

I expect an answer when I ask a question.

*Anya enters the hallway.*

ANYA

Answers are echoes. We all talk the same nonsense and we all must do the next thing there is to be done.

*She goes back to the kitchen.*

THEO

*(mutters)*

"Answers are Echoes"

*(shouting at her)*

"Virtues are formed in man by his ECHOING virtuous actions" - Aristotle said [something like that...]

Do me this virtue, I promise to echo it back.

*Anya calmly enters wearing an apron over her dress, sipping a glass of milk.*

THEO

Fine, if you really don't remember... Yesterday you offered to inquire, on my behalf, about employment opportunities at your work.

ANYA

I did not.

THEO

You did-

ANYA

Why would I offer?

THEO

It meant so much to me that you offered.

ANYA

I'm a cleaning woman, nobody listens to me.

THEO

*(pleading)*

I'm asking this one favor, Annushka, I need this.

ANYA

You have a job.

THEO

One more day, one more hour there will kill me. I work for clowns, literal clowns. I-I can't do it another day. I have this much pride left...

*(He indicates a centimeter between his index finger and thumb.)*

Help me keep it.

ANYA

What can I do?

THEO

You want me to beg?

ANYA

Beg for what?

THEO

Your last name is Pavlichenko.

*(beat)*

Your sister is a war hero-

ANYA

Lyudi is not my sister.

THEO

Cousin! You share a last name, you grew up like sisters-

ANYA

So?

THEO

She's on a goddamn postage stamp!

ANYA

She is, not me.

THEO

*(gentle)*

Simply inquire. Ask.

ANYA

The cleaning staff?

THEO

As you clean, you move about the buildings, right? You must see men of...of... Influence...

ANYA

On occasion.

THEO

THEM! Ask them!

ANYA

Are you stupid?

THEO

That would explain things-

ANYA

Wander... through the Kremlin? asking 'men-who-look-important' Questions.

THEO

You want me to fail. Suffer and disappear like some nobody.

*Theo gets vodka and two glasses from the desk.*

ANYA

When they need you, they'll come get you.

THEO

Let's change the subject.

*(re: Vodka)*

Want some?

ANYA

No.

*He pours a glass, begins to sip.*

*He closes the window.*

THEO

Tell me why you're in a good mood.

ANYA

I can't remember.

*smells the air.*

THEO

What're you making?

*(beat)*

Anya?

ANYA (O.S.)

Fish soup.

THEO

Oh, [haha] I brought bread.

ANYA (OFF)

What kind?

THEO

Uh... ha Lazarus bread.

ANYA  
What kind?

THEO  
La-za-rus bread.  
*(handing her the stale loaf)*  
It died three days ago, but will rise again when dipped in your divine soup.

*She takes it, knocks on it like a piece of wood.*

ANYA  
You paid for this?

*Shakes his head 'No'*  
*Makes catcalling noises.*

THEO  
Where's kitty?

ANYA  
Out mousing maybe.

*Anya enters the hall*

THEO  
I'm sorry for...

*She stops, turns.*

THEO  
I'm sorry.

ANYA  
Am I a good woman?

THEO  
Yes. The best woman.

*He kisses her.*

ANYA  
Am I? I'm not so sure?

THEO

I'm awful, I haven't told you how beautiful you are today, now, this moment? Hm? (re: dress) Is this new? It matches your eyes.

ANYA

My eyes aren't...  
(*getting the joke*)  
You're a child.

*Anya walks away*

*Theo laughs, pulls her back.*

THEO

Play with me.

ANYA

No.

*He tries to tickle her.*  
*Anya holds her ground, impervious.*

ANYA

What're you doing?

*He tries again...*

THEO

You're not ticklish.

ANYA

You've forgotten?

THEO

You always pretend not to be / ticklish-

ANYA

A person is either ticklish or not.

THEO

No, you can pretend anything.

ANYA

I was ticklish once upon a time...  
I was fourteen, I went to the opera / with-

THEO  
I hate opera.

*Theo goes to the vodka.*

ANYA  
With my grandma and her gentleman friend who wore a wig - what was his name-?

THEO  
“Wig”? I don’t know that word.

ANYA  
Uh fake hair.

THEO  
Ah. So you are ticklish. One of these days, I’ll find your spot.

*Silence.*

THEO  
Who tickled you?

ANYA  
An opera singer.

THEO  
You had to listen to him moo like a cow, then he tickled you? What a shitty time.

ANYA  
Yes. He tickled me like...

*On ‘THIS,’ she tickle-attacks him.*

ANYA  
THIS!

THEO  
Stop, Anya! Stop-

ANYA  
*(tickling/teasing)*  
What’s wrong?!

THEO  
(*rage*)  
Fucking STOP IT!!

*She stops.*

ANYA  
Guess you don't want to play.

*Pause.*

THEO  
Anyone call?

ANYA  
No. Why're you still in your coat?

THEO  
I'm cold.

*Anya lights a cigarette.*

ANYA  
Whenever it feels just right, you're cold.

THEO  
There's a furnace inside you.

ANYA  
Where your soul will burn for all eternity. Your soul will sink to the bottom of the ninth lake of fire and God will forget you ever existed.

THEO  
Old news.  
That happened January fifth, 1953.

ANYA  
Here we go.

THEO  
The day I arrived in Moscow.  
In less than(*calculates*)three months from now... I'll have been here... SEVEN. YEARS. (*scratches his scalp*) Back on January fifth, 1953, I thought: "I'm an important man," "Tomorrow needs me." Here in the land of Pushkin and Tolstoy, I'll spend my time talking with Men of Ideas!



Nope. I teach dull-minded Soviets “American” English, “American” behavior... I baby-sit KGB rejects. Decoys. They don’t think I know but I do.

God’s already forgotten me.

ANYA

*(exhaling smoke)*

How’bout some music?

THEO

Nah. You’re here with me. Has God forgotten you, too?

ANYA

I want music.

BOBCHINSKY

There’s a “white box” on the wall, looks like an intercom. It’s a listening device, commonly installed in the homes of “persons of interest,” - in this case Theo, because he’s from the United States. Something that size, so pronounced, is more a psychological weapon. If they wanted to simply eaves drop, they would ‘bug’ the joint. Maybe they have. Which is why Anya wants the music.

*Theo watches Anya...*

*1) draws the curtains*

*2) hangs his hat over the ‘white box’*

*3) chooses and plays a record*

*“We Three (My Echo, My Shadow, and Me)”  
plays*

THEO

Seven years, I’m done.

*He removes the needle from the record.*

THEO

No more whispering, no one’s listening.

*Taps the ‘white box’ like a live microphone*

THEO

Testing, testing... I was not born to amuse the Premier, over-and-out.

*(mocking)*

Oh, oh, oh, I’m sorry you want to dance?

*Anya exits to the kitchen.*

THEO

Silence is better, God forbid anything coming between me and your fish soup.

*(beat)*

Soup, Soup, Soup haha... Is it almost ready?

*He peers out a window.*

THEO

You know that big oak down there? On a bright day it's a perfect uh um sundial. *(compares to his watch)* It's exactly... Something's wrong with my watch. I should take it to...

*He finds the broken alarm clock.*

THEO

Huh

*He sits on the bed.*

*He bursts into silent sobs. He wipes away the emotions, stands, slaps his belly, then drops to the floor and starts doing push ups.*

*He counts off however many he does.*

*Anya enters carrying a tray with two big bowls and the loaf of stale bread.*

ANYA

Save your strength, you'll need it to cut this bread.

*He stops and rolls on his back*

THEO

Let's carve our initials somewhere.

Under the window.

Some child fifty years from now will find it, make up a tall tale.

*She puts the tray on the table, moves a few items from the table to the desk.*

ANYA

Cut this.

*He takes the knife and the loaf he brought and starts sawing through it, which is a struggle.*

THEO

"Thus heaven's gift to us is this:

That habit takes the place of bliss.”  
...Pushkin.

ANYA  
I knew it wasn't you.

*They eat in silence.*

THEO  
When was the last time you saw kitty inside?

ANYA  
This morning.  
Yesterday morning?

THEO  
I don't think I've seen him in at least a day.

ANYA  
You care about her.

THEO  
He has integrity. Keeps the mice away.

*They eat.*

*And eat.*

*And as they eat, a woman in the audience gets up and walks to the stage. She is Anya's doppelganger - same hair, same dress, same stride (if the actor cast as Anya is an identical twin, this would be fantastic.) Anya 2 enters the playing area facing upstage. Anya 1 takes in Anya 2. Hold.*

BOBCHINSKY  
Oh dear.

*Anya 2 exits.*

ANYA  
Do you ever feel like...?

*Pause.*

THEO  
What?

ANYA  
Never mind me.

THEO  
What is it?

ANYA  
A daydream.  
THEO  
Good or bad?

ANYA  
There is a double.  
Two of me.  
One that dies and one that lives eternal.  
Which is real? Which is better? Am I what I seem to myself? Is this my story?

THEO  
One of you is plenty.

*They eat.*

THEO  
Did anyone call?

ANYA  
No.

*They eat.*

THEO  
It's very tasty.

ANYA  
Meh.

*Anya stops, clanks her spoon.*

ANYA  
I overheard a conversation.

THEO  
When?

ANYA

The other day. These men - smoking, drinking, pink-faced men - discussed the assassination of the prime minister of Sri Lanka.

THEO

The Sri Lankan Prime Minister was assassinated?

ANYA

Mm-hm, last month apparently.  
Said he was shot by a Buddhist Monk.

THEO

Nonsense.

ANYA

It's what was said.

THEO

They were playing a joke on you

ANYA

Who?

THEO

The men.

ANYA

They didn't know I was listening

THEO

Why were you listening?

ANYA

I wasn't, I was cleaning nearby... but, I suppose, the best spy doesn't know they're a spy.

THEO

Why didn't you ask them.

ANYA

Ask them?

THEO

About employment. For me. Why didn't you ask them?

ANYA  
I want music.

*Theo wipes his mouth.*

THEO  
(rolls his eyes)  
No one's listening.

ANYA  
I want to dance.

*He nods, goes to the record player.*

ANYA  
Not a slow dance, something upbeat.

*Theo chooses a record  
Anya draws the curtains*

ANYA  
My life... no longer belongs to me.

THEO  
Has it ever?

*As Anya hangs Theo's hat over the white box, "Let's call the whole thing off" Ella version begins to play.*

THEO  
Who or what does it belong to?

*They begin to dance.*

ANYA  
Someone else.

THEO  
Who?

*She smiles.*

ANYA  
Someone more deserving-

*PHONE RINGS, (absurdly loud) startling everyone.*

*Rings again.*

*Theo moves to the phone.*

*Anya takes the needle off the record.*

ANYA

Are you going to answer it?

*Rings again.*

*Theo picks up the receiver, and immediately slams it back down.*

*Beat.*

THEO

We're eating.

*He goes back to the soup.*

*The phone rings.*

*He throws a dish*

THEO

*(at the phone)*

WE'RE EATING!

*The phone continues to ring.*

*Theo walks towards it.*

THEO (CONT'D)

No, I won't answer it.

ANYA

It's all right...

THEO

It's never important, yanking my leash, "Heel doggy! Heel!" I'll bite, I will, I'll-

*He answers the phone.*

THEO

*(altered, calm voice)*

Hello?

Valeri,...

Good evening to you. I'll-

Yes.

No...

no...

yes.

Yes no

No, no

Yes, still need rest.

*(fake coughs)*

Without question, yes.

*(long listen)*

Yes, yes.

*(shorter listen)*

Oh, tomorrow? Good.

Thank you. Good day-

Night.

*Theo hangs up the phone.*

ANYA

What did they want?

THEO

New student.

ANYA

The usual?

THEO

No, an American.

ANYA

American?

THEO

Yes.



ANYA  
When?

THEO  
Tomorrow. Coming here.  
Is that a problem?

ANYA  
No.

THEO  
No?

ANYA  
No.

THEO  
No?

ANYA  
Yes, no.

THEO  
Oh "Yes-no"

*Their hearts aren't in it.*

ANYA  
That'll be nice for you, won't it? An American.

*Pause.*

ANYA  
When was the last time you spoke to an American?

THEO  
Time to time, it happens.

*Puts on his coat, grabs his hat*

ANYA  
Where're you going?

THEO  
Look for kitty.

*Theo pours vodka, lies on the bed - coat, shoes, and all. Sipping...*

THEO

It must be so easy for your cousin.

*She strokes his head.*

THEO

To have made your mark, to be recognized, no longer burdened by defending your existence.  
“Never contented with his life,  
never with his dinner, nor his wife.” I’ll never be the hero will I?

*He jerks away.*

ANYA

You torment yourself.

THEO

It’s the winters here. Still, in seven years (he scratches his scalp), I haven’t grown used to them.

ANYA

It’s not winter.

THEO

How horrible. The anticipation.

*He pushes past her, moves to the ‘intercom’ box and speaks.*

THEO

I live the best I can.

ANYA

No one’s listening.

THEO

*(sharp)*

You don’t know that.

*He takes off his coat,*

ANYA

What about kitty? Let’s both go look.

*He kicks off his shoes,*

THEO

I forgot, I did see kitty.

ANYA

Where?

THEO

Near the fence.

ANYA

Why didn't you bring her in?

THEO

He was busy.

ANYA

Always busy.

THEO

At the bottom of the steps standing atop a wooden box.  
An audience of, at least, two dozen mice-

ANYA

So few?

THEO

Perhaps four dozen.

ANYA

In her red velvet cape?

THEO

Reciting Pushkin.

ANYA

Onegin?

THEO

What else?

ANYA  
Anything else.

THEO  
*(a dramatic interpretation)*  
“He lay stone still; uncanny-seeming,  
A languid peace showed on his brow.  
There from his chest the blood poured, steaming,  
The bullet gone straight through him. How  
One moment earlier... shit.

...  
*(trying to recall)*  
The bullet? had gone right through him? How  
One moment earlier...a...uh...  
*(quiet)*  
...goddammit...goddammit all...

ANYA  
It'll come to you.

THEO  
*(seething)*  
It doesn't matter. Nothing matters.

*She pets his head.*

ANYA  
You've never seen the opera of Onegin.

THEO  
Never. I hate opera.

ANYA  
I saw it, when I was fourteen.

THEO  
Really? You never told me that. At the Bolshoi?

ANYA  
Yes. Mama and me had just moved to Moscow.  
*(a sharp inhale)*  
The man who played Yevgeni Onegin had:  
these dark eyes, thick black curly hair, real poetic type. My heart quickened whenever he was  
on stage. Oh I loved him.

THEO  
I see.

ANYA  
Jealous?

THEO  
He's probably fat and ugly or dead now.

ANYA  
I loved him. But only as he pretended to be. He made the story real. Anything that beautiful must be true.  
*(laughs)*  
When it came to the duel, between Onegin and / Lensky-

THEO  
Lensky.

ANYA  
Yes. Best friends challenging a duel. It all seemed very adult, pistols pointed up, took their paces, ten, aimed, Onegin fired.

Time froze. I screamed. Then laughed.

THEO  
Nervous laughter.

ANYA  
No, it wasn't that, thank you, I laughed at how stupid men are. He killed his best friend. Extinguished unconditional love with his index finger. Why?  
*(laughs)*  
Shot a gun at his friend, then seemed shocked by the result. As if it was a game.  
*(laughs)*  
Why did God make men so stupid?

THEO  
So we might love women.

ANYA  
After the performance, I met him, the man playing Yevgeni. His real name was Yevgeni Buhaj, he had fled Poland in the early days of World War Two. He started courting Mama, and then one day he invited me to the opera house alone, it was a secret, we were on the sixth floor, books all around, a storage room above the opera house. I looked out the window - blue sky,

parade below... It was thirty-five days after my fourteenth / birthday-

THEO

*(a burst)*

“The bullet gone straight through him. How  
One moment earlier INSPIRATION  
And LOVE and HATE, and ASPIRATION  
Had in this heart vibrated, churned,  
How life had revelled, blood had burned”  
Oh I feel better, so much better.

*Anya switches on a light, draws the curtains.  
She gets the vodka and two glasses.*

ANYA

Here. Pour.

*He does.*

*She goes to the record player.*

THEO

Remember how we met?

*She smiles, chooses a record.  
She drops the needle on “We Three (My Echo, My Shadow, and Me)”*

*They drink the vodka.*

ANYA

*(re: Vodka)*

Bitter. Cleanse my palate.

*They kiss, she starts them dancing, giving Theo a weighted stare.*

THEO

*(reading Anya)*

Something on your mind?

*She breaks from Theo, puts his hat over ‘the white box’.*

THEO

No one’s listening, I’m sure of it.

ANYA

Better safe than sorry.

*They dance.*

ANYA

What would surprise you more than anything else right now?

THEO

I don't follow.

ANYA

What if you heard me say it would shock you the most?

THEO

I don't know.

ANYA

Guess.

THEO

You got me a job at the Kremlin.

ANYA

Please, Theo...

THEO

That would shock me.

ANYA

No. Guess again.

THEO

Uh... That you're not who you say you are.

ANYA

Who would I be?

THEO

I don't know... Someone else.

ANYA

No.

THEO  
I don't know what you want me to say, Anya-

ANYA  
I'm pregnant.

*They dance in silence.*

THEO  
Did you just say...

ANYA  
Yes.

THEO  
An immaculate conception.

ANYA  
Hardly.

*He freezes.*

THEO  
(*gentle*)  
Is it mine?

ANYA  
Yes.

THEO  
Mine.

ANYA  
Yes. It's ours.

THEO  
Are you sure?

ANYA  
I saw a doctor.

THEO  
How did this happen?  
How...?



ANYA

I know it's a shock.

*He puts on his shoes and coat, grabs his hat.*

ANYA

It's good, Theo.

THEO

You lied to me.

ANYA

I'm just as surprised as you.

THEO

What other lies have you told?

ANYA

I haven't lied.

THEO

Liar.

*He exits.*

*She puts a hand on her belly.*

BLACK OUT.

### INTERLUDE

*CAT enters wearing a two-sided cat head - a SMILE FACE and a FROWN FACE.*

*It enters with THE SMILE FACE facing front, places a new card.*

CARD 12

"POST PROLOGUE / После Пролог"

*Cat flips this last card, which is SOLID BLUE on its reverse.*

*Cat turns Up Stage, revealing THE FROWN FACE on the mask's opposite side.*

*Exits.*

## POST PROLOGUE

*Theo has ripped the white box from the wall. He's sticking his hand in the hole and yanking out fistfuls of wires.*

*Anya is asleep on the bed.*

*Theo sticks his hand in again and receives an electric shock.*

*With a huge, forceful gasp, Anya wakes from a nightmare.*

ANYA

Enough! Stop!

THEO

Bad dream, mama?

*She nods.*

THEO

The one with the two yous?

*She shakes her head.*

ANYA

No, no...

My soul was inside a goldfish  
that lived in a glass of vodka.

A man drank the vodka, then he could see his future.

Left me in the empty glass.

I thought you were gone.

*He gently rocks her.*

THEO

"Everything is perfection in you... even your being thin and pale. One would not like to imagine you different. I had such a longing to come to you. I... Forgive me."

ANYA

What're you saying?

THEO

A little Dostoevski always calms me.

*She checks the reality of his face, shoulders...*

ANYA  
You're here...

THEO  
To stay. Forgive me.

ANYA  
Where'd you go?

THEO  
I went thinking. And planning, mama, lots of planning

ANYA  
Why're you calling me "mama"?

THEO  
*(beaming)*  
You're a mama.

*He goes to kiss her.*

ANYA  
Stop it.

THEO  
What do you think of the name Gerald? It means ruler. Or Nadya, it means hope.

*Anya sees the wires, the hole in the wall*

ANYA  
Am I awake?

THEO  
Yes.

ANYA  
What the hell happened? Did you do that?

THEO  
Yes.

ANYA  
So many wires!

THEO  
Listen to me. We're leaving.

ANYA  
Leaving? Where?

THEO  
With only what fits in our pockets, mama, perhaps / one bag.

ANYA  
Please, don't call me / "mama"-

THEO  
Sorry-

ANYA  
Where're we going?

THEO  
I can't, I mean, I don't know. A man will come, he knows.

ANYA  
A man.

THEO  
A lone man.

ANYA  
It's always a man

*With nothing better to do.*

THEO  
He knows what to do, where to take us, how to keep us safe.

ANYA  
Who is this man?

THEO  
I know his name is Bobchinsky.

ANYA  
Bobchinsky.

THEO  
Yes. Forgive me, Anya, for leaving, I was scared.

ANYA  
You were scared?

THEO  
I've lied. I'm not who I am.

ANYA  
Theo, stop talking.

THEO  
I must say this now.

*Anya puts her hand over his mouth.*

ANYA  
Shh, don't tell me.

*Theo nods.*

*Anya releases his mouth.*

THEO  
I understand. It's too much.  
(*pause*)  
I bought a gift.

ANYA  
What?

*He pulls a small tin, wind-up, spin top from his coat and sets it in motion on the floor.*

THEO  
For the baby-

ANYA  
(*horrified*)  
What're you doing?!

THEO  
It's for the baby-

ANYA  
Are you trying to curse this child?!

THEO  
It's a good / thing-

*Anya destroys the toy (stomps it, smashes it...)  
She opens the door to toss out the broken toy.*

*ANYA'S DOPPELGANGER is standing just outside the door.*

*Theo pulls more wires from the hole...*

THEO  
This isn't how it was supposed to be.

*The wall begins to bleed.*

THEO  
I'm sorry I'm a coward.

*ANYA 2 enters. From now until otherwise indicated, only ANYA 2 physically interacts with Theo, while ANYA 1 speaks the dialogue and watches.*

ANYA  
You are?

THEO  
If we stay here this child will never know its father.

ANYA  
Why here?

THEO  
Is that what you want?

ANYA  
Nothing grows here.

THEO  
You don't want that.

ANYA  
I've been here before.

THEO  
My child must know me.  
ANYA  
Stop.

THEO  
I should have told you a long time ago.

ANYA  
The sky is so blue.

THEO  
*(with tremendous difficulty, like pulling a tapeworm out, he begins with exhaling an 'h')*  
H-  
H...  
Hi...  
Hid... Hiddeh... Hiddell.  
James.  
James...  
James Hiddell.  
James Hiddell?  
Yes.

ANYA  
What time is it?

THEO  
My watch has stopped at half past noon.

ANYA  
What did you just say?

THEO  
James Hiddell?

ANYA  
Is that German?

THEO  
No.

*A wave of nausea hits Anya.*

ANYA  
What's that smell?

*She points at the liquid dripping from the hole in the wall.*

ANYA  
What's that?

THEO  
What a mess.

*He wipes fingers through the rusty sludge.*

*ANYA 2 exits to the toilet.  
ANYA 1 follows her.*

THEO  
What a mess.  
Must've cracked a pipe. It's an old building-

*We hear Anya retch.*

THEO  
Maybe we're not great, but the child will be.

*He sits, talks to Anya through the door.*

THEO  
It was raining when I left, a drizzle. I liked the wet, shiny world. Smell of earth drinking the rain.

*Anya retches.*

THEO  
I love that. Raindrops filling the puddles with a hundred circles a second and the sounds of water, all of'em - on roofs, through gutters, squishing mud...

*The toilet flushes.*

Tchaikovsky's got nothing on it.



*(beat)*

For the first in a long time, I believe we've been blessed, Annushka, but... But I must confess, I'm no good example for a child - not now and never here - which is why... We must leave. Moscow has never been my fertile soil, I wanted it to be... You are. You are the soil from which our greatness will grow. Proud. Strong. True. Unto us a savior will be born.

*Only Anya re enters from the toilet.*

ANYA

Are you drunk?

THEO

I am of sound mind

ANYA

Who's James Hiddell?

THEO

He was last seen in a 'motel' -

ANYA

What's a "motel"?

THEO

Little hotel. For motorists. Men were repairing the plumbing in the next room, kept saying, "Sorry, Mr. Hiddell, we'll try to be more quiet." Since he couldn't nap, he walked. All the way to the nearest town. Went to a cinema, saw "The Naked Spur," with Jimmy Stewart. Had a burger, walked back to the motel. The work had stopped. He showered. Fell asleep reading, never left that motel. Might still be there.

ANYA

Who is Theodore Lozhen?

THEO

Dead. Died at eleven. On a farm in Ohio. Was playing hide-and-go-seek with his sisters. Farmhand didn't know the boy was in the silo. Suffocated.

ANYA

Which one are you?

THEO

James, I think.

ANYA  
Theo.

THEO  
Yes?

ANYA  
Go find kitty.

THEO  
Kitty can't come.

ANYA  
I want to say good bye. And get milk, we're out of milk.

THEO  
I got some already. It's in the kitchen. We can only take what we can carry in our pockets.  
Perhaps one bag.

ANYA  
I don't want any of this. Nothing. The past will only betray me. Go find kitty.

*He kisses her passionately.*

THEO  
If Bobchinsky comes. Tell him I'll be right back.

*He exits out the front door.*

*She drops the needle on the record player, "We Three..." plays.  
She gets a bag and begins to quickly pack. She puts on her shoes. As she puts on her coat.*

*A KNOCK at the door.*

*The KNOCK changes reality.*

*Anya freezes.*

*The CAT places a SOLID RED card on the easel.*

BOBCHINSKY  
It's happening, can you feel it. Note: the card has changed from Blue to Red - if you're not a Russian speaker, you won't understand Anya until the card is Blue again.

ANYA  
(to herself)  
Eto on?  
(Is it him?)  
Privyet?  
(Hi.)

*Another knock at the door.*

LEE (O.S.)  
Zdravstvutee? Privyet. Kak vi poszivayetye? Dobray utro. Meena zovute Lee. Theo?

*Another knock.*

LEE (O.S.)  
Izvinity pojalusta, Theodore Lozhen? Pojalusta.

*Anya moves to the door.*

ANYA  
Nyet. Kto zdes'?  
(No. Who's there?)

LEE (O.S.)  
Uh Alek? Ya Americanits. Ya nuzhna... Theodore Lozhen.  
That you, sir?

ANYA  
Podozhdite, pozhaluysta  
(Wait, please)

LEE (OFF)  
You own a cat?

THEO  
Schto?

LEE (O.S.)  
Uh cherny and white kitsya? It's out here and wants in.  
Can I- Can I come in?

*Beat.*

*Anya opens the door.*

*Enter Lee carrying a black & white kitten.*

LEE

*(offering kitty)*

This yours?

*Lee is wearing a grey two-pieced suit over a tan v-neck sweater, and a white button down oxford shirt with no tie. On his head is a fur Russian winter hat. Finishing out the ensemble, he wears polished army boots and white kid gloves. He is of slight build and rather plain looking. He is carrying a brown paper-bag full to the brim with items wrapped in blue paper. Tucked in his jacket pocket is a new copy of Fyodor Dostoevsky's The Idiot.*

ANYA

Vot aná!

*(There she is!)*

*Anya takes kitty from Lee.*

ANYA

Spasiba

*(Thank you)*

*(to kitty)*

Gdje ty bylá?

*(Where have you been?)*

ANYA

Anya.

LEE

Alek.

Theo enters.

THEO

Privyet?

LEE

Theodore Lozhen?

THEO

You're American.

LEE  
You speak English! / Thank God-

THEO  
Yes. Who are you?

LEE  
I'm Alek.  
*Lee offers his hand, Theo doesn't take it.*

THEO  
State your business.

LEE  
Rimma, my tour guide? with Intourist... She's helping me immigrate here. To the Soviet Union.  
She sent me to this address. I have an appointment.

ANYA  
Ja jej dam malaká  
(I'm going to give her some milk.)  
(to Lee)  
Spasiba

*Lee nods.*

*Anya and kitty exit to the kitchen.*

LEE  
(*extending his hand.*)  
You Mr. Lozhen, sir?

THEO  
Yes.

LEE  
Phew!

THEO  
Call me Theo.

*They shake.*

LEE  
I'm Alek.

THEO  
That was Anya.

LEE  
Oh'kay.

THEO  
She doesn't speak English.

LEE  
Well, I don't speak Russian very well.  
*(beat, a smirk)*  
Beautiful women here.

THEO  
Uh yes.

LEE  
*(eying Theo)*  
This a bad time?

THEO  
It's fine. Who sent you?

LEE  
Rimma.

THEO  
I don't know any / Rimma-

*Lee pulls a folded paper from his pocket*

LEE  
Shirakova, here-

Hands it to Theo.

THEO  
*(unfolding, reading)*  
Oh, yes, good...

LEE

How'd you come to tutor people in Russian?

THEO

*(reading)*

Mostly I teach English.

LEE

Oh sure.

Theo... I need your help...

I need to be fluent, asap. Learn customs,  
show the folks in charge I'm serious.

You can help with that?

*Theo nods, he's finished reading.*

THEO

I'll try.

LEE

I'll work hard.

THEO

You're aiming to stay?

LEE

That's the plan. That's it.

THEO

You must have your reasons.

LEE

Jeez... there something wrong with the Soviet Union I should know about?

*(He laughs at his own joke.)*

I do, I have serious reasons. It's a serious world.

*Lee digs in his bag, pulls out a bottle of vodka.*

LEE (CONT'D)

Here, from me to you, comrade.

*Lee offers the vodka to Theo.*

THEO  
Uh...

LEE  
What? It's customary, right? To bring a gift whenever you visit someone?

THEO  
Well yes, but... Thank you.

LEE  
It's a good custom. So...  
You're American.

THEO  
I was.

LEE  
Ha. Where from? Originally?

THEO  
Ohio. Farm country. You?

LEE  
Here and there.  
Never been to Ohio though.  
Leave anybody behind?

THEO  
Not really-

LEE  
*(shaking his head, pleased)*  
No, me neither. "Family," right?  
What's that? Ha.

*Pause.*

LEE  
How long you been here?

THEO  
Few years.

LEE



Uh-huh, but really, how long?

*Anya re-enters without Kitty, drinking milk.*

THEO  
Since '53.

LEE  
When in '53?

THEO  
January.

LEE  
*(nodding)*  
Oh wow.

THEO  
What?

LEE  
Nothin', you just... got out just before they zapped the Rosenbergs.

THEO  
That's true.

LEE  
Yeah, wow, what a tragedy, right? How's...  
*(conspiratorially)*  
How's life here?

THEO  
It's... not bad.

LEE  
It's 'different'? I'll tell ya, I barely been here forty-eight hours... People just seem more Real.

*Theo clears his throat.*

THEO  
"Moscow... how many strains are fusing  
in that one sound for Russian hearts!  
What store of riches it imparts!"

LEE  
What's that?

THEO  
Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin. His words open doors in this land.

LEE  
(*nodding*)  
Okay, you'll have to teach me some. Haha, so, how we gonna do this?

THEO  
The / lessons-?

LEE  
The tutoring, yeah.

THEO  
Oh. Well, normally I meet students / at-

LEE  
Could we meet here?  
Yeah, see, I'm at the Metropol hotel 'til all's settled? Yeah, yeah, which isn't too far a walk.  
That'd be helpful. At least until I get a real home set up.

THEO  
Uh sure.

LEE  
Great. Thank you, Theo.  
(*to Anya*)  
Spaseebo.

ANYA  
Pachemú on menjá blagadarít?  
(Why's he thanking me?)

THEO  
Patamúshta on... blagadáren. Nje znáju. Ja at nevo' izbávljus'.  
(Because he's... thankful, I don't know. I'll get rid of him-)

ANYA  
On zhe nash gost'.  
(He's our guest, why're you being rude?)

THEO

Ty zab?la, shto li...

(Have you forgotten what / we're-)

LEE

What're you saying-?

THEO

Sorry. Uh...

Can we offer you a drink. Something to eat?

LEE

Is that what she said?

(to Anya)

Vy krasávitsa!

(You are a beautiful woman.)

ANYA

Spasíba za kamplimjént.

(Oh! Thank you.)

LEE

Pojalusta.

THEO

Lee? You've... studied Russian before?

LEE

Took a basics course in the marines. Already forgotten most of it.

THEO

Good. You have a foundation, it'll help us.

LEE

I was under the impression that this would be my first lesson. That's what Rimma told me- Look, forgive me for coming on strong, it's just when you've waited as long as I have for your life to start, I gotta make up for lost time. I need all the time. I have plans.

*Lee nods.*

*Silence.*

LEE

Mind if we do a little now?

THEO

Well uh, Âlek... Oh, here are your papers back...

LEE

I'm interrupting something. Between you and your wife.

THEO

We're not married, we're progressive.

Haha, we just learned some big news, that's all.

LEE

I hope it's good news.

THEO

*(nodding)*

It is, it's just um... that she, Anya, is pregnant.

LEE

Holy smoke...

That's great, that's terrific!

Are...you...the...ff / father?

THEO

I am.

LEE

Great! Haha! Let's crack open that bottle and toast you two.

THEO

Why not

*Anya lights a cigarette.*

LEE

*(to Anya)*

Congratulations-

*(to Theo)*

How do you say "congratulations"?

THEO

Uh Poz-drav-ljájju.

LEE  
(to Anya)  
Pazdravljáju!  
(to Theo)  
How d'you say Baby?

THEO  
Oh yes, Dyet-ka.

ANYA  
Vy skazali yemu?  
(You told him?!)

LEE  
Pozdravleniya dyetka!

THEO  
(shrugging)  
I did...

LEE  
(to Anya)  
You shouldn't be smoking-

THEO  
I'll get glasses, excuse me-  
Theo moves towards the kitchen

ANYA  
Shto kchórtavaj máteri praiskhódit?  
(What the hell's going on?)

THEO  
Vsjo fparjádke. On prósta studjént... Amerikánets.  
(Everything's fine, he's just a student. The American...)

*Theo offers an awkward grin to Lee  
Theo exits to the kitchen.*

LEE  
Pozdravleniya dyetka!

ANYA  
Spaseeba.

LEE

It's hot in here.

Uh mind if I...

*Lee opens the window.*

LEE

You have any friends as pretty as you?

*Lee and Anya smile pleasantly at each other.*

LEE

Children are the future.

*(beat, stares at Anya)*

You're why I need to learn Russian.

Let you in on a little secret:

There's greatness inside of me. I'm up to the task.

*Theo reenters with three glasses.*

*Lee opens the vodka, begins pouring.*

ANYA

Kak jevo zavút?

*(What's his name?)*

LEE

Alek!

*Anya and Theo freeze.*

LEE

She asked my name, right?

*(proud)*

I understood that!

THEO

Good. That's good.

ANYA

Kahgdá prijéchal?

*(When did he arrive?)*

THEO  
Alek, when did you get to Moscow?

LEE  
On the fifteenth, I think...

*Three shots have been poured.*

THEO  
Oh-  
(to Anya)  
Na dnjakh.  
(Only a few days ago.)

LEE  
Barely know what day it is...

LEE  
Don't know what it was like for you, Theo, but my entry's been a roller coaster, I hope everything'll turn out A-okay.  
(raises his glass)  
To a healthy baby boy or girl!

THEO  
Za zdaróvje násheva rebjónka!  
(To the health of our child.)

*They clink glasses and drink.*

*Anya takes the bottle and pours three more shots.*

ANYA  
A tepér' za násheva góstja. Shto takóje snim?  
(Ah! Now, for our guest. Does he have anything special...?)

THEO  
Ah, Anya wants to make a toast in your honor.

LEE  
(to Anya)  
Oh, that's kind of you-

THEO  
Is there something special-? I guess, welcome / to Rus-

LEE  
Sure, tomorrow's my birthday.

*Pause.*

THEO  
Oh...  
Záftra jevó den' razhdénija.  
(Tomorrow is his Birthday.)

ANYA  
Nje imjeníny?  
(Oh! Name-day?)

THEO  
Pazháluj njet.  
(Probably not...)  
You mean birthday, not namesday, right?

LEE  
Come again?

THEO  
Here um people celebrate their Name-day,  
Never mind-  
Nje imjeníny.  
(It's not his nameday-)

LEE  
What's a namesday?

ANYA  
(*toasting*)  
Fsjevó kharósheva!  
(Many years.)

THEO  
The feast day of the saint you were named after...

LEE  
Oh.

THEO  
Alek is short for Alexander?

LEE  
No, Alek's not my name.



THEO  
Oh!?

LEE  
It's a nickname - not trying to pull a fast one but... Been using it just 'cus... Just easier.

THEO  
Oh

LEE  
My name's Lee. Which people here say sounds Chinese and laugh so - haha - so, been using Alek.

LEE  
Hell, new country, new name, why not?

ANYA  
Sdnjom razhdénija  
(Happy Birthday.)

THEO  
You have a preference?

LEE  
Huh...  
(*he thinks*)  
Don't matter.

ANYA  
FSJEVÓ KHARÓSHEVA!  
(MANY YEARS!)

THEO  
Happy Birthday!

LEE  
Thank you!

*They clink and drink.*

THEO  
Now Lee, I'm / sorry-

ANYA  
Tvaja óchered' praiznjestí tost.  
(Your turn to make / a toast-)

LEE (CONT'D)

You two hungry? I got so much food--  
(*re: the paper sack*)  
Salami, bread, cured sturgeon, pastila...

LEE

I was going to feast by myself, you know, back in the hotel but there's more than enough.

ANYA

Ty praignjesí tost. Jesli my snim praignósim tost, a ty njet, grazít njeshást'jem.  
(Make a toast, it'll be bad luck if he does, I do, and you don't.)

ANYA

Shto on gavarít?  
(What's he saying?)

LEE

What's she saying?

*Beat.*

THEO

On khóchet správit' den' razhdénija snámi.  
(He wants to share with us his birthday feast.)

*Anya looks at Lee's offering.*

ANYA

Nu shtosh. Ras on khóchet, to njepremjénna náda tak.  
(We must share his birthday feast if that's his wish.  
We should have more friends like you.)

*She exits to the kitchen.*

THEO

She's very impressed by your generosity.

LEE

You're doing me a favor. I bought too much.

THEO

How old will you be?

LEE

Twenty.

THEO  
Twenty?

*Anya reenters with plates, knives & forks, begins making plates for everyone.*

THEO  
Ánya, Aljóku ispólnitsja dvádsat' ljet.  
(Anya, Lee will be twenty years old.)

ANYA  
Takój maladój.  
(So young!)

LEE  
What?

THEO  
You're young.

LEE  
Feels old.

THEO  
"K bede neopytnost' vedot"  
( "Inexperience leads to misfortune" ~ Pushkin )

LEE  
You're nice people.  
Nicest I've met since I got here.

ANYA  
(with a full mouth)  
Éta tak fkúsna!  
(This is delicious.)

LEE  
Spasiba.

*They eat.*

LEE  
Not that everyone I've met has been disagreeable... That's what I want from you, Theo, I want to learn how to get along with every citizen on a day to day basis and have smart, 'great' conversations, 'Big Idea' conversations...

ANYA  
Shto on gavarít?  
(What's he saying?)

LEE  
Staying here will be a dream come true.

THEO  
On khóchet v?uchit' rússki jaz?k dlja tavó,  
shtóby lúchshe panját' vjelíkikh rússkikh  
myslítelej.  
(He wants to learn Russian so he can know  
more about great Russian thinking.)

LEE  
I must stay here. I will stay here.

THEO  
You seem like a very decent person to me, Alek.

LEE  
Thank you, Theo.

*They eat.*

ANYA  
On namjéren astátsja?  
(He's planning to stay?)

THEO  
Da.

LEE  
(beat)  
You haven't asked me why I want to live in The Soviet Union.

THEO  
Not for the 'Big Idea' conversations?

LEE  
That's only part of the reason.  
*(wipes his mouth)*  
Don't know if you still follow but there's an election in the U.S. next year. Is that a record  
player?

THEO  
It is.

*Theo pours three more shots.*

LEE

Could we listen to some music?

THEO

Please, you're our guest.

*Lee talks as he looks through the record collection.*

LEE

Big election. Global influence. That's why I'm here. Last month Premiere Kruschev spoke at the U.N., I'm sure you heard cuz boy howdy his words got folks' heated. I agree with him. Marx said, Capitalism, by definition, must conquer the whole earth for its markets. With its promises of more time, more efficiency, more products... Old news started a hundred years ago, y'know, John Henry and the machine. Increased efficiency forces man to keep up with machines instead of the other way around. Speed likes repetition not variety, hence loss of diversity, creativity, loss of the self, annihilates space with time, promises speed as a currency until life is moving beyond the capacity of humans and we will cease to exist. So... I'm here. I think Lenin, Marx, Bachunan... they saw, and this "Great Experiment" is the only real resistance to total commodification.

THEO

The 'Now' is what holds time together.

LEE

Huh?

THEO

You're talking about the destruction of the 'Now'. Aristotle.

LEE

That sounds right.

*Lee chooses a record, puts it on and rejoins the table.*

LEE

You know, minutes and seconds were only invented to exploit workers. Didn't exist before the industrial revolution.

*Theo raises his glass.*

THEO

To your time in the Soviet Union!

*As they all raise their glasses, “Stars and Stripes Forever” by John Phillip Sousa comes blaring from the record player.*

LEE  
Ha-ha!

*They clink glasses and drink.*

CURTAIN FALLS

(SUGGESTED INTERMISSION)

INTERLUDE

*Lights to black.*

*In Black...  
Two small, floating lights enter.*

*Stage lights rise revealing the floating lights to be The Cat’s eyes. When stage lights are at full, the CAT pushes a button on the side of its head, switching the lights off.*

*It places a new placard on the easel...*

CARD 13  
“PURGATORY”

*It flips it, it’s SOLID RED on the other side.*

PART TWO: PURGATORY

*The Moscow flat, about an hour after the end of Act I.*

*There’re scraps of food left over on the table.*

*Anya and Lee are tipsy and animated. Theo is drunk and sluggish. They laugh.*

ANYA  
*(through tears of laughter)*  
I fkantsé kantsóv jevó nashlí bjez shtanóv...  
Pytayas' mochtit'sya na malen'kuyu sobachku  
*(And they finally found him, wearing no pants, chasing the little dog, and trying to pee on him.)*

*She attempts to pantomime this.*

LEE  
What?

THEO  
*(chuckling)*  
They found the little boy running around without his pants, and trying to pee on the little dog.

*Lee laughs and nods to Anya that he understands.*

*Anya, still laughing, falls back down on the bed.*

*More vodka is poured.*

LEE  
Haha yeah... Yeah.  
I always got blamed at that age for doing stuff like that boy did *(laughs)* Little older.  
'Cept I didn't do it.  
Most the time. Ha sometimes.

*Anya curls up, fixes her gaze on Lee.*

LEE  
God, teachers, adults always blaming me. Pretty soon kids got the idea they could get away with murder if they fingered me. Yeah. *(chuckles)* Gets so you think: that's how things are always gonna be. I got sick of the shit end of the stick, that was fifth grade - just stopped going.

ANYA  
Shto on gavarít?  
*(What's he saying?)*

LEE  
...to School. Rode the subway all over, went to museums, libraries instead...

THEO  
Shhh. Ja tebjé patóm skazhú.  
*(Shh, I'll tell you later.)*

LEE  
Read, learned that 'great men' always have to suffer for their greatness *(he tears up)* That was a relief. Took two months before the school dragged my butt back. I'd changed. Learned perspective. Fixed my sites on bigger fish. When greatness knocks, I was gonna be ready. No matter what form it's in, I'll claim it.

THEO  
My greatness lies in my insignificance.

*Beat, then Theo and Lee burst out laughing.*

THEO  
It's true.

LEE  
Everything has brought me here to my unique chair at the table of history.

ANYA  
Shto on gavarít?  
(What's he saying?)

THEO  
*(very drunk)*  
I hope, for your sake, you find your greatness here. In Russia.  
*(beat)*  
That tonight is the beginning...

ANYA  
Shto ty gavarísh?  
(What are you saying?)

THEO  
Shhh. Wait. Ja gavarjú iz sérdtsa. Vsjo éta fpólnje fserjóz.  
(I am speaking from my heart. Serious matters.)

ANYA  
*(still laughing)*  
Pochjemu?  
(Why?)

*Theo waves her away.*

THEO  
She is telling me... She is saying I am being too serious. And I tell her now, I want to be serious, and tell you what is in my heart.

LEE  
Let it out.

THEO  
Hmm? You bring something out of me, Alek.  
*(beat)*



What was I saying?

LEE

You were... Uh... You were talking about me leaving... living here in Russia.

THEO

Yes!

ANYA

Ty pjan.

(You're drunk.)

THEO

Shush!

ANYA

Ty pachemú cebjá tak glúpa vedjosh? My vjecjelímcja.

(Why are you being so stupid now? We were having fun.)

THEO

Shto? Ty malchí! Daj mnje gavarít'

(What! You be quiet. Let me speak.)

*Anya imitates Theo like he was some big dumb "serious" monkey.*

ANYA

*(mocking)*

Daj mnje gavarít'

("Let me speak.")

THEO

What was I saying?

*(beat)*

You think they'll let you stay?

LEE

Might come to a showdown but I got an ace up my sleeve.

THEO

Oh yeah?

*Lee nods.*

*Anya, on the bed, quietly sings "We Three..." in broken English.*

LEE

In the marines I was a radar technician. All the codes I memorized gotta be worth something. I'm ready to sing.

THEO

You got a song?

LEE

A whole opera.

*They laugh.*

THEO

Oh oh, I know something you're gonna get a kick out of...  
We're in the presence of greatness.

LEE

That so.

THEO

Anya's last name is Pavlichenko.  
Ring a bell?

LEE

No.

THEO

I guess maybe you're too young, wow.  
You never heard of Lyudmila Pavlichenko?

ANYA

Ugh!

*Anya exits to the kitchen.*

THEO

She hates when I talk about this.

*Theo gets a journal from the desk, from the journal he pulls out a letter.*

LEE

She's a special woman.

THEO  
Who?

LEE  
Anya.

THEO  
I love her, like Onegin loved Tatiana, Romeo loved Juliet, Anya is my other half....

LEE  
To Russian women.

*They clink glasses and take a sip.*

THEO  
But Anya's sister? Is the world's greatest female sniper!

LEE  
Her sister?

THEO  
Three-hundred-and-nine confirmed nazi kills in World War 2.

LEE  
That's a number!

*Theo pantomimes picking off nazis with a sniper rifle.*

THEO  
In '42, she was the first Soviet citizen invited to the white house.

LEE  
Wow.

THEO  
And here's the amazing part, she visited the base I was stationed on.

LEE  
And you were there?

THEO  
On that day!

LEE  
Small world.

THEO  
When I met Anya and learned her last name, I knew it was fate! Here's a letter Lyudi wrote me. She came and visited us and here look at the stamp... Has her picture on it.

LEE  
Holy shit, she has her own stamp?

THEO  
Yes!

LEE  
That's impressive.

THEO  
I knew you'd appreciate that, but...

LEE  
Huh?

THEO  
I can top it.

*Theo plays "Miss Pavlichenko" by Woody Guthrie - this should be a single play maybe 45 rpm record.*

LEE  
This about Anya's sister?

*Theo nods.  
Theo and Lee listen until...*

*Anya enters and stops the record with a scratch.*

*Theo raises his glass only to discover it is empty.  
Then, indicating for Lee to fill the glasses.*

THEO (CONT'D)  
Please...

LEE  
The well is dry.

THEO  
*(horrificed)*  
What!

LEE  
We've drunk it all.

THEO  
All? Shto nam djélat'?  
(What will we do?)

ANYA  
Schto?  
(What?)

THEO  
Kónchilas' vódka.  
(We've no more Vodka.)

ANYA  
My búd'em trézvy.  
(We will become sober.)

THEO  
NYET!

ANYA  
Da.

THEO  
Wait, my jug of wine!  
*Theo gets his jug and pours it around.*

THEO  
I hope this evening will mark the beginning of a fruitful new life for you here in Russia. I too am an adopted son of mother Russia, but I speak for all when I say: You are welcome here.  
*(beat)*  
AND you are precisely the sort of generous, intelligent, hard-working man we need contributing to "The Great Experiment." You are a man of great Ideas.

LEE

Thank you. I'm just hoping they let me stay.

I really need to stay. Hope I make a good enough impression on the right people.

THEO

If you act just as you have toward us... If you act yourself. I have very little doubt...

I have a strong feeling...

I have to use the toilet.

*Theo darts to a stand.*

THEO

Excuse me.

*He begins his stumble to the toilet.*

THEO

I'll only be a moment.

*As he navigates into the hallway, his shoulder hits the wall.*

THEO

Ow. Oh my, look how happy I am.

*He opens the door to the toilet and pauses.*

THEO

Anya...

*(beat)*

Please share with Lee any thoughts you might have on how...

*Theo abruptly stops speaking, and bends over, still hanging on to the door.*

*He appears to be crying.*

*Both Lee and Anya rise.*

*Anya goes to Theo.*

*Just as she puts her hands on him,*

*He suddenly peels with hysterical laughter.*

THEO

*(through tears of laughter)*

She doesn't speak English. I spoke to her in English. She doesn't speak English. You don't speak English.

*(catching his breath)*

Oh, I'm drunk.

(*Beat. To Anya*)  
I love you.

ANYA  
Góspadi blagaslaví!  
(God bless us.)

LEE  
Amen.  
Theo nods, opens his mouth, enters the toilet and closes the door.

*Anya and Lee stand in silence.*

ANYA  
(re: Theo)  
On pjani.  
(He's drunk.)

LEE  
Sure.

*Anya and Lee stare at each other in silence.*

LEE  
You are lovely.  
Vy krasávitsa!  
(You're beautiful)

ANYA  
(*in English with Russian accent*)  
Oh...Tsank you.

LEE  
I'm just calling a spade a spade. Uh...

*Silence.*

ANYA  
American...

LEE  
Me? Yes. American.

ANYA

Me... uh... Ukraiynka, no Russian.

LEE

*(pointing)*

You're Ukrainian.

ANYA

Tak. Lviv.

(Yes, Lviv (in Ukrainian))

LEE

Ah. Uh-huh.

I don't speak any Ukrainian.

*Anya points at Lee.*

ANYA

Ohio?

LEE

Ohio? Oh, no. No. New York and Texas-

ANYA

Oh! Texas... Big!

LEE

Bolshoi, yeah.

ANYA

Oh, "bolshoi". Good.

LEE

Thanks.

*Silence*

ANYA

Me, Ukrainka, Lviv.

*(pointing at Lee)*

American, Texas.

LEE

*(nodding)*

That's right.



*(beat)*

You think Theo's all right?

BOBCHINSKY

Here's the moment I spoke of at the beginning.

*Bobchinsky flips the card to BLUE.*

BOBCHINSKY

So you can understand everything.

ANYA

This is like talking to kitty.

Do you want a cat? Take our cat, please.

LEE

You say cat?

ANYA

She's so nice. Ferocious, too.

This is all over now, we're all gone.

I imagine it'll be empty for a while.

Do you want to carve your name under the window sill?

LEE

Theo's a lucky man.

ANYA

Why did he tell you I'm pregnant?

LEE

I could listen to you talk and talk.

ANYA

What do you want, American man?

LEE

'American' - I got that.

ANYA

I am pregnant. Do you want to know a secret? I was before. Then an old witch used my belly as her cauldron, pushed in her spoon and stirred and stirred, took it away, among other things, took it all away.

*Her eyes grow as wide as saucers, she shakes a memory from her mind's eye - this is almost a convulsion, a sharp jolt from a chill up the spine, which lands between her eyes.*

LEE

You okay?

ANYA

Love is terrible. Not love. Yes... love. Turned me into a little liar. My best friends and I would meet in a meadow, our "*dol gwas*" We sharpened ourselves, cast spells, called ourselves the "Meadow Dwelling Allies," Oh how silly, swearing eternal allegiance in blood to each other, forever, or until some dreamy man said I was the center of the heavens and earth again, said I know how we can be alone. I barely slept the night before, instead, all night I listened to two clocks compete. My heart synchronizing with the silence between ticks. After picking at the breakfast mama made, I "forgot" to meet the Meadow Dwelling Allies, an act of treason, I ran to dress myself in feelings of Cherishment. What else was there? From start to finish this was a secret that I entered all shallow breaths and racing heart, spinning mind, a maniac in a brown wool skirt. With ruddy burning cheeks.

We were on the sixth floor, books all around, a storage room above the opera house. I looked out the window at the blue sky. There was a parade below. It was a special day, thirty-five days after my fourteenth birthday He gave me vodka, which I had had before. Little tastes. Not so much as this. This spun my head, unraveled my sense. Three shots. First one slow. He laughed, I did, too. Turned my head and saw a book on the floor "Rule of the Spear." Two more shots, quicker - two, three. We sat in the red corner, where an icon hung, Saint Ivan of Patmos - Eyes gazing up, fists up near his throat, fiery halo bursting out his head. His touch turned my flesh as hard and cold as winter metal. "I'm sorry." He asked how come he didn't fill me with blood, because I did this for him. It upset him, hurt him he said. I didn't know. I watched his big face swell above me, become ugly, a swollen tick. He had been all I ever wanted to see and, just like that, it changed... The ugliest image. I cannot imagine. I can't picture it, even now, if I squeeze my eyes tight and try and try... I don't know how I ever saw it any other way. I didn't know anything anymore but the icon of Saint Ivan, the boring blue sky, the parade below and the clock stopping at half past noon. Smell of wood oil, old paper, and fresh sweat. His. Drops in my mouth, in my ears. Crushed between the rhythm of his weight and the floor boards, I managed little pulls of air. I sat up after. The back of my shirt was too dirty to go home, not to mention my skirt. I had to get either clean or dirtier. I walked down the stairs, down to the second floor, alone. I've lived another fourteen years since. All that time. Whenever I look at a clock, it's usually half past noon it's true. There are moments so poisoned, time can no longer grow in that moment. Moments that roll through my memory, over and over, sometimes it's all I can remember. At some point, my mind stopped making new memories. I only call back the old, compare them with the present and regret.

LEE

God, you're beautiful. I think I love you. I resent everything that isn't you. I need to dance with you...

*He drops the needle... "Miss Pavlichenko" plays. Lee starts to dance, goes to Anya who resists.*

LEE

Aw c'mon Miss Pavlichenko...

BOBCHINSKY

If you take this small interaction away, Lee's, I mean Alek's world shaking act doesn't happen, other moments in his life can come & go, mix & match... What you just witnessed is an essential ingredient for the world as you know it. I don't understand it myself but that's the reality.

*Lee claps to the rhythm.*

*Anya reluctantly complies.*

*They dance.*

*Theo comes out, sits on the floor in the hall and watches.*

LEE

I'm sorry, I don't speak as pretty as you do. If you could be mine, I'd stay here just for you.

*(looks at his watch)*

Oh criminy! Crap! Crap! Uh... I've gotta go. I'm late. Shoot! I was suppose to meet Rimma at the hotel half an hour ago! I'm sorry, I-

*Lee stops at the door*

LEE

Tell Theo...

THEO

I'm right here.

LEE

Oh. Uh... Theo. Good bye, nice to meet you.

THEO

What? Wait, don't go-

LEE

I gotta run. I was suppose to meet Rimma at Intourist-

THEO

Just a moment, let / me get-

LEE

I'll be in touch about the tutoring. Nice meeting you both.

*(to Anya)*

Dosvidanya.

THEO

Alek...

*Lee opens the door.*

*The CAT is standing outside the door. It enters carrying a ball of yarn, the loose end goes off stage. He hands the yarn to Lee, who hands it back to the Cat.*

*Lee exits.*

*Cat presents an larger-than-normal calling card to Anya - on one side is a black star on a white background, the flipside is a white star on a black background.*

ANYA

Thank you.

*Knock at the door.*

*Theo opens the door. Bobchinsky stands in the threshold.*

BOBCHINSKY

You live here?

THEO

I do.

BOBCHINSKY

You're James?

THEO

Yes.

BOBCHINSKY

*(offering his card)*

Boris Yagasovitch BOBchinsky - at your service.

THEO  
Hello.

BOBCHINSKY  
May I come in?

THEO  
Please. Thank you for coming.

*Bobchinsky enters, carrying the carpet bag.*

*Theo closes the door.*

BOBCHINSKY  
Comrades, time stops for no one,  
(to Anya)  
Except maybe you...  
The task at hand is not an easy one, I will need your full cooperation. Do what I say, no questions. Otherwise I will walk out that door, you'll never hear from me again. Agreed?

ANYA AND THEO  
Yes.

BOBCHINSKY  
Perfect. You must be Anya. You're pregnant?

ANYA  
Yes.

BOBCHINSKY  
And James has confessed to living all this time under a false identity?

THEO  
Yes.

THEO  
And now you both want to leave?

THEO  
Yes.

*Bobchinsky looks around*

BOBCHINSKY

Mm-hm... Who was the young man who just left? More to him than meets the eye, am I right?

THEO

Seemed normal to me.

ANYA

I saw it.

BOBCHINSKY

I know, I know you did.

Hard to look at, isn't it?

ANYA

Yes, but you can't look away.

BOBCHINSKY

No, once you see it you can't un-see it. What did you see?

ANYA

I don't know how to say, it was unreal, uncluttered.

THEO

What're you talking about?

*Bobchinsky produces a pocket note pad, which he references and scribbles in.*

BOBCHINSKY

*(listing off)*

Bleeding wall, ball of wires...

THEO

I'm sorry, I must've cracked a pipe-

BOBCHINSKY

Tut tut, try not to speak unless spoken to.

*(to the CAT)*

Gleb!

*The CAT comes over.*

BOBCHINSKY

Gleb, will you- Oh, dear, how rude... Allow me to present to you Star, aka Central, aka Asterion... but I know it best as Gleb Minosovitch Dobchinsky.

*Dobchinsky, a.k.a. The CAT, bows.*

BOBCHINSKY

*(to the CAT)*

Please make us some tea. And find a nice, big bowl. Not wooden.

*Dobchinsky nods, goes to the kitchen. Intermittent loud bangs and clangs.*

*Bobchinsky checks a pocket watch.*

BOBCHINSKY

One minute ahead of schedule!

*(to Theo)*

Excellent, James, get all of your identifying papers, everybody you've ever been, bring them to me.

THEO

Dr. Bobchinsky, where are we going-?

BOBCHINSKY

*(clapping)*

Hup hup! Times-a-wastin'

*Theo moves - gets papers from the desk drawers, from under the bed, he goes to the other rooms...*

BOBCHINSKY

Such simple creatures - you like your fish soup hot and your tickling under control.

*Dobchinsky enters with a big bowl.*

BOBCHINSKY

Thank you.

I believe every individual is born with a question, they repeat it over and over, to sing their fear to sleep: "How do I matter? How do I matter? How do I matter? How do I matter? Do I...? Mere conjecture, not my area of expertise. I received my doctorate in anthropophagy from Alexander Pearce University, Australia.

*Bobchinsky presents a business card to Anya.*

*Theo brings papers to Bobchinsky.*

BOBCHINSKY

How's it coming along?

THEO

I think I have everything.

BOBCHINSKY

Perfect.

THEO

Mine and Anya's.

*Bobchinsky grabs his carpet bag.*

BOBCHINSKY

Put them next to the bowl there. Now, I need you to change your clothes, we can't risk you being recognized, put on what's in this bag.

THEO

May I change in the wash closet?

BOBCHINSKY

Certainly.

*Theo takes the bag and exits to the WC.*

BOBCHINSKY

Poor boy, just craves structure.

*Dobchinsky (CAT) passes Theo while entering with the tea on a tray.  
Bobchinsky looks through the papers, then sees Dobchinsky hovering.*

BOBCHINSKY

Wipe that smile off your face.

*Dobchinsky turns the cat head around, switching the expression from a Smile to a Frown.  
Bobchinsky laughs to tears.*

BOBCHINSKY

That kills me. Every time.

*(re: papers)*

Anya, this is yours.

*Bobchinsky puts Anya's aside.*

*Theo's papers are put in the bowl.*

*Bobchinsky holds and lights one with a match while speaking...*



BOBCHINSKY

I'm here to free you from what has come before. Isn't that why our Heavenly Father sent His h'only son... Holy son- ONLY son (curing out of frustration) Jesus Christ!

*(shakes his head)*

Made him flesh. And blood. I'm O negative.

*All of Theo's papers are now burning in the bowl.*

BOBCHINSKY

Are you god-fearing, Anya? Do you kneel before the excoriating gaze of your maker? No? Me neither, I don't need church to marvel at my own shortcomings. My colleague here, however, *(points at CAT)* is of the ancient beliefs - a pagan. It's true. It and I don't agree on a single thing, which is why I like working with it. We compliment. It likes doing everything I don't. I prefer addressing men, It only talks to women. Go figure. Not sure what that's about. Two sides of the same coin never see eye-to-eye...

*(sings)*

"He sings Tomato and I sing To-mah-ta,

He says potato, and I say: Vodka"

Ha ha ha ha

I'm funny.

*Theo enters dressed as a clown.*

BOBCHINSKY

Looks like we're ready to go.

THEO

What about Anya?

BOBCHINSKY

She's staying here with Dobchinsky.

Bobchinsky opens the door.

THEO

*(to Anya)*

We'll meet up later. Don't worry everything is going according to plan.

BOBCHINSKY

Oh no. No, you'll never see each other ever again. Never.

*C'mon! Now!*

*Bobchinsky makes sounds like calling a dog.*

*Theo obeys.*

*Dobchinsky sits at the table with the tea set “staring” at Anya.*

*Dobchinsky pours tea, relishes the rising steam.*

*Dobchinsky takes off the Cat head.*

*Dobchinsky’s face is alarming. (Possible Dob has Neurofibromatosis.)*

*(Speaks with a slight lisp.)*

DOBCHINSKY

*(re: the hot tea)*

Schteam.

Transmutation. A miracle under our noshe. Water into Air.

Thish ish how it goesh, all things - right?

Nothing shtays the shame.

Tea?

ANYA

No.

DOBCHINSKY

Shuit yourshelf.

*Dobchinsky tries to set the alarm clock.*

ANYA

It’s broken.

DOBCHINSKY

*(mocking)*

“It’s broken”

*Dobchinsky sets it, places it on the desk.*

*Dobchinsky pulls a folded piece of paper from his pocket, opens it.*

DOBCHINSKY

Anya.

ANYA

Yes?

DOBCHINSKY

*(reading the paper)*

“The door ish always open.”

Do you undershtand?

*Anya lights a cigarette.*

ANYA

No.

*Dobchinsky goes to the door, opens it, ANYA 2 is on the other side.*

DOBCHINSKY

Pleashe join ush.

*Anya 2 enters, sits across the room from Anya.*

DOBCHINSKY

You two know each other?

ANYA

Yes.

DOBCHINSKY

I never shmoke. Makesh you old before your time.

May I touch your belly?

No? It's okay. I wouldn't want me to either.

*(pause)*

I've never gotten a woman pregnant.

*(silence)*

Did you hear me?

ANYA

/yes

DOBCHINSKY

I've never gotten a woman pregnant.

ANYA

Oh.

DOBCHINSKY

I don't have functioning teshticles. They never developed.

ANYA

I'm sorry.

DOBCHINSKY

It's a blessing. God spared me romanshe.

You're very beautiful. I could never shpeak to a woman ash beautiful ash you. I look like vomit, I shmell like shewage, I'm not risch...

ANYA

You don't smell... bad

DOBCHINSKY

I shtuff this coshtume full of lilac!

*(he pulls out a fistful and shows it)*

Otherwishe no one would come near me

And I love people, love children, love making them shmile.

ANYA

Is that why you wear that costume?

DOBCHINSKY

Excushe me?

ANYA

Is that why you wear a cat costume.

*Pause.*

DOBCHINSKY

I menashe.

ANYA

You menace?

DOBCHINSKY

Yesh. I'm good at it.

Would you like a demonshtation?

ANYA

No.

DOBCHINSKY

No. HA!

*(super serious)*

I'm going to tousch your belly?

*She doesn't respond.  
He puts his hand on her belly and speaks...*

DOBCHINSKY

Oh, little heart... You're two in one right now, I've never had that before. Would I see two lights go out? Boop...Boop.

Do you know what cutting someone's throat is like?

It's like cutting the string that's preventing a balloon from flying up to heaven.

*(menacing pause)*

Tada.

See what I mean? I mean.

ANYA

Mr. Dobchinsky, what are we doing here?

DOBCHINSKY

"We"? Are creating a metaphor for your lifelong suffering.

ANYA

Oh.

DOBCHINSKY

Let's role play. You be you, and I'll be me, and you have to guess who I am.

ANYA

You're Mr. Dobchinsky.

DOBCHINSKY

Nope.

ANYA

But your friend introduced you.

DOBCHINSKY

I have no friends.

ANYA

Your partner.

DOBCHINSKY

No partners.

ANYA

Who are you?

DOBCHINSKY

A riddle: first I make you sick, then I make you bleed, then I wreak havoc on your life, and yet you pray I'll watch you die - Who am I?

ANYA

I don't know.

DOBCHINSKY

First I make you sick, then I make you bleed, then I wreak havoc on your life, and yet you pray I'll watch you die.

ANYA

I don't know.

DOBCHINSKY

(lisp goes in and out)

"Oh how sad, oh how sorry, oh how silly."

This is what the woman who raised me would say whenever I cried. "Oh how sad, oh how sorry, oh how silly." She was eternally kind. She pulled me from the trash, where you left me, and loved me, through thick and thin, mama.

You breeders are so irresponsible.

*(a stage whisper)*

"The door is always open."

*Bobchinsky enters talking.*

BOBCHINSKY

This doesn't matter, you've seen the part that matters this rest is business as usual - the first trauma, the dissociative episode, the second trauma, the gulag, the unmarked grave... One in a billion is interesting.

*Anya 1 & 2 exit.*

## INTERLUDE

BOBCHINSKY

But... two years later, Gary Powers crashed, Wilt Chamberlain scored a hundred points in a single game, and there's a new, young U.S. President.

*Dobchinsky displays a new card.*

CARD A  
"MAY 20, 1962"

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE.

*May 20, 1962.*

*Triumfalnaya Ploschad (Triumphal Square). Benches and birch trees.*

*Extreme stage left (almost off stage) is a memorial statue of the poet Mayakovsky.*

*Atmospheric sounds of the area: birds, rustling trees, distant traffic...*

*Passerby move through the space - woman with a pram, old man, a woman in a Soviet military uniform, an 19th century poet, the CAT carrying a dozen red balloons, and on and on... They shouldn't appear all at once, they amble through the space, live their lives.*

*Over the course... Cat gives a balloon to everyone.*

*Lee, stylishly dressed and wearing sunglasses, enters carrying a small manila envelope.*

BOBCHINSKY

Lee's been working in a radio factory in Minsk, and after proposing to several women, a year ago he married a woman named Marina. Now he's trying to leave the Soviet Union, just wasn't up to his standards.

*He almost crosses the stage, stops, thinks, approaches the lady with the pram...*

LEE

*(cool, flirty)*

Pozjalusta.

Yesli veeznayu...

*The old man sits on a bench.*

*Lady with pram moves away from Lee, maybe exits.*

LEE

*(to the Lady)*

YA ne kusayus.

*(I don't bite)*

*(under his breath)*

Mat...

*(Fuck)*

*Lee sits on the bench with the old man, pulls papers from the envelope, regards them with disdain.*

*He cracks his neck, takes out a comb, runs it through his hair.*

*The old man (a ragged Theo) puts a cigarette in his mouth, feels his pockets, gives Lee a tap...*

THEO

*(to Lee)*

Plamya?

*(A light?)*

LEE

Nyet.

*Theo pulls matches from a pocket, lights his cigarette.*

*Lee mutters to himself as he reads the papers. He leans toward the old man...*

LEE

Pozjalusta, dedushka.

Yesli veeznayu...

THEO

Ya gavoreet Angleesky.

LEE

Pravda?

THEO

Yeah.

LEE

American?

*Theo nods.*

LEE

Ha what're the odds. Mind doing me a favor?

THEO

I'm waiting for someone but until they arrive...

LEE

Thanks, um...

*Shows Theo the papers, checks his watch.*



LEE

I'm headed to turn these in...

You mind giving them a once over? I'm bad at paperwork, thanks-

THEO

Don't thank me yet. What am I looking / for-?

LEE

Any mistakes.

*Theo reads.*

THEO

You don't want me reading these, friend-

LEE

I do, please. I wouldn't care if you're KGB, honestly, I'm not hiding anything, I need help with this.

*Theo nods, looks around.*

LEE

You know how it is here, one little mistake and-and that's it, you lose your one shot, who knows if you'll get another...

THEO

*(offering his hand)*

James.

LEE

Oh sure, Lee.

*They shake.*

THEO

Lee?

LEE

Yeah.

*As Theo reads, Lee taps his foot, shifts in his seat.*

LEE

Reading's never been my strong suit.

I have something called dyslexia - words jumble, gets worse with nerves, reading Russian right now's near impossible.

*Lee's looking over Theo's shoulder.*

THEO

You're going back to the U.S.?

LEE

Trying to...

*(beat)*

I got here forty years too late. Who knew the revolution was the high water mark, this place's going backwards ever since. The future's in Cuba.

*(pointing at the paper)*

My wife helped, that's why the handwriting changes-

THEO

You're married?

LEE

Yeah, just over a year.

THEO

Is it a happy marriage?

LEE

The best.

THEO

Children?

LEE

One on the way-

THEO

She's pregnant!

LEE

Uh-huh.

THEO

Excited to be a father?

LEE  
Sir / I have to-

THEO  
James.

LEE  
James uh I have to turn these forms in today, thank you-

THEO  
Apologies.  
I'm being nosey.

LEE  
It's okay.

*Theo reads.*  
*Theo flips a page, then another...*  
*Lee paces.*

LEE  
Look at this, I'm sweating like a pig.

*Takes off his jacket, drapes it over the bench.*

LEE  
Can't tell you how many jackets I've lost this way.  
Get too warm, take it off, leave it someplace...  
How's it looking?

*Theo produces a flask from his coat, and offers it to Lee.*

THEO  
Here.

LEE  
*(re: the flask)*  
What is it?

THEO  
Where are we?  
*(beat)*  
It's vodka.

*Lee accepts the flask, takes a swig, hands it back.*

*Theo takes a swig.*

THEO

Helps with comprehension.

*One more swig, puts it back in his pocket.*

THEO

You live in Minsk?

LEE

Uh-huh, did I misspell it?

THEO

No...

*Theo flips through the papers, offers them back to Lee.*

THEO

Everything looks in order.

LEE

You sure?

THEO

Far as I can tell.

LEE

Great.

THEO

What's the 'H' stand for?

LEE

*(checking his watch)*

Huh?

THEO

Your middle initial.

LEE

Harvey.

*(checks his watch)*

Can I get another quick taste? Please, the-?

THEO

Oh sure.

*Hands flask to Lee, who drinks.*

*In the background, passerby continue to move about, the Cat gives balloons, cutting the strings with a pocket knife before handing them out.*

THEO

Have as much as you need.

LEE

Thanks.

THEO

Plenty more...

*(pause)*

You ever see the movie with Jimmy Stewart? About the...

LEE

Invisible rabbit no one can see but him.

THEO

Uh-huh.

LEE

Yeah, I've seen it.

THEO

That's what I thought of when you said Harvey.

*They pass the flask back and forth.*

LEE

Never thought much of Jimmy Stewart, all his stu-stuttering and...

*Lee imitates Jimmy Stewart.*

THEO

"It's a Wonderful Life"?

LEE  
Claptrap.

THEO  
Who do you like?

LEE  
Actors?

*Theo nods.*

LEE  
Van Heflin.

THEO  
Oh, he's good in "Shane."

LEE  
He's excellent. You ever see him in "Johnny Eager"?

THEO  
No.

LEE  
That's good acting.

THEO  
Huh. You don't recognize me do you?

LEE  
No. Sorry.

THEO  
It was your birthday, your twentieth / birthday -

*Lee stands, gobsmacked.*

LEE  
Holy shit.

THEO  
You must be twenty-two now-?

LEE

Twenty-two, yes...

That was you?!

THEO

Great number, twenty-two. Multiples of eleven are good, eleven, twenty-two, and so on... They signify renewal.

LEE

That was you!?

THEO

Yes.

LEE

You look... different.

THEO

Younger? Haha...

LEE

I had just arrived.

THEO

I remember.

LEE

Wow... That was you...

I think about that day a lot.

THEO

Me too.

*Pause.*

LEE

What's... happened in your life?

THEO

I was in a gulag.

LEE

Oh.

THEO

Yes, for nine months until Krushschev shut them down.

LEE

Oh.

THEO

Thank you for asking.

LEE

And... um... Anya?

THEO

Oh...

I don't know.

LEE

Uh-huh.

Amazing to see you again. Thank you again for your help. And the vodka.

What a coincidence.

THEO

Here for your entrance and now for your exit.

LEE

Yes.

Yes.

*(checks his watch)*

I should go.

THEO

Go get 'em. Good luck. You're young, so much life ahead of you. You'll be great. I'll tell everyone

"I knew you when."

LEE

Good bye.

THEO

Good luck.

LEE

Thank you.

*Lee exits.*



*Theo sits.*

*The Cat has three balloons left.*

*Bobchinsky enters.*

BOBCHINSKY

It's twelve-thirty in Moscow, most of what's happening doesn't matter.

*Bobchinsky shrugs a "meh."*

BOBCHINSKY

Go have a drink.

*The Cat takes its knife pops the first one. Pause. Then pops the next one.*

Black Out.

**END OF PLAY**