

THE CANTICLES OF ST. CECILIA

By Sean Harold &  
Daniel Perrone

Revised: 27 June 2013

FADE IN:

1 EXT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT 1

We are looking through an imposing glass door at an expansive, aristocratic lobby, where THEATER-GOERS numbering 40 or 50 kill time before a show. Some drink at the bar. Some filter towards a hall entrance. Others stand around conversing with each other. There is no sound.

A pair of hands concealed by elegant leather gloves appear. They push the door open, and the clamor of a thousand conversations surrounds us.

2 INT. CONCERT HALL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS 2

ANTON VOGEL, 50s, tall and wiry with legs like beanstalks. He wears a fine black tuxedo and a bowler cap, removed upon entering. He surveys the scenery like a conquering king and walks through the crowd like a ghost: nobody notices him.

As Anton walks, he passes a LARGE POSTER. It reads: Concert of New Music by George Pavel. Chelsea Gant, featured soloist. 7:30 p.m.

Underneath the text, a black and white photo of CHELSEA GANT (20s with classical beauty) playing her cello.

3 INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT 3

A mid-sized venue, tastefully retro. Its 150 seats fill gradually.

Musicians gather on stage and tune their instruments. The sounds float through the background. An elaborate set design sprawls across the stage. Gnarled contours stand aside stark edges in shapes straight out of Dr. Caligari, all painted in deep blacks and reds.

Anton moves about midway down the aisle. He takes his seat at row's edge, sneering surreptitiously at a MAN sitting across from him. Anton remains unnoticed.

4 INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 4

Drab and unattractive. Lighting is poor but strong enough to illuminate the dust and grime painted on every surface. Ancient wallpaper—a sickly green—peels off in chunks. The faint sound of ORCHESTRAL STRINGS penetrates the walls.

In the corner of the room, pages of a musical score are pasted to the wall. A MAN stands in the shadows, his back to us. This is GEORGE PAVEL (30s), our object of study. Soon we'll see his stern face and intense, black eyes.

But for now, he's just a tuxedo'd figure violently conducting an imaginary symphony.

A KNOCK at the door breaks the silence. George turns expectedly. He cracks open the door to reveal a MAN wearing a grotesque Commedia dell'arte mask. With the door open, the sounds of the orchestra grow louder.

GEORGE  
Is she here yet?

The man shakes his head no. George takes a deep breath.

5 INT. MARTY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

5

MARTY, an unshaven and slovenly man, is pacing around the room. Smoke wafts from a half-lit cigarello dangling from his mouth. George stands in the entryway.

GEORGE  
She's never been late to a concert.

MARTY  
You know this thing was supposed to start fifteen minutes ago, right?

George is silent.

MARTY (CONT'D)  
Because that usually counts as late.

GEORGE  
She's the soloist.

MARTY  
Yeah, so the poster tells me.

GEORGE  
How did you get a job working with human beings? Huh?

Marty picks up a poster from his desk and holds it towards George, pointing at "7:30".

MARTY  
My job is to make sure that this poster is as accurate as possible.

GEORGE  
Then we need to wait for Chelsea.

MARTY

Chelsea's already made my job impossible. At this point, I'm cutting my losses, so whoever this broad is--

GEORGE

She's my sister.

A beat.

MARTY

Sister or not, you've got two choices, George: scrap the piece, or scrap the concert.

6 INT. THEATER BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

6

George stands stolidly in the center of the room. Marty stands a bit behind him.

A troupe of actors and musicians rehearse. The performers wear different Commedia dell'arte masks, and the actors' movements are jagged and abrupt.

A string trio plays amid the actors -- an oppressive, dissonant piece -- the STABBING SOUNDS punctuate the movement of the actors around them. The trio's playing comes to a harsh climax and ends abruptly, along with the actors' dance-like choreography.

GEORGE

Let's begin.

7 INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

7

The seats are now all full. In the front row, a slight woman in her late 20s with fair skin and pitch-black hair. This is SOFIA, George's better half.

The chamber orchestra is on stage. George walks out. The audience applauds. George takes a brief bow before turning to the performers and raising his baton. In the audience, Anton smiles.

George's arms begin to move, and the performance begins.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: A piano melody. Slow and somber.

FADE IN:

8 INT. THE LION'S HEAD - NIGHT

8

An upscale restaurant, darkly lit and with little modern fanfare. The conversation is low, the decor is antiquated, and the PATRONS have dwindled down to a dozen or so. The piano melody continues, and at last we see where it comes from: George, off to the side, on a grand piano.

9 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

9

We're close on a middle-aged man with salt and pepper hair and a tan that came from some Aegean island. He's sitting at his desk with chopsticks in hand, prodding at an exotic Asian meal. This is Terrance Cid, hereon known as CID.

CID

Do I need to get you a shrink?

George is on the wrong end of Cid's mahogany desk. The rest of the room is simple and expensive with surfaces clean enough to eat off. To the side, a large black man, dressed equally neat, pours scotch into two tumblers. This is ERNIE.

GEORGE

A shrink?

CID

Yeah. A shrink. Or a social worker? Maybe just a sandbox and a friend. But, and correct me if I'm wrong, depression is par for the course in your business, innit?

GEORGE

I've heard that.

CID

Then we're on the same page. So just tell me. What's the matter?

GEORGE

Nothing. I'm fine.

CID

You're fine? Every time I go into the lounge between seven and ten it sounds like Brezhnev's fuckin' funeral! That melody you were just playing. What was it?

GEORGE

Nocturne in C sharp Minor. Chopin.

CID

No more Nocturne in C sharp Minor.  
I made Ernie hide the revolver away  
cause honest to Christ, George.  
Honest to Christ. I'll put that  
barrel in my mouth.

Cid picks up a mess of noodles and shoves it in his mouth.

CID (CONT'D)

And you'll be the one explaining to  
the cops why my brains are  
everywhere but in my skull.

Ernie hands a glass of bourbon to George. George takes a sip  
and gives a quick raise of the glass to Ernie.

GEORGE

I appreciate the psychological  
intervention, Cid. Ernie. You too.  
I appreciate the psychological  
intervention from the both of you.  
And the scotch. I appreciate all  
those things.

Cid turns to Ernie, amused.

CID

Ever hear a man use so many words  
to say so little?

ERNIE

I don't mind the conversation.

Cid turns back to George.

CID

Ernie and me aren't the intervening  
types. You wanna be a miserable  
fuck? Do it on your own time. Me? I  
got a heated floor. I don't wanna  
lose that because my piano guy  
makes people sad.

GEORGE

No more Chopin. I get it.

Cid motions to Ernie. Ernie reaches into his jacket and pulls  
out a large envelope. He hands it to Cid, who quickly reviews  
the contents before pushing it across the desk.

CID

Here.

GEORGE  
What's this?

CID  
Two French passports and a map of  
the Pyrenees Mountains. And love  
letters from the fuckin IRS. Give  
it to your sweetheart and tell her  
I need it looked over by Tuesday.

George takes the envelope. Ernie opens the door. Seeing this,  
George stands up and walks out. Cid goes back to his meal.

10 INT. MAILBOXES ETC. - NIGHT 10

George stands in an office supply store in front of a few  
dozen commercial mailboxes. The CLERK, college-aged, sits  
behind the counter and gives George a familiar nod and half-  
smile. George fumbles in his pocket and pulls out a small  
key.

FROM INSIDE

George pulls out a few envelopes and junk-mail fliers.

ON CONTENTS

One letter after another. Recipient names are a combination  
of CHELSEA GANT, CHELSEA GANT OR CURRENT RESIDENT, and  
finally, CHARLES GANT.

George quickly scans the rest of the mail and puts it in his  
bag.

11 EXT. WOODS - DAY 11

Descending from an overcast sky. A CELLO, all harsh scratches  
and stabbing runs, sounds in the far distance. Tall, skinny  
trees are draped across the horizon as we move downward.

A VOICE, faint at first, can be heard over the cello. It  
belongs to Anton.

ANTON (O.C.)  
Dig! Dig!

We continue moving down. The trees are dead or dying.

ANTON (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Yo-hee-ho!

Anton is perched on a mound of dirt stacked a few feet high  
wearing the same outfit from the opening scene.

George is before him, waist deep in a ditch, digging and tossing soft earth feverishly.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Dig! In unison, all of you! The dig  
is done in unison with shovels!

The cello is suddenly louder. George looks back. Chelsea plays hysterically on the mound, indifferent to the world. George freezes, staring at her. A volley of notes sing as Chelsea's violent bowing grows in intensity.

ANTON (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Dig! You're the batoneer, but I am  
the conductor! Now dig!

CUT TO:

12 INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

12

Darkness, except for some moonlight seeping in through the window. George lies prone on a neatly-made bed. His eyes open. He struggles into an upright position, then moves to the edge of the bed.

LIGHT pours in from the ceiling lamp. Sofia stands at the light switch near the door, dressed in full party-hosting attire.

SOFIA

Let me get this straight, because  
I'm confused by the whole  
situation.

GEORGE

Okay.

SOFIA

You don't want to be outside at  
this party.

GEORGE

Right.

SOFIA

So you sneak into the bedroom.  
Undetected.

GEORGE

Yes.

SOFIA

You sneak in. Turn the lights off.

GEORGE

Uh huh.

SOFIA

And sit on the bed in total darkness.

GEORGE

Yes.

SOFIA

For how long?

GEORGE

Thirty, maybe thirty-five minutes.

SOFIA

Thirty, maybe thirty-five minutes.

GEORGE

That's right.

Sofia debates spending any more time on the conversation.

SOFIA

Okay. I'm not going to address the red flags and huge psychological issues that are screaming--and I do mean screaming--at me right now.

GEORGE

That'd be a giant waste of time.

SOFIA

Just get up.

GEORGE

I don't think that's a good idea.

She stares at him for what feels like an eternity. Finally he relents, walking over to the dresser to pick up Cid's envelope, as well as a few letters from the P.O. Box. He hands the envelope to Sofia.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Paperwork from Cid.

SOFIA

Did he say anything?

GEORGE

Nothing worth repeating.

13 INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

13

The sound of small-talk and background music as George moves through the gathering of smiling PEOPLE holding glasses of wine and small plates of hors d'oeuvres. He spots CHARLES GANT, an imposing man in his late 30s talking to another PARTY GUEST, and stops cold.

CHARLES

(Overheard)

So you are, in effect, making a bet. I mean look at what Dave Waltz did when he was with GE. He goes 85/15 bonus to salary. I mean, do the math, right?

PARTY GUEST

Smart guy.

CHARLES

Yeah that's all relative, but--

Charles looks up and notices George.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

How the hell are ya, George?

George turns slowly. There's too much space between him and Charles for a comfortable conversation.

GEORGE

Well, I'm not Dave Waltz good. But then again, who is?

Charles's smile fades a bit. He turns to the Party Guest.

CHARLES

Barry, this is my brother-in-law. He owns this apartment. Or rents. Do you own it?

The two shake hands.

GEORGE

We rent.

CHARLES

Maybe talk to Barry a little bit. Not that there's anything wrong with rentals as a short term strategy.

A beat.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
Barry's in real estate.

GEORGE  
No, I think we're--

CHARLES  
It's no problem. Barry, give George  
your card.

Barry reaches into his wallet and takes out his business card  
to give to George.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
So how's your gig at the nightclub  
going? George plays piano at the  
Tiger Stripe Saloon. Or something  
like that.

GEORGE  
Lion's Head.

CHARLES  
The what?

GEORGE  
The Lion's Head.

BARRY  
I've been there, sure. They make an  
unbelievable Pomegranate Duck.

Barry's talking becomes background noise as George's eyes  
wander around the room. He sees Sofia talking to a YOUNG  
COUPLE.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
(distant)  
I've never actually had the duck.  
My wife ordered it once on a  
friend's recommendation. She  
usually finds duck too oily, but  
apparently that's just a matter of  
preparation.

Sofia finally locks eyes with George. She excuses herself  
from the conversation and heads over, settling in next to  
George.

CHARLES  
Sofia.

SOFIA  
Making George feel at home?

CHARLES

Always.

GEORGE

I get what you did there.

SOFIA

I'm going to need to borrow you in the kitchen for a minute.

Sofia leads George away.

GEORGE

Did you know that he bought his cat to match his living room furniture? Can you believe that?

She grins and puts her arm around his waist.

SOFIA

He did not.

George looks down at the letters in his hand.

GEORGE

Hold on. I'll catch up with you.

He turns and walks back to Charles.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Almost forgot.

George hands him the letters. Charles looks at them quizzically.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

This is from Chelsea's post office box. I stopped by earlier.

A belated smile runs across Charles' face.

CHARLES

Of course. Thank you.

Charles puts his arm around George and turns him around. He wants the conversation privileged.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

It's hard for me to get down there these days.

GEORGE

Don't I know it. World keeps turning. Sun keeps shining. Life goes on. You of all people.

CHARLES

Yeah, well I appreciate you doing this, George. Keep me in the loop about your Horsehead gig, and don't hesitate to call Barry here if you change your mind about the apartment.

George nods as Charles returns to his former conversation with Barry.

INT. MISSING PERSONS OFFICE - MORNING

A tiny office with papers and files stacked on every desk and cabinet. At the head of the room, scribbling names hastily on a white board, is DETECTIVE LAWRENCE FELLS. He's in his early 40s with skin that toes the line between African and Hispanic. An old TV flickers on his desk.

ANOTHER ANGLE

George is watching Fells intently.

GEORGE

Just you, huh?

DET. FELLS

(still writing)

Yup.

GEORGE

What happened to Mills?

DET. FELLS

Bureaucracy happened.

George stares incredulously until Fells heaves a sigh and takes a break from his writing to turn around and face George for the first time.

DET. FELLS (CONT'D)

Cutbacks. You think I'm wearing this tie because we're swimming in cash?

George looks down on Fells's cheap, stubby tie.

GEORGE  
We still have the budget for a  
mermaid parade, but they're making  
cuts to the police?

DET. FELLS  
C'est la vie.

GEORGE  
Yeah, I guess so.

George shakes his head and sits in an uncomfortable looking  
plastic chair, gazing listlessly at the TV.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
No word yet?

DET. FELLS  
Not in three years now.

George's eyes move back to the TV. Fell sighs again, then  
turns back to his whiteboard and renews his jottings.

DET. FELLS (CONT'D)  
I get why you come and all, but I  
keep telling you, we'd call you if  
we found something.

15 INT. UNIVERSITY OFFICE - DAY

15

George is dressed in the same black suit from the opening  
scene. He sits in the office of a state university. Portraits  
of old faculty line the wall in wooden frames.

A SECRETARY types, intermittently glancing at some documents  
on her desk. Her phone rings. She answers, gives a  
monosyllabic response, and hangs up.

SECRETARY  
Mr. Pavel.

George looks up.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)  
The dean is ready for you.

George stands, straightening his coat.

GEORGE  
Just one second.

The secretary nods. George walks out of the room.

16 INT. UNIVERSITY HALLWAY - DAY 16

George walks a few feet down the hall to a water fountain. He takes an extended drink. George looks down, his tie sits in the basin of the water fountain, sopping wet.

A beat. George walks away from the office to a stairwell and exits.

17 INT. THE LION'S HEAD - NIGHT 17

It's past closing, the restaurant is emptied and the only sounds come from the kitchen cleaning crew. George sits at a table near the piano, a mess of papers in front of him (musical compositions, barely legible), an OLD COAT perched on the seat next to him. He scribbles hastily.

A WAITRESS stops at the table to clear away George's coffee mug.

WAITRESS

Night George.

GEORGE

Good night.

As she moves out of the way we reveal Anton, again well dressed, standing against the far wall and eyeing George. George hasn't noticed him, his eyes glued on his work.

Closely, we see George's index finger moves slowly across the bars of music.

Back to Anton. He is closer now. Two tables away. Still staring his uncomfortable stare.

A close look at the composition. A complex score. As George continues to move his finger across the page, the sound of someone WHISTLING the melody.

George stops and looks over his shoulder. Anton, uncomfortably close, stares back with a pleased grin across his face.

ANTON

Keep going.

George continues with the motion, and Anton continues to whistle. When he reaches the end of the page, the whistling stops and Anton pats George's shoulder.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Well, it's not without its charms.

Anton holds out his hand.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Anton.

George takes it.

GEORGE

George. Where'd you learn to sight read like that?

ANTON

One of those unpronounceable French conservatories in Alsace that no longer exists. They liked to make us sight-read serial works as punishment.

Anton pauses.

ANTON (CONT'D)

My god! Is that your coat?

George nods as Anton runs his fingers over the fabric.

ANTON (CONT'D)

What a piece of art. I'll bet there's an interesting story behind it.

GEORGE

What makes you think that?

ANTON

A garment of that cut? Of that quality? You haven't lassoed it from a local Army-Navy store. No. That there, that's something special. That's an heirloom. Am I right?

The two stare at each other, Anton looking downward, George upward.

GEORGE

My grandfather was in Russia during the war.

Anton pulls a chair out from opposite George with haste and sits down. He rests his chin on his fist. George moves his papers closer to his side of the table.

ANTON

Continue. Please.

GEORGE

I inherited it when he died.

ANTON

Fascinating. Simply fascinating.  
How our coats tell stories. Don't  
you think?

GEORGE

No, I never gave it any thought.

18 Anton points to the coat rack in the corner. On it, an 18  
audacious fur, far too hot for the weather.

ANTON

Mine is Danish Mink. Early 1930s.  
From Denmark. I probably shouldn't  
have left it alone in here.

Anton races to the coat rack, grabs the fur and brings it  
back over.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Feel. Soft, isn't it?

George does. It is.

ANTON (CONT'D)

There's no better fur on Earth. Not  
for my Kenyan shilling. Some might  
argue, and they're entitled to  
their opinions, but-- Say, George,  
might I ask you another question?

GEORGE

What's that?

ANTON

If I'm not being too intrusive, and  
by all means say so if you feel  
otherwise. Because--oh, the hell  
with it! How much do you suppose  
your grandfather paid for that  
coat?

GEORGE

How much did he pay for it?

ANTON

That's right. How much?

GEORGE

It was several decades ago. I  
couldn't say.

ANTON

Give me a number off the top of your head.

GEORGE

I'm not a coat appraiser. I'm sorry.

ANTON

Perfectly fine, George. It's just that I like this coat very much.

GEORGE

So do I.

ANTON

I can't picture my collection without it. I collect coats. I'll give you three hundred.

GEORGE

That's generous of you. But I'm not going to part with it.

ANTON

Five hundred.

GEORGE

No.

ANTON

Six hundred, and I'll give you my Danish mink so that you don't go home cold.

GEORGE

Listen. This is mine, okay?

ANTON

Okay, okay. I know it's yours. That's why I'm talking to you. If it weren't yours, and let's say it were his...

Anton points to a BUSBOY moving a tray into the kitchen.

ANTON (CONT'D)

...Then I'd be having this conversation with him and not you. And our paths would never have crossed. And maybe he'd have been the--

Anton trails off and gazes intently at the man he'd just pointed to.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
Excuse me!

The busboy pays him no mind.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
You there! If this were your coat  
and not this man's right here, and  
I offered you several hundred  
dollars for it, would you take it?

The busboy pauses a moment as if to respond, but never so much as turns towards Anton before moving into the kitchen. Anton looks upset as he stands with his arm frozen in the air, clutching the coat.

GEORGE  
You like hearing yourself talk.

Anton doesn't move. George goes back to his work as he finally turns and puts the coat back on the chair.

ANTON  
I like the sound of my voice.  
There's no shame in that.

George goes back to writing. Anton stares. And stares. And stares. Finally:

ANTON (CONT'D)  
My offer still stands.

George looks up.

GEORGE  
Thank you. But no.

ANTON  
Well, should you come to your  
senses, my door is always open. Not  
literally of course. This city is a  
cesspool. But I'd love your  
company, if not for the coat, then  
to whistle some more of your  
wonderful tunes.

20 With that Anton flicks a card onto the table and about 20  
faces, once more whistling George's atonal melodies  
beautifully. George picks up the card:

"Anton Vogel, Ne'er do Well"

George flips over the card, and written in blue ink:

"Marteau Avenue"

21 INT. MAILBOXES ETC. - NIGHT

21

The same office supply store, the same scraggly clerk, the same PO Box. George absentmindedly hums his piece, mimicking Anton's whistling as he pulls a stack of letters out of the box.

More junk mail. George flips through the letters with little concern, almost flipping past a handwritten envelope in his haste.

ON GEORGE

Taken aback and no longer humming, George examines the envelope closely.

ON ENVELOPE

Addressed to Chelsea Gant. Neatly written in semi-faded black ink. The return address is from St. Luke's Church.

BACK TO GEORGE

George slowly opens the letter, carefully peeling back the flap as to avoid tearing the envelope as much as possible, then he gently slips out the letter.

ON LETTER

In the same neat handwriting:

Dear Ms. Gant,

My deepest thanks to you for your participation in our concert last week. It's help from people like you that enables us to act as a home to the arts.

Scanning to the bottom:

Sincerely,

The Reverend Elias Edi

(insert date three years prior to current events)

A look of confusion washes over George.

23 INT. BAR - NIGHT 23

A run-down watering hole. George motions for the BARTENDER to refill his glass with whiskey. The letter sits on the bar in front of him.

24 INT. MISSING PERSONS OFFICE - DAY 24

The same tiny office with papers and files stacked on every desk and cabinet. At the head of the room is DETECTIVE JOHN PINTER. He's a stern man who's too old for his baby fat and writes on the white board indifferently.

George is stumbling, drunk. He holds a cup of coffee. George strains his neck to see if Fells is hidden from sight.

PINTER  
Can I help you?

George mumbles something unintelligible.

PINTER (CONT'D)  
Come again?

GEORGE  
Looking for Detective Fells.

PINTER  
Fells isn't around.

GEORGE  
Where is he?

Pinter makes a snipping motion.

PINTER  
Budget cuts.

GEORGE  
I need to see him.

PINTER  
No, no you don't. You needed to see him. Then you found out that he doesn't work here anymore. Now you need to see someone else.

GEORGE  
Who's that?

PINTER  
You tell me what you need. I tell you who to see.

GEORGE  
I'm looking to check up on an old case.

PINTER  
Who called you about an update and what's the name on the case?

GEORGE  
Chelsea Gant. No one called.

PINTER  
No call means no update. If we have an opportunity to look at your wife's--

GEORGE  
Sister.

PINTER  
Sorry--your sister's case and we find something. We will call you.

Pinter returns to his work. George stands staring.

GEORGE  
But--

PINTER  
Sir, I'm sorry about your wife, I really am. But I'm very busy and we're understaffed right now.

George stands motionless. Suddenly he throws the cup against the wall, its contents exploding across the room.

GEORGE  
Sister! She's my fucking sister! Does anyone around here take this shit seriously?

Pinter surveys the mess calmly.

PINTER  
You can either leave, or I can put you in a cell for the night. It's your choice.

A beat. George turns exits the room.

George stumbles through the door into his apartment. Sofia, back turned, stands in the kitchen dicing vegetables.

George tries closing the door. It doesn't close. Again. It doesn't close.

SOFIA

Taste this. I have mixed feelings.

George looks down. A letter is caught in the door jamb. He stoops over and picks it up before absentmindedly shoving the letter into his pocket. He slams the door. This time it closes.

Sofia, startled, spins around.

GEORGE

It was stuck.

She shakes her head and turns back to the vegetables.

SOFIA

Is this good drunk or bad drunk?

GEORGE

I don't like labels.

George pulls the letter to Chelsea out of his bag.

SOFIA

Uh-huh. Well whatever you've got there, it can wait. Drunk or not, I need you to start chopping vegetables.

GEORGE

It's an engagement ring.

SOFIA

Such a romantic.

Sofia turns towards George.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

Now how 'bout you either prep some peppers or tell me how your interview went.

GEORGE

Dinner can wait for five minutes.

George walks over to Sofia, holding the envelope. He speaks excitedly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

There was a letter to Chelsea in her PO box today.

Sofia faces George again.

SOFIA  
An actual letter?

GEORGE  
Yeah, from three years ago or  
something. And look at the date.

He hands her the letter, pointing out the date. She looks for a moment.

SOFIA  
Holy hell. That's gotta be a  
mistake.

GEORGE  
Maybe. Maybe not.

SOFIA  
Either way, I guess you should  
bring it to that detective. Uh...

George looks down.

GEORGE  
Fells.

SOFIA  
Right. Bring it to Detective Fells.

A beat.

GEORGE  
Yeah, I will. I'll go in tomorrow.

SOFIA  
Good. Just don't get your hopes up.  
It's just a date in an old letter.  
People make mistakes.

George nods and walks back to his bag. He replaces the letter and begins to walk to the sofa.

SOFIA (CONT'D)  
Hey!

George turns around. Sofia holds up a pepper.

SOFIA (CONT'D)  
Dinner. And you still haven't told  
me how the interview went.

GEORGE  
Who cares how it went?

SOFIA  
I do.

A beat.

SOFIA (CONT'D)  
You didn't go to the interview, did you?

GEORGE  
I went.

SOFIA  
And?

GEORGE  
I wouldn't expect much.

Sofia sighs. She offers George a slight smile.

SOFIA  
I need you to be more positive.

George says nothing, but nods to her. He walks back to the kitchen and takes the pepper from Sofia.

26 INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

26

George is asleep on the sofa, the sounds of an INFOMERCIAL coming from the TV. He wakes suddenly, wincing, and sits upright. Sighing heavily, George's body slackens again and his hands go into his pockets. George pauses, confused.

He pulls the envelope out of his pocket.

ON ENVELOPE  
Handwritten, magnificent script. In lieu of addresses, two names appear: ANTON in the top left and GEORGE PAVEL in the center.

George tears the envelope open with hasty curiosity. He removes a CARD from inside.

ON CARD

A save the date invitation. Several small *New Yorker*-esque drawings, unmistakably George, in various stages of conducting and performing run down the left side. The text, imitating late 19th century script, reads:

GRAND EVENING CONCERT of GEORGE PAVEL; PERFORMING in the EPOCH of WONDERFUL MODERNITY; UNDER DISTINGUISHED PATRONAGE; MAROON HALL SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12; DOORS OPEN at 7:15; PERFORMANCE to COMMENCE at 7:45; RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

At the bottom of the card:

CARRIAGES at 10:15.

George stares at the card without a hint of understanding. He reaches into his back pocket, pulls out his wallet, and removes the card Anton had given him earlier.

27 ON ANTON'S CARD 27

Marteau Avenue

28 INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT 28

George sits in a moderately filled car. A HOMELESS MAN sits near him, the rest of the passengers have moved away. The man is draped with winter coats, each dirtier than the last. He shouts to no one in particular.

HOMELESS MAN

Marv, you wanna give us today's weather report?

The man does an excited drum roll on his thighs.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)

It's fuckin' cold outside!

29 EXT. ANTON'S HOUSE - NIGHT 29

A large brick mansion just outside the city proper. George walks up an ornate pathway surveying the landscape.

Up ahead: a koi pond inhabited by rubber ducks. George continues up the path to the front door. He raps loudly. No answer. Again. No answer. George tentatively opens the door and enters.

30 INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS 30

Anton and SEBASTIAN, 40s, completely oblivious to George's presence, are hunched over a table looking at something. From George's vantage point we cannot see what it is. As George draws nearer, we hear bits of their conversation.

ANTON

If you're just going to futz around then you might as well give up now.

A sputtering MOTOR sound is heard, but it quickly dies.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
I need this fixed. Properly.

Sebastian takes the abuse silently and continues to work.  
George moves closer, still undetected.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
Do you have anything to say for  
yourself? Anything at all? I want  
you to help me with this. I do not  
want for you to screw things up.  
Can you help me? Can you,  
Sebastian?

A beat.

SEBASTIAN  
Perhaps the screwdriver?

ANTON  
The screwdriver? Are you trying to  
ruin this? Are you a spy trying to  
sabotage our progress? That's it,  
isn't it! You're a saboteur doing  
an inside job! J'accuse!

Sebastian shrivels in fear, shaking his head no. Anton calms  
a bit.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
A screwdriver. You've all the  
finesse of a Parisian whore with  
none of her charms.

SEBASTIAN  
I just thought--

ANTON  
That's never been a problem of  
yours before, has it? This is  
serious business, and it's about  
time you treated it as such.

Again, the sputtering of the motor. George moves closer,  
still undetected. The object of Anton and Sebastian's  
attention slowly comes into view:

ON OBJECT: a household blender.

Anton sighs and turns around. He looks at George as though he  
knew he were there.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
Perhaps you can offer some modicum  
of help? It seems to be well beyond  
Sebastian's ability.

George pulls out the invitation.

GEORGE  
What the hell is this?

SEBASTIAN  
An invitation!

Sebastian claps at his own answer.

ANTON  
Well, the answer does seem fairly  
obvious.

A beat.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
Let's have a conversation, shall  
we, George?

Anton takes George's arm and leads him to a side room. He  
turns to Sebastian as they exit.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
For God's sake, try not ruin it  
while I'm away.

31 INT. PARLOR - MOMENTS LATER

31

Anton closes the door and motions for George to sit in one of  
two chairs. A tea kettle and cups are already laid out on a  
small table, and once George sits Anton begins to pour.

GEORGE  
So what is this? I never agreed to  
anything.

ANTON  
Not in a verbal manner, no.

GEORGE  
Not in any manner!

ANTON  
Ah, you know how these things work.  
You say one thing, perhaps I hear  
another. Different intonations.

He sips some tea.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
(matter-of-factly)  
It's all a matter of subjectivity,  
anyway.

GEORGE  
The hell does that mean?-

ANTON  
But, I am sensing some...Let's call  
it trepidation. And perhaps I was a  
bit presumptuous-

GEORGE  
Presumption only scratches the  
surface of the issue.

ANTON  
-And if you don't want to write a  
piece, I certainly can't make you.  
Though I do enjoy your work, what  
little of it there's been these  
past few years.

GEORGE  
So this is your idea of an  
opportunity?

ANTON  
Seems to me you could use one.

GEORGE  
I'm not quite desperate enough for  
this.

ANTON  
Oh?

George stops.

GEORGE  
This isn't about opportunity. This  
is...a power play? I don't even  
know what to call this.

Anton takes another sip of tea.

ANTON  
I see.

GEORGE  
And I don't like other people  
dictating my life or my work.  
(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You've managed to try and do both,  
after a single meeting-

ANTON

A single meeting at your lucrative  
position as a restaurant ivory  
tickler.

Anton takes a slow, deliberate sip of his tea.

ANTON (CONT'D)

I liked your playing, George. There  
was more there than the rote  
standards pouring from your  
fingers. There was feel, a real  
feel for what music means. You  
can't learn that. It's in your  
compositions, too. I'm willing - no  
- no, I'd like to work with you.  
Get your music played for an  
audience not busy shoving bad  
Merlot and overpriced steak in  
their faces. But don't get me  
wrong, because you're not the only  
man with an ear and a baton in this  
city. This piece of paper, about  
which you're so incensed, is a  
means to an end. An invitation to a  
new beginning.

A beat.

George takes out the invitation card again. He looks it over  
for a moment.

GEORGE

So this?

ANTON

Wishful thinking, maybe. A bold  
request that bordered on impudence.  
But I don't think you should let my  
enthusiasm mar what could be a  
wonderful concert.

The blender whirs for a few moments from the other room, then  
sputters out again.

Anton smiles and stands.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Come now. Let me show you where the  
magic is made.

A large hall with high ceilings and a stately, but sometimes odd decor. At one end, the floor is slightly raised forming a stage. George and Anton walk around the hall as they speak, with Anton gesturing towards the eccentricities of the room as they're passed.

ANTON  
The maroon hall!

Anton makes a sweeping gesture.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
Carnegie may have the name, but  
I've never sullied my establishment  
with rubbish like Bill Haley.

George takes in the hall.

GEORGE  
How many peop-

ANTON  
The Maroon halls boasts a 500  
person capacity, easily  
accommodating most concert needs.  
Our events are strictly by  
invitation only, however.

GEORGE  
So that invitation I got-

ANTON  
Our resident string quartet, the  
Intonarumori Ensemble, will be  
performing your piece. They're a  
distinguished group with a long  
history here at the Maroon Hall.  
Though, if you wish to add other  
musicians, arrangements can of  
course be made.

Anton waves towards a sculpture as they pass.

ON SCULPTURE: Marsyus being flayed alive by Apollo, holding a reed flute as he screams.

GEORGE  
No. A string quartet is--

ANTON

Marvelous! I can arrange any meetings you may desire with the musicians. Since they are my resident quartet I'll have to insist the meetings happen in our hall, but I think you'll agree the acoustics here are preferable to the usual dingy practice rooms-

Anton suddenly stops walking and does a 180 to face George.

ANTON (CONT'D)

I really think this is the start of something important, George! The beginning of a true artistic symbiosis! A new entry in the distinguished line of patron/artist relations! I'll be the von Meck to your Tchaikovsky, the Pope Julius to your Michelangelo...

GEORGE

The Adolf to my Speer, I get it.

Anton looks at George with disgust. He quickly snaps out of it and pulls George a few more steps, stretching his arm towards a painting.

ANTON

We've reached the end of our tour, and not coincidentally, my favorite piece.

ON PAINTING: Anton, fully nude and surrounded by nymphs dancing and playing flutes, staring coquettishly out from the canvas.

George stares silently. Anton smiles broadly.

ANTON (CONT'D)

We should retire to the foyer. I don't like leaving Sebastian alone for too long.

33

INT. FOYER - MORNING

33

Anton and George sit on a sofa. The sun is rising, and light pours in from every window. Sebastian is still hunched over the blender. His efforts have been in vain, and his ongoing pursuits are being ignored.

GEORGE

I should actually be on my way.

ANTON

So soon? We have so much to do!  
This is going to change art as we  
know it, George.

GEORGE

Right. But I have something I need  
to take care of today, and no  
amount of delusional grandeur can  
change that the sun is rising.

ANTON

Well, what's on our plate today,  
then?

George looks at Anton hesitantly.

GEORGE

I got something in the mail that I  
need to follow up on.

Anton looks at George enthusiastically, awaiting further  
details.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's kind of personal.

ANTON

After all we've been through, I  
think it's all right to confide in  
me.

George says nothing. Anton responds with a hurt tone.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Well fine. Exclude me if you must.  
At least tell me where you're off  
to in such a rush over a simple  
piece of correspondence.

GEORGE

The police.

Anton's disgust is visceral.

ANTON

The constabulary? What on Earth  
could you need from that menagerie  
of corrupt incompetence?

GEORGE

I pissed them off the other day.

ANTON

No loss there.

GEORGE

I'm serious.

ANTON

So am I. Anything those flunkies could do, a child could do better. Besides, you're bringing them a letter? For what?

GEORGE

Like I said, it's personal.

Anton ignores George's interjection.

ANTON

Evidence or something? Waste of time. A waste of time at best.

GEORGE

It's their-

George stops himself. Anton cocks his head, finally having George's full attention.

ANTON

What? Their case? Their box collecting dust would be my guess. No. No the only way to get anything - anything - done is to do it oneself. I'd be glad to accompany you-

George moves as if to interject again, but Anton waves him off and continues.

ANTON (CONT'D)

But if you must do this yourself, then do it yourself. Leave the police out of this. What have they ever done for you anyway? Waved you off, complained about their budget, ignored evidence, ignored you, ignored the obvious? No, no, no. You know what to do, George. You know better-

Sebastian springs to his feet in elation as the blender comes to life.

SEBASTIAN

I've done it!

Anton and George look at Sebastian, who holds up the whirring blender in triumph. George and Anton stare back in silence until Sebastian slinks back down, clicking the blender off in defeat.

GEORGE  
Who are you?

ANTON  
He's Sebastian.

Sebastian offers a slight curtsy.

GEORGE  
I really have to go.

ANTON  
Just remember, George: Rodney King.

George just stares.

34 EXT. POLICE STATION - LATE DAY 34

George stares at the station, the letter to Chelsea in hand. A steep set of stairs leads down to the entrance. He takes the letter out of the envelope and reads it before replacing it.

George walks down the steps and enters the building. We stay outside and watch the door close, then reopen only moments later. George shoves the letter back in his pocket and hurriedly walks away.

35 EXT. PARK - DUSK 35

George sits on a park bench talking on his cell phone, the letter in his other hand. Most of the day's light has faded leaving the flickering illumination of the street lights.

GEORGE  
My name is George Pavel. I'm  
calling about a letter I received  
from you.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

The train is empty except for George, who is staring out the window. He clutches a leather knapsack tightly.

CONDUCTOR  
(intercom, muddled)  
All doors will open.

EXT. ST. LUKE'S CHURCH - DUSK

Afternoon becomes evening above a picturesque stone church at the edge of the woods. Streetlights illuminate the sidewalk.

INT. CHURCH OFFICE - DUSK

The room is a storage house of filing cabinets and morbid crucifixes - all sizes and colors, each evoking the agony of Christ's final moments.

Sifting through the cabinets is the Reverend EDI, a tall, elderly man of Nordic stock with a nervous demeanor. He coughs in fits throughout the scene. George stands by, holding the letter.

EDI

I don't understand why you wouldn't call first.

GEORGE

I did call. We spoke for about ten minutes.

EDI

You should have called again. I don't have an archivist.

GEORGE

I can see that.

EDI

Does this look like the Vatican? Do I look like some sort of papist? No. I have to do all of this by myself.

Edi begins to cough furiously.

GEORGE

How about you go back to your tea. I'm sure I could find it.

EDI

(scoffing at the idea)  
You wouldn't know where to begin.

GEORGE

Then let me help.

EDI

I have a system here. I don't need you mucking it up.

Edi continues to sift through the files, coughing lightly.

EDI (CONT'D)

Let me see the letter again.

George hands him the letter. Edi scans it quickly, then resumes his search.

GEORGE

You sure you don't remember her?

EDI

Quiet!

He flips through the contents more quickly. Then, almost to himself:

EDI (CONT'D)

I've got eighty years of names in my head.

At long last Edi pulls out a manila file from the depths of the cabinet.

39 INT. TRAIN CAR - NIGHT

39

George stares down at the manila file. He opens it to reveal a concert poster. Plain, no pictures. The header reads, "Chamber Works - St. Luke's Church - October 2".

George moves it aside. Underneath, a copy of a grant approval form. George scans the contents before coming upon a name: Terrance Cid.

40 EXT. CID'S OFFICE - MORNING

40

George stands outside an office marked "CID." He raps on the door lightly. From inside, Cid's voice.

CID (O.S.)

What!

GEORGE

It's George.

A beat.

CID (O.S.)

Hold on a sec.

Over the sounds of movement in the office, we hear Cid grumbling. After a moment he opens the door.

CID (CONT'D)  
You look like shit.

41 INT. CID'S OFFICE - MORNING

41

George moves in and takes a seat. Cid makes an after-the-fact "please come in" gesture, then follows.

CID  
Coffee?

GEORGE  
No.

George reaches into his bag and pulls out the rolled-up concert poster.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Ever seen this?

Cid takes the poster and unrolls it. He holds it at a distance.

CID  
No. Something special about it?

GEORGE  
Look at the date.

Cid re-examines the poster, then gives up.

CID  
I ain't big on the guessing games, kid. When you walk in here, you leave the Miss Marple bullshit outside. Verstehen?

GEORGE  
That says October 2nd. Chelsea wasn't playing a concert on October 2nd because no one knew where she was on October 1st!

CID  
I'm waiting for the part where you tell me what I've got to do with this.

GEORGE  
I went to that church. Spoke to the minister.

CID  
And?

GEORGE

Not a particularly enjoyable man.  
But he told me who set this concert  
up.

A beat.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You.

CID

Me?

GEORGE

Yeah that's right. You. Through  
your foundation.

CID

That's why you're here, huh? I hate  
to fuck with your neat little  
narrative, but I don't know from  
that foundation. Sofie does the--

GEORGE

I know, I know. Sofie does all the  
finances, but it's your foundation.  
You know something.

Cid hands the poster back.

CID

Hey! Don't interrupt me when I'm  
talking! That's my name on the  
door. When you have Sinatra's Oscar  
on your shelf and your name on the  
door, then you can interrupt me.

GEORGE

I'm sorr--

CID

And don't bring that tone in here  
either. First rule of persuasion,  
George. Know your audience.  
Especially when your audience can  
put you in the fuckin' ground and  
not lose a minute of sleep over it.

George's eyes narrow.

CID (CONT'D)

Let's be as, uh, as unceremonious  
as possible.

(MORE)

CID (CONT'D)

Let's lay our cards on the table,  
huh? These things? They bore the  
shit outta me.

Cid takes a plaque off a nearby shelf and hands it to George.

ON PLAQUE: The plaque reads, "For his great contributions to  
the arts, Man of the Year, Mr. Terrance Cid 2011"

CID (CONT'D)

Eleven concerts that year, plus  
some charity bullshit, and wouldn't  
you know it? I'm man of the year.  
Now, I only went to the dinners,  
cause as long as you fund 'em, they  
don't care if you go. Hell, they  
don't care if you even realize they  
exist. Case in point, really.

GEORGE

Someone's gotta be able to tell me  
who put this thing together.

CID

Best bet would be your lady friend.  
She handles all that shit. I sign  
the checks.

42 INT. USED BOOK STORE - DAY

42

The soft cover of Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul On Ice*, a phallus  
inked across the author's forehead. PULL BACK to reveal Sofia  
holding the book and looking at the image in disgust.

A wider view reveals a disheveled used bookstore. Yellowing  
pages are piled high and haphazardly about the room. The  
shelves are lined with more of them. Genres vaguely define  
the stacks, but there's no real organization.

George searches a stack of musical manuscripts: opera scores,  
piano sheet music, musical theater song-books.

He pulls a book out from the pile.

CLOSE ON BOOK: old, bound in leather and well worn, entitled,  
"Canticles of St. Cecilia."

George opens the book and leafs through it carefully. His  
fascination grows. This is an unbelievable find.

SOFIA (O.C.)

I'm ready to go.

George doesn't answer, he just flips through the pages of the book. Sofia walks closer.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

George?

GEORGE

"The hazy kiss of dawn had barely filtered in, darkness swallowing its gentle touch. But, from the back of the room shone a ring of light, as bright as any torch."

Sofia knows the words. She stops short.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

"The flaming wings of a cherub cast their glow on Cecilia, a halo of light guiding her fingers across the keys. As she played, the organ sang as if it were the voice of God, and Valerian fell to his knees weeping for--"

SOFIA

Stop.

George stops reading and looks up at her. A tear is in her eye.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

Keep reading.

GEORGE

"Valerian fell to his knees weeping for the love of Christ, for the golden angel, and for Cecilia herself, beautiful and pure."

EXT. CITY STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Walking along the sidewalk, George holds a bag from the book store.

GEORGE

Thank you.

Sofia tries to smile.

SOFIA

We shouldn't have needed another one.

George pulls Sofia closer.

GEORGE

What good would a birthday present  
have done her at that point anyway.  
Unless you think Chelsea's spent  
the past three years reading the  
same book in solitude.

Sofia hugs him.

SOFIA

I'm sorry.

GEORGE

I know.

44 INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - DAY

44

George sits at his kitchen table. Pages of music are spread out before him, as well as an open computer alongside rulers and pencils. He writes hastily in a notebook.

A knock at the door. He walks over and looks into the peephole.

THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE: Anton taps his foot impatiently.

George opens the door, and Anton brushes past him quickly.

ANTON

(eyeing his surroundings)  
Oh dear god.

He spins around and faces George.

ANTON (CONT'D)

This won't do at all. From now on  
we meet at my home.

Anton removes the pair of leather gloves he's wearing.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Besides, I have a much nicer--

He surveys the room but doesn't find what he's looking for.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Where's your piano?

George taps the door and it lazily swings closed.

GEORGE

I don't have a piano.

ANTON

You don't have a piano.

GEORGE

I don't have a piano.

ANTON

I don't believe you.

GEORGE

Believe me. Don't believe me.  
There's a keyboard in the other  
room, but I don't usually write  
with it.

ANTON

Do you pluck the notes from the  
ether? What kind of creative  
process am I dealing with here?

George walks back to the table and sits.

GEORGE

Would you like to get started?

Anton hastily puts his leather gloves back on and walks to  
the door. He opens it and turns towards George.

ANTON

No. This place won't do us any  
good. Pack your things.

45 INT. ANTON'S HOUSE - PARLOR - DAY

45

George sits at Anton's piano. Anton shifts restlessly in the  
background.

ANTON

Go on.

GEORGE

It's a string quartet.

ANTON

It sounds like the whirring of my  
radiator. Come on, George, play.  
Play as only you can.

George positions himself at the keys. He plays a brief  
passage from the score, consisting of a few dissonant notes  
and chords. After it is finished, he turns around and faces  
Anton.

At once, Anton's face changes from blank to overjoyed. He snatches the score from the piano and begins pointing at segments of it.

ANTON (CONT'D)

You're right, you're right! The piano does it no justice. But I can hear it all! Simply wonderful!

George sits dumbfounded with a vague smile.

GEORGE

Thank you.

ANTON

This was no accident, my boy!  
(singing)  
Such a wonderful sensation! Where once were nerves, now solely elation!

Anton tugs at his crotch.

ANTON (CONT'D)

It begins with the heart, moves to the stomach and concludes with the testicles. That's when you know you've experienced something worthwhile. Heart. Stomach. Testicles.

George nods.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Some take the music and just...throw. They just toss notes at the players, but you know the wood. You know the bow.

GEORGE

Yeah, well--

ANTON

They say it takes a decade to master an instrument, you know. Three-thousand six-hundred and fifty-two days of work. Imagine! I played the bandoneón for about a week before being run out of Catamarca.

GEORGE

When--

ANTON

Perhaps we could add a solo piece for you. Do you ever give performances of your own work?

GEORGE

Not really. I mean, I don't really play the cello.

Anton is more perturbed than perplexed.

ANTON

Impossible. Not as long as this is your writing.

He hoists the composition in the air. Before beginning his grand speech, though, he pauses and looks down on George.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Well wait a moment. Why do you say it like that?

GEORGE

Like what?

ANTON

I don't play. The emphasis. You don't play. Who does?

Silence.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Ahh...a woman! I knew it. A woman, yes? Of course. You remind me of a bullfighter.

GEORGE

This isn't something I want to discuss.

ANTON

What a shame. Collaboration thrives in candid climates. We must be open if we're to succeed.

A long pause.

GEORGE

My sister was a cellist.

ANTON

Ah! Not as lurid as I had hoped, but--

Anton stops himself.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Was?

GEORGE

Was.

George looks down. Anton sits beside him.

ANTON

We must be open if we're to  
succeed...

George looks up at Anton, who smiles gently.

46 EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT 46

The din of evening traffic murmurs in the background as George walks into a tall office building.

47 INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER 47

The elevator door opens, and the sounds of a party catch George off guard. Outdated pop songs play in the background under a constant stream of chatter. A standard buffet is laid out on a long table along with 'Congratulations Jim!' balloons and fliers adorning the walls.

George enters the room with trepidation, surveying the people around him. Buzzed office workers pay him little mind as he walks amongst them. George spots Charles just as Charles spots George.

48 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT 48

The door opens and light floods in from the adjoining room, as does the sound of the party. George and Charles enter the room with George being led by the arm in a cordial fashion. Charles closes the door, cutting off most of the light and sound.

GEORGE

Sorry, I didn't know you were  
having a party.

Charles wears a half smile.

CHARLES

Not a problem. Let's just make this  
quick, huh?

George takes out the same poster he's been toting around and hands it to Charles. It's beginning to get wrinkled and torn.

GEORGE  
You ever seen this?

Charles inspects the poster.

CHARLES  
No. Did you two put this one  
together, too?

GEORGE  
Look at the date.

Charles looks again. He furrows his brow, still sporting his  
default smile.

CHARLES  
Huh. Cancelled?

GEORGE  
That's the thing. It happened.

Charles hands George the poster back.

CHARLES  
That's not really possible, now is  
it?

GEORGE  
One wouldn't think so. But that's  
kinda why I'm here.

Charles's smile is gone.

CHARLES  
Chelsea didn't play this concert,  
George. She was already gone.

GEORGE  
You should check the P.O. Box more  
often.

Charles stares.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
You might've seen the nice letter  
Chelsea got. The reverend just  
wanted to thank her for her  
participation is all.

A beat.

Charles's smile returns.

CHARLES

Listen, I really have to get back to the party. If you find out any more about this, be sure to let me know.

GEORGE

Sure thing.

Charles puts his hand on George's shoulder. He's closer than he needs to be.

CHARLES

Wish I could help ya more, George. I think you're wrong about this, though.

Charles walks to the door. He opens it, the SOUNDS of the party flow back in.

GEORGE

I'll be seeing you, Charles.

Charles pauses, then exits without responding.

49 EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

49

George walks out of the office building and heads down the street. As he walks away, Cid and Ernie exit the same building headed in the opposite direction. George catches sight of them over his shoulder, spins around, and races to catch up.

Cid and Ernie turn the corner. When George comes around the bend, a busy street greets him, and Cid and Ernie are nowhere to be found. George runs through the crowd, rudely confronting several people before giving up.

50 INT. SUBWAY - DAY

50

Empty, yet George opts to stand. He grips the metal pole tightly and stares blankly at the light panel, which shines unimpressively. The subway is traveling fast. All axles and wheels and bass. It creates a NAUSEATING BEAT. George looks worried. The lights flicker and buzz.

The lights go out. The noise stops. Deathly silence.

At once, everything is bright and frantic. The car is filled with ghoulish FIGURES surrounding George. They're dressed for a lavish affair. Some drink, others dance. George's eyes widen.

We focus on four figures in particular: the STRING QUARTET-- Sebastian and three other men-- playing a lively jig rife with odd dissonances. The latter three don expressionless white masks.

A voice comes over the intercom, distinctly Anton's.

ANTON (O.C.)

We're all here to help with this great cause. And thanks to your immense generosity, we've raised almost ten-thousand yen for the 'Find Chelsea Foundation' this evening. Ladies and gentlemen, please give yourselves a round of applause!

The car erupts with joy. Across from George, Chelsea sits laughing. George shuts his eyes tight, pleading for an end.

Silence. Darkness.

George opens his eyes. The car is back to normal and George is sitting down. Two BOYS (11 or 12 years old) sit across the way, delighting in George's behavior.

51 EXT. ERNIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

51

George walks down the sidewalk. The sun is out, and no cars line the street. The buildings along the way are empty, but none are run down or boarded up.

As George continues, a gate in the distance opens and Ernie emerges. He takes out a cigarette and lights up, taking a long drag before glancing in George's direction. Ernie exhales, leaving a cloud of smoke in the air. He heads to an adjacent stoop and sits down.

George warily approaches Ernie. Ernie takes another drag, never directly acknowledging him.

ERNIE

What are you doing here?

GEORGE

I need to talk to you.

ERNIE

Yeah well we ain't exactly bridge partners. I was hoping for a specific or two.

GEORGE

I need to talk to you about Cid.  
Cid's concerts specifically. And my  
sister.

ERNIE

Mr. Cid's business is his own, and  
as such, I don't talk about it with  
anyone but Mr. Cid. On top of that,  
I only talk about it with him when  
he asks me to, and I gotta be  
honest with you, Mr. Cid ain't  
especially talkative when it comes  
to his business.

Ernie takes a quick puff.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

As for the concert, not my scene.  
And I never met your sister.

George stands silently as Ernie takes one last puff before  
flicking away his cigarette. Ernie turns around and begins to  
walk to the door.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

If you wanna come in, though, you  
can come in.

Ernie walks inside his house and leaves the door slightly  
ajar.

52 INT. ERNIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

52

George enters Ernie's house and closes the door behind him.  
The decor is much more cozy than one would expect, with  
family photos adorning the walls and a bright color scheme.  
George walks further into the house through a hallway that  
leads into a connected kitchen and dining area. Ernie stands  
by the stove and turns around as George approaches.

ERNIE

I'm making tea, you want any?

George glances over, a little surprised.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

It's chamomile, but I have black if  
you prefer.

GEORGE

Chamomile's good.

Ernie fills the tea kettle with water as George sits down at the kitchen table. A cat enters the room and rubs against George's leg. George obliges and scratches the cat's head. Ernie puts the kettle on the stove and sits across from George.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Nice place.

Ernie offers no reply.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

This decor isn't exactly what I pictured.

ERNIE

I have work in a few hours, man. Let's cut to the chase.

GEORGE

How do you know Charles?

ERNIE

Charles who?

GEORGE

Charles Gant. My brother in law. I spotted you and Cid outside his office yesterday.

ERNIE

Charles Gant, huh. Don't know him, and I believe you're mistaken.

GEORGE

You and Cid weren't at his office yesterday?

ERNIE

I've never even met your brother in law, George. And I was off yesterday.

The kettle begins to whistle and Ernie gets up. The cat, still purring, scampers away, while Ernie pours two mugs of tea. Ernie places one mug in front of George, and sits down with the other one.

GEORGE

Was Cid there?

ERNIE

Do you listen, man? Mr. Cid ain't.  
Very. Forthcoming. You want  
answers? Try your woman.

GEORGE

Sofia?

Ernie takes a sip of his tea.

ERNIE

That's beautiful.

INT. MUSEUM - LATE DAY

George and Sofia walk through halls of sculptures and paintings. Each piece seems either a lament or a warning. Abstractions, melted figures, paintings of mythological treachery and loss. Occasionally one of them pauses to look closer at the art. They never look at each other.

George stops at a painting, Sofia follows suit. Picasso's 'The Weeping Woman'. The two of them gaze at it.

GEORGE

How-

A beat.

SOFIA

What?

GEORGE

How well do you know Cid?

SOFIA

I don't. Not really.

A beat.

GEORGE

His charity-

SOFIA

I don't want to talk about my  
clients.

Silence.

GEORGE

Me neither.

George and Anton sit third row center, surrounded by a vast sea of empty seats. The stage has been transformed into a laughably low-budget nautical play (Moby Dick: The Musical). Torn sheets have been draped along the wall in lieu of ship's sails, and a single coin is nailed to the wall. Crates are stacked high, with the tallest featuring a laundry basket laid on top. A shorter stack with a bicycle wheel attached serves as a ship's wheel.

Sebastian and another ACTOR are dressed as sailors, with Sebastian sporting a peg-leg tied onto his bent knee. Throughout the scene, the two men carry on with the play in a wildly over-the-top manner.

GEORGE

...And I know what I saw. Cid and Ernie. Clear as day.

ANTON

Shh...shh. This is Sebastian at his best.

ON PLAY:

ACTOR

Avast the chorus! Eight bells there! d'ye hear, bell-boy? Strike the bell eight, thou Pip! thou blackling! and let me call the watch. I've the sort of mouth for that-the hogs-head mouth. So, so, Star-bo-l-e-e-n-s,a-h-o-y! Eight bells there below! Tumble up!

SEBASTIAN

Grand snoozing to-night, maty; fat night for that. Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Anton turns to George excitedly. The play continues in the background.

ANTON

What did I tell you?

George's eyes wander around the theater.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Their Othello was just a little bit disappointing. He doesn't make a very convincing Moor. But this truly makes up for it!

GEORGE

I lost them in a crowd. I should have followed them closer.

Anton turns his attention back to the play.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

This doesn't strike you as odd?

ACTOR

I don't like your floor maty; it's too springy for my taste. I'm used to ice floors...like the skating rinks that those dirty Eskimos have.

SEBASTIAN

Filthy creatures! Fine whalers, though... Where's your girls? Who but a fool would take his left hand by his right, and say to himself, how d'ye do? Partners, I must have partners!

ACTOR

Aye, girls and a green! Maybe even a yellow. No blues, though! I've always preferred calypso! Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

We return to George, who has had enough.

GEORGE

I gotta go.

He stands, and as he does, the play comes to an immediate halt. Sebastian and Actor stare blankly at him. George sits back down and the play resumes.

ANTON

Let yourself enjoy the play. We don't do Moby Dick often.

GEORGE

I've got bigger things on the horizon. If you were paying attention to what I was saying--you know what. Forget it.

ANTON

Don't act like a hurt schoolgirl. What more do you need to know?

GEORGE

I need to know that it was them coming out of Charles's office building.

ANTON

Clear as day. You said it yourself.

GEORGE

Yeah.

ANTON

And maybe your colored friend is onto something. Search her place if you're so worried about it. And if she's as careful about her transactions as she seems to be, there's bound to be something for you to find. Then maybe you'll stop moping and learn to enjoy the arts.

Back to the play, which has completely abandoned its source material.

ACTOR

Ye scurvy prostitute! Or is it Postlethwaite? Possibly his purple prose promptly prodded the postulate!

SEBASTIAN

Aye! But 'tis a fine day for a metaphor! Where's the peace pipe made of a weapon?! I wish to smoke, not smote!

ACTOR

The other way is finer! No matter, though, the double entrendre will work nicely here. The sperm whale cometh!

George sits, shaking his head in his hands.

GEORGE

No. She's not an idiot, and I'm not going to screw over the only sane person in my life.

Anton once again brushes off George's comment. We focus on the play, which has devolved into both actors hitting each other while shouting facts about whales.

SEBASTIAN

The Right Whale was the first  
regular hunted by man!

ACTOR

The sperm whale is the most  
formidable to encounter!

SEBASTIAN

The Fin-Back resembles the Right  
Whale, but is of less portly girth!

Anton remains rapt by the performance, while George's  
demeanor has continued to devolve.

ANTON

Do whatever you want. If you choose  
to ignore the only link between  
Charles and this whole business  
that you have, be my guest.

He turns to the play, then back to George.

ANTON (CONT'D)

But sanity has never gotten in the  
way of duplicity.

George slumps back into his chair.

ANTON (CONT'D)

The woman works regular hours,  
right? Look around while she's  
gone, you don't have to be obvious  
about it, for God's sake.

Anton jumps up, pointing a finger towards the performers.

ANTON (CONT'D)

And that goes for you, too! Tone it  
down!

Sebastian stops, abashed. Anton returns to his seat. The play  
continues.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Besides, George, I'll take an  
honest madman over a lucid liar any  
day of the week.

As George sinks even further into the Chair, focus returns to  
the play. Before long, Anton jumps up again and runs to the  
piano. As he begins to play, he and the two on stage sing a  
cabaret-style song about whaling:

ANTON (CONT'D)

(singing)

A captain stood upon the deck, a  
spy-glass in his hand, a viewing of  
those gallant whales, that blew at  
every strand!

54 EXT. PARK - DAY

54

A steady rain falls from a uniformly grey sky. The park looks empty except for George, dressed in a dark trench coat and holding a black umbrella. George walks around a bend, and we see another figure, also clad in black but soaking wet and sans umbrella, sitting on a park bench.

George walks up to the man, and we see that it's Detective Fells. George is smiling, but Fells remains conspicuously disconnected, offering no acknowledgment of George's presence.

A beat.

GEORGE

Fells?

Fells looks up slowly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You wanna get some coffee?

Fells shakes his head no and stands.

FELLS

Follow me.

Fells begins walking without delay.

55 EXT. PARK - MOMENTS LATER

55

George trails Fells by a few steps. Fells wears the same emotionless expression, and a gun pokes out of his pants. George looks increasingly worried.

GEORGE

Where the hell are we going?

Fells ignores George. His pace has increased, and the park seems endless. As the two continue, the trees become barren and dead. In the distance, an unmarked industrial building stands alone.

56 INT. INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - DAY

56

Fells leads George through a dimly lit grey hallway.

GEORGE  
It's hot as hell in here.

George takes off his trenchcoat. Fells remains silent.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
This where you work now?

Silence.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
When you called, I kinda figured--

FELLS  
You know what you get when you're  
laid off from a government job?

A beat.

FELLS (CONT'D)  
Because all I've gotten is a call  
complaining that some asshole threw  
coffee at the wall trying to get a  
hold of me.

GEORGE  
They called you because of that?

The hallway ends and an unmarked door stands in front of George and Fells. Fells takes out a ring of keys and quickly finds the one he's looking for.

57 INT. INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

57

The door swings open and Fells leads George into a pitch black room. George stands at the entrance as Fells walks into the darkness. ECHOS from his FOOTSTEPS are heard.

A beat.

Fluorescent lights flicker on. The room is nearly a warehouse, large and mostly empty. A single pile of boxes sits in the center of the room. Fells stands on the far side of the room next to a fuse box.

Both Fells and George walk to the pile.

FELLS  
As far as I'm concerned, this is my  
pension.

Fells pulls out a box cutter and cuts open the topmost box.

FELLS (CONT'D)

It's yours now.

George stares at Fells a moment then begins to rifle through the box.

ON CONTENTS:

Manila folders and bagged evidence. All labeled 'Gant, Chelsea Disappearance'.

George looks up at Fells, a huge smile on his face. Fells is walking back to the fuse box.

GEORGE

Holy shit! How did you get all this?!

George looks back at the evidence. When he looks back up, Fells is standing at the fuse box, his left hand on the breakers. He pulls the gun out of his pants.

FELLS

Goodbye, George.

George bolts up, but Fells abruptly throws the switches on the fuse box and the lights shut off. A GUNSHOT ECHOS in the darkness. The sound of George's RUNNING bounces off the walls. Confused FUMBLING as George searches for the fuse box, a loud THUD as he trips, more FUMBLING.

The lights flicker back on. Fells's body lies in a puddle of blood. George stands over him, his clothes stained red.

58 EXT. PARK - MOMENTS LATER 58

George's trenchcoat covers most of the blood, the rain washing away what's on his shoes. He awkwardly carries a few of the boxes from the room, moving quickly back through the park.

59 INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - BUILDING STAIRWAY - NIGHT 59

George, soaking wet, plods up the stairwell, leaving a stream of rainwater behind him. He glances at his cell phone, which reads "9 missed calls".

60 INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT 60

Sofia, Indian-style on the couch, staring at nothing. A television blares on in the background.

George enters. Heavy footsteps along with the slosh of his wet clothes.

George sits down next to Sofia. He removes his wet shoes. They both stare at the television blankly.

61 INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

61

George lies on the sofa, still dressed in his wet clothes. His cell phone rings, and he is stirred awake. He answers.

GEORGE

Hello?

ANTON

George, please.

GEORGE

Anton?

ANTON

George?

Raucous group laughter and cries of "Hear, Hear!" from Anton's end of the line. George says nothing.

ANTON (CONT'D)

(chuckling lightly)

We were tweaking the songs of our new play. I want you to come over. Now. And bring that invaluable input of yours.

GEORGE

It's five AM.

ANTON

I know what time it is. But seeing as though we're both awake, you might as well come over and proffer some advice.

GEORGE

I can't.

ANTON

Pah! The sun is out -at least I assume it is. Just pull on your pants--

GEORGE

I'll be there at noon.

ANTON

But Sebastian has his etiquette lessons at noon!

A beat.

GEORGE  
Goodbye, Anton.

62 INT. FOYER - DAY

62

Sebastian walks daintily across Anton's living room with a book atop his head. The awkward pseudo-grace of each step is accentuated by his exaggerated hip motions and flattened, outwardly stretched hands.

ANTON  
You look like a budding whore  
donning her first corset. This is  
not how a gentlemen should carry  
himself!

Sebastian's stride continues, unfazed by Anton's comments. Anton and George sit on a half sofa, with George's side backless. As he speaks, he shifts uncomfortably.

GEORGE  
I thought you wanted to see me.

ANTON  
And I told you, Sebastian's  
etiquette lessons are at noon.  
(to Sebastian)  
If you're not going to take this  
seriously, you can stop wasting my  
time!

Sebastian stops in his tracks. Anton relaxes and returns to his prior position.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
Eh...take a break, Sebastian.

Sebastian's dismayed face melts away and he walks towards the door.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
At the very least, pretend you have  
poise!

Sebastian exits the room resuming his ridiculous gait. Anton laughs to himself.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
You know, George, I generally keep  
my expectations to a minimum.  
(MORE)

ANTON (CONT'D)

But when you're dealing with human beings - I mean, real humans - you need to forget the concept of expectations all together.

George rubs his temples and looks at the ground.

ANTON (CONT'D)

What's with you?

GEORGE

I'm just not up for one of your performances today.

ANTON

Come, come, George. This is more than your usual brooding.

Silence. Anton looks George up and down, faint traces of blood remain on his shoes.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Could it have something to do with those conspicuous stains on your sneakers?

George looks down at his shoes. He looks up at Anton, a hint of panic in his eyes.

ANTON (CONT'D)

No need to fear, George. I'm not about to go to the authorities. If you need an ear, though, I'm here.

A beat.

GEORGE

It's Fells.

Anton raises an eyebrow.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

A friend of mine. He's a cop - he was a cop.

ANTON

You know a lot of people in the past tense.

George slumps.

GEORGE

I met with him yesterday.

ANTON

Had a bit of a row with him?

GEORGE

No. No. He gave me something.

ANTON

Unless he gave you a blood sample,  
that doesn't explain much.

GEORGE

He gave me boxes of evidence.

George stands and begins to pace.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Everything from my sister's case.  
Files, evidence, everything. I have  
all of it sitting in the basement  
where I work.

ANTON

That seems like something to be  
excited about.

GEORGE

He gave me a pile of evidence. Then  
he shot himself.

It's Anton's turn to stand. He walks to George and puts his  
hand on George's shoulder.

ANTON

Sit back down, George.

George complies.

ANTON (CONT'D)

I can't imagine what's running  
through your head right now, my  
boy. All tragedy aside, though, it  
seems clear to me that the time is  
now. You've been given a gift, and  
a pair of ruined sneakers is no  
reason to ignore it.

George looks up, unsure. Anton kneels in front of him.

ANTON (CONT'D)

You've been dancing around this  
business of your sister since we  
met. Now that you finally have the  
tools you need, it's time to start  
digging.

INT. LION'S HEAD BASEMENT - DAY

Dim lights and a musty feel. George is in the far corner of the room pulling a series of boxes out from behind a large water heater. Anton stands behind him, offering no physical help.

ANTON

Why on Earth you'd choose a dank cellar to hide your blood diamonds I've no idea.

GEORGE

Where else would I have put them?

ANTON

My home is open to you, you know that George.

GEORGE

Me and Sebastian.

ANTON

Sebastian knows his place. You've nothing to fear from him.

George pulls out the last box. He slides one to Anton and opens another himself, immediately digging in. Anton picks through the evidence slowly, mildly disgusted by the whole scenario.

GEORGE

Most of this is just files. It'll take forever to go through all of it.

ANTON

Does your benefactor know you're using his dank pit to hide official police business?

George ignores him.

GEORGE

Just tell me if you find anything strange.

The two of them sift through files, skimming the pages then putting them to the side. After a moment, Anton gasps.

ANTON

My word!

GEORGE

What?!

ANTON

This is no way to store such a treasure! But you're safe now, little cherub!

Anton pulls something out of an evidence bag.

GEORGE

What the hell did you find?!

Anton holds up an old book. The binding's been torn, and there are dark red stains splattered across the cover. It's another copy of the "Canticles of St. Cecilia."

George bolts up, Anton instinctively pulls the book back to protect it.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Let me see that!

Anton gently hands the book to George.

ANTON

Such a shame, it looks like the poor thing's been through quite an ordeal.

GEORGE

This is it.

ANTON

And the binding's in such disarray.

GEORGE

I got this for Chelsea's birthday three years ago.

ANTON

My my! You have better taste than I give you credit for!

GEORGE

She never got it, though. Sofie lost it.

ANTON

Apparently not.

Anton takes the book back. He opens the book, there are more stains inside as well, they're clearly blood.

ANTON (CONT'D)

That won't help the market value a bit.

GEORGE

Sofie must have--

ANTON

I know a man who may be able to clean this up a bit. It'll never be as lovely as it once was--

GEORGE

Where did they find this?

Anton looks at the evidence bag.

ANTON

(reading)

From the Gant residence.

GEORGE

She had the book?

ANTON

She didn't take very good care of it.

George begins muttering.

GEORGE

Or Charles had it? How did the cops not ask me about this?

ANTON

I suppose asking them about your stolen evidence is out of the question?

George looks up at Anton.

GEORGE

If it weren't for Fells.

ANTON

You don't have many options, do you?

Large and antiseptic. Expensive, sparsely furnished. Whites and blues offset by modern metal flourishes. The only life in the room is a bluish white cat who keeps to itself in the corner, blending in perfectly with its surroundings.

Charles and George sit across from each other at a brushed metal table. Charles's smile is strained.

CHARLES  
Nice to see ya, George.

GEORGE  
The "Canticles of St. Cecilia."

A beat.

CHARLES  
Oh yeah?

GEORGE  
It's a book.

CHARLES  
It is, huh?

GEORGE  
It was Chelsea's.

CHARLES  
Listen. George. I've got a lot on my plate today, so if you could get to the point.

GEORGE  
That book was a present from me. But I never got to give it to her, so how did it get here?

Charles's eye twitches. He's abandoned his smile already.

CHARLES  
You know, Chelsea would always tell me what a good brother you were. All that shit with your parents, the help with school. Always about you taking on responsibility. But all I ever saw was a little prick who wouldn't show me the smallest amount of common courtesy.

GEORGE  
I--

Charles puts up his hand.

CHARLES  
Let me finish. I put up with the disrespect, the constant snark.  
(MORE)

CHARLES (CONT'D)

For two years of marriage, I put up with it. Why? Because she asked me to. Because if smiling at your bullshit was what it took to keep her mum, then it was worth it. And then she disappeared, and I thought to myself, I'm done.

Charles leans forward. A new sort of smile creeps across his face, spiteful and genuine.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

I thought I was finally done with you, too, but for the first time in your life, you tried to be socially correct. And for three years now, I've been coming to your parties, collecting junk mail from an irrelevant P.O. box, and watching you sit around and feel sorry for yourself. And now, for some reason that completely eludes me, you think you're Columbo...George Pavel, boy detective...and I have to put up with your paranoid ramblings about concerts that didn't happen--that couldn't have happened, books with ridiculous titles, and all the fixtures of a lunatic. And for what?

GEORGE

For Chelsea.

Charles's fake smile comes back.

CHARLES

Yeah, for Chelsea. But like I said, I've got a lot lined up today.

Charles stands. George reluctantly follows suit.

65 EXT. CHARLES' APARTMENT - LATE DAY

65

George comes out of the apartment. A well dressed man from a bygone era (HESKA) stands smoking on the stoop. He holds a cup of Turkish coffee in one hand.

HESKA

George.

George nods hello.

Heska holds his mug towards George, the grounds leaving a trail of black sludge down the side. George nods, and the two enter Heska's adjacent apartment.

66

INT. HESKA'S APARTMENT KITCHEN - LATER

66

The two men sit across from each other at a small table. George's now empty cup sits upside down on the dish, a coin on top. Heska takes a long drag on his cigarette, then he picks up George's mug and studies the grind-laden dish below intently.

GEORGE

How's it look?

Heska offers no answer, only looking at George blankly.

INT. MAROON HALL - NIGHT

The sounds of a string quartet are heard. The slow moving timbres drift by at a dirge-like pace, dissonances replaced by more dissonances as the sounds build upon one another listlessly.

We see the stage with the STRING QUARTET (the same from the subway dream: Sebastian, playing viola, and three other men - still wearing their expressionless white masks) set up around George as he leads the rehearsal. Anton sits behind George, looking at a copy of the score in between glances at the musicians.

The music lingers for a moment, and the room falls silent as the musicians lower their bows. After a brief moment of repose, Anton bursts into applause, at which point all four musicians stand and bow in unison, to George's surprise and disgust.

Anton stands up and walks to George while still clapping gleefully. George stands shaking his head as Anton begins to speak.

ANTON

Take your bow!

George shoots him a withering glance, then turns back to the musicians, who are still bowing repeatedly.

GEORGE

(through clenched teeth)

Sit. Down.

The bowing ceases and the musicians reluctantly sit, though Anton's clapping remains. George stays, facing the musicians.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Stop clapping.

Anton's clapping fades, along with his smile. George turns towards Anton.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
This is not how rehearsals are conducted. There is no clapping,  
(turning back to the musicians)  
and there is to be no bowing. You're here to rehearse this piece, not bask in the glow of one man's eccentricities.

ANTON  
I don't-

GEORGE  
And at the next rehearsal, I don't want to see anybody in a fucking mask.

ANTON  
I don't mean to interject, but I think that you might be stifling their creativity.

George slowly turns towards Anton.

GEORGE  
They're musicians. They're playing music. That's where they're creativity comes from, not from uniform, dime-store masks.

ANTON  
These are hardly from a dime store.

George flips over his music stand, sending the score flitting around the room.

GEORGE  
These are my rehearsals for my piece! And if you want them to continue, you'll concede to basic reason for once in your life!

The musicians sit looking at Anton, awaiting his response. Anton's expression has gone sour, but his dour countenance gradually melts to something resembling normalcy. His response is oddly humble.

ANTON

No. You're right. This is your piece, and this is your rehearsal.

GEORGE

Thank you.

ANTON

(to the quartet)

Please leave your masks off for future rehearsals. I'm sorry for my brusque interference.

George nods to him and turns back to the musicians.

GEORGE

Good. That's it today. Thank you.

The musicians begin to pack up, their masks remaining in place as they do so. Anton and George move to where Anton was seated and begin talking in a quieter tone.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I don't think I should feel so indebted for a glimpse of respect.

Anton's smile returns.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I guess when you're used to being slapped around, a handshake makes you grateful, though.

ANTON

Wonderful analogy, George.

GEORGE

Apt, you mean.

George begins to pack his music. Anton stops him.

ANTON

Won't you stay for a drink to celebrate our first full rehearsal?

At this point, the musicians have packed, and all four are sitting silently while staring at George and Anton. George glances wearily back at the three masked men and Sebastian for a moment, and then turns back to Anton, who is ignoring their gazing completely.

GEORGE

What are we drinking?

## INT. ANTON'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

George and Anton sit across from each other at a small table. The table, like much of the kitchen, is homey and seems like a prop from an Italian cafe.

To their left, Sebastian sits on the floor playing his viola. A book of music sits atop his head like a hat, and his performance consists of a folksong-like dirge that slowly shifts throughout the scene. To the right and rear, the other three musicians stand, still in their masks.

George and Anton each nurse a snifter of brandy - their fourth or fifth. George is mid-story.

GEORGE

It was a set. Short piano pieces. I wrote them maybe six months after we started seeing each other.

George smiles and laughs lightly in recollection.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

They were all based on this strange Italian folk song her grandmother used to sing to her as a kid.

George begins to hum a folk tune. It blends seamlessly with Sebastian's playing.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I gave her the score and played her the entire set for her birthday one year.

ANTON

Lovely. Quite lovely. A little sentimental for my tastes, but...

Notable irritation from George.

GEORGE

She liked them.

ANTON

Yes, yes. Women do trade in schmaltz.

George sneers.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Oh stop. I'm only kidding. Go on, though. How long have you been with her now?

He holds up four fingers.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
Years?

GEORGE  
Uh huh.

ANTON  
Christ! I once had to feed  
someone's dog for a week and felt  
absolutely smothered.

GEORGE  
Not really an apt comparison.

ANTON  
You're right. Dogs are much more  
loyal.

GEORGE  
The human condition, I suppose.

ANTON  
The feminine affliction.

George rolls his eyes.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
Roll your eyes all you like. Your  
actions belie your feminism.

GEORGE  
What does that mean?

ANTON  
Nothing. Nothing at all.

Anton raises his glass.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
To the sentimental piano and the  
cold-hearted quartet!

George stares. A smile creeps back onto his lips, he raises  
his glass.

GEORGE  
Nothing's more sentimental than  
strings. And nothing's colder than  
a lone pianist.

Both men drink. Anton chuckles.

ANTON

Still...

GEORGE

I don't want to hear it.

ANTON

Of course not. And I've no desire to say it, frankly.

Silence.

GEORGE

But you will.

ANTON

All these suspicions. Discoveries. They must come to a head at some point.

GEORGE

You think I have discoveries. I have maybes at best.

ANTON

It's maybes that have toppled empires. Your fears are coming true. You're like a fossil hunter uncovering an ancient skeleton. You dig, brush away some dirt, dig, brush away some more. Dig, brush, dig, brush back and forth. And little by little the bones begin to appear, and you see how they're all connected to each other.

His voice softens to a whisper as he goes, and he taps the table with each item mentioned.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Letters to posters to bodies. Cid to Sofia...to Charles...to Sofia.

Sebastian's music becomes more oppressive in feel as time goes on. The three masked men retain their vigil.

GEORGE

What does any of this matter to you?

Anton smiles.

ANTON

There are too many coincidences here, George. And you've uncovered too much of the fossil.

(leaning in)

You don't trust Sofia, George.

George stares at him.

ANTON (CONT'D)

You can't exactly figure out why, but you've never really trusted her. Even when you were writing her musical love letters.

The music grows more dissonant, its presence almost unbearable.

ANTON (CONT'D)

In fact, even now, when your faith is at its lowest, you still trust me more than you've ever trusted her. This, a woman whose body you know, inside and out. Who has clung to you. A woman who has burrowed a hole deep inside you and who will never leave on her own accord.

Sebastian suddenly brings his playing down to a quiet drone that seems to float past George and Anton.

ANTON (CONT'D)

All the same, you grow weary of her.

George continues to stare.

ANTON (CONT'D)

You want to ignore everything because if you see the truth, well...I'm on your side, George, simply because now there are too many bones to ignore.

George stares for a moment longer. He drinks slowly. Anton gently puts his hand on George's cheek as Sebastian's music builds again. The three masked men remain unmoved.

George climbs up the stairwell. His walk is uneven. As he approaches the door, George pulls out his keys, but before he can put them in the lock, the door opens.

Sofia stands in the entrance. She's dressed in night clothes, but her hair is unruffled.

SOFIA

Where have you been?

George looks at Sofia for a moment, then brushes past her as he walks into the apartment. Sofia closes the door.

70

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

70

George walks to the couch and drops onto it. Sofia shuts the door, but stays where she is.

SOFIA

Get off the sofa.

He doesn't.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

You either get off the sofa now, or we have a serious goddamn problem!

George sits, then pushes himself up. He throws his arms up.

GEORGE

Happy?

SOFIA

Yeah. Thrilled. All I ever wanted in life was a drunk asshole to call my own.

GEORGE

I do aim to please.

SOFIA

This isn't funny to me.

GEORGE

You haven't heard my A-material yet.

SOFIA

George!

George's smirk fades.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

Do you really think it's okay to keep doing this?

(MORE)

SOFIA (CONT'D)

Do you really think it's fine to make me worry all night, to not have the common decency to call me. At least answer when I call you!

GEORGE

I was in a rehearsal.

SOFIA

A rehearsal?

GEORGE

The concert's soon.

SOFIA

A concert?

GEORGE

Yeah. New string quartet.

Sofia can't decide whether this is good news.

SOFIA

That's where you've been all these nights? Why didn't you tell me you had a concert coming up?

GEORGE

You never asked.

SOFIA

Fuck you.

Sofia seems to soften and walks closer to George.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

When is it?

GEORGE

Next week. It's by invitation only, though.

A beat.

SOFIA

What?

GEORGE

The concert. It's by invitation only.

SOFIA

You're saying I can't go?

GEORGE  
I dunno. I'll have to ask Anton.

SOFIA  
You'll have to ask -- who the hell  
is Anton!

George waves her off and sits back down.

GEORGE  
I need to get some sleep.

He drops his body onto the sofa.

SOFIA  
Jesus Christ. Will you please talk  
to me for once? You owe me that at  
least.

GEORGE  
At least what?

SOFIA  
A conversation! Some consideration  
in your life! Some fucking trust!

George rolls over to face her again.

GEORGE  
Trust? What debt would that repay?

INT. MAROON HALL - MORNING

George walks into the maroon hall. It's empty except for a large ornate chair, almost a throne, in the center of the room. Anton sits in the chair, legs draped over the sides. Without getting up or directly acknowledging George, he begins to speak.

ANTON  
The drapes will be hung, of course.  
Deep blues and reds. The entire  
affair will be downright regal. The  
hall will be filled. None but the  
crème de la crème. There will be  
enough blue blood in the room to  
drown a dozen Bathorys.

Anton leaps out of the chair.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
At six pm sharp, a pre-concert  
buffet will be laid.  
(MORE)

ANTON (CONT'D)

Cheeses, wines, meats - nothing that isn't old enough to vote. The mingling will last an hour, and not a minute more.

Anton runs to the stage. He jumps onto it, and paces back and forth excitedly.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Then the pre-concert talk. Fifteen minutes about the music from the quartet. Fifteen more of Q and A with the composer himself. Then, at seven thirty!

Anton ceases his pacing and his voice momentarily drops to a whisper.

ANTON (CONT'D)

The program begins. Webern's Five Pieces to start us off. I always like to start a show with my namesake.

He flashes a smile. This is all news to George.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Pärt's Fratres follows. The quartet version is not my favorite, but it's such a crowd pleaser, after all! Then Lachenmann's Pression. I'd have preferred Gran Torso of course, but cellists are such divas.

Anton jumps from the stage and rushes to George.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Aren't they?

Another wide smile.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Then intermission! More wine! More cheese! Fifteen minutes. Then?

He runs back to the stage.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Then, George? The denouement of the evening. The reason we're all here. Our grand premier. The debut performance of...

Anton hops off the stage and walks to George, confused.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
Say, George?

GEORGE  
What?

ANTON  
What is the name of our new piece?

A beat.

GEORGE  
String Quartet Number Three.

Anton arches an eyebrow.

ANTON  
Say again?

GEORGE  
String Quartet Numb--

ANTON  
No. Name it something else.  
Something with flavor. The music  
isn't dreck, why should the title  
be?

George is silent.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
A title should be as evocative as  
the work it represents. How  
about...St. Luke's Passion?

Silence.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
You're right. A bit too on the  
nose. Penderecki's already used it  
anyway. Give it some thought today,  
would you?

GEORGE  
If he doesn't know--

ANTON  
Give it some real thought.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

George sits in a train car, a notebook open in front of him. A number of possible titles are written down, most have been crossed out. His mind is elsewhere, he's wracked with nerves.

72 INT. ST. LUKE'S CHURCH HALLWAY - DAY 72

The corridor resembles an abandoned hospital ward. Light filters in from open doors on both sides. "My Blue Heaven" plays faintly from a room down the hall. George surveys the surroundings as he makes his way toward the music.

73 INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 73

Edi, pale and sickly under a blanket not reaching his feet, is propped up on a small mattress, staring into space. George enters the room. An old phonograph situated next to the bed continues to play "My Blue Heaven."

George walks over to the phonograph. He runs his hand over the amplifier, then turns and walks to Edi. He sits down on the bed beside him.

The song continues. At once, George breaks. He places his head in his hands and sobs uncontrollably. Edi continues to stare into space.

Inconsolable sadness. George chokes on tears and mucus and saliva. The song ends. The lock groove of the LP CRACKLES faintly. George's cries are louder.

The needle resets. The song begins again.

74 INT. ST. LUKE'S CHURCH HALLWAY - DAY 74

The sounds of music and George's crying continue from a distance.

75 INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY 75

George is shaking, tears in his eyes. He holds the same notebook as before. "Canticles of St. Cecilia" is underlined at the bottom of the page.

76 EXT. CHARLES' APARTMENT - DUSK 76

George paces near an alley next to Charles's apartment. The streets are empty, and George is muttering nonsense to himself.

He spies Charles approaching quickly from across the street.

## GEORGE

Here he comes! The guy who has it all! Charles fucking Gant, cock of the walk, king of all he sees, God amongst--

George is cut short as Charles punches him in the face. As George reels in pain, Charles pushes him into the alley. Charles punches him again. George cries out as Charles grasps his own hand in pain.

George supports himself against the wall of the alley. Charles shakes out his hand and picks up a garbage can lid. George tries to run out of the alley, but Charles swings the lid and hits George in the head. George falls to the ground.

Charles tosses the lid at George, but it misses. He walks over to George, who is doubled over and gasping for air. Charles looks over his shoulder briefly, then stomps on George's arm. George cries out. A stomp in the ribs, another cry. George moves to defend himself. A stomp on the hand, a loud wail.

George coughs, hacking up a blackish fluid. Sounds of crying with no actual tears accompany a terrible gurgling hiss.

## CHARLES

If you're not gone in thirty minutes, I'm coming back with a gun.

Charles brushes off his jacket and straightens his tie. He leaves the alley and walks around the corner towards his house. George lies in his blood, moaning.

77 EXT. STREET NEAR A SUBWAY - NIGHT 77

George stumbles down a sidewalk, his injuries serious. He approaches a subway station, but collapses before he can enter. George drags himself to the side of the walkway and props himself against a wall there. He painfully takes his phone out of his pocket and dials.

78 EXT. STREET NEAR A SUBWAY - LATER 78

The streets are barren, save for George and the light emanating from the subway. Anton comes up from the subway entrance slowly.

79 INT. ANTON'S PARLOR - EARLY MORNING 79

The room is still bathed in darkness. George awakens on Anton's couch with a stifled groan, and cradles his still bloodied face with one hand and his ribs with the other.

He struggles to an upright position, but has to pause for a moment to catch his breath, which is labored.

George slowly lifts himself up from the sofa, and stands clutching his jaw as he braces himself for further movement. Veiled in the near impenetrable darkness of a far corner of the room, we hear Anton.

ANTON (O.C.)

You should rest.

George stands bewildered, then eases himself back onto the sofa.

80 INT. SUBWAY - MORNING

80

George stands in a crowded subway car. His face is badly bruised and still stained with blood, as are his soiled clothes. Though the car is packed with rush-hour traffic, there is a three foot radius of space around George.

The other passengers either avoid looking at him or stare unapologetically.

81 INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

81

Sofia sits on the couch. Her face shows signs of a sleepless night rife with tears. The curtains in the apartment are drawn, but the morning light is creeping past.

We hear George searching for his keys outside the door. Sofia stands quickly, her attention rapt. She unlocks and opens the door. George stands in the entry way, poised but bloody.

Sofia puts her hand over her mouth. Tears gather in her eyes.

She rushes to embrace George, who tries in vain to stop her.

SOFIA

What happened to you?

He moves past her towards the sofa. Sofia lets him go, watching his strained movements with increasing worry. George eases himself onto the sofa with a deep sigh of momentary relief.

GEORGE

(trailing off)

Things are going to be just fine.

As tears trickle down her face, Sofia's disposition changes. She becomes a spectator, incapable of interacting with the scene before her. George's breathing is heavy and labored.

SOFIA  
Rehearsal doesn't look like this.

Silence.

SOFIA (CONT'D)  
Where do you go?

GEORGE  
Where I go is my business.

SOFIA  
Why do you come back bleeding! Why  
can't you come home and be okay?  
You're never okay!

GEORGE  
You want to know?

Sofia nods fervently.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
You really want to know, Sofie?

George stands up. The adrenaline softens his pain and he lurches forward as he speaks in a staggered monotone. Fear enters Sofia's eyes.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I go to churches. And basements.  
And makeshift graves. And every  
corpse and every man of god tells  
me the same fucking thing.

Sofia slowly backs away, too scared to speak.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
You know what they tell me?

Silence.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
They tell me about you.

SOFIA  
Me?

GEORGE  
They tell me all about you.

Sofia has backed herself against the door now, her hand on the knob.

SOFIA

What?

GEORGE

They tell me all about the  
"Canticles of St. Cecilia."

Sofia's head drops and her hand falls from the knob.

SOFIA

I--

GEORGE

You gave it to her.

Sofia's mouth opens, but no sound.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

When?

Silence. George explodes.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

When the fuck did you give her the  
book, Sofie?!

Sofia breaks. She begins to sob uncontrollably. Words blur together, nothing she says makes any real sense.

George reaches her. He grabs her by the arms and hoists her back up to her feet. His words are a harsh whisper.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Why is there blood on every page?

Sofia knees George in the stomach. All the pain his rage had suppressed comes rushing back and he crumples over. Sofia rushes out of the room. The bathroom door SLAMS shut.

George pushes himself back upright. He walks to the kitchen and indiscriminately takes a bottle of liquor from the cabinet.

82

INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

82

CLOSE ON: George as he awakens on the floor, the room dark and silent. A mostly finished bottle of vodka sits on the floor next to his sprawling body. As George begins to sit up and collect himself, we move back to reveal Anton, wearing an ornate mask, hunched atop the couch, gazing at George.

George jumps up in surprise, and Anton flips on a light beside the couch. The suddenly illuminated room casts Anton's shadow over George, who is still in a state of shock.

George starts to chuckle to himself, then out loud. Anton hasn't changed his position, and remains squatting on the couch in his mask.

ANTON

I just came to check on you. You weren't in very good shape when we last parted ways, you know?

GEORGE

How did you get in here?

Anton reaches into his pocket and pulls out keys. He dangles them in the air in front of George.

ANTON

You left these.

George snatches the keys from Anton's outstretched hand. Anton remains squatting on the couch, hunched over like a gargoyle.

GEORGE

What time is it?

ANTON

Eleven forty-three.

George looks around the apartment before turning back towards Anton.

GEORGE

Where's Sofie?

ANTON

I wouldn't know, George. She's never been a concern of mine.

GEORGE

Well, she's a concern of mine.

George looks around, and seeing his phone on the floor near the vodka, moves to pick it up. Anton, however, rises from his hunched position on the sofa and interjects before George can make a call.

ANTON

We really don't have time for this right now.

GEORGE

Don't have time for what? Why?

ANTON

We have to get your suit tailored.

George stares blankly at Anton.

GEORGE

What suit?

ANTON

Your new suit. I won't have you premiering our piece in those tattered rags you flit about in these days.

GEORGE

But it's almost midnight.

ANTON

The tailor is a personal friend of mine. I met him on a ski trip to Tunisia during the glory days of French colonialism. He's eagerly awaiting our arrival.

George again offers Anton a blank stare.

GEORGE

I have to call Sofia.

ANTON

But--

GEORGE

I'll go. After I find Sofia.

Anton relents with a wave of his hand and George begins to dial. A faint RING comes from within the apartment, and George's face wrinkles with confusion. He follows (with Anton in tow) the sound towards the bathroom. George opens the door.

83

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

83

Sofia is lying in the tub, one arm resting on the side, motionless. Her neck is slit from ear to ear. The bathwater is red, splatters of blood on the walls and water on the floor. A drip-trail of blood leads across the floor to the opposite side of the room where a bloody knife lies.

George stands in shocked horror from the doorway as Anton looks in from behind.

ANTON  
 We really mustn't keep the tailor  
 waiting, George.

FADE TO BLACK

84 OVER BLACK 84

A croonerish, Rat Pack-type song plays in the background.

85 INT. DRESSING ROOM - MAROON HALL - NIGHT 85

FADE IN to reveal George standing in front of a full-length mirror in slacks and an untucked dress shirt. The bespectacled tailor (LUCA, 60's) is hunched over measuring the length of George's pants. Anton stands just slightly out of the light, visible only through reflection.

ANTON  
 How does it feel so far?

George nods listlessly in approval. Anton grins and turns to Luca.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
 I think that's as close as we're  
 getting to a compliment tonight.

Luca pauses to admire his work, then returns to it.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
 You know artists. They're an  
 emotional lot. George is just  
 having a bad day. We found his  
 sweetheart in a bath tub earlier  
 this evening...

Luca gives Anton a wink and coquettishly bites his lip.

CLOSE on George. He is at a breaking point. Sweat trickles down his forehead. His eyes are barely open. Anton's words have become soft and distant.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
 It was a bloody mess, as you can  
 imagine. But it's like they say:  
 Tragedy. Fuel. Art. All that  
 nonsense. Frankly I'm quite sure  
 George is going to come out of this  
 on top.

George walks toward the exit. He makes it a few strides before Anton grabs him by the shoulders and leads him back to the mirror.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Come on now. Back in front of the mirror. Luca's almost finished. Aren't you, Luca?

Luca turns and smiles at Anton, nodding eagerly. He then turns to George, offering the same assuring grin. George wipes sweat from his brow.

ANTON (CONT'D)

That's from Milan, not Cambodia. If you need a handkerchief I'll get you one.

LUCA

Quella camicia e' stata prodotta a parigi.

ANTON

Really?

LUCA

Si.

A beat. Anton looks George up and down. George hangs his head.

ANTON

My goodness, boy. The evening hasn't been that awful.

Luca stands up.

LUCA

Finito!

ANTON

Grazie, Luca. Give us a moment, would you?

Luca nods and exits. George turns his gaze back to the mirror, where Anton's devilish grin hangs over his shoulder.

ANTON (CONT'D)

This is about the girl, isn't it?

GEORGE

What else would it be about? We just left her in the fucking tub!

Anton, shaking his head, scoffs at the notion.

ANTON

She's gone, George. There's nothing  
we could've done.

George moves for the exit again, but Anton grabs him and  
looks him in the eyes.

ANTON (CONT'D)

But us! We're so alive! And with  
big, big, big times ahead. The  
chefs are preparing dinner. Luca is  
preparing your suit. You're going  
to be the toast of the town.

Anton leans in uncomfortably close.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Isn't that what you've wanted?  
Isn't that what Sofia wanted for  
you?

George doesn't have time to respond, as the two of them turn  
at the sound of Luca returning. He brings George's already  
tailored jacket to him.

As both Anton and Luca rejoice, George slips on the jacket,  
tucks in his shirt, and looks into the mirror. Luca begins to  
clap as Anton emerges from the shadows to reveal a MATCHING  
SUIT.

LUCA

Bravo, maestro.

ANTON

I'll be the first to say it: We.  
Look. Marvelous!

Anton takes Luca's round face into his hands and kisses both  
his cheeks.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Luca, my very own Rumpelstiltskin.  
Weaving cloth into gold! I'm very  
happy right now!

GEORGE

I need to get home. Call me a cab.

Anton stops his celebrating abruptly.

ANTON

Everything at home will be just as  
you left it. I promise.

Luca's clapping has evaporated and been replaced by a forlorn expression.

ANTON (CONT'D)

And you ought to thank Luca for his work.

George, still looking into the mirror, responds with something between laughter and crying.

GEORGE

The suit fits like a glove. Thank you Luca.

Luca's face returns to a state of elation. A door opens on the opposite side of the room and the sound of boisterous TABLE CHATTER filters in. Sebastian enters.

SEBASTIAN

Dinner!

Still looking into the mirror, George watches Sebastian exit as quickly as he came. The room returns to a state of quiet darkness.

ANTON

Come on, George. You look like you could use a decent meal.

86

INT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

86

George, Anton, and Luca emerge from the dressing room. The dining hall is brightly lit and alive with the cacophonous drone of a dinner party. Seated at an especially long table are about FIFTEEN GUESTS, each dressed in outdated high fashion, ranging from the late 19th century through the '70s. The table is set with ornate china, candelabras, and delicacies laid out with a garish flare.

George follows Anton to the head of the table. As they pass the dinner guests, each turns and greets Anton and George with eerie smiles and hellos. Many are clad in ostentatious masks, while the rest have drawn looks that serve to accent the pretense of their smiles. The muffled sound of the fixed BLENDER draws George's gaze to Sebastian, who offers an absurdly deep bow as he mixes drinks.

Anton stands at the head of the table with George (in matching suit) by his side. George moves to sit down, but Anton grabs his arm to stop him. Anton picks up his glass, and raps on it with a spoon several times. Anton places the glass back on the table, then clears his throat.

ANTON

Bacchus, Dionysus for the pedantic amongst us, has blessed us this evening--one can only hope in all his incarnations--with the gift...the profound joy...of art.

Anton strokes George's face.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Or at least an artist!

The guests break into applause, and simultaneously stop as Anton raises his hand. George looks ill with discomfort.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Yes, our esteemed composer has been gracious enough to join us this evening. And in collaboration with the Maroon Hall, with the support of your gracious contributions, the premier performance of George's "Canticles of St. Cecilia" will take place in just two short days!

The guests again erupt into applause as Anton sits with George in tow.

GEORGE

Who are these people?

ANTON

Friends. Patrons of the arts.

GEORGE

What are they doing here? We haven't even had the final rehearsal.

Anton ignores George as Sebastian begins to serve the meal. From a distance, the food is hard to make out, but as Sebastian approaches to serve Anton, the main course becomes clear - hard boiled eggs. A single egg is placed on each plate as the noise of the room continues. George stares at the egg for a moment, then looks up at Anton slowly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

And what is this?

Before Anton can answer, Sebastian tugs on George's sleeve.

SEBASTIAN  
(sheepishly, with a wry  
smile)  
How's your search going?

GEORGE  
My search?

He nods.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
How do you--

George looks to Anton, but Anton is speaking to a couple dressed as if for a black tie burlesque. Their displays of affection for one another, and for Anton, are far too open for a formal dinner.

George turns back to Sebastian.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I hit a wall somewhere.

SEBASTIAN  
A wall, huh?

Sebastian stares at George.

GEORGE  
That would be the best way to  
describe it.

SEBASTIAN  
What about the evidence?

GEORGE  
A lot of questions. Not many  
answers.

SEBASTIAN  
Well, at least your wounds are  
looking better.

George softly touches his still bruised face as if just remembering his injuries.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)  
Shame, though. You were making such  
fine progress until, well, like you  
said. Wall.

Sebastian makes a sympathetic motion, barely caressing George's face.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

Anyway, you shouldn't let it get you down! Perhaps the apartment?

GEORGE

The apartment?

SEBASTIAN

Yes, yes! Have you searched Charles's apartment? That's where the book was, after all!

GEORGE

Yeah, but after my last run-in with Charles, I don't think would be the best idea-

Anton, still entertaining the guests, suddenly sees Sebastian speaking with George and bolts up furiously.

ANTON

What did I tell you about bothering our guests?

The room falls silent. Sebastian stands, trembling slightly.

GEORGE

It's no bother.

ANTON

Nonsense! When isn't he a bother?  
(to Sebastian)  
And what prompted you to be such a nuisance?

Sebastian remains quiet and still.

GEORGE

He was asking about my sister.

Anton stands motionless for a moment, the entire room still hushed. Anton suddenly smiles.

ANTON

How is that silly little search going, George?

The room falls back into its chaotic rhythm.

GEORGE

You know exactly how it's going.

SEBASTIAN  
 (to Anton)  
 I suggested he try the brother-in-law's house.

Anton's eyes light up.

ANTON  
 You suggested that?

Sebastian nods and Anton bursts into laughter.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
 Sometimes it only takes one monkey to write a sonnet!

George points to his face.

GEORGE  
 After last time--

Anton holds up his hand to cut George short. George stares at Anton in disbelief as Sebastian moves over to Anton and whispers something in his ear. Anton smiles from ear to ear as Sebastian hands him a large spoon.

ANTON  
 It's time for our appetizer, George. If you've never had the pleasure, I can show you how to proceed.

GEORGE  
 I've had an egg before--

George cuts off halfway through his sentence as Anton cracks open the egg to reveal a mostly developed bird fetus. George looks around the table in horror as the guests have all begun to crack open eggs containing fetal birds in exaggerated displays of development. Wings and eyes seem to be opening on the birds with more feathers, while on others, beaks fall open in mock screams.

George closes his eyes for a moment, disgusted. As he opens his eyes, he's greeted by a sea of smiling faces devouring fetuses. George rushes from the room, knocking over his chair in the process, the sounds of the guests disappearing behind him.

George's head rests awkwardly against the bathroom door, the rest of his body splayed across the tiles.

We see everything in the room except the tub, conspicuously hidden from view as George never ceases to stare at it.

The sound of George's VIBRATING PHONE. He checks.

ON PHONE: Incoming call: Cid

88

INT. THE LION'S HEAD - DAY

88

George, pale and sickly, enters The Lion's Head. The room is empty, save for Cid and Ernie. Ernie sits on the far side of the room reading a newspaper and sipping a cup of tea. He offers no reaction as George enters. Cid is seated at a table placed in the middle of the room.

George walks towards Cid.

CID  
(apologetically)  
We only got two chairs here. The one I'm sitting in and the one Ernie's sitting in.

George looks around the room and sees a stack of chairs in the far corner.

GEORGE  
I can stand.

CID  
This chair shortage is killin' me. You know I had three Japanese investors in here last week? Ernie had to lop the legs off of a table and put pillows down so we could all make pretend it was one of those fuckin' kneel on the ground type deals they got over there. My back's been killin' me ever since. Ain't that right?

Cid turns to Ernie for confirmation. Ernie offers none and sips his tea. Cid turns back to George with a fake smile.

CID (CONT'D)  
And I been getting these fuckin' headaches. I can't look out the corner of my eyes without a shooting pain...I really like looking out the corner of my eyes.

GEORGE  
...I don't know what to tell you.

An artificial smile moves across Cid's face. He looks at Ernie again.

CID  
This kid never knows what to tell  
me!

A beat. Cid chuckles.

CID (CONT'D)  
You cunts are a fickle bunch.

George looks at Ernie.

GEORGE  
Am I missing something?

Cid snaps his fingers, commanding George's attention.

CID  
Listen, you schmuck fucking  
asshole. You don't talk to Ernie  
unless I tell you to. He's here to  
sit in that chair and to break your  
arm, should I ask him nicely.

Ernie turns towards George and stares blankly at him.

CID (CONT'D)  
And what I'm getting at is the  
cause of these fuckin' headaches.  
Namely, you.

GEORGE  
Cid--

CID  
First off, it's Mr. Cid. Second,  
Ernie's got something that I think  
belongs to you.

Cid keeps his eyes fixed on George. Ernie walks over, carrying the boxes of evidence. He drops them on the floor between George and Cid with a THUD. George says nothing.

CID (CONT'D)  
These yours?

GEORGE  
Listen, I--

Cid suddenly bolts up, flipping over his desk and knocking over his chair.

CID

No, you listen! I don't know where the fuck you got this shit, and I damn sure ain't looking for the answer, but my basement is not - I repeat: Is. Fucking. Not. - a goddamn storage locker for your stolen shit!

Cid picks up his chair, dusts it off, and sits.

CID (CONT'D)

I haven't seen you in here for two weeks, two fuckin' weeks, and it looks like you spent every second on the losing side of a war. The latter part is your business, but the former?

GEORGE

I--

CID

The former is very much my fuckin' business! And you know what? For the first time in three years, I haven't had to make small talk to the sounds of a Russian funeral!

George stands in silence.

CID (CONT'D)

We get along pretty well, George, we do. But I just bought the best of Sinatra on vinyl, and frankly, business has never been better.

Cid pulls out a cigar and preps it as he speaks.

CID (CONT'D)

I'm done with you, George. Take your shit and get the fuck out.

A beat. Cid begins to smoke. George picks up the boxes, turns and walks out without responding. In the background, Ernie is no longer seen.

89

EXT. THE LION'S HEAD - CONTINUOUS

89

George exits quickly, carrying the boxes awkwardly. Before he gets very far, though, Ernie emerges from the side of the club in front of him.

George stops in his tracks.

ERNIE

I'm gonna go out on a limb here and guess that Sofia ain't the one who gave you those love taps.

GEORGE

Safe bet.

ERNIE

It's been my experience that anyone who delivers that kind of beating does so for one of two reasons. Either they found you fuckin' their woman.

Ernie looks at George, whose face remains blank.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

That's what I thought. Eliminating that option, I'd say whatever you're up to - you're up to the right thing.

George turns, but Ernie grabs his shoulder.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

Keep digging, George.

90 INT. SUBWAY - LATE DAY

90

George sits in a nearly empty subway car. The lights flicker on and off. The only other passenger is the HOMELESS MAN, at first unseen, humming a melody softly (the whaling song from the Moby Dick play). The camera pans over as George glances towards the sound, leaving the two men in the outskirts of the shot.

91 EXT. CHARLES'S APARTMENT - DUSK

91

George sits propped against the side of the building in the alleyway. The sound of a door opening and closing is heard, and George brings his body tightly into the shadows.

Charles quickly walks past the alleyway. As the sound of Charles's FOOTSTEPS fade, George emerges. He walks to the entryway of the building and knocks on Heska's door.

A beat.

The door opens. Heska answers.

HESKA

What the hell happened to you?

George offers a modest smile.

GEORGE  
It's nothing.

Heska looks George up and down curiously.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I just figured I'd take you up on  
your offer. Coffee?

92 INT. HESKA'S APARTMENT - LATER 92

The two men drink Turkish coffee in silence.

93 INT. HESKA'S APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER 93

George walks to the door. We hear the sound of DISHES being washed from the kitchen. George checks over his shoulder, then surreptitiously takes one key from a series of hooks near the door. He exits.

94 EXT. CHARLES'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS 94

George leaves Heska's apartment, and opens Charles's door with the key.

95 INT. CHARLES'S APARTMENT - LATER 95

George is on his stomach, reaching under Charles's bed. After a moment of fumbling, George pulls out a box and sits up. A pile of photographs are in the box.

George begins leafing through the photographs in a daze. The collection consists only of photos of Chelsea. Some with Charles, some of her performing, some with strangers, and some with George. Chelsea's face never conveys emotion.

With each photo, George seems to break a little more. He starts frantically thumbing through the prints, dropping the photos back into the box as he does so. Eventually, he pauses on a photo of Chelsea and himself in front of a stage. Both of them are smiling. In the background, Anton stands glowering.

George stares. And Stares. And stares. He shuts his eyes while dropping the final photo back into the box.

96 EXT. CHARLES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 96

George walks away from the apartment carrying a cello case.

ON CASE: A tag on the handle sways as George walks. CHELSEA GANT.

97 EXT. PLAINS - NIGHT

97

Two lines of barren trees run in perfect symmetry off into the distance. The sky is overcast and everything is bathed in grey (with every shift in perspective, red hues become more vibrant and accentuated). Long, muted shadows run in impossibly different directions from each row of trees.

George stands in the center, dressed in a black suit, staring towards the camera. He casts no shadow.

POV: An ornate chaise longue with a deep-red fabric.

George turns, and we turn with him.

POV: Sofia, back to us, sits at an upright grand piano stained deep red. She plays, but there is no sound. Fallen red leaves drift lifelessly in the wind back towards the chaise longue, and we follow.

Anton sits smiling, one arm around Chelsea, the other hand moving slowly up her leg. George looks around, the grey palette of before is almost unbearably crimson.

ON GEORGE: The rows of trees no longer cast shadows. The fallen leaves are now a luminous red, while George's suit is still starkly black. George stands exactly as he was, his shadow now immense.

ANTON (O.C.)

Come now, George. There's work to be done.

98 INT. MAROON HALL - DAY

98

The string quartet is set up as before, again with all but Sebastian wearing plain white masks. In addition to the quartet, a menagerie of Anton's friends line the room in unsettling silence. Each dons a plain white mask and stands as if posed for a painting. The room has been semi-decorated with blood red drapes and deep-blue chaise longues, canapés, tête-à-têtes, and other such ornate furniture.

George is in front of the quartet conducting the work. Anton is to his rear, observing the rehearsal with a coquettish simper. The final few moments of the piece are heard before George lowers his arms. This time, no applause sounds through the room, nor do the performers even relax. Only George and Anton move. The quartet and the onlookers stand in their aforementioned motionlessness state without making a sound.

Anton walks up to George, standing just a little behind him and off to one side. His wry smile remains.

ANTON

Why so somber, George? I think  
we're ready, don't you?

George doesn't turn around to answer.

GEORGE

It's over.

ANTON

The rehearsal?

George turns towards Anton.

GEORGE

There was nothing.

The musicians and crowd begin to move at an almost undetectably slow pace, a la Noh theater. The crowd, whose gazes were positioned elsewhere, start turning their attention towards Anton and George, while the musicians begin miming a performance.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I don't have enough proof to fill a  
shot glass.

Anton snorts.

ANTON

Proof. You put so much stock in  
proof. You don't need proof! You  
just need a convincing story.

GEORGE

A story?

ANTON

George, what you need now is an  
ally who can get Charles to  
incriminate himself. Someone with  
unlimited access to Charles, who  
can eat away at his confidence. And  
to get that, a good story is worth  
more than all the proof in the  
world.

George stares at Anton while the audience has turned their full attention to the two of them. The miming of the musicians has continued as if silently scoring the scene.

George furrows his brow.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
 The landlord, George. Lovely  
 fellow. I've sent him an invitation  
 to our soirée.

GEORGE  
 What?

Anton bursts into a full grin and takes George by the  
 shoulder.

ANTON  
 He adores you, my boy!

Silence.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
 And he's not very keen on our  
 mutual friend. So we tell him some  
 things - Maybe they're true, maybe  
 they're not - but he tells them to  
 Charles. And Charles worries.

Anton takes George by the shoulders.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
 And no one acts their best under  
 pressure. I think we both know  
 that.

GEORGE  
 The evidence?

ANTON  
 We tell him all about it! At least,  
 we tell him something about  
 something.

George pauses. He nods. Anton beams.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
 Now come, rest a spell. You look a  
 little peaked.

As Anton begins to lead George out of the room, the musicians  
 begin playing a lively waltz, to which the audience begins to  
 dance. George and Anton take no notice of this as they walk  
 away.

George awakens, fully clothed, in a darkness that's broken  
 only by the moonlight's pale illumination. He checks his  
 watch.

100 ON WATCH: 12:45 100

George stands, groggy but alert. He walks across the room to an ornate doorway. As he opens the door, the muffled sounds of MUSIC and a PARTY can be heard.

101 INT. MAROON HALL - NIGHT 101

George makes his way through the decorated room towards the growing sound. He heads towards a stairwell on the opposite side of the room, which leads downwards. As George walks down the stairs, the music grows until he comes to a door at the bottom. George opens the door, and the sound of KARAOKE MUSIC swallows everything else.

102 INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS 102

Golden light pours at us from a stage at the front of the room, where a lone PERFORMER is frozen in a bow. (The brass introduction to Louis Jordan's 'Deacon Jones' blares wildly in the background.) He has a microphone in one hand and a top hat in the other, but his face is concealed. To his left and right are two large karaoke projector screens.

There are about two dozen round tables in front of the stage, occupied by MEN and WOMEN in fancy attire. Their eyes are fixed on the stage in merry bewilderment.

The man lifts his head and raises the mic. The vocals begin. George's eyes grow big as he realizes who the performer is: Anton, painted in VAUDEVILLIAN BLACKFACE, begins to sing. A cheer erupts.

\*As Anton sings, the words will stream across the two screens, as written below:

ANTON  
(delightfully animated)  
*Brothers and sisters and sister-ettes!  
Deacon Jones sends his deepest regrets!  
To the members of the flock who are new  
around here...*

As the music picks up, Anton begins to snap his fingers.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
*...There's somethin' bout the deacon that I  
want to make clear!*

He grins at the crowd.

ANTON (CONT'D)  
*Who's honored an' respected?*

The crowd erupts in giddy shouts:

CROWD  
Deacon Jones!

ANTON  
*Mmm hmm! And who's so kind n'  
unaffected?*

CROWD  
Deacon Jones!

ANTON  
*An' when a sinner's moanin' low, who'll  
listen to his tale of woe?*

ALL  
*Lordy lordy Hallelujah Deacon Jones!*

ANTON  
*Who's handsome an' good lookin'?*

CROWD  
Deacon Jones!

ANTON  
*An' who is it that could smell a rooster  
cookin'?*

CROWD  
Deacon Jones!

ANTON  
*An' who gets all the chicken breast, an'  
leave the giblet for the rest?*

ALL  
*Lordy lordy Hallelujah Deacon  
Jones!*

The chorus picks up, and the words "Go, Anton, go!" flash across the karaoke screen. Anton launches into a mad softshoe shuck jive. A few members of the audience get up and also begin dancing wildly, to everyone's delight.

ANTON  
*Aw Deacon Jones! Deacon Jones! Lordy  
Lordy Hallelujah Deacon Jones! Deacon  
Jones! Deacon Jones! Lordy Lordy  
Hallelujah Deacon Jones!*

Anton stops dancing and holds his hands out to quiet the crowd.

ANTON (CONT'D)

*Now who's loved by all his neighbors?*

CROWD

Deacon Jones!

ANTON

*Mhmm. And who is it that will help you with your labors?*

CROWD

Deacon Jones!

ANTON

*Uh-huh! He'll help you beat the rug and also help you find a cider jug...*

ALL

*Lordy lordy Hallelujah Deacon Jones!*

George, face emotionless and eyes unblinking, drags himself closer to the stage. Some people turn and stare. Anton sees him and flashes a toothy, almost demonic grin:

ANTON

Ladies and gentlemen, what a treat!  
The official court maestro, our  
splendid, sister-less servant!  
Making his debut tomorrow evening  
in this very hall - George Pavel!

The crowd cheers louder. We track George as he is surrounded and engulfed by the dancing men and women. They grab at him and try to move his body rhythmically. George's limbs are manipulated like a rag doll. Soon the crowd has him dancing wildly.

In the background, we hear another chorus and see Anton rev up his dance, but the focus is on George. His face has grown pale. He tiredly pushes the people out of his way and moves back to the entrance.

103

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

103

George falls to the ground, sweat trickling down his forehead. Vomit erupts from his mouth and moves down his chin. He breathes heavily.

104

INT. BATHROOM - GEORGE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

104

George awakens in the dark on the bathroom floor. He pries open his eyes, but the darkness offers little in the way of elucidation. George feels his way to the wall and flicks on the light switch. As the fluorescent light invades the room with a flicker, we see Sofia, still lying dead in the tub.

The water has grown somewhat murky, and the signs of Sofia's death are more obvious. Despite this, George merely grimaces at the light coming on, paying no mind to the corpse in his tub.

Once his eyes have adjusted, George collects himself, then exits the room while the camera lingers in the bathroom, Sofia's corpse briefly offering the only trace of humanity. After a beat, though, George re-enters, carrying a stack of papers and tape. George makes a beeline to the wall and begins feverishly taping the papers, which we see are a music score, to the wall.

George finishes taping his score up and steps back to admire his work. With Sofia's corpse acting as an audience, George first closes his eyes in deep concentration, then begins to conduct the score.

The sounds of a string quartet begin to swell.

FADE TO:

105

INT. MAROON HALL - NIGHT

105

George is fiercely conducting the string quartet. He's wearing his tailored suit and his demeanor is intense.

The string quartet, Sebastian now included, have augmented their white masks with tattered, turn of the century tuxedos. The decay of their garb is offset by the Maroon Hall, however, which is ornately decorated as before, but with added tables of exquisitely set-up food, modeled as if for 17th century still-lives.

In the middle of the hall, amid the food and garish decorations, George's new copy of "The Canticles of Saint Cecilia" is displayed on an ornate golden stand.

The audience, which now fills the room, has also grown more ostentatious. As at Anton's dinner party, many of the people in the room wear gaudy masks, while the rest don makeup. Also as before, each outfit sports a different era of high-fashion. In addition to the grab bag of passé fashions, there are many who seem drawn from an avant-garde circus.

Exaggerated makeup and glimmering, garish costumes serve to heighten the dichotomy between the plain white masks of the quartet, and the grotesque, hyperbolic garb of the audience. As the piece continues, the audience is divided into those who remain statuesque in their arrangement, and those who sway about in dance despite the music's dissonant feel.

As the piece continues and we cut between shots of George and the musicians, and shots of the audience, Anton becomes more and more visible. Initially veiled in shadows and lost in the audience to George's rear, Anton becomes more illuminated and draws closer to George with every shot, even beginning to offer musical cues to the quartet as time goes on. Finally, as the music draws to a close, Anton hovers just behind George and the two cut off the music in unison.

As the quartet's final jarring CHORDS echo throughout the room, George and Anton simultaneously stand taut for a beat, then relax with the musicians as the audience erupts into applause. The musicians stand up and George and Anton turn to face the audience. As they prepare to bow, a door in the rear of the hall bursts open.

Charles enters the room. He pays no mind to the menagerie of masked patrons as he makes a beeline towards the stage. In turn, the audience pays no mind to him, simply stepping aside as he passes. Anton and the quartet repeatedly bow, Anton holding George in place.

The noise of the crowd quickly dissipates as Anton rises from his final bow. He deftly steps aside as Charles draws near, throwing George to the floor.

CHARLES

What the fuck is this?

Charles reaches into his pocket and pulls out a crumpled piece of paper. He throws it at George, who slowly picks it up and examines it.

ON PAPER: In Anton's handwriting, a letter to Heska. We see fragments of it.

"We need to talk ... new evidence in my sister's disappearance ... blood on the book and ties to her last concert ... I think that Charles killed her ... -George"

George looks up at Charles.

GEORGE

It's a letter to your landlord.

Charles kicks George in the stomach, and George lets out a moan. George coughs. There's already blood in his mouth.

Charles kneels down and leans in, so that their faces are mere inches apart. He's regained his icy composure.

CHARLES

What could you possibly think you've found? You can barely function as an adult, and you think you've sleuthed your way to an answer to a question three years old? How? Breaking into my home? What'd you find, George, that so neatly solved this mystery?

GEORGE

A cello.

CHARLES

A cello.

George begins to cough and wheeze. Laughter starts to grow, swelling amongst his coughs. Charles furrows his brow. Suddenly, George grabs him by the collar.

GEORGE

This is all I've got left, Charles!  
A book, a cello, and this! This is it! This is hell, and for hate's sake, I spit my last breath!

George spits a mouthful of blood in Charles's face then let's go of him. As Charles recoils in disgust, George falls back in hysterical laughter. His teeth shine with blood and specks of red stain his clothing.

CHARLES

What is the matter with you!

George continues to laugh. Charles moves as if to strike again, but stops himself. Charles lingers a moment, then shakes his head in disgust.

Charles walks back towards the rear of the room. George pushes himself up and scans the room. Anton, grinning slyly, nods towards Sebastian's cello lying on the ground.

Charles is amid the crowd making his way to the back. The masked patrons again stand aside as he passes, now watching his every step. Charles still pays them no mind. George picks up the cello and makes his way to Charles at a quick pace.

The crowd parts widely for George, curtsying as if for a king and pointing in Charles's direction. George is nearly upon Charles, both of them next to the grandiose book display, when he lifts the cello.

GEORGE

Charles!

Charles turns to face George just as George swings the cello at his head. The cello makes a loud THUD as Charles is knocked to the ground. George jumps on top of Charles, repeatedly SMASHING his face, the blood staining everything around.

Charles's cries are first reduced to gargled yelps, then finally to silence, as only the sounds of the beating remain.

The violence ends. George is smiling widely. His breath is heavy and his face and clothes are soaked with blood.

Anton, still on stage, is ecstatic. His voice pierces the silence.

ANTON

Lovely piece, George! Simply  
marvelous! And such a fine  
performance at that!

Sebastian pushes his mask up on his head and begins to clap furiously. In turn, the audience bursts into wild applause. George looks up, he's surrounded by blood. Amid the audience, George espies Chelsea.

His smile fades. He drops the remnants of the bloody cello and pushes his way into the crowd towards Chelsea. The audience envelops him, ghoulish masks glaring at him from every direction as their rapturous applause continues.

In a panic, George begins pushing them out of his way frantically. Glimpses of Chelsea grow more distant. A path never appears.

GEORGE

Chelsea!

The crowd gets denser. George can barely move. Chelsea can no longer be seen.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Chelsea! Anton! Find her!

George keeps pushing the masked strangers away from him, he's lost all sense of direction. Audience members fall, only to be replaced by other ones. Finally: Another shove, a CLATTER.

The audience stops thronging, silence sets in. We see that the book display has toppled under a masked patron.

In the confusion, George has found himself back next to Charles's body. The book lies in a puddle of blood, its pages now stained red.

Anton walks to George, gazing at the book.

ANTON

No worry. I'm sure we can find another one.

George turns to Anton.

GEORGE

But--Chelsea?

ANTON

She's not going anywhere. You know that.

A beat.

George smiles and turns towards the stage.

GEORGE

Sebastian! A waltz!

Sebastian turns to the rest of the quartet and begins to conduct. The trio erupts with a jagged German waltz. The audience begins to dance around George, Anton, and Charles's corpse. George and Anton smile proudly.

FADE TO BLACK.