

UGMO AND EENIE GO DOWN THE RUSKI HOLE

A play
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New Dramatists

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Ugmo, a self-proclaimed punk queer and performance artist asshole, is dressed as a thug and sits on the floor in his one room basement apartment in Chicago. Yellow notepads, cards and post 'em notes are scattered everywhere.

There is no bed.

There is an embraced "yes, I am fucking poor" sentiment.

There is a nest made out of pillows and a blanket and more notebooks. Scattered carryout containers from Chinese restaurants also dot the space. Ugmo is suffering a little from inhaling the last bit of over-sauced carryout food.

As he ignores his stomach cramps, Ugmo concentrates on his notes. When he concentrates, he sweats beads of concentration. A moment of possible inspiration threatens to arrive. He scurries and poses among the notes to ready for it. To help its arrival, he sets up his imaginary stage and is about to step into it faux Kabuki-style but has a sudden and extreme loss of faith in his inspiration. He throws himself to the ground.

He returns to his notes. They suck. He looks for brilliance in other notes. Nothing. He wants to cry or tear up the floorboards. Before he can wail his frustration, he hears footsteps outside his basement window.

He freezes still and listens like a very little animal.

Someone with a glam idea of a Brazilian beauty pageant winner boasting of midnight sequins enters the apartment building's hallway and walks up the stairway. She is wearing real steel-toed combat boots. She is tired and her stuck on beauty is dripping off rapidly. On closer examination, perhaps she is dressed in a purposeful imitation of a Hollywood prostitute. Her boots make quite a bit of noise. She coughs in a low register. She takes off her wig. She now appears to be a young male drag queen with a wicked cough. Eenie, the young queen, has been partying. Depending on the light, Eenie is of indeterminate gender and race.

Eenie disappears and can be heard walking up the stairs to his apartment. Eenie's apartment is directly above Ugmo's room.

Ugmo listens to Eenie move slowly up the stairs and collapse somewhere in the apartment above his head.

A recorded pop singer crying out her pain can be heard coming from Eenie's apartment.

UGMO

O GOD NO STOP STOP YOU ZOMBIE STOP SAY NO TO THE MACHINE
FORCE FEEDING HUMANTIY WITH CAPITALIST POP IDOLATRY DON'T
MAKE ME SHOW YOU WHAT TRUE HUMAN MISERY IS STOP -

The recorded song shuts off.

Ugmo is embarrassed, scared and proud of his outburst. He was heard.

(in a little voice:) That's right.

He looks out over the landscape of his notes.

He exhales.

He sits as still as a Buddha statue.

*He jumps back on his stage. He looks about and sees the buzzing of
audience eyes before him. He is now standing before his imaginary
audience. He inhales. He freezes.*

We will begin shortly.

*Ugmo throws himself into a corner, hits himself and cries. His sobbing
transforms into moans. They are glorious. He abruptly stops, satisfied,
and jumps up and returns to his imaginary audience.*

*As soon as he is aware they are watching him, he is once again blocked
about how to begin.*

Um...

He jumps out of his designated "stage area."

There's too much order here.

He makes chaos with the papers.

My notes.

He stares about at his layers of notes.

Wait, where is...damn...

He searches intently among his notes. He reads and discards the following:

"Mud sticks to your feet."

"Slavery is an infection."

"Wear oxygen masks at all times."

"Pleasure is a mask for pain."

He reads and keeps the following:

"I am a sick man."

He smiles proudly and waves the note.

He jumps back onto the "stage."

(to his imaginary audience:) I'm not going to see a doctor. I'd rather my sickness eat me than a doctor chew me up, push me around with his thick lazy tongue, back and forth over his soft pink gums, until he spits me out. Like this:

He demonstrates.

That's what a doctor would do. But I'm not going to mention doctors.

He jumps off "stage" and digs in his pile for another note.

"A mouse knows what it is, but a man..."

He crumbles the note and throws it away, then retrieves it and smooths it out in front of himself and studies it with dignity.

He is moved by his note's sentiment.

He jumps back in front of his "audience."

Hello, everyone, this is a story about a faggot who claimed to be a mouse.

No, no one ever said I was a fag-Mouse. Fairy. Funny fella. Queer. Perve. Sicko. *Homosexual*. No one told me I had to go through life trying to define myself either. Ha. I'm a two inch little fag-mousy faggot with a twelve foot fat hat head.

When I try to run down into my mouse hole my big fat hat head blocks my escape. Shall I tell you something? Gay thugs who live in mouse holes should be kept off the stage. We spend all our time under the floor or behind walls or beneath cupboards and if we come out and happen to see that a few eyes are blinking at us, well, our soft fuzzy heads swell twelve times their size and we talk and talk and talk - we talk without stopping - and even though we may have a heightened overdeveloped

consciousness, we are still homo meeces, not homo men, even though no one has actually called me a fucking rock star faggy mouse to my face - until now, I call me one myself: MOUSE. HOMO. ROCK STAR FAGGOT. It's a pleasure to call myself a homo rocking fag star. HOMO FAG FAG HOMO STAR STAR.

Mouse.

A pleasure. But don't misunderstand me. Pleasure has nothing to do with smiling or feeling good. Or winning awards or American idol votes, o no.

Pleasure is a porcupine you've mistaken for your teddy -

Ugmo becomes still. Then explodes:

PAY NO ATTENTION TO ME.

NONE.

ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME

MEEE.

His glorious display is interrupted by a pounding from the floor above his head. Ugmo suffers the knock with a whiplash and falls to the floor. He curls up into a ball as if to pretend he's not at fault. He listens. He shakes his fist at the ceiling. He waits. Nothing. He whispers fiercely up at the ceiling:

I'm rehearsing my show.

He moans in a whisper.

MORE POUNDING.

Ugmo stops. He silently mouths moaning at the ceiling. He goes into silent convulsions of moaning and then abruptly stops.

I'm a sick puppy.

He jumps back onto the "stage."

I'm vile. My fingers should fall off. They disgust me. Each one is a vomit stick.

He stuffs his fingers in his mouth and begins to lick and suck on them. He sticks them in his pants and then back into his mouth, trying to shock his "audience." He breaks his "stage" reality.

I would never do that in front of an audience.

He assumes his "audience" again.

Each one of you is a trick and my mouth is an insatiable whore.

He enacts this, then judges himself.

I disgust myself, but I admit it. The more ashamed I make myself the sweeter the pleasure is. How sweet it is. Why am I lying? I grind my teeth at night. I need a guard.

*He sticks his whole hand in his mouth and bites down hard.
His eyes tear with pain.*

PAY NO ATTENTION TO ME.

This is met with pounding from the ceiling.

He whispers:

I'm disturbing you? Breaking your heart? Keeping everyone awake?

He waits and listens.

Stay awake. Why should you be allowed to sleep when my teeth ache?

He slides over to his recorder and plays a tape of Bartok music. He dances with himself. He stops, inspired, and hurries to scribble on his yellow notepad. He flushes red as he writes until he throws the pen from his hand.

WHY DOESN'T ANYONE KNOW WHAT A SENSITIVE AND COMPLEX MAN I AM?

A furious pounding rages from the ceiling. It's force pummels Ugmo into submission. He burrows and hides in his note heap.

*The stomping and pounding stops.
Ugmo emerges and hisses in a whisper.*

Well, I wish I could stick you into a mousehole, with nothing to do, for weeks and weeks, and I'd like to see what kind of state you'd be in. Do you think it's permissible to leave a sensitive soul alone for years and years without anything to do? Do you?

He stares towards his stage.

If it weren't for my show...my "Show"...yes, I'm rehearsing my one-faggot show. A solo show for the mouse to perform all alone in his hole. Can we get a little applause for the hole under the floor? No, we can't! Because no one will ever be asked in to see it, because OTHERS from OUT THERE only distort and ruin what's pure and secret IN HERE. In here, inside me in here.

He stifles a little sob. Very effective. He's proud of this.

It's only our secrets that have any worth. And I won't perform my show OUT THERE because OUT THERE everyone feels an instant disgust for anything that lets itself be revealed to have come unmediated from inside HERE. Where truth is UNAPLOGETICALLY QUEER, MARXIST AND RAW. AND ANTI -MARRIAGE. OMIGOD. The whole point was not to be as sheepish as the straight people. That is why TRAPS are set. You know what I'm talking about. TRAPS for any mouse that would dare come out of its hole - let the mouse creep out to proclaim his love of thugs and cheese and...

...ERWHNG KRRACK GUHHHH.

Despite the danger, I do go out. I have to. How else will I know I exist? When I do go out I do something vile and disgusting, so when I come back inside HERE I get to have a secret unhealthy base little pleasure in creeping around my hole, knowing I've been vile OUT THERE even though I know that I am in fact a truly all-loving but all-alone sensitive soul in here. HA. YOU BOUGHT THAT? SCRATCH THAT. I'M VILE IN HERE AND OUT THERE. IN AND OUT. EVERYWHERE.

There is a pounding at his door.

Ugmo silently freaks. Someone was actually listening?

Eenie's voice can be heard from behind the door. Eenie is now dressed in cut-off sweats and childish slippers.

EENIE

It's past two in the morning. Hello. Fuckin' asshole.

He waits for a response. Ugmo is horribly still.

Hey, asshole.

Eenie listens.

EENIE

Uh huh. I hear you breathing. I don't want to hear another sound out of you.
You hear me! Huh? Do ya? That's right.

Eenie pounds for good measure. Snorts and exits.

Ugmo listens to him leave and then speaks.

UGMO

Every man has a right to his own solo show. YOU HEAR ME!

He is frightened he was loud.

He's safe, Eenie does not return.

In my solo show...

He jumps on "stage".

No one will recognize me, because I will, by sheer queer will, triumph over everyone, and they, the little everybodies of this world, they will hobble amidst strewn soda caps admitting to my superiority and I, I will forgive them.

"I forgive you. I forgive you all."

Also in my show, I'll read them a few great poems which I'll write that day and which will be so moving billionaires will insist I take all their money, which I will so I can donate it all to fight human suffering, and then I'll confess all my perversions which everyone will realize were the result of my tortured need to share my brilliance with all mankind, and all womankind, and all gender and transgendered kind, and all human kind will fall before me, weeping, trying to kiss me -

He demonstrates.

I throw off my shoes and vow to live barefoot. All ethnic strife ceases. The Pope has the Vatican disassembled, gift-wrapped in beautiful colored paper and sent to me. I mount a white steed, grow my hair long, and ride to the Himalayas where quivering aspects of Truth and Beauty await me like virgin brides. I am tender with each one and they give birth, one big collective birth to a rainbow of love and faith - SOMEONE COME AND APPLAUD ME.

I hate all mankind.

APPLAUD.

*Loud feet coming down the stairs.
Pounding at the door. Ugmo drops to the floor.*

EENIE

OPEN UP.

Ugmo is very still.

COWARD.

*Ugmo hides in his nest of papers.
He moans loudly his despair at being interrupted.*

Good Lord...

Eenie pounds on the door.

UGMO

Pound on some other savior's door. I'm not your Jesus. THERE'S NO JESUS HERE.

EENIE

Listen, you loser. I gotta sleep. I have places to be in the morning.

UGMO

I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE.

EENIE

Yeah? What am I? Huh? What am I? Open this door and tell me what I am.

UGMO

(He whispers so he can't hear him:) You're a sweet Midwestern boy who should be allowed his right to love and dream.

EENIE

FUCKIN' COWARD.

He pounds.

I'LL HAVE YOU EVICTED. I PAY MY RENT.

UGMO

Okay, okay, okay, okay, I'll play dead. Is that what you want? You got it. Deader as a doorstep.

EENIE
WHO CAN UNDERSTAND YOU?

UGMO
I'M SORRY. I'M SORRY. I HAVE A TOOTHACHE.

EENIE
Really?

UGMO
A TERRIBLE TOOTHACHE. AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

EENIE
ARRRRRGHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

*They crescendo and end together.
They are surprised and silent.*

Better now?

UGMO
If you bring me a doll or a nice cup of tea, chances are I'll calm down.

Eenie exits. Ugmo listens. When he feels alone and safe, he speaks:

Why can't everybodys leave me alone - do I ask for an audience? No. Leave me to my hole, my little refuge, so I can dream, yes, sublime and beautiful dreams -

*He rolls on the floor and tries to have beautiful and sublime dreams.
He starts coughing up hairballs instead.*

I can only go on like this by myself for three months at a time and then I've got to get out, it's almost been three, it's not that I want to go out, I DON'T WANT AN AUDIENCE, it's just I need to know that I could delight one if I got one - not like at Carnegie Hall, but maybe at a small dinner party, I could tell jokes, make toasts, remind the world that even if I am a mouse I can, on occasion, still act like a human being. It's not like I want a support group or a salutary parade, but I do expect, no, demand, everyday politeness and at least an attempt at a dignified sharing of sensibilities. Shouldn't that be possible?! But who, who is OUT THERE? Classmates that still hate you for being more intelligent than they, whores that won't blow their own noses but will blow you. And big self-satisfied magazine men dressed in lawyer suits who think they can pick you up by the nape and toss you aside as if you didn't exist. I EXIST, Mr. Magazine Man!

The man jumps on "stage."

Mr. Magazine Man jogs regularly in the park, uh-huh, so his moneymaking buttocks can become a tight-assed dream. I'd see him every Sunday morning after my all night debaucheries. He was amazing to watch. He literally ran over people like me, and even people who were quite a bit more confident. He'd run straight at them and they'd clear out of his way. I vowed: I WILL HOLD MY GROUND.

Him.

I'M HERE. I'm holding, I'm holding, I will hold...

He jumps out of the way.

But I always jump out of the way. Mouse, mouse, MOUSE.

He shouts after the Magazine Man:

Next Sunday, buddy, just you wait and see. Next Sunday. Oh yeah. The next Saturday I drank to my upcoming victory until the Nike footsteps of dawn announced the Sunday morn. Here he comes. I will not budge. I will not budge. I will not budge.

*He jumps out of the way. He throws himself on the ground in self-hatred.
He jumps up and tries again.*

I will not budge. I will not budge. I will not budge.

He jumps out of the way.

NOOOOOOOOOO. I was sick for days.

He demonstrates with moans.

I was sick all week. I gave up leaving my hole. I could do nothing but moan. Until, finally, I had to go out and get something to eat. And in this weak state fate decided to test me once again. I'm struggling home with my carton of Chinese food when suddenly I see this suited Hercules, briefcase in hand, walking towards me. Three steps away. I clench my fist around my little white bag with its Styrofoam container of Kung Po Chicken and - BANG. We bump into each other - HARD. He keeps walking, pretending nothing happened, but I know it did, I know my three dollar dinner has splashed across his suit trousers. There will be a dry-cleaning bill. There will be proof. I EXIST.

He does the victory dance of existing.

Of course, his briefcase jammed into my leg, I had gotten the worse of the collision, but I was so proud of my throbbing leg that I went home and sang Italian operas as loud as I could:

He bursts out singing an operatic aria as Eenie returns.

O SOLO MIO. MI SOLO PEE-OH OH, OH OH, OH!

There is a knock at the door.

Ugmo freezes.

Silence.

The gentle knock repeats.

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I'll be quiet. I promise.

EENIE

Listen, open the door. I won't bite your head off or anything. I brought you what you asked for.

Ugmo approaches the door and opens it a crack. Eenie sticks a large stuffed bear in army fatigues (or a large G.I. Joe doll) through the opening. The man jumps back from the object. Eenie talks through the door opening, animating the G.I. Joe doll.

Hello, Mister.

UGMO

What's your name?

EENIE

Eenie

UGMO

Hello, Eenie. Is that your birth name? What's your God-given name?

EENIE

Ernest.

UGMO

Ernest? Really.

EENIE
Yeah, really.

UGMO
Damn, I'm sorry. Did your parents know right from the start?

EENIE
Eenie is my drag name.

UGMO
Drag queens are the worst.

EENIE
That's right. Just one step up from fucked in the head queer thugs like yourself.

UGMO
I'm not.

EENIE
A thug?

UGMO
What's your full name, Eenie?

EENIE
Eenie Meanie I-ma Mo.

UGMO
Cute.

EENIE
I brought you a nice cup of herbal tea so you can sleep.

Eenie offers a cup of tea through the door opening.

UGMO
You're very kind.

EENIE
You are one crazy dude.

UGMO
No.

EENIE
Yeah, you are.

UGMO
You don't understand what courses through me.

EENIE
I understand you need to calm down.

UGMO
I'm hopeless.

EENIE
Get help.

UGMO
A doctor? HA.

EENIE
Why do you like to suffer all the time?

UGMO
I don't suffer. I rehearse. I'm an artist. I'm rehearsing my solo show. Artists sometimes are loud. But I don't suffer. Suffering is inadmissible. My show is a light stage comedy.

EENIE
I know what your problem is.

UGMO
I'm horribly sensitive.

EENIE
You need to get laid.

The man's tea cup clatters.

UGMO
Please, go.

EENIE
I'm sorry. I was only trying to make a joke. I...

UGMO

Why must humor always be coupled with brutality? Please, go.

EENIE

No...I...I never sleep. I always hear you beneath me. But tonight, boy, you sure are outdoing yourself. Someone shit on him, I said, and poor shit, I bet he didn't even get paid for it.

Ugmo shuts the door, keeping Eenie outside the basement apartment.

UGMO

No one shat on me.

EENIE

I got some advice - you want to hear it?

No answer.

Rehearse less. Your moans are sounding too fake. They used to sound more sincere.

Ugmo moans.

Eenie knocks.

UGMO

A MOUSE DOES NOT FAKE BEING A MOUSE.

Silence.

Eenie does not leave. Ugmo waits and listens. Finally:

EENIE

Are you really rehearsing a show?

Eenie waits for a response.

Tonight was my last night doing drag. You want to know why? Do you want to know why?

Ugmo arranges his notes loudly, so Eenie can hear that he is ignoring him. Yes, he is putting on a "show."

You don't want to know. No one wants to know.

Eenie uses the doll to knock on the door.

EENIE

Hey, Mister, you don't look like an actor. Have you been in any movies?

*A cry of pain fills the night.
Eenie drops the doll/bear and exits.
Ugmo jumps into his stage.*

UGMO

The mouse can't help but remember everything, every insult, and go over them again and again, and then come up with even better humiliations.

He swings open the door, but Eenie is gone.

He is surprised by his exit and suddenly devastated that he has lost a possible friend or at least his only real audience member. He sees the doll. He picks up the bear with his mouth, and crawls, scurry fashion, back to his nest. He sits with the bear, holds it tenderly, and confides in it.

Shall I tell you the precious little ideas I've been nurturing in my hole? No? In my heart? You want me to listen to my heart? The heart! Nothing but a unthinking muscle. A constant bully. It forces us to fall in love. Why? It has no idea - I'll tell you why. So we can sneer at ourselves. So we can suffer the really good stuff - jealousy, oppression, violence! A thinking man must resist - he must not be bullied. He must look love in the eye and...

He looks deep into the doll/bear's eyes.

I can brave falling in love. I...owwwwww. It's killing me. Cheap sentiment. Disgusting.

He feels up the bear. He looks out at his "audience."

What has happened to me? Why won't anyone invite me to their parties?

He jumps on "stage" and resumes his performer's persona.

I'll go to their party, I shouted, and either they'll all get down on their knees and beg me for my friendship or I'll slap Zverkov's face! I hired a carriage and kept spitting on the driver's neck to get us there with more speed. Pronto! The next thing I knew I was pounding and kicking on the door. The door was opened very quickly. Siminov stared at me with a stupid smile. Behind him I could see two other schoolmates of mine. They were planning a farewell party for a friend of theirs named Zverkov. I knew this Zverkov too. He'd just been promoted to the Capital of Pretentiousness even though he is a no talent without a brain.

He talks in the others' voices:

We love Zverkov!
We love him!
We love him!

He's going to be rich and famous.
But we know him.
Yes, we know him and love him!

I'M COMING TO THE PARTY FOR ZVERKOV.

But...
But...
But you don't love him.
And no one's invited you.

COUNT ME IN. HERE'S MY MONEY.

(He speaks to the audience:) I forced myself on them, I don't know why. I got to the hotel at the appointed time. I was the first to arrive. I waited an hour before they and Zverkov showed up:

You came.
We changed the time.
Didn't Siminov tell you?

Oops, sorry.
Zverkov, do you remember...
God, what's your name?

Dear little man, are you still writing?
What do you do for money?
Do you have agent?
You've got stains on your trousers.

Oh. Never mind him. More champagne.

Yes, Zverkov.
Hooray Zverkov.
We love Zverkov.

I'LL SHOW THEM. I'LL SHOW THEM. I'LL SHOW THEM.

He's drunk.
When's he leaving?
What's he trying to prove?

Let him alone. He's not going to bother me.

O YEAH? O YEAH?! I grabbed their bottle of champagne to hit them in the face
- and poured myself some to drink. I was paying my share of it.

He drinks five glasses in a row.

They will wake from their drunken stupor and recognize that my nobility of mind and unquestionable sensitivity is ten times more valuable than Zverkov's cheesy appointment as an assistant chief at the Capital of Poohpooh Art. I drank and paced, drank and paced, waiting for their revelation. I vowed not to pay any attention to them. The next thing I knew they were running off to get into Zverkov's limousine - where are they going without MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE?

He runs to his door, opens it wide, and yells out.

COME BACK. DON'T LEAVE ME TO MYSELF.

He realizes what he has just shouted in the hall. He scurries back into his hole. He waits and listens.

Please, come back. Please? Please please please please.

*Eenie slowly and quietly returns.
He notices the doll is not in the hallway and that the door is ajar.
He pushes it open.
Ugmo sits in the middle of his note heap, back to his note concentration.
Eenie waits in the doorway.*

EENIE
You like playing with my doll? Beats therapy.

UGMO
I'm rehearsing...

EENIE
You keep saying that.

UGMO
Repetition makes it true.

EENIE

Like someone saying "I love you."

UGMO

No one's saying that. What?

EENIE

Can I watch?

I'm. I need something to bring me down. I mean, I'm all wound up. From celebrating. And I need to chill out. I don't have a tv. You might have noticed I don't own much. Well, I guess more than you. I own a bed. I'm not trying to insult you in any way. I'm very good. Being an audience, I'll be appreciative, no judgment, I promise.

UGMO

I thought you needed your beauty sleep.

EENIE

My macho sleep, you mean.

UGMO

Don't hit me.

EENIE

What? I wasn't.

UGMO

I wasn't saying anything about your masculinity.

EENIE

What about it? You can. Say something.

C'mon. I'm not going to hit you or anything. What? You don't think I'm macho? What? You think I'm homo or something? I'm kidding. I've always known I'm a fag. The only person I've ever hit was my Dad. And he was drunk and had a gun. So, you're safe. Everyone knows I wouldn't hurt a flea.

UGMO

I'm not...

EENIE

Not you – what?

UGMO
A f – f – f

EENIE
Fag?

UGMO
Flea.

EENIE
My bad. You got anything to drink?

UGMO
And I don't believe in labels and categories.

EENIE
Maybe some weed? I don't party any harder than that.

UGMO
I'm rehearsing. I'm not throwing a party.

EENIE
Okay, okay – so you told me. But can't you take a break?

UGMO
Take a break from the truth, you mean?

EENIE
Yeah. I got to clean out my system anyway. I report to the military tomorrow.
Yep. I signed up.

UGMO
You're shitting me.

EENIE
A girl's got to do what a girl's got to do to succeed in this economy.

UGMO
They took you?

EENIE
Happy to have me.

UGMO
I don't believe in it..
EENIE
You don't believe in what?
UGMO
Fags in the military.
EENIE
Hey.
O my god, you almost had me! You should sign up too.

UGMO
What the fuck are you talking about?
EENIE
Combat boots are going to pay my way to design school.

UGMO
You have no hold on reality.
EENIE
Are you seriously telling me I have no hold on reality?

UGMO
I do nothing but hold on. To.

Ugmo looks over his room.

EENIE
Let me help you rehearse. I can be your roadie while you rehearse.

UGMO
Roadie. You mean crew.

EENIE
Krew? You mean like rappers?

Look, I know you want to get rid of me. But. There's no way I'm falling asleep tonight. Might as well see this show of suffering that's been raging beneath me. Give a soldier his last request before he gets shipped off. Let the performance art begin.

UGMO

Are you hoping to get laid?

EENIE

Oh my god. No. No. No. Okay. I'm outta here.

Eenie exits. Ugmo shouts after him.

UGMO

MY SHOW.

*Ugmo exits after him and gestures sweetly for Eenie to return.
He empties a box of notes and sets it up for a seat for Eenie.
He indicates Eenie should take a seat.
He makes an audience spot for him somewhere in the room.*

It's an anti-performance. A conceptual thing.

EENIE

I should go. I'm not good at concepts.

UGMO

NO MORE CONCEPTS. You want something real, okay, then, the mouse will answer the call of the lion and put on...

Ugmo decides to risk it and jumps onto his "stage."

My show..

Thank you for agreeing to fall down the Ruski hole.

*Ugmo chalks the wall as if there is snow falling.
He shivers as if he is very cold on a winter Russian street.*

Oh, oh...it's always winter in St. Petersburg.

*Eenie takes a seat next to his G.I. Joe doll to watch.
It's about to begin.*

UGMO

Um...

He cannot. He remains frozen on "stage" in the worst stage fright known to mankind. Eenie waits, not sure if something has happened.

Ugmo jumps off the "stage."

UGMO

It's not ready - just yet -

EENIE

Well, let me know. I'll send you some roses.

Ugmo whimpers.

That's what you're supposed to do, right? Do your friends come and see your shows?

UGMO

I HATE THEM. I HATE THEM. I HATE THEM. WHY DO I EVEN PRETEND TO LIKE THEM? WHY SHOULD I CARE WHAT THEY THINK OF ME?

EENIE

You are a piece of work. What are you shouting about now?

UGMO

Siminov and the lot of them - crumbs, crumbs, I wouldn't let pigeons touch.

He does the Chase-Away-Pigeons dance.

EENIE

What are you doing?

UGMO

Chasing pigeons.

EENIE

Uh-huh.

UGMO

Everything I do. It's chasing pigeons. They left me stranded at a bus stop.

Ugmo draws a bus stop on the wall and stands there, stranded.

I tried to get into their limo but they lifted me out: "we need to make room for some Lovelies!" They were going to watch each other put it to some Lovelies. Am I amusing you? Yes, I was with such people and, what's worse, I let them insult me.

EENIE

They pushed you out to make room for rent bois? What - you didn't have the money to pay your share? You poor shit.

UGMO

It's not because I couldn't pay. I was of a different caliber. I can pay. Didn't you understand anything I said at all?

EENIE

Yeah...

The man enters the stage space with the doll.

UGMO

A young man of indeterminate gender enters the room. Without judgment. Innocent and pure. No, not innocent, not here in Olympia's whorehouse, but pure nonetheless. I can pay.

EENIE

Then why didn't you?

UGMO

I can pay.

EENIE

Yeah, I heard you.

UGMO

I can pay.

Ugmo scurries among his papers and pulls out an envelope of money, counts his money and shows it to him.

UGMO

Here. You want to be paid right? Right?

Silence.

Eenie stares at him.

He never takes the money.

No? Oh, I get it. You want to be loved.

Silence.

UGMO

Omigod, I hit it. You want to be...but you can't say it. Who's the coward now?

EENIE

We can go upstairs to my place if you want...

UGMO

I don't leave my hole.

Pause.

My Ruski hole.

EENIE

You don't even have a bed.

UGMO

I DON'T HAVE A BED IT'S TRUE BUT I HAVE A SOUL.

EENIE

Please don't yell at me. I didn't come down here for...

UGMO

I can love.

Pause.

EENIE

Fine. I'll be back. Don't go anywhere.

Eenie exits.

The man stares into the eyes of his imaginary audience.

UGMO

I can love - yes, how much –

Ugmo draws a big heart on the wall.

- how much love, in my dreams. I ride the winged horses Sublime and Beautiful. One barefoot on each back, the stars catching in my hair, Eenie, Ernest, look up and see my love exploding like a new born galaxy. But what's this? My winged horses whinny and buck. What's that ahead? Meteorites coming my way! The universe is shooting molten lead my way. Lumps! Lumps! Lumps! You hear me Zverkov and Siminov and the rest of you, you're lumps, lumps of the universe, knocking me off my beautiful steeds and spiraling me down, down, down into my hole.

Eenie enters dragging in a foam mattress.

EENIE

If you won't come to the mattress, the mattress will come to you...

Ugmo speaks to his audience:

UGMO

And before your eyes, dear audience, the magnificent transformational power of the theatre will lift us out of our hopeless solo shows and set us...

EENIE

Do you kiss? If you don't kiss, this isn't going to work.

UGMO

I don't audition.

Eenie kisses him.

EENIE

That's not.

Ugmo kisses Eenie fully and with intimacy. Eenie looks into his eyes to check if this may be for "real." Ugmo looks back. Eenie accepts it is a miracle. They have a connection. They stay dressed and make love. Their appetite to make love overtakes the lovemaking itself. They exhaust each other. Eenie is overcome and full in the lovemaking.

UGMO

(While Eenie continues, he speaks to his "audience") Enjoying the show? Maybe I should become a stand-up comedian. A joke, a joke, do I know any jokes? I can tell the one about my sister who has her arms and legs chopped off but still wants to be a ballerina. That's the joke, ladies and gentlemen, we all have imaginary sisters who burden us with their mutilated dreams.

Eenie Meanie He's a Ho. I bet you think this kind of showing off is in bad taste. But name me one person that doesn't go around showing off their sickness and glorying in it. I'm disgusting because it's my whim. Whim is everything.

Ugmo climbs back onto Eenie.

He continues the fully dressed lovemaking.

He climaxes with painful little sounds.

Perhaps they are the sound we imagine fish making when thrown out of water, their gulls gulp air.

*He collapses.
He rolls away from Eenie.
They lay next to each other, both overcome with their silence.
Eenie reaches towards Ugmo. Ugmo scurries up and away.*

*Ugmo gets two candles. He sits and lights them, placing
one by Eenie and one in front of him as he sits in his "stage area".
He speaks softly.*

UGMO

After the degradation, after the act, I lay in a semi-conscious state. For two hours. All the cathedral clocks in St. Petersburg cry out in the silence. It's four. It's four. It's four. It's four o'clock in the morning.

EENIE

I didn't come down here to have a quickie. Shit.

UGMO

(to his "audience.") The crushing snow falls outside. St. Petersburg is being buried in a heavy winter shroud.

EENIE

I've caught you looking at me, you know. That's why I...

UGMO

(He speaks softly:) You should fall in love, move in with a nice guy, be happy.

EENIE

Oh, thanks.

UGMO

Have you ever been in love?

EENIE

Have I ever?

UGMO

Don't answer if you don't want to. I shouldn't be told anything. At least not anything real. Unless you think it's possible we can be unprotected and true intimates with each other. I don't blame you, if you think that's impossible.

EENIE

My first love, maybe my only love, was this boy from high school. He was four years older. I thought he was the bomb. Man. He joined the army. And when I was a senior in high school he came back to my school as a recruiter. And of course I stayed after his talk because I had all these questions. I kept asking him questions until he said he was getting hungry and we should get a burger. He'd pay. Well, the U.S. Army would. We both smiled. We went to a burger place. And we talked and talked and talked all about how much he loved his life. And how I was a freak because I liked hot sauce on my fries and how late it was getting and no my parents wouldn't care, are you kidding me. He knew I was falling big time. I was in love. My little crush became this one big heat wave of love. All I could think was sign me up. Sign me up. I blurted it out: "Sign me up. Take me with you."

UGMO

But he didn't.

EENIE

He said he couldn't. Because I was too much "that way." So, he couldn't sign me up. But he could take me back to his motel room. And that's what he did. He took me. First we went to a store and bought some candles, and bourbon, I had never had bourbon, and lubricant. When he got me to his room, he held me, and he smiled because I was shaking and the skin on my arms was covered with goose bumps. He loved that, he said. I gave him my virginity. And. I said: I love you. I love you, I said, as all virgins do who finally have the sex they thought they would never have. Stay away from the military, he said. It's not for you. I never saw him again. And I did stay away for years...until I saw no other way. I signed up six months ago. I want to go to design school and this is the only way I know how to get the tuition. Pimp myself out to the military. Why not? I've been a slut for a lot worse reasons. A lot worse.

Ugmo goes to his papers.

He writes with intensity.

Eenie approaches and rips the writing pad away from him. He reads.

EENIE

"A Queen like you should be loved."

UGMO

A note to myself. For my show.

EENIE

You know, fuck off. I didn't come down here to be in your goddamn show.

UGMO

Why did you come down here?

EENIE

To fuck. And pretend it meant something more.

UGMO

Maybe it did mean something more. Do you think you could let yourself with me? Fall in love?

EENIE

Fuck. You are one crazy dude.

UGMO

Maybe I have more hope than you do.

EENIE

You don't know me. I should never have told you my story. What's wrong with me? Chatty Cathy every time. Ok, I...admit it. I had a stupid little thought, because I've seen you watching me, and I would sometimes pretend you liked me, that you wanted to hold me, that you thought I could be someone...out of the ordinary, someone to spend time with. More than once. I should always put a gag in my mouth immediately after I have sex...this is embarrassing. I don't believe in falling in love, don't worry.

UGMO

I debase myself in ways that I'm ashamed of - but even so, I still believe it is possible, that it is possible to be loved. And to love in return.

Silence.

EENIE

Bullshit. You're all bullshit.

UGMO

If two men fall in love, they should say so. They should marry! And when they say so, the greatest hardships will seem like happiness, as long as there's love and courage. Money cannot buy us love and courage. Love, however, can bring it out in us, once we're willing to admit it's possible to be good and decent people. Wouldn't we feel more our real selves, if we acted as examples for others and were people they could rely on? Imagine telling the world how much you loved the man standing beside you, imagine your love transforming their hate for what they can't understand. No matter how cynical we pretend to be, aren't we all hoping for that room of love and happiness.

(He sings:) O, my man, I love him so...

UGMO

To experience a room of love and happiness, to experience one moment of love and happiness, one should be willing to suffer almost anything. Nothing can compete with true love and true suffering for the one you love.

EENIE

Are you...?

UGMO

What?

EENIE

Did you...?

UGMO

What?

EENIE

Make that up yourself - or is it all out of some book you read?

There is a stillness.

UGMO

What are you saying? Happiness only belongs in books? It's only for straight decent heterosexual couples? Maybe you're right. Maybe I'm living in some other century, some other country even (*Ugmo draws two male stick figures, their penises and a star between them on the wall*) because I believe there can be something sacred in love between two men, and that my soul mate is somewhere out in the world and he's queer and proud and ready to die for me. That such a love is the most precious thing I can obtain. But that's only true in books read in a San Francisco café.

EENIE

I wasn't saying...

UGMO

If only I had met you in a book in some other century, but meeting you now, today, in the flesh, so to speak, what are you, nothing but a cynical doll dismissing everything I might say that has a bit of idealism left in it. When our mothers gave birth to us, we were a miracle, and for the two of us to be brought together, that too is a kind of miracle, that too should create a kind of beauty. I foolishly still believe it's possible to create beauty.

He gets the doll.

UGMO

I tell you what, Miss Queenie Eenie Meanie, I'll pay you for your G.I. Joe Bear, for one round with him, like a Richard Gere gerbil, but you have to watch. Deal? Why not? If it's a crime to defile this Thing, o god in heavens why isn't it a crime to defile you?

EENIE

I'm not defiled. I'm empowered. I'm changing my life for the better. Starting here. Starting now.

UGMO

That's a song that never made it to Broadway! Stop being such a faggot. You're empowered? Yes, you'll be empowered when they put you in your MILITARY grave. The worms will not care how empowered you say you are. It won't matter to them.

EENIE

Shut up. I do what I can.

UGMO

And this is the sum of it? The sum of what you CAN do? Don't ask, don't tell fits you to a tee. Give up your happiness because you think you're suppose to play by the rules others make for you? Follow those rules and watch yourself rot as you mock the loss of your soul. Yes, we all CAN do that. What we faggots do to each other is an obscenity, because we both know how afraid we are to admit we deserve a chance at happiness.

EENIE

Shut up.

UGMO

There are people who don't do everything they can to destroy themselves. There are such people.

EENIE

Shut up.

Eenie blocks his ears.

UGMO

Shut me up now and you might as well slit your wrists and let the coffin lid fall. You'll get no second chance - no matter how hard you pound on that lid. Pound, I say. Pound. Is your heart pounding against the coffin lid?

He pounds. Eenie pounds but Ugmo doesn't notice.

UGMO

"LET ME OUT. I HAVE HOPES! I HAVE DREAMS! I HAVEN'T LOVED."

Eenie hides in the makeshift bedding.

Pound as you might, they will not come and open your lid. No, all those men you served, they'll all plug their ears. That will be the sum of your life, their fingers jammed in their ears. Do you hear me? DO YOU?

Eenie buries himself in Ugmo's arms. He is sobbing.

Ugmo is still.

He tries to quiet the air.

I...I...no, please, please, you mustn't pay any attention to me.

He takes one of Eenie's hands into his.

Here. Make a fist. Hit me. Hard.

Eenie undoes the fist and intertwines Ugmo's fingers with his. Ugmo holds his hand. He cannot look into his eyes.

Can I bring you something? A glass of water. Forgive me. I...

EENIE

Everything you said is true.

UGMO

I had no right to say it. None. Believe me...

EENIE

You're brave enough to say it. It needs to be said. All of it.

Ugmo holds Eenie.

It gets awkward. Eenie laughs.

They shift out of the embrace.

UGMO

Stay if you like. If you don't want to be alone...

Eenie looks into Ugmo's eyes and accepts.

EENIE

I would like. I want to show you something. It's upstairs. One second. I'll be back. Don't go anywhere.

Eenie exits.

Ugmo looks to his audience.

UGMO

O GOD. NO. WHAT WILL HAPPEN NOW? What if he wants to marry me? How long before he sees I'm nothing but a vicious coward? How did I get cast in a melodrama? I'm already writing out a little scene for us.

He scoops up the bear and performs a melodrama:

Dearest Queenie, these last few minutes you were away from me were an eternity.

UGMO/DOLL

I love you above all else in the world.

UGMO

We will never hide our hearts again.

DOLL

You pulled me out of my degradation. You are my savior.

UGMO

Queenie Eenie, do not love me out of gratitude, nor out of obligation or some misplaced sympathy.

DOLL

I know I cannot hope that you will love me in return.

UGMO

You're pure! You're beautiful! You will be my One True Love!

He takes "centerstage."

Kiss kiss kiss.

A five hour embrace.

Applause. Applause. Applause.

We travel abroad and live a happy life.

He throws the doll down in disgust.

UGMO

I don't have time to be your hero. I've got notes to write. What if he wants to read them? He'll see what a desperate man I really am. I'm shaking. He mustn't see me like this. Put them away. Put them away. Put them away.

*As he scurries among his notes, Eenie returns.
He is holding a piece of paper.*

EENIE

You don't have to clean up.

UGMO

I have to get things arranged.

EENIE

Can I help?

UGMO

No, no, you don't know the order.

EENIE

I brought you something to read. A poem. I'm not a good enough reader to say, but I think it's very good. It's a poem that, back in high school...I was so happy and depressed, you know, because I had fallen in love for the first time, but he didn't say I love you back, I got teen-age suicidal, you know, but then instead I had to write my feelings down, and I did...I always wanted to give him this. Because. I always wanted someone to read it and know, just know, how much... I want you to read it, because of the things you said. You'll know what it means to me.

The man reads the poem.

I was embarrassed I kept it, but not anymore.

UGMO

It's obviously written by an adolescent. The overall structure is weak.

EENIE

I didn't read many poems in high school.

UGMO

The images are trite. The language lacks luster.

EENIE

Oh. Ok.

UGMO

But the content is genuine.

He hands the poem back to him. Ugmo turns away in pain.

EENIE

Thank you. Thank you for reading it. "Why Each Day Will Sing" by Ernie Petunie.

UGMO

Ernie Petunie?

EENIE

Yep. That's me. Ernie Petunie. Not an easy name for an aspiring Queen.

UGMO

A poet-queen.

EENIE

What about you? What's your name? Got any love poems you want to share?

UGMO

Did I fall and hit my head? Am I in a coma right now and hallucinating?

EENIE

Your name's scraped off on the mailbox. Tell me your name.

UGMO

Ug.

EENIE

Ugh?

UGMO

Mo. Ug – Mo.

EENIE

Really? Is that Polish or Turkish or something?

UGMO

No.

EENIE

Oh. Ughmo.

UGMO

Where is he now? Your recruiter?

EENIE

Ohio. Married. Guess who I ran into on my way back down here? Mr. Appollon. He threatened to come in here with me. He said we were making too much noise. He said he wanted to know if we thought we were porn stars.

UGMO

I hate that man.

EENIE

The way he stares. I bet he comes and listens at your door.

UGMO

What did he say to you?

EENIE

"It's three in the morning. I'm calling the police."

UGMO

He dared to say that!

EENIE

"Tell that little man he owes me money for fixing his toilet last week. Tell him they put people in prison for debt, you know."

The man runs out into the hall.

UGMO

I HAVE THE MONEY. I HAVE THE MONEY! But you'll never get it until you apologize, do you hear me, apologize! I may be poor but I will be treated with respect!

EENIE

What is it? What's the matter?

UGMO

I don't know what you're imagining. He is my guest. My guest, do you hear me! You don't know what kind of man I am! Call the police. CALL THE POLICE. I'LL MURDER YOU. DO YOU HEAR ME. MURDER YOU.

Ugmo runs back into the room, slams the door, and breaks down into sobs.

UGMO

He is my torturer. My torturer.

EENIE

He's just a harmless old man. You can't let him get to you...

Ugmo stills himself and returns to his notes. He examines and orders them. He does not break from his routine. Eenie waits. Ugmo stops working, but does not speak or look at him.

This goes on for at least a minute. Yes, a long time.

Maybe you could write me a poem?

Ugmo emits a very small and painful sound that he immediately swallows. He surveys his floor of notes. He begins to wad up his notes.

UGMO

Copied. Forced. Adolescent. Fake. Lie. Lie. Lie! Haven't we told enough lies for one day?

As he wads and tosses his notes, Eenie starts smoothing them out.

You mustn't do that.

Eenie continues.

You mustn't do that.

EENIE

Okay.

UGMO

No, not okay. *(to his audience:)* Talk amongst yourselves.

He finally stops his activity and looks at Eenie.

Are you waiting for a big dreamy embrace? Yes, yes, look at me, I'm Mr. Hug. I won't hold you. And even if someone does hold us, we're still going to die lonely and unloved. You'd better go. Go before you see your hero take off his mask. Stop looking at me. I am the most ridiculous, most vile, stupidest, stingiest, envious worm there is. I was jealous of a high school boy because he could write

a poem! You should spit at me. Walk out and tell everyone what a monstrous coward I am. Stop. Tell them how I moralized, talked about beauty, how I talked and talked, and talked - do you think it pleases me to hear myself talk? Well, you're wrong. I make myself sick. I'm worthy of the lowest contempt. Are you waiting for me to love you? LOVE YOU! Don't you know what you should say to me? Do I have to give you your lines? "You little nobody. You faggot! I hope you die and rot in your solo homo show that nobody is allowed to come to." More? "How dare you think you can dance all over me!" Say your lines. Play your part. I was excellent being solo, excellent, I tell you, and then you had to come in here and cast me as some kind of romantic hero in and I'll never forgive you for it. DO YOU ENJOY MY TORTURE? DO YOU?

Ugmo buries himself in his notes.

EENIE

It's okay. It's okay.

UGMO

I...I want to be somebody good, somebody...

EENIE

Shh. You are good. You are somebody. You're so very brave...

*He holds him. He kisses him. Ugmo sits up and looks to Eenie.
Ugmo looks into his eyes. Eenie takes off Ugmo's shirt. Eenie indicates
Ugmo should take off Eenie's shirt. They look into each other.
Ugmo takes off Eenie's shirt, but feels too open, exposed, vulnerable.
Ugmo hides his whole head in the shirt.*

Aw, don't be afraid.

UGMO (masked)

Applaud.

Applaud.

Ugmo emerges from under the shirt.

You don't get to save me.

Afraid? HA.

I'm laughing at you.
I'm laughing at you.
I'm laughing at you.

UGMO

Hear that all you, Everybodies?

I TRIUMPH.

ME.

APPLAUD.

He holds his triumph pose.

He waits.

He applauds himself.

He bows. Throws kisses.

He waits.

Eenie doesn't move. He just stares at Ugmo, expressionless.

Show's over, you can go.

Eenie doesn't move.

Show times over, time to go. Time to go. Poof. Disappear. Bye-bye.
Disappear. Poof. Poof.

Eenie doesn't move.

Is he still there?

Tick tick tick tick 5 6 7 8 9 10 20 30 40 50 60 one minute. 10 20 30 40 50 60 -
how long are you going to be like that? Bye bye, thanks for the laughs.

Eenie coolly, slowly and methodically applauds.

Ugmo "withstands" it.

Eenie stops. Eenie dresses.

*He chooses to leave the bed. He sees the doll. He picks up the doll and
approaches Ugmo.*

DOLL

Thanks for the show. Let's stay friends.

Ugmo does not answer. Eenie makes the doll give Ugmo a kiss.

Mwah.

*Ugmo works hard not to respond.
Eenie smacks Ugmo's with the bear.
Ugmo cowers in a fetal position on the floor.*

UGMO

Please, please, please, please...

Eenie winds up to viciously beat Ugmo.

Yes. Please.

Eenie drops the doll and exits.

I run out after him into the streets of St. Petersburg.

He runs in place:

ERNIE. ERNIE. ERNIE PETUNIE...

She's not there. The grey street lights lash out at me uselessly. I see no one and hear no sounds. The Russian snow is heavy on my face. What will save us in the end? Cheap happiness or noble suffering?

Sometimes, an insult is all that keeps us alive.

I suffer so Eenie Meanie I-ma Mo won't have to.

His heart breaks.

EENIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE.

MEANIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE. I – MA. I-MAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

*Sounds of Eenie leaving his apartment.
Eenie walks by Ugmo and doesn't flinch or acknowledge him.
He is dressed in his fatigues carrying a dufflebag of his belongings. He puts
on his cap. He walks out the building and is gone.*

Eenie...

Ugmo goes back to his hole.

That's all folks.

Ugmo sits on the floor and stares at his wall.

Silence.

Then a whisper of applause, followed by the sound of a thunderous operatic ovation which obliterates everything.

Blackout.

End of play.