

My Favorite Composer

A short play by
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

IVAN (38), a guitarist, singer and music composer

CASSIE (36), Ivan's fiancée. She works at a beauty saloon.

PHIL (40s), Ivan's previous band manager and employer

SETTINGS

A modest loft

TIME

The present.

MY FAVORITE COMPOSER

Lights up. We are in a modest loft. On center stage there's a couch and a short table with an ashtray full of cigarettes butts, a glass of whisky and the empty whisky bottle. On that same table is a sound recording island: an interface, a microphone, earphones and a laptop computer. Upstage there is a kitchen area and a door. Downstage left there is a double bed. Downstage right there is a toilet and a sink indicating a bathroom. Posters of rock stars are scattered on the walls. IVAN (38) is standing on center stage with his electric guitar. Ivan plays and sings:

IVAN

My buddy Will had a bruise on his head when we met, he said: 'my old man hit me with a bat'.

Will was cool, deranged and confused, but his soul was kind and so was mine. In my pickup truck we drove around the state. I was the lead he was the wing. I played guitar and sing, he hit the drums like a beast. The good old days will never come back. The scavengers on the road. The women, the booze, the youth.

Will was cool, deranged and confused. He had a light heart but mine grew heavy. He said: you are my best friend and my only family. The truck broke, with no money we went back to where we came from. Don't hold me back, I said. And he smashed a bottle on my head. Like a beast drumming away, I have the scar until today.

Will had a wound on his chest when we met, he said: 'my old man flailed me with a lash'. I scratched my scar and sighted: 'your old man deserves to die'. So I gave him my old gun and tapped him on the back.

Will was cool, deranged and confused. He shot that old fool dead and went to prison. I never went to visit but heard he didn't last. The last thing he said to me was 'thank you', something I wish I could forget'.

(CASSIE (36) enters through the door carrying a couple of bags. She notices that IVAN has stopped playing because of her.)

CASSIE

Hi baby. Was that a new one?

IVAN

Mark Moon, 'Drum Away Will'...

CASSIE

Sounded really nice.

(CASSIE enters the kitchen area. She lays the bags on the counter. She retrieves mouse traps and rat poison from one of the bags.)

CASSIE

I got us the mouse traps and some rat poison too.

(She shows the items to IVAN but he has little interest. She places the items in a cabinet.)

CASSIE

And I got us-

(CASSIE opens the fridge and notices there's nothing there.)

CASSIE

Dinner...

IVAN

I forgot, I'm sorry.

(CASSIE lays the groceries on the counter. She puts some fruit on the fruit basket.)

CASSIE

It's okay. Maybe we can have breakfast together tomorrow?

(IVAN sits on the couch with his guitar on his lap. He lights a cigarette and drinks whisky.)

IVAN

If you want to... If you're not gonna be late for work.

(CASSIE approaches and kneels in front of IVAN. He struggles to make eye contact but offers her his cigarette. She takes it but doesn't smoke. She is uncomfortable with the guitar in between them. CASSIE leans forward, dodges the guitar and kisses IVAN on the lips. To him the kiss feels lifeless. CASSIE smokes.)

CASSIE

Did you have a good day?

IVAN

Sure. I thought about what you said so I called that asshole Phil.

CASSIE

Really? What did he say?

IVAN

I couldn't get through to him of course, but Stacey promised me he would call me later.

CASSIE

Oh my god, that's huge.

IVAN

You think so?

CASSIE

Yes, that means they want to take you back. Do you know what you're gonna say?

IVAN

Like what?

CASSIE

It's already 7PM. We have to practice, you're gonna fuck it up.

IVAN

Practice what?

CASSIE

Ivan, you're so slow nowadays. We have to practice what you are gonna say to Phil.

IVAN

Why do you have to make such a big deal out of this?

CASSIE

I'll play Phil. You ready?

(IVAN stands.)

IVAN

I can call fucking Phil, okay? I know how to make a phone call.

CASSIE

Yeah, but you have to be nice, because he's gonna be nasty to you. You have to be super nice, like imagine he's one of your old clients at the telemarketing.

IVAN

Not in a million years. I don't have that in me anymore.

CASSIE

(Imitating Phil)

Why the fuck did you call me? Go fuck yourself with a firecracker up in your cunt. Never call again!

(IVAN is speechless.)

CASSIE

Baby, c'mon, look alive. This is a big deal. You know it is.

IVAN

Fuck off Cassie, really.

CASSIE

(Imitating Phil)

Hello Mr. 'Elephant Hands'... Mr. 'Toe Thick Fingers'. What's with the buttplug you fucker?

IVAN

Fuck off!

CASSIE

No, no, no. Be nice.

IVAN

Can I suck your cock? You fucking asshole.

CASSIE

(Imitating Phil)

You can eat my shit!

IVAN

All right, this is not working-

CASSIE

(Imitating Phil)

Go play triangle!

IVAN

Okay, that's so immature-

CASSIE

(Imitating Phil)

Go play bass!

IVAN

Wow, wow, wow. Bass is cool. That's offensive but in a whole other level.

CASSIE

Right?

IVAN

Okay... listen... Bro... How about we link up at Ralphie's and have a beer. For old time's sake?

(CASSIE smiles.)

IVAN

I have been thinking. And if you still need a guitar player... I... It's good that I took some time off, and I am ready to come back.

(CASSIE claps.)

IVAN

There, happy now?

CASSIE

That was good. Keep it short, invite him for a beer. If he tells you to come to the office you say 'yes', no matter what time. But the most important is that you just keep your cool.

(IVAN feels dizzy and needs to sit down.)

IVAN

Yeah, whatever. I need a drink.

CASSIE

You need food and water.

(CASSIE goes to the kitchen area.)

CASSIE

I can't believe you haven't eaten the whole day. C'mon baby, here, have an apple.

(CASSIE tosses an apple. IVAN catches it in the air and places it down on the table.)

IVAN

I haven't eaten on purpose.

(CASSIE opens the grocery bag for some bread and jam.)

CASSIE

I know. That's why we are eating now. You need to be sober before you come to the phone.

IVAN

No, I don't.

CASSIE

You are fucking drunk Ivan.

IVAN

(sarcastic)

And I'm so proud that you don't drink anymore. How long has it been? Two years?

CASSIE

And twenty seven days and counting. And you are starting to look like me back in the day.

IVAN

Ah, so that's what this is about.

CASSIE

Yes that's what this is about.

IVAN

Except that unlike you I'm not an addict and I know exactly what I am doing.

CASSIE

You are not gonna fuck up this call.

IVAN

Fuck that. Fuck Phil and all those assholes. Of course they want me back, there's no better guitarist around. But me, I'm a front man. I'm the composer, I should be taking the credit-

CASSIE

Just eat the apple baby.

IVAN

No Cassie. It's a creative thing. Musicians do that.

CASSIE

I know. They starve and they go nuts and lose their minds, is what they do.

IVAN

Yeah, they starve, they suffer, they drink, they do drugs, whatever it takes-

(CASSIE opens a top cabinet and finds three coffee mugs.)

CASSIE

We need to buy more glasses.

IVAN

...to create. It's just part of the process-

CASSIE

Just eat the apple baby.

IVAN

That (points at the apple) is not what I need right now.

CASSIE

Have you seen yourself? You are forty years old, you're gonna end up dead.

IVAN

The greatest artists didn't live this much.

CASSIE

He did! What's his face playing with your guitar. He is still alive.

(CASSIE points at the poster of the rockstar 'Mark Moon' on the wall who has the exact same guitar as IVAN.)

IVAN

Don't pretend you don't know his name, okay?

CASSIE

Eat the apple Ivan.

IVAN

No.

CASSIE

Eat the fucking apple!

(CASSIE throws an apple at IVAN. It gets smashed on the wall.)

IVAN

Great...

CASSIE

Don't you think we are too old for this shit?

IVAN

I don't care about my stupid age, which is thirty eight by the way. But I do hate it when you pull this sort of crap on me.

CASSIE

Well, I'm sorry because I do care about MY stupid age, which is thirty six. And instead of having a life of my own, and kids-

IVAN

Ha!

CASSIE

What's funny?

IVAN

You said you didn't want to have kids.

CASSIE

Not in this dump I don't. It's unbelievable, I have to take care of a big baby. There is no food in the fridge. I was hoping we could have what I brought for breakfast tomorrow, but you 'forgot'. You always 'forget'. Did you eat at all today? You look sick. Look at you. Look at us. And what did you do today-

IVAN

I made the phone call just like you told me to-

CASSIE

You better not fuck up that call.

IVAN

And I worked. The whole fucking day. Believe it or not, this is my work.

CASSIE

You could have played on the street at least.

IVAN

I told you I need some time alone to create my own thing.

CASSIE

Can't you play your 'own' music on the street? It's two birds with one stone. Nobody is listening anyway.

IVAN

When I'm here I'm thinking, I'm having great ideas. But if I go out there I shut down. I'm trapped...

(CASSIE pours water in a mug and brings it to IVAN.)

CASSIE

Here. I'm your freaking nanny now.

(IVAN looks at the mug.)

CASSIE

Drink the water Ivan.

(They stare at each other. She is visibly angry. IVAN finally takes the mug and drinks.)

IVAN

I need to be alone.

CASSIE

Great, do you want me to lock myself in the bathroom or what? Do you want to split?

IVAN

I'm just tired Cassie. I'm tired of doing cover for other bands. I'm tired of all the bullshit-

CASSIE

It's not normal what you're doing. It's like you want to drag us down.

IVAN

When you came in today-

CASSIE

I always come back at the same time.

IVAN

You interrupted me.

CASSIE

You know what I did today?

IVAN

Yes.

CASSIE

I was listening to those crones since nine in the morning complaining about their stupid bullshit lives-

IVAN

You said it wasn't so bad-

CASSIE

It's a fucking hair saloon! I'm tired, I'm hungry. Do you get that? That's what I care about. I care. But I don't care about your mediocre music- I'm sorry, about your 'average music' like you say, which is even worse because it makes you believe that you are onto something, but you are not! You're not that good. How can you be good if you don't eat? If you don't have any friends?

IVAN

All right, calm down. Here, have some water.

(IVAN passes the mug to CASSIE. She instantly throws the water on his face.)

CASSIE

This is for coffee, or tea!

(CASSIE smashes the mug on the floor.)

CASSIE

You see? We don't have anything. I mean, we have dust because you don't clean. Look at this!

(CASSIE points at her own clothes.)

CASSIE

Look at this.

(CASSIE shows IVAN her ears which have no earrings on them.)

CASSIE

I don't have anything! Look.

(CASSIE turns in place indicating
the empty loft around them.)

CASSIE

I'm an animal. I wear rags, I have mice, I have cockroaches.
I'm not even disgusted by them anymore. I squeeze them with
my bare hands.

(IVAN laughs.)

CASSIE

Why are you laughing?

IVAN

That's it. That's what I need.

CASSIE

Are you making fun of me?

(IVAN shakes his head sideways.)

IVAN

Yes!

(CASSIE is in rage. She starts
slapping IVAN real hard.)

CASSIE

Why do you drive me nuts?

(IVAN collects his guitar and
starts playing.)

(IVAN turns on the microphone to
record the music. CASSIE brings her
hands to block her ears.)

(IVAN plays a solo on the guitar
for a few seconds. When he stops he
seems almost satisfied.)

CASSIE

That's good baby. That's good... Let's eat something now, shall we?

(The phone rings.)

CASSIE

Ivan, the phone. Pick it up.

IVAN

Just let it ring.

CASSIE

This might be our only chance.

(IVAN approaches the phone.)

CASSIE

Wait, no. You're right. Just call him tomorrow. It should be fine.

(IVAN picks up the phone.)

IVAN

(Into phone)

Sup Phil.

PHIL (OFF)

Ivan, we have a show this Friday at the Hipno House, do you want to do it?

(IVAN is silent. CASSIE is making faces 'dying' to know what Phil is saying.)

PHIL (OFF)

Ivan, you there?

IVAN

(Into phone)

Yeah, I'm here.

PHIL (OFF)

Listen, I need to know if this is a waste of my time.

(IVAN looks at Cassie.)

IVAN

(Into phone)

I just called you to tell you to go fuck yourself.

PHIL (OFF)

Are you drunk motherfucker?

IVAN

(into phone)

Go fuck yourself.

PHIL (OFF)

You are done, you hear me? You are done!

IVAN

(Into phone)

I am just getting started.

PHIL (OFF)

I'm going to destroy you. I'll make sure you never play anywhere in this state again.

IVAN

(Into phone)

You are nobody Phil.

PHIL (OFF)

You fucking lunatic. Send my regards to Cassie, will you? Tell her I had a great time fucking her. Enjoy your retirement.

(Phil hangs up.)

CASSIE

What did you do? What did you do?

IVAN

I made a decision.

CASSIE

Are you kidding, or-

IVAN

Why are you so interested if I work with Phil or not?

CASSIE

Was that Phil on the phone?

IVAN

Yes.

CASSIE

What did he say?

IVAN

What he always says.

CASSIE

So that's it then?

IVAN

That's it.

CASSIE

And you are good... It's all good...

IVAN

I'm good. I want to play. I'm feeling inspired.

(IVAN prepares to play.)

CASSIE

Stop.

IVAN

You ready?

CASSIE

Do I look ready? Do I look ready to 'feel' the music? To bathe in the magic of your melody? I don't feel anything except anger and despair.

IVAN

That's great.

(IVAN starts playing a solo. CASSIE grabs the arm of the guitar and holds the strings.)

IVAN

What the fuck are you doing?

CASSIE

Baby, I'm going crazy. Help me. I need help.

IVAN

This is what I want Cassie.

CASSIE

Let's see a therapist.

(IVAN finds that hilarious. He takes a step back trying to get rid of CASSIE.)

IVAN

Get off me.

CASSIE

We go together. We have to. We must.

IVAN

New friend of yours, huh?

CASSIE

What? No, I don't have any friends who are therapists.

IVAN

Do not get me started Cassie.

CASSIE

Just sell this god damned thing.

IVAN

Never.

CASSIE

I got rid of everything, for us! We barely have furniture-

IVAN

I don't need fixing.

CASSIE

Who cares if it belonged to some famous guy?

IVAN

Mark Moon, best guitarist who has ever lived.

CASSIE

Exactly. You can easily get \$20.000 for it, you said it yourself.

IVAN

It's worth so much more than that.

CASSIE

Buy a new one for a third of the price.

IVAN

You should see a therapist Cassie. I can't keep having the same conversation over and over. Just pick one of your friends, for free! How about that Tony guy?

CASSIE

What?

IVAN

No? Pawn the rings then. Do you want to do that? You can get two thousand bucks easily.

(CASSIE just stares at him.)

IVAN

You don't owe me anything Cassie. You are free. And I am leaving.

(IVAN puts his guitar down and starts packing some clothes in a bag.)

IVAN

You can stay. I'm sure Mr. Robinson won't mind you skating by another month or two. In fact, he should be your new therapist! I've seen you guys together, you hit it off nicely.

CASSIE

What are you saying?

IVAN

I am saying that it's not because of me that he didn't make us sign a lease.

(CASSIE picks up on IVAN's jealous insinuations.)

CASSIE

Mr. Robinson is like family... to us.

IVAN

Indeed, and that's why I am leaving.

(Neither of them speak for a moment. IVAN keeps packing.)

CASSIE

I fucked Phil.

(IVAN stops for a second. He shakes his head and continues packing.)

CASSIE

What is important to you Ivan?

(CASSIE notices Ivan's guitar by the bed.)

CASSIE

Music?

(CASSIE approaches the guitar.)

CASSIE

I pity you. I always have.

(CASSIE picks up the guitar.)

CASSIE

I'm guilty. That's why I am here.

(CASSIE harshly plays the strings.)

IVAN

Do not do that.

CASSIE

I have reached bottom. Have you? I don't think so.

(CASSIE holds the guitar by the neck with both hands.)

IVAN

Baby what are you doing?

CASSIE

I feel like I want to die.

(IVAN takes a step closer. CASSIE threatens to hit him with the guitar.)

IVAN

Baby, I love you. I love you baby.

CASSIE

Thank you. Allow me to retribute the favor.

IVAN

I'm gonna sell it. Stop!

CASSIE

Rock bottom!!!!!!

(CASSIE slams the guitar! Once! Twice! By this time IVAN has already jumped her. The guitar falls in pieces. He strangles her. He pushes her towards the bathroom area. They hit the sink. Hygiene and beauty products scatter everywhere.)

IVAN

What did you do! What did you do. What did you do...

(He releases her. CASSIE shrinks to the ground gasping for air. She throws up in the toilet.)

(IVAN walks back into the kitchen area. He opens a cabinet and finds a bottle of whisky. He notices the rat poison flask.

IVAN looks back at CASSIE -she is on the ground gathering the fallen products- IVAN takes the rat poison. He collects the only two mugs left, pours whisky in both of them and then pours rat poison in only one of the mugs. IVAN swirls the drinks and the poison dissolves completely. He can't tell one drink from the other. IVAN places both mugs atop the fruit tray and spins it. He looks away whilst the tray spins and spins. When it stops IVAN doesn't know which drink has the poison anymore.)

(Meanwhile CASSIE is on the ground. She opens one of the nail polish and starts doing her nails. Her hand is shaking. CASSIE starts painting her hands and arms with the nail polish.)

CASSIE

(Talking to herself)

I just don't know what to do anymore, you know? You're right, men are all the same, they are all scum bags, they are like kids... My son is incorrigible... the other day he threw a rock in another kid's head, can you believe it? Poor kid was bleeding all over the place. The police, the drugs, lazy motherfucker-

(IVAN approaches. He offers both mugs at the same time.)

IVAN

Here, have drink.

(CASSIE seems to come back to reality.)

IVAN

It's whisky, it's gonna make you feel better.

(She takes one of the mugs.)

CASSIE

Thank you.

(CASSIE swirls the drink and smells it. IVAN sits across from her.)

IVAN

Just like the old days.

CASSIE

No. You're alone. I don't love you anymore-

IVAN

Right back at you.

CASSIE

...and I hope you die.

IVAN

I hope you die too... Cheers.

(Neither of them drink.)

IVAN

Ladies first, please.

CASSIE

(somewhat delirious)

The first of many... for you, not for me. I still have friends you know? And tonight I might just go to Phil's. I'm sure he will be more than glad to invite me in for a cup of coffee. Or would I rather just go upstairs to Mr. Robinson? I ask for the couch, he offers me the bed and I invite him to join me. Yeah, we need sugar Mr. Robinson, I am cooking... for my friends, you know? The kids are coming over. I'm entertaining. I loooove to entertain, I'm very good at it. We're gonna play some salsa. Do you want to dance? I'm a sexy mama.

IVAN

You used to be sexy. I give you that much. I wanted to shove my face on your ass all the time, but now I imagine poop coming out of it.

CASSIE

I ruined your life, not the other way around. You saved ME. And now I don't need you anymore. But I will take the drink... for courage, you know? To get back in the game.

(CASSIE raises her mug.)

CASSIE

One for the road.

(She brings the drink to her lips.)

(IVAN knocks the mug off her hand. Whisky spills all over.)

IVAN

No need to spoil your perfect record.

(IVAN stands.)

IVAN

Bye baby.

CASSIE

No, you stay. Have your drink. This is my turn.

(CASSIE stands. She walks around the loft quickly tossing some clothes in a bag. Soon enough she is by the door ready to leave. CASSIE looks back at the lonesome figure of Ivan. She eyes the entire loft with disdain.)

CASSIE

Enjoy.

(CASSIE leaves.)

(IVAN is alone with his drink. He takes a moment to find courage.)

(IVAN drinks.)

(Lights off.)

(The audience thinks the play is over -hopefully we hear some applause.)

(A spotlight turns on. IVAN is on center stage with a new guitar and speaking into a microphone mounted on a stand. IVAN is dressed as a rock star with a bandana across his head.)

IVAN

Thank you, thank you... This next one means a lot to me. You guys are familiar...

(IVAN plays and sings.)

IVAN

It's my fault that I stayed and I can't see clearly now. I can't see beyond the clouds, they're closing down on me. And I'm alone.

I remember what we had, crystal clear ten years ago. Her love was bigger than the world but I kissed her ice cold the night I lost everything in exchange for this song.

My dreams became reality but now I dream of different things. I'm complete, there's only this tiny hole inside of me where I keep her. And she passed away giving birth, I heard when I finally went looking for her. Beautiful little girl just like her mom.

And I'm alone.

I never knew you anyway, but you knew me. And I would throw away everything I ever dreamed of if you would come back to me. Come back to me. Come baaaack toooo meeeeeeee...

(applause)

(A blue light turns on at the back. CASSIE enters through the door. She is dressed the same way she had been that day. She carries the same bags, she says the same lines and talks the same way.)

CASSIE

Hi baby, was that a new one?

(IVAN can't stop staring at her.)

IVAN

Yeah. I made it for you. Do you like it?

CASSIE

Sounded really nice...

(CASSIE looks around. She is impressed with something.)

CASSIE

Did you clean? What is that smell?

IVAN

Yes. And I cooked dinner too.

(CASSIE shows the bags she brought.)

CASSIE

Because I brought us-

IVAN

Breakfast. We can have breakfast together tomorrow if you want to... If you are not gonna be late for work.

(CASSIE puts the bags down over the counter. She is smiling. She rushes towards IVAN. IVAN makes sure to remove his guitar from his shoulder and toss it on the couch.)

(They embrace and kiss.)

(Blackout)

(End play)