

CHARACTERS

Dr. Ava Drozdov	A professor of literature at Paira Caus Univesity
Stefan Welf	Her husband, a former child star
Petyr Welfzdov	Their son, a pianist and amateur songwriter
Benji Grayson	His boy friend, a computer programmer
Dr. Joanne Oats	A colleague of Ava's, a Doctor of Entomology

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

At rise: a large and empty room. At one point in time, it was the bedroom of a man in his early 20s. There's a keyboard or piano of sorts.

Somewhere in the room, there is a large pile of blankets or clothes. There is no bed. There's trash about and a single trashcan.

Somewhere in the room is a window. It's blocked off by a large block of wood.

Somewhere, maybe hidden, maybe obvious, is a CCTV camera.

A lock turns.

A woman, DR. AVA DROZDOV enters from the single door, whistling. She has a large tray. Perhaps from the tray, she takes a bag filled with trash and strews it about the room.

As she decorates, she transitions from whistling to singing a slower, sweeter version of "Bye, Baby.Bunting."

DR. DROZDOV

BYE, BABY BUNTING.
FATHER'S GONE A-HUNTING.
MOTHER'S GONE A-SEARCHING.
TO BURN A LITTLE RABBIT'S SKIN
TO TOSS THE BABY BUNTING WITH.

Satisfied with her job, she fishes out a nose plug and gloves. She removes the trashbag and holds it away from her. Whatever is inside is disgusting.

DR. DROZDOV

Petyr! Wake up. I'm home from work. I brought you breakfast: beer-soaked bread topped with garden mushrooms. You have some water, as well. It is from the tap, however. You had the last of the rain water this morning. I've replaced your waste bag, and your jug is near full, so I'll take that as well. Do good and eat whilst I throw this all away.

She takes the bag and a jug filled with piss and leaves, whistling once more.

From the pile of clothes and blankets, a disheveled, dirty man in his early 20s crawls out. PETYR WELFZDOV does not stand. He does not walk.

He rushes to the food and devours it like an animal.

DR. DROZDOV

(Off)

...course I trust her. We've been friends since my adjunct days.

STEFAN WELF

(Off)

And I trust my mother. You know what she would do if she saw him?

DR. DROZDOV

(Off)

Your mother forced you on that horrid, vapid show.

STEFAN WELF

(Off)

She'd call the UN to nuke the whole fuckin' state is what she'd do.

DR. DROZDOV

(Off)

Jo is not your mother.

STEFAN WELF

(Off)

And he's not her son. You think any--

DR. DROZDOV

(Off)

So we do nothing?

STEFAN WELF

(Off)

You know what? You're right. I'm sorry. You're always right.

DR. DROZDOV

(Off)

Thank you.

STEFAN WELF

(Off)

You're the published scholar! The mighty paragon of learning herself. I'm just an oaf. A stupid, vapid, fucking *plebian*. That a good enough word for you? I'm sorry I--fuck it. I'm getting a shower.

Dr. Drozdov knocks and then enters. She has a fresh jug. The nose clip and gloves are gone.

DR. DROZDOV

You remain out of your hovel. I see you ate as I suggested. Well done. This is your new jug. This time you might aim better, yes?

PETYR

Thank you.

DR. DROZDOV

The slime you secrete has made its way to your vocal chords. It seems to me you might soon only speak in titters and clicks. To think there soon comes a day we shall have no more conversation keeps me up later than the research for a new book.

PETYR

It feels the same to me.

DR. DROZDOV

Such an absurd assertion. Did you dream today? With Kafka, the one who morphed never dreamt in the first place. Ambition and imagination both were slave to content and mindless labor.

PETYR

I did dream.

DR. DROZDOV

Do you recall of what?

PETYR

We were on vacation at Panama City. A tsunami broke, and the streets became flooded, yet the sidewalks were dry. I swam in the streets. Everyone else walked the sidewalks. When I climbed out the street river, an officer handed me a blanket. I didn't know I was cold until I had some new warmth. When I stopped shivering, he shot me thrice and pushed me back into the waters. That's when I woke.

DR. DROZDOV

Were you human there?

PETYR

I was. Have you dreamt recently?

DR. DROZDOV

I signed books in a library so grand that all who stood in queue were the great men and women of history.

PETYR

What was the book about?

DR. DROZDOV

All of the pages were blank.

PETYR

When you can't understand me, you'll stop asking about dreams.

DR. DROZDOV

That is probable.

PETYR

If you stop asking, will I stop dreaming?

DR. DROZDOV

I'm not God, Petyr. I have no way of knowing, but yes, I believe so.

PETYR

Oh.

DR. DROZDOV

The metamorphosis will be complete.

PETYR

I see.

DR. DROZDOV

Are you frightened?

PETYR

Yes.

DR. DROZDOV

I see. Yet your father and I shall not let that come to pass. His love for you is what causes such passion. To that end, I have a colleague on her way to see you. Be not afraid of her.

PETYR

What is she is afraid of me?

DR. DROZDOV

Would you blame her? Her nose will not be accustomed to your... pheromones, we can call it. The scent is not pleasant. So you must understand, I freshen the air for her sake, not to antagonize you. The scent today is lemon.

She sprays the room furiously. Petyr coughs.

DR. DROZDOV

The way your body shivers, one might imagine you are coughing. Bear with it. The portraits made with tea-leaves are well worth the bitter swallows.

She leaves.

PETYR

Lemons. Smells like sepsis. I.. I miss Benji. I miss you.

There's a knock at the door, and then STEFAN enters.

STEFAN WELF

You heard the knock and you're still fucking out? Go. Go! Into your fucking shit hole. How often do I--No one wants to look at that. No one wants to--No one wants to see that--see that shit. Jesus Christ. I'm sorry it--I'm sorry if it hurts your feelings, but you know I, you know I don't know if I can remember you're my son if I see--remember who you are when you look like that. I don't want to hate you. I don't want to hate my son, so when you hear the fucking knock, you fucking cover yourself. You hear the--we're warning you, and you're supposed to hide. We're giving you--When you were a teenager you went on and on about privacy and us knocking and now we do and you just don't--you don't care at all. You're fucking--don't show me that shit.

PETYR

I'm sorry.

STEFAN WELF

As long as you know.

PETYR

I'll try to do better.

STEFAN WELF

The same way you were trying to get people to listen to that shitty--how you didn't move--the way you try all the time?

PETYR

I'll do better.

STEFAN WELF

Good.

PETYR

I'm sorry.

STEFAN WELF

Your mother sprayed that incense, didn't she? I love this smell.

PETYR

It makes me sick.

STEFAN WELF

You're a mistake in the code of the universe. Anything would make you ill. I keep telling Ava, I say, "When there's mistakes, you go back and do another take if you've got--if you've got time." Because, you know, you know, to move on, they rearrange the lights, and maybe they tear down the set, and if you don't do the take now, then, you know, your show is shit. Your show is shit or the studio makes you cut out the whole scene and she's too stubborn to cut out--I told her all this years ago. Do another take. Do another take. Another one for safety. You wouldn't--You used to be real good at math. I could shout some random problem and BAM, no eff--a second later, you'd pop off with the--compute it out like some computer. "I wanna be a mathematician!" So fuckin' cute, man. You see a little you saying some smart shit like that and you think, yeah, think this is a good--you don't need another take. But then you're watching the footage and he says--you see this continui--all of a sudden he's a "songwriter." Now look at--bad takes only get worse. We're trying, you know, to edit out the--to fix you up. We love you. But you're so un--You always look at me with those--What sort of father doesn't want to shoot him--It's hard knowing your kid is some cockroach. You can't keep reminding me--showing your--reminding me of my mistakes, Petyr. It's--you're--it's cruel. God I love this smell. I wish she sprayed it everywhere.

PETYR

I'm sorry.

STEFAN WELF

Don't apolo--you didn't do--Don't apologize.

PETYR

When I'm better, I'll go back to school. Major in calculus. I'll repay you.

STEFAN WELF

Are you scared of me?

PETYR

What?

STEFAN WELF

I'm not mad anymore. I'm not... mad. Your mother has one of her friends coming to see you. One of those blue-haired lesbian tour--She's another professor. She's just going to talk--You're only going to--Don't show yourself. You understand? Don't show yourself. I just want you to be safe and, and, and happy. Stay hidden. Be a good boy. Be a good... Be a good son. Not much time for extra takes this time. I need to find that can.

He wanders out.

Petyr is alone once more.

PETYR

I should ask for a candle.

SCENE 2

Petyr is alone, out in the open.

At a knock on the door, he rushes into hiding.

DR. DROZDOV and DR. JOANNE OATS
enter.

DR. OATS

Oh wow. Wow. You mentioned it, but this smell. Wow. This is after you administered--

DR. DROZDOV

I used an air freshener, yes. This is the mild smell.

DR. OATS

Really? It really hits you in the eyes. You know, you look at it, and it looks somewhat sterile despite the clutter, you know? But I suppose the waste disposal and all of that piles up over time. Wow. You really keep it contained, too. I couldn't smell anything over dinner.

DR. DROZDOV

The house has to remain liveable for the rest of us.

DR. OATS

No, of course. I'm impressed, is all. Wow. That's the...? It's recording now, right? Hi. Hi there. Wow. Did Stef set that up? I didn't take him for the handyman type.

DR. DROZDOV

If you can find a YouTube tutorial, his abilities boggle the mind.

DR. OATS

I've tried that with trimming the branches over my house, but I only really pulled a thigh muscle and got these scratches on my face.

DR. DROZDOV

People decry "elite professionals," but there is a reason they exist.

DR. OATS

Wow. Teasing from the woman who says yes to every kid looking for a thesis advisor. What was it last year? There was that “Voracious Desires: Literature and the Taboo Desire to be Consumed.”

DR. DROZDOV

There was merit in the paper.

DR. OATS

You laughed it out in the defense.

DR. DROZDOV

As is my right.

DR. OATS

I bet you blushed.

DR. DROZDOV

I did no such thing.

DR. OATS

I bet you went home and told Stef to tell you he was going to swallow you whole and digest you, and the weirdness was enough to finally get him to open his legs for you again.

DR. DROZDOV

Petyr! Come here.

Petyr comes out from his mass of fabrics,
though he continues to hide himself beneath a
blanket.

DR. OATS

Wow. The scuttling is louder than I thought it'd be. Wow. He's nocturnal, you said? That doesn't wake you up?

DR. DROZDOV

Ears grow blind with the same ease noses manage. Why are you hiding yourself?

PETYR

I was told to.