

THE OTHER GENIUS

a farce

by
Steven Haworth

THE OTHER GENIUS

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THE OTHER GENIUS

For Ruth

THE OTHER GENIUS

CHARACTERS

JAMESON – 21 – A troubled young student, in love with Fiona.

FIONA – 31 – An English psychology professor, Jameson’s teacher, in love with David.

DAVID – 51 – A rich, powerful art dealer, linguist, chess master, genius, Jameson’s father.

ARIANA – 45 – A Serbian personal assistant to David.

DARKO – 21 – A Serbian ninja.

TAMAZAWA – A masked Japanese master ninja (and stage ninja).

SETTING

Westchester County and New York, NY

A NOTE ABOUT THE SET

The set is a bare stage with a platform. That’s it. The platform transforms into a desk, a bed, a small stage, etc. depending on where we are. Scene Ninjas, in black, masked, ninja garb are employed to help in the changing of the scenes, with one later playing Tamazawa.

The play should run 90 minutes without an intermission.

The Other Genius was a winner of the 2015 NEWvember Festival hosted by Tangent Theatre in Tivoli, NY, and the Long Beach New Works Festival at the Long Beach Playhouse, Long Beach, CA.

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The NEWvember Festival reading was directed by Michael Rhodes with the following cast:

Jameson.....Samuel Hoeksema
David.....Brendan Burke
Fiona.....Anna Nugent
Ariana.....Audrey Rapoport
Darko.....Paul Nugent
Stage Directions/Tamazawa.....Steven Austin Young

Abingdon Theatre (NYC) did a public reading of The Other Genius, directed by Jamie Richards with the following cast:

Jameson.....Jonathan Randall Silver
David.....Chris Ceraso
Fiona.....Julie Fitzpatrick
Ariana.....Anne Marie Howard
Darko.....Douglas Rossi
Stage Directions/Tamazawa.....Marla Yost

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SCENE 1

Fiona's Office. A whiteboard is covered in psychological phrases and references from mid-twentieth century theories from Abraham Maslow, B.F Skinner, Erich Fromm, Alfred Kinsey, etc. In front of the whiteboard a desk. FIONA, 31, sits behind the desk and JAMESON, 21, stands before her.

FIONA. *(English accent.)* If a professor is stalked by a student, fails to report it, and the dean finds out she can be fired. Did you know that?

JAMESON. No.

FIONA. And the student expelled or even arrested.

JAMESON. Huh.

FIONA. And we both know you left a prestigious Boston university to attend a lowly community college because I teach here.

JAMESON. I'm not stalking you, Fiona.

FIONA. Do you want to be expelled?

JAMESON. No.

FIONA. Do you want me to be fired?

JAMESON. God no.

FIONA. Then you will leave my office immediately.

JAMESON. Are you seeing someone else?

FIONA. You're being very hostile, Jameson.

JAMESON. Admit you're seeing another man and I'll go away.

FIONA. I am seeing another man.

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JAMESON. Anyone I know?

FIONA. And now you go away!

JAMESON. Who is this guy?

FIONA. *Jameson.*

JAMESON. Let me guess.

FIONA. I am calling Security.

JAMESON. Wait! He's very rich, enjoys an international reputation as an art dealer, author, philanthropist, he's a world-class linguist, his amateur musicianship is the envy of avant garde professionals, he has a PhD in Art History, another in Astrophysics, both from Harvard, with honorary degrees from Princeton, Stanford, Oxford and The Sorbonne; he's met four presidents, and on a good day he can beat a grand master at chess.
(Fiona is taken aback.)

FIONA. You should know that besides being your Psychology 101 professor I am board certified and can have you committed.

JAMESON. I heard him talking on the phone.

FIONA. When?

JAMESON. Last night. He was talking about school and I'm pretty sure he was talking to you--

FIONA. So this is all about whether if I am seeing *David*.

JAMESON. Only because it's my worst nightmare.

FIONA. You really are completely mental.

JAMESON. So, you're not. Seeing David. You have to promise me you're not. Because it will kill me! If you are. So say you aren't. Please. Please tell me you and David are not lovers!

(Pause.)

FIONA. Sorry, Jameson. Your father and I are most definitely lovers.

JAMESON. AGGHH FUCK!! NOOO! OH MY GOD -- !!

FIONA. Keep your voice down.

JAMESON. How the hell did this start with my dad?!

FIONA. He called me.

JAMESON. He just called you on the phone?!

FIONA. He called to discuss the F I gave you for your term paper.

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JAMESON. He did NOT!

FIONA. Apparently you complained.

JAMESON. Then what?

FIONA. We hadn't spoken in years. It turned charming very quickly.

JAMESON. I never should have told him about that F.

FIONA. Why did you?

JAMESON. The paper didn't deserve an F!

FIONA. True. It deserved a B plus or A minus.

JAMESON. Then why did you give me an F?!

FIONA. You work below your potential. From you I require untrammelled excellence.

JAMESON. What are you talking about?! I worked hard on that paper! And my father calling you about it is wildly inappropriate!

FIONA. Really?! Your father is wildly inappropriate?! Let me give you some advice! You do not continue to ask a woman out when she has repeatedly said no! Especially not a woman with a PhD in psychology! And *especially* not a woman who was your live-in babysitter when you were six!

JAMESON. Fiona –

FIONA. That is Professor Ogletree to you! You are completely over the line! You are a student and I am seeing another man!

JAMESON. Yeah, my father! He's twenty years older than you!

FIONA. I'm ten years older than you.

JAMESON. It's good for me to be with an older woman.

FIONA. It's good for me to be with an older man.

JAMESON. Why? Do you have a thing about your father?

FIONA. No. Do you have a thing about your mother?

JAMESON. Yes!

FIONA. *Jameson* –

JAMESON. I'm in love with you!

FIONA. Oh, Jameson, really -- !

JAMESON. But even if you don't love me you can't be with him!

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FIONA. You are not in love with me! I am simply a diversion from finding a way to make something of yourself in the shadow of your titanic father!

JAMESON. I'm going to kill myself!

FIONA. Jameson! I know this is ... well, awful. Really bad just horribly awkward and bad and sad and embarrassing and just terribly wretched and really really bad. But ... you see I ... absolutely *adore* him! (*Jameson reels and GROANS.*)

FIONA. What can I say? He's a genius! (*Jameson HOWLS. He suddenly stops, transfixed by a shocking thought.*)

FIONA. Jameson?

JAMESON. Oh my god.

FIONA. What?

JAMESON. OH MY GOD!

FIONA. What?!

(*Jameson is frozen in horror staring at the monstrous thought in his mind. Finally --.*)

JAMESON. Nothing. Bye.

FIONA. Stop! To make up for your F I need a paper on Maslow's hierarchy of needs in three days. Good bye. (*Jameson doesn't move. He stares at Fiona. She is unnerved.*)

FIONA. What!

JAMESON. You were the live-in *au pair* for two years. Then you weren't. Then my parents divorced.

FIONA. What are you on about?

JAMESON. It just came to me. When you lived with us ... did you have an affair with my dad?

FIONA. What?!

JAMESON. When you were *sixteen*?

FIONA. OH MY GOD!

JAMESON. Did you? Because that would mean you are revisiting now an earlier affair with ... a statutory rapist! Are you the reason my parents divorced when I was eight?!

FIONA. I did not have an affair with your father while I was in high school! Jesus!

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JAMESON. So my mother's suicide does not prey upon your conscience?

FIONA. I don't believe this!

JAMESON. Is that why you went into psychology, guilt over the death of my mom?!

FIONA. Are you insane?!

JAMESON. Don't you have reservations about dating a man who drove his wife to suicide?!

FIONA. Don't you have reservations about dating a woman who drove your mother to suicide?!

JAMESON. I do! But you're so beautiful I may have to put them aside!

FIONA. I want you out of my class! I am telling your father about this! Mark my words!

JAMESON. No! *I* am telling my father about this! Mark *my* words! *(He starts off, he freezes.)* Oh, my god. I am, aren't I. Holy shit. *(Jameson exits. Fiona stands frozen.)*

SCENE 2

Jameson sits on a table outside his house, which is covered by a vinyl tablecloth, looking up at the night sky. DAVID, his father, 51, enters in topcoat, carrying a rifle slung over one shoulder and a small deer around his neck. He throws the deer on the table.

JAMESON. Jesus!

DAVID. You're back.

JAMESON. What the hell is that?!

DAVID. What does it look like?

JAMESON. It looks like a dead deer!

DAVID. That is precisely what it is. Why are you sitting outside the house?

JAMESON. I was walking.

DAVID. Walking. At night.

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JAMESON. Yes.

DAVID. In the woods.

JAMESON. Yes.

DAVID. Don't you think that strange?

JAMESON. No. I was thinking.

DAVID. Hmm. But now you're back.

JAMESON. I thought I heard shots.

DAVID. Ah.

JAMESON. When did you shoot that deer?

DAVID. Just now while looking for you.

JAMESON. You were looking for me?

DAVID. Yes.

JAMESON. With a gun.

DAVID. I don't like to waste time. If I am going to search for a son in the woods at night I might as well thin the herd of deer that terrorizes our local motorists.

JAMESON. I heard a bullet whistle past my head.

DAVID. That's the risk you take when you walk in the woods at night during deer hunting season.

JAMESON. But the woods are yours! You are the only one allowed to hunt in them! And you knew I was in the woods!

DAVID. Let's stop talking around the subject. I am very angry with you.

JAMESON. You're angry with me?! I'm angry with you!

DAVID. Why are you angry with me?

JAMESON. You're dating the woman I love and have always loved and you know I have always loved!

DAVID. That is true. But look at her. Have you ever seen a more beautiful woman?

JAMESON. NO!

DAVID. I didn't mean for it to happen. It just happened.

JAMESON. If there is one person that statement is idiotic coming from it is you!

DAVID. What do you mean?

JAMESON. Everything that happens to you is by design!

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DAVID. You vastly overestimate my powers.

JAMESON. You called her on the phone!

DAVID. Yes. And do you know what she said?

JAMESON. What?!

DAVID. She said you are out of your mind.

JAMESON. Please!

DAVID. She says your behavior in class has been erratic, you say things that are wildly inappropriate, and you stare incessantly.

JAMESON. I only stare when her back is turned.

DAVID. Women know when we stare even when their back is turned.

JAMESON. No, they don't!

DAVID. Perhaps we want to be caught. Perhaps they have invisible antennae with little eyes on the ends. It doesn't matter, they know.

JAMESON. The point is I tried to hide my feelings.

DAVID. Until you accused her of adultery with me as a teen!

JAMESON. Anyway! Then what happened?!

DAVID. I told her of my success in international art dealing, my new book. She told me of her career. Did you know she won a prize in grad school for --

JAMESON. I don't care! Then what?!

DAVID. She admitted she often wondered if I had *aged well* as she had always considered me a devilishly handsome man. I knew at once this was the real reason for her marking your term paper so unjustly. To spare her the awkwardness of asking me to dinner I took the initiative as a gentleman.

JAMESON. You asked her to dinner!

DAVID. Yes.

JAMESON. Where did you go?

DAVID. Le Bernadin.

JAMESON. And then?

DAVID. We had dinner.

JAMESON. And then?

DAVID. We had sex at her place.

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JAMESON. GOD!

DAVID. It was sex like no other! Certainly your mother could never rise to Fiona's imaginative heights. The things that woman can do with her mouth alone would add another volume to the Kama Sutra!

JAMESON. AH! Question!

DAVID. Yes.

JAMESON. Did you ravish Fiona when she was the *au pair*?

DAVID. How can you even suggest such a thing?

JAMESON. It was a blazing insight!

DAVID. I was too preoccupied with your mother's illness to think of anyone that way.

JAMESON. You weren't too preoccupied to divorce her.

DAVID. But it does not automatically follow that an affair was the reason --

JAMESON. Then why?!

DAVID. It was your mother who asked for the divorce.

JAMESON. Because she knew about your affair!

DAVID. No.

JAMESON. Yes! YES! Why else does a woman ask for a divorce when she knows she's dying!

DAVID. Alright! I can't keep it to myself any longer! She didn't love me anymore! There you have it. In fact, she couldn't stand the sight of me. The thought of spending the last painful year of her life in my company was something she could not abide.

JAMESON. Dad, c'mon!

DAVID. My wife preferred to die alone! I wanted to nurse her, hold her hand. But she pushed me away! I don't mind telling you ... I wept.

(David seems genuinely stricken. Jameson studies him narrowly, then bursts out laughing.)

JAMESON. What an asshole!

DAVID. How dare you! *(Suddenly the deer jerks its legs.)*

JAMESON. HOLY SHIT!

DAVID. Good god!

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(The deer jerks again. Jameson SCREAMS. David points the rifle at the deer's head. David FIRES, Jameson SCREAMS. David continues to point the rifle at deer, which does not move.)

JAMESON. Um. It's dead, Dad.... You can put the gun down.

(David points the rifle at Jameson.) Dad?

DAVID. I want you to listen to me. And I want you to listen with care. Are you listening?

JAMESON. Yeah, Dad.

DAVID. You will speak no more of this lunatic notion of an earlier affair between Fiona and me. You are not to bring it up to me. You are not to bring it up to Fiona. You go to her class. You apologize. You study. That is all. Understand?

JAMESON. Yes.

DAVID. If you do not obey me do you know what I will do?

JAMESON. Shoot me in the face?

DAVID. I will expel you from this house.

JAMESON. I thought you were going to say you would shoot me in the face.

DAVID. Since you have no money, no friends, I think the threat of homelessness will suffice. Am I wrong?

(Jameson bows his head, David rests the rifle on his shoulder.)

I'm impressed. There you were with the father you fear and despise, a father who sees you as an enormous disappointment, pointing a loaded rifle at your head, and you barely flinched.

Congratulations, Jameson. There is hope for you yet.

(David exits. Jameson looks after him. He looks at the deer.)

SCENE 3

David's Office. David is on the phone, speaking Italian. Fiona is studying a chessboard on David's desk. A chess piece moves by itself on the board, startling Fiona. David, continuing in Italian, takes about two seconds to make his move. Fiona reacts to its brilliance. Over which:

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DAVID. No, la Tate Modern ha pagato dieci milioni. Si sta male informato. Si sta male informato. Sì, lo so cosa leggere e dove si legge, in ArtForum, pero ArtForum è male informato. La Tate ha pagato dieci milioni. Sì. Sì, but as Lorenzo de Medici said :

“Troppo conoscere è miseria.” *

Well, I won't keep you. Ciao, Pietro! (*He hangs up, to Fiona.*)

I am so sorry. Just a moment. (*He presses intercom button.*)

Ms. Drajik. Hold all calls.

ARIANA'S VOICE. (*Serbian accent.*) I heard you the first time, Mr. Wilkinson.

DAVID. Then why did you let that call through?

ARIANA'S VOICE. It was important.

DAVID. Please hold even important calls.

ARIANA'S VOICE. I shall hold all calls. I shall not suspend my judgment. That is fair warning.

DAVID. *Alright, Ms. Drajik. (He smiles, the soul of patience, turns to Fiona)* I am all yours. For the next ten minutes.

FIONA. Who are you playing?

DAVID. Some grandmaster in Russia. Marvelous machine, isn't it? A gift from Gary Kasparov.

FIONA. Oh. What happens in ten minutes?

DAVID. I have a call with Sotheby's. Some loose ends on the mansion on Fifth Avenue. My god, the building rivals the Frick! We are opening in *four days*, do you believe it?! And then I have a call with my European agent. Rafael's *Transfiguration* is secretly on the market. And I'm going to get it!

FIONA. I thought the *Transfiguration* was owned by the Vatican Museum.

DAVID. The Vatican needs money for obvious reasons. I must have it. It will be the jewel in the crown of the Wilkinson

* Translations in the Appendix.

Collection, soon to be acknowledged as the most magnificent private collection for public viewing in the world!

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FIONA. The scale of your ambitions is Himalayan! And now you must kiss me with wild abandon.

DAVID. As you command. *(They kiss. INTERCOM BUZZER. David presses button.)*

DAVID. Ms. Drajik! Hold all calls!

ARIANA'S VOICE. On your head be it, Mr. Wilkinson!

DAVID. That woman. Where were we?

FIONA. Wait. We must talk about Jameson. What did he say when you spoke to him?

DAVID. He was very apologetic.

FIONA. Really?

DAVID. No. But he will be. This accusation of an affair fifteen years ago, it is all about disappointed love, not actual belief.

FIONA. But I don't believe he loves me.

DAVID. Of course he does.

FIONA. David, no. He stares, he has a crush, but real love -

DAVID. From the day he met you he's never stopped talking about you. When his mother died and you went away he howled for weeks. From the moment he first found his penis he has masturbated thinking only of you.

FIONA. You can't possibly know that!

DAVID. He's adored you beyond reason all his life.

(Fiona stares.)

FIONA. How can you pursue a woman you know your son is in love with?

DAVID. I didn't. You pursued me.

FIONA. What?! You called me on the phone!

DAVID. And fell straight into your brilliant trap. How did you know I had been dying to speak to you for fifteen years?

FIONA. I didn't!

DAVID. Imagine my relief when you were so clearly overjoyed to hear from me.

FIONA. It is possible you flatter yourself.

DAVID. It's not. I am the soul of humility. And I say that in all modesty.

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FIONA. David! You knew Jameson was mad for me and you just didn't care! And now we have this very real problem!

DAVID. Because you can't keep a secret. Why did you admit you were seeing me in the first place? For a psychologist you show a surprising lack of restraint.

FIONA. Me?! What about you?!

DAVID. I am the soul of discipline.

FIONA. We had sex on the first date!

DAVID. And when was the last time we had sex before that?

FIONA. Fifteen years ago!

DAVID. Now that's discipline.

FIONA. As if you have been thinking of me all this time!

DAVID. Of course I have! Why do I speak more languages than I can count? You! Why have I built the greatest private art collection in the world? You! Why have I bought an entire city block on Central Park risking my entire fortune? You! When I sent you away it nearly killed me! I swore off love! Everything I have done since is a vain attempt to forget you! You have plagued my soul for fifteen years!

FIONA. And ... you have plagued mine! David!

DAVID. Darling! *(They kiss passionately. LONG BUZZER.)*

DAVID. Ms. Drajik!

ARIANA'S VOICE. It is Bogdan Proschepinski!

DAVID. Oh for heaven's sake! *(David picks up the phone. He speaks Polish. At some point a chess piece moves on the board. David sees, makes his move quickly while continuing to converse.)*

DAVID. Bogdan? Co robisz? O mój Boże, nie znowu. Słuchaj wiesz, to tylko chwilowy burza w twoim umyśle. Przestań straszyć wszystkich i przyjdź z półki. Nie można pozbawić Światową swojego geniuszu, a nie zapomnij, że nadal ci winien trzy miliony dolarów z ostatniego pokazu. Ci wysiąść? Dobry. Zadzwoń wieczorem. Tak. Do widzenia.* *(David gets off the phone, pushes intercom button.)* Thank you, Ms. Drajik. Disaster averted.

ARIANA'S VOICE. You're welcome, Mr. Wilkinson!

FIONA. What was that about?

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DAVID. One of my artists in Warsaw. He was standing on a ledge and thinking of jumping.

FIONA. Oh no!

DAVID. He does it all the time.

FIONA. Was that Polish?

DAVID. Of course.

FIONA. Who speaks Polish?

DAVID. The Poles do. I do. Where were we?

FIONA. You were explaining how I am the reason for all your brilliant success.

DAVID. Yes! I've accomplished so much. All because I had an affair with the *au pair*.

FIONA. Hmm.

DAVID. Hard to believe we actually did that.

FIONA. But we did.

DAVID. Indeed. I instantly forgive you without reservation.

FIONA. What the hell is that supposed to mean?

DAVID. You seduced me.

FIONA. I did no such thing!

DAVID. You were constantly flirting and finding ways to be alone with me. Your intentions were beyond obvious.

FIONA. You came into my bedroom!

DAVID. Only after your silent invitation.

FIONA. I was sixteen!

DAVID. You said you were seventeen.

FIONA. I was sixteen!!

DAVID. One of the greatest love stories of all time was born ... on unconventional ground.

FIONA. Is that why your wife killed herself?! She was too conventional?!

DAVID. My wife didn't know about us! How many times must I tell you?!

FIONA. I would have done anything for you! Then you sent me away! I thought I'd die! Do you think any boy, any man, could

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compare to you? You ruined me! And now here we are again! And Jameson knows! Oh, my god, what am I doing?!

DAVID. Fiona --

FIONA. It will kill me, David! If this isn't real! This time I'll die!

DAVID. I love you more than anything or anyone. I love you more than my own son! I even love you more than my son loves *you*!

FIONA. But Jameson knows what we did!

DAVID. He does not!

FIONA. I'm telling you he does!

DAVID. Then he has no proof!

FIONA. What if he were to find some proof?!

DAVID. What proof?!

FIONA. What if someone else knows?!

DAVID. Who else could there possibly be?! (*REPEATED BUZZERS.*) Ms. Drajik!

ARIANA'S VOICE. It is Ai Weiwei! The Chinese authorities have arrested him again! He is allowed one phone call! *Will you take the call?!!*

DAVID. Christ in heaven! Yes! Yes! (*He picks up phone, speaks Mandarin.*) Weiwei. Wǒ de péngyǒu shì zhēn de ma? Nàxiē húndàn. Bié dānxīn, wǒ huì bāng nǐ de. Wǒ huì ràng nàxiē húndàn zhīfù. Bǎochí jiànkāng, bǎochí lěngjìng, yào xiǎoxīn nǐ chī shénme, wǒ huì dài nǐ líkāi nàlǐ. Cóng bù wèijù. Nǐ shì wǒ de yīngxióng.* (*David slams down the phone.*)

FIONA. Can you really get Ai Weiwei out of prison?

DAVID. They will let him out tonight! (*A chess piece moves on the board, David makes his move.*) And checkmate!

FIONA. Oh, my god!

DAVID. Now listen. Jameson attends your class this afternoon. He has promised to apologize.

FIONA. I don't want him in my class.

DAVID. But I do.

FIONA. Why?

DAVID. I want to keep an eye on him.

FIONA. You mean you want *me* to keep an eye on him.

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DAVID. Don't worry. Jameson will see reason.

FIONA. And if not?

DAVID. We'll drive him insane.

FIONA. David! I am a mental health professional!

DAVID. Then who is better equipped to drive him insane than you?

FIONA. David!

DAVID. I'm joking of course. He will apologize. And now: it is time to make my call. *(He picks up the phone. Blackout.)*

SCENE 4

Lecture Hall. Fiona lectures us.

FIONA. Transfiguration! That word crossed my path today. *Transfiguration.* What does it mean? A change of form into a different or more beautiful state. There is also the religious definition: Christ's transfiguration from mere prophet into the luminous son of God as witnessed by Saints Peter, James, and John on Mount Tabor. But for me the word brings to mind perverse sexual obsession. I've been thinking about perverse sexual obsession a lot lately. Probably because I am being stalked by a student. Please please it's fine. There is no danger. Although the student is here today. Oh, stop. Relax. Thanks for your concern.

But let us consider the stalker. Why does a man send a vibrator through the mail to a famous model with a note. "Because I love you." Why does John Hinkley, in hopes of impressing Jodi Foster, shoot the president of the United States? And why does my student make his desires so obvious even his father knows his favorite pastime is masturbating while thinking of me?

Oh grow up.

Transfiguration. My student is obsessed with me because he is desperate to become something other than he is. It is not my naked body he truly desires. No! He desires *me* to see *him* as he

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sees *me*. Were I to see him as he sees me he would be *transfigured*, infused himself by my splendor, and rescued from his abject mediocrity. That's what he wants. And I say to him now: not a bloody chance!

Your thoughts in 900 words. Due on Tuesday. Class dismissed. (*She gathers her notes. Enter Jameson.*)

JAMESON. Interesting lecture.

FIONA. Thank you

JAMESON. Really hilarious. Except for the totally humiliating part.

FIONA. What can I do for you, Jameson?

JAMESON. I ... want to apologize.

FIONA. For what?

JAMESON. My accusation of the earlier affair. My accusation of complicity in my mother's suicide. And I guess masturbating while thinking of you though I can't imagine how you knew about that.

FIONA. You don't seem very sorry to me. If you don't feel truly sorry you shouldn't apologize, Jameson. It's not as if someone pointed a gun at your head.

JAMESON. I don't know what came over me. Except that I was madly in love with you.

FIONA. Was?

JAMESON. But I'm over it.

FIONA. Oh.

JAMESON. I decided anyone that crazy about my dad is not worthy of my love.

FIONA. Jameson, your father is a great man!

JAMESON. My father is an asshole. But I'm sorry I said those things.

FIONA. Thank you.

JAMESON. It's not your fault you fucked my dad and killed my mom. You were just a kid.

FIONA. For god's sake!

JAMESON. And here is my paper on Maslow's hierarchy of needs! Ta da! (*Fiona snatches the paper from his hands.*)

THE OTHER GENIUS

FIONA. You have to stop!

JAMESON. I can't. My father is evil.

FIONA. You force me to tell you something that has been kept from you all your life!

JAMESON. Really?

FIONA. I say this at great risk!

JAMESON. Risk of what?

FIONA. This news may jeopardize what is left of your brilliance!

JAMESON. Brilliance?

FIONA. Oh, Jameson, you were the brightest, most gorgeous, incredible little boy anyone had ever seen! You were like a giant light bulb for a head on top of a frolicking three-foot body! Everyone was absolutely dazzled!

JAMESON. What happened?

FIONA. Your mother died.

JAMESON. Oh.

FIONA. And the light went out.

JAMESON. Oh! But other children's moms die and they don't lose half their brains.

FIONA. True. But when *their* mothers die they don't crawl into bed with the *au pair* at eight years old and sleep with her every night for weeks.

JAMESON. I'm sorry, *what?*

FIONA. David put a stop to it and sent me away at which point you went into hysterics followed by a ... no. No, I can't!

JAMESON. Fiona!

FIONA. It's too dangerous!

JAMESON. C'mon! Hysterics followed by a -- !

FIONA. Two-month coma!

JAMESON. What?!

FIONA. You were in a coma for two months!

JAMESON. I don't remember any of this!

FIONA. You were in a coma! For all we know that's where half your intelligence went. Down the drain of your brain along with

THE OTHER GENIUS

the memories of crawling in bed with me, crying your eyes to sleep, your little hands wandering over my breasts --

JAMESON. Wait a minute!

FIONA. Perhaps one day you will remember and your true intelligence will reappear.

JAMESON. Why didn't anyone tell me this before?!

FIONA. It's just one of those things a parent keeps putting off telling a child. Like he's adopted.

JAMESON. I'm adopted?!

FIONA. No! But you do see how this explains why you're so fixated on me. Leading to these twisted ideas about the past.

JAMESON. Ah! So everything I think about you and Dad is wrong because I slept with you as a kid after the death of my mom none of which I remember because of a two-month coma.

FIONA. Yes! *(They regard one another.)*

JAMESON. Huh. I sound like a real mess.

FIONA. Well --

JAMESON. I guess it could be worse.

FIONA. How?

JAMESON. Suppose I was abused as a teen then returned to the scene of the crime to be with my abuser. Would that make me fixated, twisted, or just a totally fucked up whack job?

FIONA. How dare you?!

JAMESON. Must be love.

FIONA. You are over me, remember?!

JAMESON. Yeah, well --

FIONA. And thank GOD! Imagine if you *continued* to pursue me! *Continued* to fantasize your own sexual conquest while I am in your father's bed! Can you imagine anything more pathetic?!

JAMESON. Actually --

FIONA. *Actually*, the only thing more pathetic would be if you *succeeded*! Imagine if I were to succumb to your advances. Suddenly I realize your father *is* really horrible. I invite you to dinner. At my flat. We have a wonderful meal with some beautiful wine. I assume you like Stravinsky?

THE OTHER GENIUS

JAMESON. Um.

FIONA. The Firebird plays in the background. I leave the room and return in the sheerest of negligees. *(She draws close to him.)* I take you by the hand and lead you to the bedroom where we slip between the sheets, as in days gone by. Only now you expertly undo my bra and place your mouth softly on my silky breast. I caress your member until it is ready to enter me and so you do. We rock to the rhythm of our love like the waves that crash against the shores of the Sargasso Sea! And then I whisper in your ear. *(He is transported.)* “Oh, Jameson. You fuck just like your dad.”

JAMESON. OH MY GOD!! *(He runs across the room.)*

FIONA. What’s the matter?

JAMESON. Jesus! That was --! Holy shit!

FIONA. Well put. Thank goodness you are *getting over me*. Oh, look at the time. I must fly. By the way, you have an erection. *(Jameson quickly covers his crotch as Fiona exits. He reels. Then reflects darkly. He takes out his phone and dials.)*

JAMESON. Ms. Drajik? It’s Jameson. No, I’m ... calling for you.

SCENE 5

David’s Office. David at his desk. Ariana, an elegant woman of 45, sits with a pad of paper, making notations.

DAVID. Have you finished the correspondence to Vienna?

ARIANA. Yes, Mr. Wilkinson.

DAVID. And Venice?

ARIANA. Yes, Mr. Wilkinson.

DAVID. And Budapest and Beijing?

ARIANA. Of course, Mr. Wilkinson.

DAVID. Excellent as always, Ms. Drajik. And where do we stand on the RSVP’s to the Grand Opening of The Wilkinson Collection?

ARIANA. The count stands at 782 with a plus one for almost all.

THE OTHER GENIUS

DAVID. Excellent! If you would take this letter and include it in the outgoing mail, please. *(David hands an envelope to Ariana.)*

ARIANA. Another university. This time your alma mater.

DAVID. Harvard. Yes.

ARIANA. You did not attend Harvard's School of Psychology. You pursued a double major in art history and astrophysics.

DAVID. Is there a problem, Ms. Drajik?

ARIANA. Are you writing perchance on behalf of Dr. Ogletree?

DAVID. How is that any of your concern?

ARIANA. This is the *twelfth* letter of its kind. It is very generous of you to spend your valuable time helping the young lady.

DAVID. Have you something to say, Ms. Drajik?

ARIANA. No, Mr. Wilkinson.

DAVID. Then. I am extremely busy.

(Pause. Ariana does not move. They regard one another. Ariana SCREAMS as she rips apart the letter with violence, and throws the pieces in the air.)

DAVID. Ms. Drajik! What in the name of all that is holy?!

ARIANA. I am giving notice, Mr. Wilkinson!

DAVID. Giving notice?! In this fashion?! After twenty-three years of service?!

ARIANA. Twenty-four! And you know why, David!

DAVID. *David?!*

ARIANA. How could you?! Start things again with that woman?!

DAVID. How dare you!

ARIANA. How dare I? How dare I?! David!

DAVID. *Ms. Drajik.*

ARIANA. Will you marry me?

DAVID. Good god. You must have lost your mind.

ARIANA. In that case would you be so kind as to give me three million dollars?

DAVID. Did something fall from a building onto your head? No, Ms. Drajik, I will not be so kind. Not until you tell me what is going on.

THE OTHER GENIUS

ARIANA. Fine! I have several complaints! Consider this my termination interview!

DAVID. These are terrible words you are speaking.

ARIANA. Here is the official termination interview form.

DAVID. I take this form with trembling hands. (*He takes the form, reads.*) First question. “Did you at any time experience sexually inappropriate remarks, harassment, or outright cruelty, and if so what improvements can you suggest to make the job more cheerful, challenging, and fun?” Proceed.

ARIANA. When I gave birth to our sons –

DAVID. Stop! I must remind you that we swore many years ago to never speak of our sons. Are you breaking our pact?

ARIANA. I am.

DAVID. God help you.

ARIANA. God help us all. In the second year of my employment I gave birth to Darko and you insisted I send him away to my cousins in Serbian Bosnia.

DAVID. (*He writes on form.*) Complaint number one. But excuse me, you can’t complain about that. Darko was born a hunchback with a clubfoot and shriveled left arm. It was obvious that his best chance at a happy life was to send him to a culture with a fondness for Richard III.

ARIANA. There is very little of that in Serbian Bosnia!

DAVID. People read Shakespeare even in Bosnia.

ARIANA. My cousins are nothing but gangsters.

DAVID. So was the royal line of Plantagenets if we’re to be honest.

ARIANA. You should know! You are descended from the royal line of Plantagenets!

DAVID. And thus so is Darko! You make my point for me, Ms. Drajik. I’m sure he fit right in.

ARIANA. Indeed he has! He became a master thief and assassin!

DAVID. That is very impressive for a hunchback with a clubfoot and shriveled left arm.

ARIANA. Of course you would be *impressed!*

THE OTHER GENIUS

DAVID. If you were so upset about sending Darko away why didn't you resign then?

ARIANA. Because we had twins! Then two years later you made me give up the other boy as well!

DAVID. Complaint number two! But excuse me, you can't complain about that. We agreed that my wife and I could raise a toddler much better than you alone.

ARIANA. Then you did not allow me to see the boy for years!

DAVID. My wife might have figured out where Jameson came from.

ARIANA. Then after I surrender my sons you throw away my love for a teenage girl!

DAVID. Complaint number three! Ms. Drajik, be fair. My wife became ill. We needed help with Jameson. Thus we called an *au pair* agency. Unfortunately they sent over the most beautiful young English girl who ever walked the face of the earth.

ARIANA. She was sixteen!

DAVID. She said she was seventeen.

ARIANA. Oh, shut up! You think you are entitled to the entire world because you are a genius!

DAVID. I feel bad about it, honestly.

ARIANA. You continued to see the girl even after your wife's suicide!

DAVID. But I broke it off eventually.

ARIANA. Because you discovered Jameson was sleeping with her every night!

DAVID. I'm sure you would agree that is simply unhealthy.

ARIANA. And still I stayed! And do you know why?!

DAVID. Why?

ARIANA. Because I love you! I love you! Like a fool! If my heart were a brain I would be mentally retarded!

DAVID. I'm not sure we say that now, Ms. Drajik. I believe you and your heart are *developmentally disabled*. Furthermore your love for me, however *mongoloid*, does not quite qualify as a complaint.

THE OTHER GENIUS

ARIANA. When you broke it off with the girl, I thought finally I have a chance! Instead you turn into a monk and learn every language on the planet!

DAVID. Complaint number four! There I plead guilty. I am an inveterate linguist. But I never learned Serbian. That should have told you something.

ARIANA. Oh ti jebeni govsnari šupak!*

DAVID. Though I think I can guess what that means.

ARIANA. Enough! I want three million dollars or I tell Jameson all about your earlier affair!

DAVID. You wouldn't dare!

ARIANA. Oh wouldn't I?! I am meeting Jameson for dinner tonight!

DAVID. WHAT?!

ARIANA. At his invitation! What's more I will tell him of Darko! Who is not any thief! He is an accomplished art thief and forger of Abstract Expressionist masters! His stolen work you have sold for millions and many of his forgeries hold a place in The Wilkinson Collection!

DAVID. How do you know all this?!

ARIANA. I eavesdrop on all conversations!

DAVID. You astonish me, Ms. Drajik!

ARIANA. You have no idea what I am capable of! You will wire three million dollars to the Swiss bank account number written here! OR YOU WILL FIND OUT!

(She slaps down a slip of paper on his desk. They regard one another.)

DAVID. I'm impressed. Shocked. Appalled. Aroused. The list goes on. One question. Do you remember, oh ten years ago, when I broke my arm skiing in Sarajevo?

ARIANA. Yes.

DAVID. I did not break my arm skiing in Sarajevo. Your cousins broke my arm ... while I was skiing in Sarajevo. They introduced themselves as I sat between them on a lift chair high over what had been my favorite ski run. They demanded money, I refused, and

THE OTHER GENIUS

they threw me off the chair. Then I paid. *Then* I plotted my revenge! I contacted Darko. We came to an arrangement. I would finance his training in the deadly art of Ninjutsu with the master sensei Katsuhiko Tamazawa in Kyoto. Now your thug cousins pay protection money to me!

ARIANA. YOU are the reason our son is a master assassin! I should have known!

DAVID. I have no time to train another secretary. Let alone pay you three million dollars to encourage your leave taking!

ARIANA. Then I tell Jameson everything! As well as Dr. Ogletree! As well as the board of The Wilkinson Collection!

DAVID. I have one word to say to you: Darko!

ARIANA. Darko is in Bosnia! He would not harm his own mother! He is not such a psychopath!

DAVID. Of course he is! And he is my psychopath! You will not speak to anyone! You will not leave! If you do Darko will find you! Whether herding alpaca in the Andes, meditating in the Marabar Caves, or sipping absinthe on the Champs Elysees! You cannot escape! YOUR EVISCERATION WILL BE SWIFT! *(He SCREAMS and rips up the interview form with violence, mocking Ariana's style; she gapes, totally freaked out.)*

Ms. Drajik, please call the Vatican Museum and confirm my place for the auction of Raphael's *Transfiguration*. *(She is too stunned to move. He slams his hand down on the desk.)* Get back to work! *(Ariana stands slowly, utterly defeated, and starts off. She encounters Fiona who is just entering.)*

FIONA. Oh! Ms. Drajik. There you are.

ARIANA. Am I? *(She laughs weirdly and moves aside. A confused Fiona enters as Ariana exits quickly.)*

FIONA. Is she alright?

DAVID. Ms. Drajik may be a bit under the weather. *(A SCREAM offstage.)*

FIONA. Good heavens!

DAVID. How are you? Did Jameson apologize?

FIONA. He did. But then things went awry.

THE OTHER GENIUS

DAVID. How?

FIONA. He held fast to his conviction that we had the earlier affair.

DAVID. So! He won't see reason. It is time to drive him insane.

FIONA. You said you were joking about that.

DAVID. *Joking?* He could ruin everything! You do have the power to commit him to an institution do you not?

FIONA. As a mental health professional it is absolutely unethical to send a sane person to such a place.

DAVID. Then we had better drive him insane right away.

FIONA. The project has already begun.

DAVID. How so?

FIONA. I gave him an erection.

DAVID. *(Pause.)* I choose my next word carefully ... *how?*

FIONA. I planted erotic acorns in his already well-fertilized imagination. His penis sprouted like an oak tree.

DAVID. You did not place your hand, mouth or vagina directly on his penis?

FIONA. No! But I did suggest an eventual comparison of his love making to yours were such direct contact to occur.

DAVID. What was his response to that?

FIONA. He totally freaked out.

DAVID. It sounds like a good beginning. I obviously would have taken a different approach. High marks for initiative, darling!

FIONA. If you say so, David. *(David regards a downcast Fiona.)*

DAVID. How was work otherwise?

FIONA. Oh, the same. I cannot believe a community college is where I've landed. I was so sure the Ivy League was my destiny. It is *so* humiliating.

DAVID. I know. Not only is my beloved teaching in a third-rate school, my son attends it.

FIONA. I meant humiliating for me!

DAVID. I have been writing to first rank universities to ask them to interview you.

FIONA. What? David! You're wonderful!

THE OTHER GENIUS

DAVID. In fact I wrote a letter today. (*He reflects.*) Have you heard from any of them?

FIONA. No.

DAVID. Hmm. (*Intercom.*) Ms. Drajik, come in here, please. (*Ariana enters, looking rather crazed.*)

DAVID. Ms. Drajik. I have given you a dozen letters written on behalf of Dr. Ogletree. Did you mail them as requested?

ARIANA. Yes and no.

DAVID. Explain.

ARIANA. I mailed the letters. But not as requested. The letters were edited, retyped, affixed with your rubber stamp signature, and only then mailed.

DAVID. Edited how?

ARIANA. Specifics elude me but the general sense was that Dr. Fiona Ogletree is an evil whore.

FIONA. What?!

ARIANA. Though I did credit her with being precocious in her erotic adventures having embarked on a career as an adulteress when merely a teen.

FIONA. OH, YOU BITCH!

DAVID. Fiona, please.

FIONA. David, she knows! You said no one knew! And she has ruined my career! Oh, you harridan! You hag! Why?! Why?!

DAVID. Yes, Ms. Drajik. Why?

ARIANA. I love Mr. Wilkinson beyond measure. I despise myself beyond measure for loving him beyond measure. But there it is.

DAVID. Thank you, Ms. Drajik.

FIONA. Wait! You are in love with David?!

ARIANA. I have just said.

FIONA. David! Are you in love with her?!

DAVID. Of course not. I'm in love with you.

FIONA. Did you know she loved you?!

DAVID. I am as shocked as you. *Thank you*, Ms. Drajik.

FIONA. Wait! How can you continue to love and work for a man who doesn't love you for twenty-four years?!

THE OTHER GENIUS

ARIANA. How did you continue to love a man who was not even there for fifteen years?

FIONA. My god! This woman knows everything! Are you two having an affair now?!

ARIANA. *(Laughs weirdly.)* I wish!

FIONA. Did you ever have an affair?!

DAVID. Have you called the Vatican, Ms. Drajik?!

ARIANA. No, I shall do that now, Mr. Wilkinson.

DAVID. Thank you, Ms. Drajik!

(Exit Ariana. Fiona is apoplectic.)

FIONA. David! Did you have an affair with that woman?!

DAVID. No. Calm down.

FIONA. Calm?! We are exposed! And she has destroyed my name!

DAVID. I'm so sorry, darling. I suppose you will simply have to marry me.

FIONA. WHAT?!

DAVID. Your career has been destroyed you might as well let me take care of you.

FIONA. I don't want to be fucking taken care of!

DAVID. I really don't see any alternative.

FIONA. You're proposing?! Now?! WHAT THE FUCK?!

DAVID. Fine. We'll discuss it later. What shall we do about Ms. Drajik?

FIONA. Isn't it obvious?!

DAVID. Yes! I'll have her drawn and quartered. I'll have her head on a pike. I'll have her guts strewn across the treetops.

FIONA. I meant you should fire her!

DAVID. That's a little awkward. I just refused to accept her resignation. But don't worry! I'll think of something. Now I must get back to work. Send in Ms. Drajik on your way out will you?

(She stares.) I'm really very busy, darling.

FIONA. Jesus Christ!

(She storms out. David picks up his phone. Fiona returns.)

FIONA. She's gone! Where would she go?! David!

THE OTHER GENIUS

DAVID. Gone? I don't believe it.

(Fiona storms out. David dials his phone.)

DAVID. Darko. Did you finish the Gargosian heist? Excellent. I need you to stay in town a few days. Yes. Listen, could you help me drive your brother insane? Oh, and kill your mother? I'm speaking hypothetically, of course. *(Blackout.)*

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