

Part One: The Corkscrew

(SOUND: An audience filing into a theatre. It's packed.)

NARRATOR: "To begin at the beginning. It is spring." Or at least it was. At some point. Not now. No, now it is winter. Spring just sounds more hopeful, doesn't it? But in this case, it was winter in Paris, a time that would eagerly be described by visitors as 'charmed' and by locals as 'bullshit', or at least that was the general consensus backstage at the Théâtre des Tuileries, one of Paris's largest, most ornate and over-expensive theaters, where tonight the revered and elusive stage magician Jean-Jacqueline Lemarque would be unveiling his newest, greatest, and most elusive spectacle yet, his mysterious Vanishing Box.

(SOUND: Organ music crescendos--we're now backstage. Crew members milling about. There are still construction sounds as the magician's crew finishes the final touches on The Vanishing Box.)

STAGE HAND #1: (*"It's not a trick, it's an illusion"*) Ce n'est pas un *tour*, c'est une *illusion*.

STAGE HAND #2: (*"Bite me, Janet"*) Mord moi, Janet.

STAGE HAND #1: (*"Ahh, Jean-Jacqueline! Hello!"*) Ahh, Jean-Jacqueline! Bonjour!

NARRATOR: This is the beginning of our story. Seems to be a very good place to start. Paris, France 1699. Glitz, glamour, and innovation buzzed backstage. The gravely handsome and newly mustached Jean-Jacqueline Lemarque was preparing, in tux and tails, for his big finish: **The Vanishing Act**. It was at that moment that Lemarque was confronted by the most terrifying and unwanted sight a performer could ever see backstage: his show's producer, the onomatopoeically named George De Bour. A man with more gut than brain and winner of Paris's Most Prominent Sideburns Award for 3 non-consecutive years in a row.

(SOUND: Hurried footsteps; De BOUR approaches Lemarque)

De BOUR: (*French accent*) There you are, Jean-Jacqueline. I've been hotter than Beauchamp's jockstrap looking for you behind all these expensive velvet curtains.

LEMARQUE: (*French accent*) It is not customary to approach the performer seconds before his glory.

De BOUR: *(not sorry)* Sorry?

LEMARQUE: What do you want?

De BOUR

Who, me? I Just wanted to say “good luck” and “Merde” and... ya know, I don’t know if you can tell, but the excitement is palpable out there. Historically, no one’s seen anything like this. In 1699, I mean.

LEMARQUE: So?

De BOUR: So, this is a big deal and we’re all very excited... and my *backers* are all counting on seeing something amazing. And if they don’t, then they may get mad. And if they get mad they may pull your backing, as backers are wont to do. And once they find out we’ve spent all the backing the backers have previously backed you with, they may be pulling you out of the Seine. Comprend?

LEMARQUE: Je comprend, mon frère. Now... since I am expositively refreshed may I go onstage to change the world and make you money?

De BOUR: Happy to hear we’re on the same page.

ANNOUNCER *(in the distance)*: Et maintenant, l’incroyable Jean-Jacqueline Lemarque et son Vanishing Box!

(SOUND: Huge applause swells. Lemarque goes onstage.)

NARRATOR: Lemarque walked on stage to a total hush.

(SOUND: All applause abruptly stops. Air getting sucked out of the room.)

NARRATOR: And closed himself into the impressive box situated dead center.

De BOUR: God, this trick better work more than that name.

(SOUND: Drumroll. Ohh’s and Ahh’s from the audience, whispers of anticipation. And then, a door opens:)

NARRATOR: And as Lemarque's appropriately-titled Vanishing Box reopened, something amazing happened...

(SOUND: The Audience gasps, then bursts into applause)

NARRATOR: Jean-Jacqueline had, as the title suggested, vanished into thin air. The trick had worked...

De BOUR *(to himself)*: He... He did it... I'm going to fuck so many women at this after party.

(SOUND: Huge Applause and triumphant music swells.)

NARRATOR: That is until...it didn't.

(SOUND: A loud mechanical hum is heard and the sound of large pieces of machinery shaking and falling. The audience screams.)

De BOUR: *(yelling)* Jean-Jacqueline. Jean-Jacqueline, what's happening?! Goddammit I don't want to die, I have a reservation tonight!

(SOUND: A loud hum leading to huge explosion! Audience reaction crescendos and then silence. Everyone has vanished. One final clatter of a lone piece of scenery hitting the ground)

NARRATOR: For after what felt like a lifetime of chaotic riffing and space-age sound effects--

(SOUND: One playful sci-fi "zap")

NARRATOR: --everyone in the Théâtre des Tuileries from the Wealthy Orchestra audience members to the nameless French copulants, had, much like the performer they came to see, *vanished* without a trace.

(MUSIC: silent movie mysterious music, a transition)

CREDITS: The Vanishing Act, by Ian Geers and Lauren Grace Thompson. Part One: The Corkscrew.

NARRATOR: The widespread disappearance of the entire human occupancy of the Théâtre des Tuileries was widely regarded as one of the most notoriously mysterious theatrical mishaps of the late 17th Century. Thought by some to be the work of true dark magic and by others to be an

inverted 17th century Flash Mob, the tragedy remained shrouded in mystery for well over 200 years. Which leads us to our story, our main story anyway, which resumes at the inception of contemporary pretensions and deviance, in Berlin 1933.

(MUSIC: Abrupt, much lighter Berlin theme.)

NARRATOR: A time categorized by artistic flourishment and driven by the pettiness of ‘who got there first,’ no one embodied these two characteristics with more abject tenacity than August Eckhardt--for our purposes, let’s just call him ‘Augie’--who at this very moment was in a rehearsal of his own for a stage play about a certain disappearance we’re hopefully all now familiar with.

HIRSCHFELDER: *(Dreamy, off)*: Eckhardt.... Eckhardt.... Eckhardt!

(SOUND: The scene comes suddenly into focus, music stops. HIRSCHFELDER, the director sits in an auditorium.)

HIRSCHFELDER: Are we gonna see this or not? We’re running an hour behind schedule and I’d like to actually start tech sometime this week.

AUGIE: *(at a distance)* Fucking directors... It’s coming, Hirschfelder!

HIRSCHFELDER: Love you!

AUGIE: Love you too.

(SOUND: We are now with AUGIE, sounds of buckles being adjusted)

AUGIE: Alright, Shwanzkoph, you’re all strapped in, how are you feeling?

SHWANZKOPH: Like I’m strapped into a harness in a nonunion house.

AUGIE: Close but not quite...

(SOUND: A belt strap tightening in place.)

AUGIE: *Now* you’re strapped into a harness in a nonunion house..

SHWANZKOPH: I swear to god if this doesn't work, Eckhardt... You're fucking dead. Like wholly dead.

AUGIE: Gotcha, gotcha, gotcha. You do know I control the harness, right?

SHWANZKOPH: And about that, this pinches under the armpits. My agent says I need my armpits to be smooth as baby butter if I'm going to book this paint ad.

AUGIE: My god, Shwanzkoph, what happened to your sense of do-it-yourself theatricality? We're supposed to pour our blood, sweat, and tears into this.

SHWANZKOPH: Yes, but the paint ad pays so...

AUGIE: Well if you're only in this for monetary compensation I don't even know why we're fucking talking right now.

SHWANZKOPH: Just get on with it, I feel a charlie-horse coming on in my right shoulder.

AUGIE: I'm gonna let that one go. Did you read the notes I sent you? When Jean-Jacqueline Lemarque tested this, his harness pinched *everywhere*, so technologically this is an improvement.

HIRSCHFELDER: (*distant*) If we're just going to run out the clock on this rehearsal could you at least let me know?

AUGIE: See, now you've pissed off the director. That's on you.

SHWANZKOPH: No, but I--

AUGIE: And don't worry your pretty little jawline, safety is the number one concern.

HIRSCHFELDER: (*Yelling from the back of the house*) Are we ready to pull this lever, or what?

AUGIE: Now *you* do what you do best: stand here, don't move, and let us do all the work.

SHWANZKOPH: I don't know - my left arm feels numb.

(*SOUND: papers rustling as Augie pulls out the notes*)

AUGIE: Look. You see these? These are Lemarque's own original notes on the Vanishing Box. My most prized possessions in the world. I can't even begin to underline how important they are or the depravity of what I had to do to get them. If I had a kid-- which I don't want -- I can promise you they wouldn't be half as culturally significant or interesting as these random sheets of paper. Now look at this.

(SOUND: Papers shaking)

AUGIE: You see that?

SHWANZKOPH: Ya, I see them. You can stop shaking the papers at me, if I get a face-papercut again my agent is going to -

AUGIE: You see that harness drawn right there?

SHWANZKOPH: Ya.

AUGIE: That's this harness you've got on! Everything we're doing here is up to at the very least, the standards of 17th century theatrical stagecraft. Now... Break a leg.

(SOUND: footsteps away, Augie leaving the stage)

SHWANZKOPH: So what, that's supposed to make me feel better?

(SOUND: Augie is now in the audience with Hirschfelder.)

HIRSCHFELDER: Sorry for yelling earlier, just wanted to put some fear of god into the room.

AUGIE: That's why your people were chosen, and mine weren't.

HIRSCHFELDER: L'chaim. Is he ok?

AUGIE: He'll be fine. Just complaining. But hey, you were the one who wanted to go with a non-union actor.

HIRSCHFELDER: We couldn't afford a union actor.

AUGIE: True.

HIRSCHFELDER: And you don't trust unions.

AUGIE: Also true.

HIRSCHFELDER: And you hate actors.

AUGIE: A third true.

HIRSCHFELDER: So this one's gonna work, right?

AUGIE: Hey, you wanted accuracy, right? I'm following the man's notes verbatim. Or at least the ones I can make out. From my younger French tutoring days -

HIRSCHFELDER: Who let you tutor French?

AUGIE: "It takes a true expert to tutor a language you don't speak." You know who said that?

HIRSCHFELDER: Nietzsche?

AUGIE: No, me. But here, look, I at least recognize these diagrams and a few of the measurements. And as for the words themselves... ehh... French, ya know -

HIRSCHFELDER: Augie, we can't afford a -

AUGIE: Relax, my little Macabee. According to this, Lemarque's Box seemed to work on springs, pulleys, and counterweights. My machine works on springs, pulleys, and counterweights. Lemarque's harness seemed to move the entire box around the performer, my harness pulls the *performer* out of the *box in a catapult-like fashion*. If anything, mine's better!

HIRSCHFELDER: It's a low bar.

AUGIE: The show's about Lemarque's Vanishing Box, I remade Lemarque's Vanishing Box. Nothing could go wrong. Alright? Alright, punch it -

NARRATOR: In fact, many things could go wrong, but Augie Eckhardt considered himself impervious to acts of god and would regularly flaunt this at work. Such as -

(SOUND: A whoosh sound as we FLASHBACK to a day in rehearsal, AUGIE standing on the middle of the stage.)

AUGIE: Cool Theater. MACBEEEEETHHHHHH!!!!!! Ok, so the acoustics suck.

NARRATOR: With family -

(SOUND: Whoosh as we FLASHBACK to AUGIE giving his niece and nephew a paddleboat.)

NIECE : Wow, Uncle Augie, you got us a paddleboat!

AUGIE: It is a great gift! I call it the 'Titanic'! So go on ahead ya little scamps, the lake is mostly thawed.

NARRATOR: And with women -

(SOUND: Whoosh as we FLASHBACK: Sheets rustling, heavy breathing.)

AUGIE: Wait, wait, wait, before we go any further. You said you liked that I was in the Theatre, right? ... The right one's Reagan and the left one's Goneril. Because they say they love me but I have my doubts. Get it? Ok, you see in King Lear...

(SOUND: The woman annoyedly sighs.)

AUGIE: So you have read it?

(SOUND: whoosh as we come back to the present.)

NARRATOR: So the chances of one of the most moderately infamous theatrical accidents replicating itself as efficiently as Augie had replicated Lemarque's Vanishing Box were not just highly probable, but a damned certainty.

HIRSCHFELDER: Adolf, take it from the top of the soliloquy.

SHWANZKOPH: Top of the Soliloquy, thank you.

AUGIE: You're welcome.

HIRSCHFELDER: Augie.

AUGIE : Sorry.

SHWANZKOPH: “Now, have I done it. When Vigarani first built the Théâtre des Tuileries little did he know....”

(SOUND: SHWANZKOPH continues his terrible soliloquy in the background over the next few lines.

SCHWANZKOPH: “That I would be taking it to its apex. For what is a theater without a performer? It is not a home. It is not a school. It is not a refuge.

AUGIE: Woof, this dialogue is rough.

HIRSCHFELDER: Well, if you got me new pages on time I wouldn't have to resort to the placeholder draft.

AUGIE: Are we fighting?

HIRSCHFELDER: You wouldn't be standing if we were.

AUGIE: Noted.

SCHWANZKOPH: “It is not a bother. I am *not* my father! It is not a sand dune. It is not a pontoon... boat.

AUGIE: Do you think he could open his eyes any wider?

HIRSCHFELDER: Thank God he's an expressionist.

AUGIE: Can he just skip to the end?

HIRSCHFELDER: Apparently not. “Interrupts his flow”.

SCHWANZKOPH: “Which is why I will DO (expressionist self-echo) do do IT (self echo) It It. To Vanish. Into. Infamy!”

AUGIE
...yeah, ok No. Pull!

(SOUND: Suddenly the harness is pulled and SHWANZKOPH is flown across stage followed by a loud yell and two loud 'pop's)

HIRSCHFELDER: Jesus Christ!

(SOUND: HIRSCHFELDER runs out. Quick foot steps.)

SHWANZKOPH: *(off)* My armpits!!!!

AUGIE: Huh... I could've sworn that...

(SOUND: Rustling papers as Augie searches the notes. Mumbles to himself.)

AUGIE: Ohhhh. Ok, so 'Échoué' must mean 'failed'. That's on me.

(MUSIC CUE: SCENE CHANGE)

NARRATOR: Later on that evening Augie was awakened from a half-attempted nap with the most welcome of noises.

(SOUND: Door knocks.)

AUGIE: Who bangs on a door these days--?

(SOUND: The door slightly opens. Closes again. Multiple chain locks coming undone. The door opens fully with a sad creak.)

HIRSCHFELDER: Good god, Augie, what happened to your nose?

AUGIE: Get in here, Hirschfelder.

HIRSCHFELDER: No need to be pushy, love.

AUGIE: I'm not, just get the fuck inside.

(SOUND: Door closing behind them.)

AUGIE: Thank god.

HIRSCHFELDER: Happy to see you too. Now, the nose?

AUGIE: It uhh... Look, I don't think we're gonna be able to get that coke from Shwanzkoph tonight.

HIRSCHFELDER: Your drug connect was the actor you maimed?!

AUGIE: How was I supposed to know you could still punch someone with a broken arm?

HIRSCHFELDER: Subtraction?

AUGIE: Well I wasn't thinking about collegiate math when I asked for the coke, was I?

HIRSCHFELDER: Apparently not. I told you not to use Lemarque's notes for the Vanishing Box, they're French nonsense and I'm still not sure they're even real.

(SOUND: a match being struck, cigarette lighting)

AUGIE: *(smoking the cigarette)* First of all, they are real. Look at how aged the papers are. Second of all, and in my defense, those notes were in French, who the fuck speaks French?

HIRSCHFELDER: Not the French tutor apparently.

AUGIE: If there's one thing I've gotten good at in the 3 plus years of having these precious papers it's inferring meaning from pictures and words I don't really understand. Today's trial didn't work, we just have to dive right in tomorrow with a few adjustments based on what I learned. For instance did you know in French "non" means "no"?

HIRSCHFELDER: The more you "non". Well, I'm sure Misha will be thrilled to see you like this tonight, obsessing yet again over your mysteriously-disappeared magician and his theater of friends.

AUGIE: I'm sure she'd be thrilled to see me at all at this point. Ya know, it's been almost a week now since our last attempt at a date night.

HIRSCHFELDER: No. Again?

AUGIE: She's been with me long enough to know what a tech schedule is like.

HIRSCHFELDER: 8 months together and no work from you, how exactly would she know that schedule?

AUGIE: You and I both know I talk about it enough.

HIRSCHFELDER: So what you're saying is she doesn't know you've put the whole 'relationship' thing on hold?

AUGIE: If anyone's smart enough to pick up that I've lost interest, it is most definitely her.

HIRSCHFELDER: Yet you still plan on attending her birthday tonight.

AUGIE: Well that's why I'm absolutely *not* going *if* we can't procure the coke. I don't want to make an ass of myself.

HIRSCHFELDER: No, why would you ever?

AUGIE: Thank you. So, what about you?

HIRSCHFELDER: Well, I've been up and down Alexanderplatz -

AUGIE: Oh, no. I meant the coke. Do you have a connect?

HIRSCHFELDER: Oh I'm so sorry, here I thought you wanted to know about my day.

AUGIE: We were together at the theater all day today, Anton. We've had the same day.

HIRSCHFELDER: I wish I had your simple outlook.

AUGIE: Many do but that doesn't mean many will. God, my head is swimming.

HIRSCHFELDER: Then by all means, let's get you some pharmaceuticals.

AUGIE: Thank you. So you do have someone?

HIRSCHFELDER: I may have spent some time with a Tommy last night who could oblige. Allons-y.

AUGIE: Is that his name?

(SOUND: Music, car horns, we are now on the streets of Berlin)

NARRATOR: The streets of Berlin have a certain beauty about them. A safety one feels walking nestled between the large houses and stone monuments. No matter the time of year, the majesty of Berlin was always there to warm its tenants' hearts...

(SOUND: INTENSE whoosh of wind)

AUGIE: Fuck it's cold!

HIRSCHFELDER: Please. By all means get your complaining out now. You'd better not embarrass me in front of this one.

AUGIE: Jesus, Anton, it's bad enough he's British, but a soldier?

HIRSCHFELDER: I'm not actually sure if he was *in* the service, only that he *performed* like he was.

AUGIE: Really, can we not...? I haven't gotten anywhere near intercourse in over three weeks. I'm gonna start looking at him as a valid option.

HIRSCHFELDER: Well, if you do decide to climb up the spectrum to enlightenment you'd find Rudyard to be extremely well-supplied, a true patron of the arts, and hung like a goddamn war horse.

AUGIE: My friend, I cede this one to you.

HIRSCHFELDER: How kind. But you were never in the running.

(SOUND: Door opening as we meet RUDYARD. He is VERY British.)

RUDYARD: Anton!

HIRSCHFELDER: Rudyard, darling.

RUDYARD: And this must be Mr. Eckhardt. I'm Rudyard T. Codswallop -

AUGIE: You talked about me?

HIRSCHFELDER: You should be honored I brought you up unprompted.

RUDYARD: Yes, Anton spoke very highly of you. Pleased to make your acquaintance, my good man.

AUGIE: I'm not gonna kiss your hand or anything, *guvnah*.

RUDYARD: I wouldn't dream of asking you.

AUGIE: Thanks?

RUDYARD: Splendid. Now that the niceties are by the dash, I must ask: what happened to your nose? Byproduct of the 'skit' business?

AUGIE: It's a war out there. Not that you're unfamiliar...?

RUDYARD: Is that reference to... oh god, do I look old enough to have fought in that thing?

AUGIE: It was a matter of debate.

HIRSCHFELDER: I was merely postulating the theory due to your... attentiveness.

RUDYARD: Oh no. Just common courtesy, I'm afraid. Do unto others and all that.

HIRSCHFELDER: Mmhm... and how many "others" are we doing exactly?

RUDYARD: Keep pressing the matter and maybe we'll find out...

AUGIE: Should I... go?

RUDYARD: Yes, quite! We all should, in fact. I believe we're attending a party, are we not?

AUGIE: I - 'we'?

HIRSCHFELDER: Absolutely, Rudyard. However before we go I was wondering if you wouldn't mind 'taking some notes'.

RUDYARD: It would be my pleasure. There's a dime jazz trio playing next door. Indulge me?

HIRSCHFELDER : We'd be delighted.

(SOUND: Whoosh. A dingy little bar. Smoke everywhere, a terrible jazz trio is playing in a corner of the bar. Mumbled crowd noise. AUGIE, HIRSCHFELDER, and RUDYARD all sit at a table.)

RUDYARD: Excellent spot, don't you think? A dime Gin Martini and more importantly, no one even attempting to check one's personal effects. Not that we'd need to worry with these...

(SOUND: RUDYARD unzips a bag and produces several pens.)

AUGIE: Hirschfelder, I know it's been awhile but you do still remember the difference between an eightball of cocaine and a satchel-full of - what are those - pens?

RUDYARD: *Ballpoint* pens.

AUGIE: Excuse me.

HIRSCHFELDER: Perhaps they're not *just* ballpoint pens Augie... Rudyard, darling, give us an example.

RUDYARD: Of course. You simply click the tip -

(SOUND: Ballpoint pen click-click)

And -

(SOUND: Snort)

AUGIE: *(Distracted)* Sweet fuck - !

HIRSCHFELDER: Beautiful, isn't it?

AUGIE *(indicating the jazz trio)*: No. The Jazz Trio by the bar. Caucasians. Jazz Caucasians.

(SOUND: The Jazz Band briefly gets louder. They're very, very bad.)

HIRSCHFELDER: Oh. That's just *not* right.

RUDYARD: Now, each of these pens here contain a line of Colombia's finest. Pens: they're sleek, stylish, easy to conceal, and easier still to use. Like so.

(SOUND: RUDYARD clicks a ballpoint pen. Snorts.)

AUGIE/HIRSCHFELDER: Wow...

RUDYARD: We'll call the first lines complementary, as I am your guest to this party.

HIRSCHFELDER: You angel.

AUGIE: How many lines between us then?

RUDYARD: Let's call it a sonnet. So, as I am new to the scene here in Berlin, are there any 'insufferables' I should prepare myself for this evening?

(SOUND: Click-click.)

AUGIE *(Snorting the line)*: Not really -

HIRSCHFELDER: Just Dix.

AUGIE: Ugh!

RUDYARD: Well, if I wasn't interested before.

HIRSCHFELDER: *Geoff* Dix.

AUGIE: The cunt.

RUDYARD: What fun.

HIRSCHFELDER: You know those artists that say they get "lost in their work" and don't come to any openings for 2 years straight?

RUDYARD: I'm afraid I haven't had the pleasure.

AUGIE (*like they're teeing up for a tennis game*): Strap in. There's Ernst.

HIRSCHFELDER: Pretentious.

AUGIE: Klee.

HIRSCHFELDER: Lame.

AUGIE: Zimmer.

HIRSCHFELDER: Hey. I like Zimmer.

AUGIE: That's the problem. Everyone *likes* Zimmer. He doesn't *do* anything. He doesn't challenge anyone. He doesn't make bold statements. He's just there. Like Bread.

HIRSCHFELDER: I like bread. Oh! You know what sounds like 'bread' and will definitely be there?

(*SOUND: Click-click*)

Brecht.

AUGIE (*Snorting the line*): No!

RUDYARD: Bertolt Brecht? The Playwright?

AUGIE: Oh for fuck's sake.

HIRSCHFELDER: Misha was in one of the first readings of *Threepenny*. They've remained close.

AUGIE: You want to meet an 'insufferable'...

HIRSCHFELDER: I just love getting a rise out of him.

(*To AUGIE*)

You know Brecht will show up for 30 minutes, stand in a corner, get swarmed by guests, and go home with the most beautiful or attentive one standing.

AUGIE: Oh he just *loves* the most eager puppy in the kennel.

(SOUND: Click-click. Snort.)

RUDYARD: He's into dogs?

AUGIE: *(bulldozing)* Exactly! Not good for a man on the rebound. I mean, what if Misha -

HIRSCHFELDER: Augie's ex--

RUDYARD: I'm sorry.

HIRSCHFELDER: --we think.

RUDYARD: Quite so...

AUGIE: What if *she's* the most eager puppy in the kennel tonight?

RUDYARD: Well this metaphor just got more problematic!

HIRSCHFELDER: Having second thoughts about your disinterest now?

AUGIE: No I... Is it too much to hope that maybe this will be one of those great relationship postscripts, where we can still have sex but aren't obligated to go to like... family events?

RUDYARD: Because you're beleaguered with those?

AUGIE: I just don't know why two people who, at one point and time, enjoyed pushing bodies together wouldn't want to rekindle that flame from time to time. It makes these dry spells so much more difficult and honestly... just really lowers my self esteem.

HIRSCHFELDER: I pity the story you're the protagonist of.

NARRATOR: Thoughts?

(beat)

AUGIE: Look. I've been fortunate enough to meet five incredibly generous women who have pitied me enough to sleep with me, and while I remain forever grateful, their lack of continued interest in me once the romance is gone is pretty rattling.

RUDYARD: And I assume you've always been this transparent with these women?

AUGIE: God no! They already end up thinking I'm an asshole after awhile, to expedite the process with honesty just seems redundant.

(SOUND: Click-click. Snort.)

HIRSCHFELDER: *(Snorting the line)* Integrity is a pesky devil.

AUGIE: I just can't lose this break-up.

RUDYARD: Afraid there will be no "dogs in the kennel for you"?

AUGIE *("What?")*: Gross, I don't fuck dogs...

HIRSCHFELDER: Oh come on, you didn't even like Misha!

AUGIE: Sure I did! For awhile, then... I don't know, at least she was willing to have sex with me. And now I'm in a spell and I... and I...

(SOUND: Click-click. Snort.)

When am I ever going to have sex again?

RUDYARD: Without paying?

AUGIE: Sometimes I wish I was queer, then I'd never have to worry about this.

HIRSCHFELDER: Ah yes, because *we're* the ones comparing the entire gender we're sexually attracted to, to domesticated animals, it's definitely *us* with a crisis of standards.

RUDYARD: Broadening your prospects certainly couldn't hurt.

HIRSCHFELDER: No no, Rudyard, let him continue digging his own grave.

RUDYARD: Yes, Quite. So men are *definitely* red zoned for you?

HIRSCHFELDER: Well if they weren't, then how could he and I ever be friends? The temptation would just be too strong.

AUGIE: You know what I mean.

HIRSCHFELDER: Honestly I don't, Augie. I guess God just cursed me with standards and blessed you with callowness.

AUGIE: I'm just saying I'd have more options.

RUDYARD : And more rejections.

AUGIE: I'm just *saying*.

(*SOUND: Click-click. Snort.*)

Ahh! That one's just a pen.

HIRSCHFELDER: There's always bound to be one.

RUDYARD: Well I must say, chaps, it sounds like a rollicking guest list.

HIRSCHFELDER: There's one you're forgetting--and I honestly shouldn't even be telling you this but the story demands I do. Lilith Von Hitzler will be in attendance tonight.

AUGIE: Lilith Von Hitzler?

HIRSCHFELDER: Lilith Von Hitzler.

AUGIE: The chipmunk-cheeked girl I used to tutor?

HIRSCHFELDER: Jesus, Augie.

RUDYARD: Geoff Dix *and* a chipmunk? What is it, Christmas?

AUGIE: I haven't heard that name in nearly 8 years.

HIRSCHFELDER: Fortunately she aged better than the name did. That would make her nearly 20 now, wouldn't it.

AUGIE: Anton, I'm not going to flirt with the girl who used to take radios apart *for fun* during our fake French lessons. Besides isn't that... immoral?

HIRSCHFELDER: Look at you exercising a conscience.

AUGIE: I try.

NARRATOR: Sometimes.

HIRSCHFELDER: Well, she shouted at me from across Alexanderplatz today - Apparently she heard about our Lemarque play from some unspecified, narratively convenient source and would not stop asking me about it. Anyway I passed the buck off on you, told her all about your precious notes and whatnot and now she is tickled pink to see you again.

AUGIE: Ugh. Anton, you know how I feel about the sanctity of the Artistic Process. It's a garden that must be tended with care and sunlight and no pressure of rewrites.

HIRSCHFELDER: I invited her to Misha's tonight, attempting to be a good wingperson and -

AUGIE: Ugh Anton -

HIRSCHFELDER: And I must say she has... grown into those chipmunk cheeks.

AUGIE: You have no idea what straight people are attracted to, do y-- Oh! You mean--she - Oh...

HIRSCHFELDER (*To RUDYARD*): Watch as he considers his course of action.

AUGIE: Well she did always have a crush on me but...

HIRSCHFELDER (*To RUDYARD*): As he tries to manifest some semblance of a moral code.

AUGIE: No, that's just obscene if I... well....

HIRSCHFELDER: (*To RUDYARD*) And...

AUGIE: I'll do it!

HIRSCHFELDER: There it goes.

RUDYARD: Shall we get some make up for that broken nose?

AUGIE: Oh shit, I almost forgot! Goddamn Schwanzkoph.

RUDYARD: Work hazard, I'm assuming?

AUGIE: Good guess.

RUDYARD: Actually, Anton told me about your... ambitious little project.

AUGIE: The only thing worse than kissing ass for funding is *wasting* that funding on actors.

RUDYARD: So this was your actor's fault?

AUGIE: What are you, writing a book?

RUDYARD: Good guess.

HIRSCHFELDER: Rudyard is a writer. Travel Books. That's why he's in Berlin! I told you all of this.

(Under his breath to Augie)

I *definitely* told all of you this.

AUGIE *(decidedly not under his breath)* No, you didn't.

HIRSCHFELDER: Must've been an earlier draft.

NARRATOR: It was.

RUDYARD: So color me curious, what's the play about?

HIRSCHFELDER: Don't get him -

AUGIE: You know Jean-Jacqueline Lemarque?

RUDYARD: Enlighten me.

AUGIE

Lemarque was a stage magician in France under the reign of King Louis the XIV -

(SOUND: Tape stop, then shift, into a FAST FORWARD of Augie's dialogue, which lowers in volume as the narration starts.)

NARRATOR: Please excuse the fast-forwarding of Augie's life passion, but seeing as we've heard this all before, I find it best to focus on how this already familiar information is being received by its newest audience. As Augie Eckhardt explained the entire history of Lemarque, climaxing in the tragedy of *The Amazing Vanishing Man*, Rudyard T. Codswallop sat wrapt, in a mood Augie couldn't place between genuine interest and cool remove:

RUDYARD: *(somewhere between between genuine interest and cool remove)*: Huh.

NARRATOR: Either way, an opportunity to talk about himself and his project was an opportunity he was more than happy to take with any newcomer, old comer, or inanimate house dressing. And... here!

(SOUND: Tape stopping.)

This next section is interesting, but hey, I'm just the omniscient third party narrator, what do I know?

(SOUND: The scene continues at regular volume.)

AUGIE: ... and who wouldn't connect with that level of intentional or accidental failure?

RUDYARD: I hope you won't take offense Herr Eckhardt, but I've never seen the point of historical drama. Every time I think about writing a novel of that kind, I wonder: Who am I -

AUGIE: Weird thought -

RUDYARD: What arrogance for me, or anyone to believe that they, in the present, have anything new to say about an era that's past. I prefer to stick to the now. There's no lack of pressing matters that need dissecting in our modern world.

HIRSCHFELDER: Check please.

RUDYARD: Well, waste not, want not.

(SOUND: Three click-clicks and three synchronized snorts.)

HIRSCHFELDER: To the cab!

(SOUND: An engine revving.)

AUGIE: But see, Herr T. Codswallop -

RUDYARD: Codswallop's fine.

AUGIE: You're telling me - but you've actually stumbled upon one of the greatest avenues of New Expressionist Theatre. Consider Germany Here. Now. Under the Weimar Republic. 1933. 14 years since it started, 6 years since its apex, at least 2 years since any good coke -

RUDYARD: You're welcome -

AUGIE: I thank you. But if people end up referring to this as The Shining Example of German Enlightenment, we'd have no idea. We're inside of it. To us, this is shit. The same shit as yesterday, and the same shit as tomorrow. The ideas that I have and you have and Anton has, could change the world as we know it, but we wouldn't feel those ripple effects until we *have* that perspective. And that could take years! Centuries of rippling down! The current political landscape has no immediate effect on us, on me, at least. We feel things... in ripples.

HIRSCHFELDER: Say 'ripple' one more time.

AUGIE: Ripple. In this 'era', what's really been produced? A couple plays, a cool piano piece, maybe one good novel, and then a barrage of other shit to get us through the day until the next great touchstone is named. I'm not trying to say I'm the next fucking Shakespeare, but I am saying a play about Shakespeare would be a hell of a lot more enlightening than a play about me, here, now. And we'd share themes, questions, motifs through the ages.

RUDYARD: Yes, I'm familiar with the concept of 'Equivalence'.

HIRSCHFELDER: He wants you to know that he is too.

AUGIE: But if we share these ideas and behaviors through the ages, then who cares what age we set our play in. You may as well choose the one that has the best characters and - in the case of Lemarque, possible... magical circumstances.

RUDYARD: Possible... What, I'm sorry?

HIRSCHFELDER: Don't get him started -

AUGIE: Magical circumstances. We know everybody disappeared, but we don't know *how* they disappeared.

RUDYARD: And you think think that's... Magic...?

AUGIE: No one's said that it *wasn't* magic so...

RUDYARD: Right... Well, let's table that -

NARRATOR: But not forget it!

RUDYARD: But, even *if* alchemy was not involved, you don't believe the political climate has anything to do with what makes these *historical times* more interesting settings for your stories?

AUGIE: Absolutely not. Hindenberg, Ivan the Terrible, Louis XIV. These are just men. They had ideas and the ideas affected the landscape, but the stories were the same. For instance, who's someone making a lot of waves here in Germany right now?

HIRSCHFELDER: Hitler.

AUGIE: See, I bet you anything this - Wait, Lilith's Father?

HIRSCHFELDER: No relation.

AUGIE: Right. I bet this 'Hitler', whoever he is, will never make one bit of difference in my life.

RUDYARD: I do believe that's an invitation for Historical Irony.

HIRSCHFELDER: We're here.

(SOUND: Car Screeching. Doors close. Car speeds off.)

(SOUND: people murmuring and jazz music playing.)

AUGIE: Well this is miserable.

HIRSCHFELDER: Look.

AUGIE: What?

RUDYARD: Caucasians.

HIRSCHFELDER/RUDYARD/AUGIE: Jazz Caucasians.

(SOUND: Music comes up for a few seconds. These guys are maybe the same terrible guys from before, but maybe even worse at jazz.)

AUGIE: Shit, ten o'clock.

HIRSCHFELDER: I don't know what that means - Zimmer! How are you, my good man?

NARRATOR: Gunther Zimmer, though a solid 4-6 inches taller, broader, and wider than Augie Eckhardt in nearly every respect, was the type of person referred to in certain pretentious circles with adjectives such as 'dim', 'insufferable' and 'bread.' But to the non-cynics of the world, Gunther Zimmer, in his sorbet colored three-piece suit, was first and foremost an Innocent and known widely across all of Berlin's restaurants and galleries as a "super nice guy."

(NOTE: Gunther has a heavy German accent.)

ZIMMER: Hirschfelder! Augie! I was just - mien god, what happened to your nose?

AUGIE: What's the deal with your suit?

HIRSCHFELDER: Gunther, this is our English friend, Rudyard.

AUGIE: He has coke if you want some.

(SOUND: HIRSCHFELDER elbows AUGIE.)

HIRSCHFELDER: Dammit Augie.

AUGIE: Ow! Why would you hit my forearm, you know I bruise there.

RUDYARD: I have no clue what these gentlemen are talking about.

ZIMMER : Pleased to meet you, sir. And no. I'm not going to 'Narc' on anybody or anything. But I'm all fine - no cocaine for me..

RUDYARD: Good man. Love the suit.

ZIMMER: Oh mien god, thank you. My mother bought it for me from Cincinnati, USA so...

AUGIE: What do you know.

ZIMMER: Say, none of you gents would happen to have a corken-screw (*corkscrew*) on you by any chance, would you?

HIRSCHFELDER (*aside to Augie*): Is that a euphemism?

AUGIE: (*aside to Hirschfelder*) It's too easy.

ZIMMER: What?

HIRSCHFELDER: Nevermind. How is your charming mother? Still in the chair?

ZIMMER: She is, but the doctors say she should be out of it by spring.

AUGIE: Hoo-rah. Gunther, you haven't by any chance seen Lilith Von Hitzler around here have you?

ZIMMER: The guy from the paper?

AUGIE: Useless.

ZIMMER: So none of you have a corkenscrew (*corkscrew*)?

HIRSCHFELDER: I'm afraid not. Is there a shortage?

ZIMMER: Nobody brought one. No stores are open. People are getting desperate.

(SOUND: PARTY GUEST runs across the room screaming a battle cry. Glass shattering.)

PARTY GUEST: Victory!

(SOUND: Glugging the wine. More glass shattering, he falls over something)

Ahh! ...I'm fine, I'm fine.

AUGIE: This is dire. Gunther, I'm going to solve this corkscrew situation for you. I will not rest until your belly is even more full than it is. Excuse me, gentlemen.

ZIMMER: What a nice guy.

HIRSCHFELDER: Saint amongst men.

NARRATOR: And thus, Augie Eckhardt began scouring his *ex* - or potentially still *current* - girlfriend's birthday party in search of his former student, whom he hoped to prove his *future* romantic partner.

AUGIE: No. No. Not you. Too tall. Too short. Too... Well, just no. This is stupid. You're so stupid, Eckhardt. You were her tutor, for christ's sake. You taught her a language you don't even speak. You're old enough to be her... older brother! Ugh, why does *that* turn me on? God, your late-20's are weird.

LILITH: Herr Eckhardt! I was hoping I'd find you slinking around the exits.

(SOUND: Sound leaves the room. Romantic music)

NARRATOR: Since the beginning of time, only a handful of combinations of humans had created so much harmony that time stopped. The stars would shine brighter, the air would blow coolly, and all poverty would cease. Looking at Lilith Von Hitzler all grown up, Augie Eckhardt felt a clarity he'd been waiting for his entire life; a purpose that rang pure and true in his heart:

(SOUND: Music stops)

AUGIE *(To himself, stunned)*: I have to fuck her.

NARRATOR: My god. It's like he can't hear my set up at all.

(SOUND: Time resumes normally - like a projector starting up again)

AUGIE: Lilith! Thank god! I mean, are you... Lilith Von Hitzler? Little Lilith? Err - I mean. What once was but a caterpillar is now in a yellow dress and looks... wow.

LILITH: Yes, I... like yellow. So good to see you, too! You are looking so much more... adult as well. In fact, speaking of adults, I actually wanted to talk to you about adult things, such as jobs, occupations, interests, your - oh my god, what happened to your nose?

AUGIE: Let's get out of the light, or how about this, you stay in the light and I'll move here into this dark corner. There... we... go - Yes, well we've both smartened in our... maturation. We're in a new chapter of our lives it seems. You and I. Here. At this party. Together. What are the odds?

LILITH: 1 in 6,132,402. Or something. Maths are wild. So I just got back from university yesterday and I heard about Misha's birthday from -

AUGIE: Yeah. We broke up.

LILITH: Oh. I'm sorry to hear that. I didn't even know you were -

AUGIE: It's... pfff... It's ok. It's better!

(Awkward pause)

LILITH

So pivoting completely away from this -

AUGIE: Absolutely. Sweet girl. Really...human... woman, but like did I *love* her? I... Pff... who's to say...

LILITH: Certainly not I. So I hear you're in theatre now, huh? Wow that's -

AUGIE: But I don't want to dwell on the past. I'm in a much better place now, focusing on work, creating, adding my *not-so-little* piece to the cultural cannon.

LILITH: If that's how we finally segue to this, yes! Let's talk about your play. Anton was telling me all about it and I was just so curious.

AUGIE: Well I don't want to take the turkey out of the oven before it's done but...

LILITH: But we gotta baste that bird sometime, right? So, tell me all about it, the story, the details, the trial specifics.

AUGIE: Basting... Good image but I... nah I don't want to *bore* you with silly business talk when we could be enjoying this previously-mentioned dark corner.

LILITH: Right... Umm... OR you could tell me -

AUGIE: For instance, you know I have a lot of hard opinions on things. Like art. And food. Sometimes I choose to wear rope as a belt. When I was a boy I would cry when my mom made me do chores so you know, I'm sensitive.

LILITH: That's amazing, Herr Eckhardt.

AUGIE: You know what I remember most about you?

LILITH: Do I want to?

AUGIE: That keen critical eye. I remember from the days of the Bienvenue Workbook.

LILITH: You knew from first grade French Lessons I'd have a 'keen critical eye'?

AUGIE: Well, French is the language of... communication.

LILITH: That is the textbook definition of 'language,' Herr Eckhardt

AUGIE: Augie. Please, you can call me Augie now. Or Herr Eckhardt. That's surprisingly ok too.

LILITH: Well, Augie, while I'm sure you were getting around to asking, I've been working for nearly 6 years to get a degree in Theoretical Physics with a begrudging minor in Administrative Services at a very remote university in the Alps that no one is allowed to speak the name of -

(SOUND: Mysterious noise)

But I'm back in Berlin for the first time in years, at my first post-graduation party, and as the fates would have it, you happen to be the person here with the information I'm actually interested in so we seem to be at what the French call an "impasse."

AUGIE: Oh we don't have to bring profanity into the mix. Here, I'll ask you a question about you now: where'd you go to school?

LILITH: We don't speak its name.

(SOUND: Same mysterious noise.)

AUGIE: No, I...heard. Well I... didn't go to university. So... that's really great that you got that experience. I decided my calling was to go straight into the world of the Theatre.

LILITH: Ha! Of course you did.

AUGIE: The fuck is that supposed to mean?

LILITH: Excuse me?

AUGIE: Nothing, I just said how did you come to that fascinating conclusion?

LILITH: You always loved talking about yourself through most of our French lessons, I was starting to think you didn't actually know French.

AUGIE: Who actually knows French? I'm in set design.

LILITH: Really? Like a carpenter or a... mechanical engineer?

AUGIE: If you think that's impressive, then absolutely like that. Yes.

LILITH: Well you know, I know a thing or two about engineering myself, Herr Eckhardt - I mean... Augie...

AUGIE (*Smitten*): Cool...

LILITH: (*changing tactics, playing incredibly dumb*) I just find it so much more admirable that instead of writing those big, pretentious, lofty plays you're working with your... hands - Strong Hands. You have strong carpenter... man hands.

AUGIE: Huh... I guess they are pretty strong considering how much I moisturize.

LILITH: We never got to do *anything* physical up at university.

AUGIE: Right, where'd you go again?

LILITH: We don't speak its name.

(*SOUND: Very fast mysterious noise*)

AUGIE: Right! Sorry.

LILITH: Oh... silly. So what are those... big... strong... meaty man hands working on now?

AUGIE: Me - my meaty man hands work on play - on a play!

LILITH: A play about...

AUGIE: About Lemarque... Jean-Jacqueline Lemarque. H-have you heard of him?

LILITH: You mean the 17th century stage magician that created a box that caused the disappearance of over 2,000 audience members and himself due to mysterious circumstances?

(*beat*)

Never heard of him...

AUGIE: Well he... He... had this box you see -

LILITH: A... a box? What would that even look like? I don't even know? A circle? Two big, stupid boob-shaped triangles?

AUGIE: They didn't teach you what a box looks like at that - where was it you said you went again?

LILITH: We can't speak its name!

(SOUND: One last mysterious noise)

Do you happen to have a picture, or like a diagram, of what this... "box" even looked like...?

AUGIE: Yeah - yes. Yeah, I actually have his - Lemarque's notes, right here in my -

RUDYARD: Beastly sorry to interrupt, you don't happen to have a corkscrew, do you?

LILITH: No, why do you -

AUGIE: Nope. Absolutely not. Just electrifying conversation, thank you very much.

RUDYARD: Oh! Eckhardt, you know it was so dark I didn't even see you there. Are you not going to introduce me, old chap?

LILITH: Well actually Augie and I were just in the middle of something Mr...?

AUGIE: Uh yeah, this is -

RUDYARD: Rudyard T. Codswallop, pleased to meet you.

AUGIE : Rudyard. Yes. He's English and a writer.

LILITH: Ah, a writer. Like of plays? Are you working with Augie on the Lemarque play?

RUDYARD: Oh no, although the chap was jawwing my ear off about it earlier. Private notes. Dark Magic. Disappearance. A true yarn. No, my first/latest was an examination of the underground poverty movement in Sweden called *Stockholm-less*.

LILITH: I'm afraid I missed it - I don't spend too much time with British non-fiction.

RUDYARD: Well it's like they say: Choosing between British fiction and non-fiction is like deciding between dinner with a corpse and cocktails with a baby.

LILITH: I guess the baby has a full life ahead of it.

RUDYARD: Spot on; Eckhardt, what are *you* reading at the moment?

AUGIE: Me? I'm - when I can tear myself away from my work - I'm currently in the middle of the newest book by C. Marshall St. Francis.

RUDYARD: I'm afraid I'm now the one in the dark. What's the title?

AUGIE: *The Temptress of Buttress Creek.*

(beat)

Excellent prose. Great world-building.

HIRSCHFELDER: Augie! It's been a gas watching you make a fool of yourself in front of this girl, but could you come over here?

AUGIE: What?

HIRSCHFELDER *(Louder)*: I said -

PARTY GUEST: *(Stoked)* Oh shit! Is that Bertolt Brecht in my muthafuckin' house?!?!!!

HIRSCHFELDER: Brecht is here.

LILITH: Wow, Bertolt Brecht comes to parties like this?

AUGIE: Pff, I think you'd see right through him.

LILITH: You think I'd see right through...Brecht?

AUGIE: Yeah. Oof I don't know about you all, but I have got to use the toilet and uhh... freshen up. But you! You, Lilith. Why don't you stay here and make sure no one comes over and steals our... dark corner.

LILITH: Alright, but when you come back we still need to talk about your play...

AUGIE: And I can't wait to tell you more!

(Hushed voice)

T. Codswallop, could you come over here with me please?

RUDYARD: Just Rudyard is fine.

AUGIE: 'Just Rudyard', I need you to do a favor for me.

RUDYARD: I'm listening.

AUGIE: I need you to distract Lilith.

RUDYARD: How long?

AUGIE: Just like 20 minutes. Until I'm sure Brecht has left with someone, decidedly not Fraulein Von Hitzler

RUDYARD: Eckhardt, are you sure? You were getting so close to approximating normal human behavior.

AUGIE: And I thank you - but please. Please for the love of fuck. Just distract her, dance with her, tell her you love her yellow dress or make up or something just -

RUDYARD: Well I do love her yellow dress and make-up so -

AUGIE: See? You're already doing great! Creating your own over-complicated truth, what are you a nonunion actor? Just talk with her. Brecht will be gone in 20 minutes. Tops. If he sees her in that time, I'm done for.

RUDYARD: So you want me to stay with Lilith?

AUGIE: For the love of real Jesus, yes.

RUDYARD: Eckhardt, I am at your disposal. Why don't we bring it in for a hug! We've achieved friendship!

AUGIE: I guess it does! Come here. You sir, are what the Jews call a munch.

HIRSCHFELDER : We call them a ‘mensch.’

AUGIE: Pretty sure it’s ‘munsch’

HIRSCHFELDER: Yeah, I forgot how bar mitzvah-ed you were. Now come on

AUGIE: Hey! Lilith, while I’m gone feel free to ask Rudyard anything you want about my project, that way I can answer any questions or astonishments you may have when I get back. Be right... soon!

NARRATOR: And turning away from one potential romantic encounter, Augie Eckhardt turned around directly into an expired one.

MISHA: Augie Eckhardt.

AUGIE (*terrified*): Misha! We were just going to find you! Happiest of Birthdays to you -

MISHA: Exactly. It is my Birthday. What are you doing here?

HIRSCHFELDER: Hello Misha.

MISHA: Hello Anton, Darling. Love the coat.

HIRSCHFELDER: I didn’t know a woman could unironically pull off a tuxedo until today. Kudos.

MISHA: Who said the style of the 20’s had to die with the decade?

AUGIE: ...Kafka?

MISHA: No. It was me!

AUGIE: Ok, cool... doesn’t make any fucking sense but ok...

MISHA: Augie, you need to leave.

HIRSCHFELDER: Couldn’t agree more. Augie? Let’s go.

AUGIE: Whoa whoa whoa, I feel like we shouldn't let one disagreement destroy *three years* of friendship or... whatever it was we had, should we?

MISHA: First of all, we've known each other for *four years*. Second, I haven't heard a word from you in a full week which effectively makes us absolutely not a "whatever" anymore.

AUGIE: That seems hurtful -

MISHA: It was supposed to be. And third: you almost ripped Poor Adolf's two arms out of socket today at your fucking unsafe fucking non-union rehearsal.

AUGIE: Yeah, but he's fine.

SHWANZKOPH(*Across the room*): Fuck off, Eckhardt!

AUGIE: (*terrified*): Ahh! When did he get here?

MISHA: Do you even realize how serious this is, he may never have full use of his arms again.

AUGIE: I'm sure he'll be fine. His hearing's still great. He can obviously still butt into conversations, so that's a win.

MISHA: You are unbelievable. I'd appreciate it if you would leave.

SHWANZKOPH: Ah ah ah -

MISHA:--unless you have a corkscrew.

AUGIE: No. I -

PARTY GUEST: Hey everyone! Heinrich's brought a corkscrew!

(*SOUND: Celebration, cheers, fireworks, people chanting.*)

AUGIE: Heinrich?

HIRSCHFELDER: Oh. I guess that wasn't Brecht. Must've just been Heinrich Merkle with a corkscrew in the lounge.

AUGIE: Since when did Heinrich Merkle start wearing glasses?

HIRSCHFELDER: Since when did Heinrich Merkle start drinking again?

MISHA: Since when would we call this a *lounge*?

AUGIE: Since it became a convenient detail to ruin my night! Anton, I have to get back to Lilith.

MISHA: Is Lilith that 12 year-old you were talking to?

AUGIE: She's 20ish!

MISHA: Honestly, Augie, you're becoming a parody of yourself. If you're going to pick up jailbait, at least restrain yourself from doing so at your ex's fucking birthday party.

AUGIE: Oh please, it's not like that - I used to be her teacher for christ's sake.

MISHA: Who let you teach anyone?

AUGIE: You see, Misha. This is exactly why we couldn't work. You didn't believe in me! Never have!

MISHA: Absolutely. Never believed in you. You are *so* right. By the way, what was the name of the last play I performed in?

AUGIE: Aha! A test! See, people who trust each other don't make each other do tests.

HIRSCHFELDER: Is that Proust?

MISHA: Anton, it has been lovely to see you. Augie, you're a worthless cunt. Kindly fuck right off.

(SOUND: footsteps as MISHA leaves.)

AUGIE: What a-

HIRSCHFELDER: Don't forget to say Happy Birthday.

AUGIE: --Happy Birthday.

HIRSCHFELDER: See, now was that so hard?

AUGIE: Fuck! We're wasting so much time that I could be wooing Lilith with. I haven't even begun to tell her about Lemarque's favorite dish is! Beef! I've gotta get back to... Anton?

HIRSCHFELDER: Yes.

AUGIE: Where'd Lilith go?

HIRSCHFELDER: She's not in that dark corner you left her in? I'm shocked.

AUGIE: No! She's not! We were falling in love right over there. Then you came over to tell me Brecht was here. Then I left *there* to come *here* to run interference...

HIRSCHFELDER: Didn't you leave her with my Englishman?

AUGIE: That's right, you brilliant, Jewish Bastard -

HIRSCHFELDER: 'Bastard''s fine.

AUGIE: We find your date, we find mine. They should still be right... over...

HIRSCHFELDER: How long was he supposed to be babysitting her for?

AUGIE: Can we not with the infantilizing of my future love?

HIRSCHFELDER: Fair. But still, brave man. You left them alone for how long?

AUGIE: Why?

HIRSCHFELDER: He is a handsome lad.

AUGIE: Yes, ok congratulations *again*, you can stop bragging now.

HIRSCHFELDER: Aren't you worried?

AUGIE: Why would I be worried, he came here with you, I don't think someone like Lilith is exactly his type. Duh!

HIRSCHFELDER: Oh child... I said I slept with him. Me sleeping with him does not necessarily mean he is not interested in sleeping with her..

AUGIE: I'm sorry?

HIRSCHFELDER: You know those boarding school boys, they're like a double-edged sword, they're long, they're cold, and they cut both ways.

AUGIE: Are you telling me I left the most innocent, beautiful, DTF flower in all of Germany alone with the most handsome, charming, British man I've ever met just to find out he's sexually fluid?!

HIRSCHFELDER: I feel like you're hyperbolizing.

AUGIE: I will kill myself! Anton, I will literally kill myself if he sleeps with Lilith!

HIRSCHFELDER: You said it yourself, she's an adult. Let her make her own Adult decision.

(Beginning to giggle)

Rudyard or... you.

AUGIE: Stop. Laughing! My self esteem is already in Chateau Fucking D'if! Zimmer! Did you see that Handsome Blond Tall Devil we were with earlier with the most beautiful beckoning angel over there?

ZIMMER: Oh, you mean that young girl? Yeah, I saw them - how old is she?

HIRSCHFELDER: How old does she look?

AUGIE: Nevermind! Did you see them?

ZIMMER: Yes. Yes! They were, well, they were over there aggressively sniffing ballpoint pens -

AUGIE: Fuck!

HIRSCHFELDER: The Coke.

ZIMMER: Oh! Very crafty Although that is very out in the open and like, I know we're all Bohemians and - I mean I'd never rat anyone out, or No Narc-ing, but -

AUGIE: What happened next?

ZIMMER: Oh, they left a couple of minutes ago.

AUGIE: Were they... happy?

ZIMMER: Oh yeah, they were laughing like a couple of chippen-munks (*chipmunks*). It was adorable.

AUGIE: I'm gonna fucking die!!!!!!

(SOUND: Augie runs away.)

ZIMMER: Should I have told him that?

HIRSCHFELDER: You did great, Zimmer.

ZIMMER: Oh good - Hey! Do either of you wanna grab brunch tomorrow? Totally cool if not, but I'm trying-

(SOUND: A door slams shut. Hurried footsteps - AUGIE runs out of the back of the party. Slower footsteps - HIRSCHFELDER walks up behind him.)

AUGIE: Fuck, man. This is not good. This is the opposite of good.

HIRSCHFELDER: Why does it matter? She's an infant, Augie. Why don't you go back in there and make a fool of yourself in front of Misha again? At least she's your age.

AUGIE: You don't get it, Anton. You can be with anyone in a matter of minutes.

HIRSCHFELDER: Is this another homosexual presumption?

AUGIE: No! You're just a very kind, smart, loyal guy and -

HIRSCHFELDER (*Caught off guard*): That's... that's very sweet, Augie.

AUGIE: But when am I ever going to have sex again?!

HIRSCHFELDER: Oh Jesus Christ.

AUGIE: THERE IS NO SUCH GOD!!!

(SOUND: A slap)

HIRSCHFELDER: Augie. Look at me. It's a lost cause. Both of our prospects left with each other. That's it. It happens. I'm not going to let it ruin my night! Especially since this party *just* got a corkscrew. Now, I am going back into this party to leer at our drunken friends until one of them decides to say fuck it and accompany me to a very dark and very sterile room. And you can either come with me or fuck off and pay for sex at the Straubsinger Cafe.

AUGIE: You want me to come with you to a dark and sterile room?

(Beat. HIRSCHFELDER turns and exits)

HIRSCHFELDER: Enjoy your night, you worthless cunt.

AUGIE: That's Mr. Worthless Cunt to you! ... ugh...

NARRATOR: Augie Eckhardt realized in this moment that more than his night was at a crossroads. If he wanted to, he could steer into the black ice of self-destructive, selfish, and radical behavior by pretending to enjoy an evening with a woman at the Straubsinger Cafe or he could leave: get a cup of strong black coffee to sober up, go home and get a good night's sleep and dive back into the one thing in his life that couldn't disappoint him: Lemarque and his Vanishing Box. Meanwhile across town, where three drunken, leather-clad military men were attempting to urinate on the spotless steps of the Berliner Philharmonic Concert Hall, Lilith Von Hitzler strolled past, turning to her handsome, English companion with a familiar question on her lips.

(SOUND: Vanishing Act "Lemarque Theme starts to play underneath)

LILITH: So Augie was saying you knew a lot about Jean-Jacqueline Lemarque...?

RUDYARD: Well... Actually I happen to have stumbled upon these notes.

(SOUND: Theme crescendos into credits)

CREDITS: The Vanishing Act: Part One was written and directed by Ian Geers and Lauren Grace Thompson. The episode was sound designed by me, Daniel Etti-Williams, and original music was composed by Baldemar. This episode featured Sarah Price as Augie Eckhardt, Laurence Stepney as Anton Hirschfelder, Sam Hubbard as Rudyard T Codswallop, Tina Munoz Pandya as Lilith Von Hitzler, Chris Vizurraga as Lemarque and Schwanzkoph, Shawn Pfautsch as De Bour, Jacob Mundell as Zimmer, Eric Eilersen as Misha and Party Guest, Jess Ridenour as Stagehand and Flashback Voices, and Lauren Grace Thompson as the Narrator. The Vanishing Act was recorded at Redtwist Theatre in Chicago. Find us on Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr @vanishingpod, or on our website, vanishingpod.com. Join us next time, for Part 2: The House Red.