

ACT I  
OUTSIDE THE TOWN OF MALBORK

Three large steamer trunks on a blank, bare stage. A small podium or lectern separated from the trunks. On the back wall, a sign in bold black and white block lettering: "MALBORK."

AT RISE: a long pause. Suddenly, THE NARRATOR is shoved onto the stage, a manuscript in his hands. He looks nervously about. He catches sight of the audience. A shy smile. An awkward twisting. The smile fades. He rushes offstage. A long moment. Again: he is pushed. Again, he awkwardly meets the audience's gaze. He turns offstage for help. Someone is signaling to him there. He tries to make out what they are saying. "What?" "What?" The wire gets connected. "Oh!" He reaches into his back pocket and pulls out a colored index card.

THE NARRATOR

(Reading, stilted.)

"Hello. My name is Brian. And I would like to thank you for coming out tonight to hear a reading of a new work in progress. It is so important for an artist to get the valuable insights of an audience. And it is in this spirit that I will be presenting to you all tonight a reading of a chapter from my latest book: Gulag-37. In case of an emergency the exits are located here and here. Please take this time to silence all cell phones and/or other noise making devices. Thank you."

(A moment for compliance. The moment overwhelms him. He returns to his card.)

"As I said, it is so important for artists to get feedback.

THE NARRATOR (cont'd)

Did I already say that? Well let me say it one more time: feedback is very important to new writers. And it is in this spirit that I will be present...." Oh, I uh. Already read that bit. Sorry.

(A goofy smile to the audience, then back to his card.)

"And so, with that in mind, you will find a comment card in your program where you can write down what you liked, what you did not like, and what you would like to hear more of. Please do not write your names on the cards as they are...."

(The writing has stopped. He flips the card over. He flips it back over. A small moment of panic.)

Ummmmm. ...Ha. Uhhhhh.

(He begins a slow kind of hyperventilation. He snaps his finger, holds his hand out. A water bottle is thrown from offstage. The Narrator catches it without looking. He immediately starts drinking. He finishes the whole bottle. When he is done, he looks at the audience. He begins to hyperventilate again.)

THE NARRATOR

Excuse me.

(He exits. He is immediately thrown back on. He holds a silent argument with someone offstage. He points to the index card. He flips it over. He flips it back over. "What?" "What?" The wire gets connected. "Oh!" He reaches into his other back pocket and takes out a different colored index card. He reads, stilted.)

THE NARRATOR

"Supposed to remain anonymous." Yes, uh....

(Combining the two cards.)

"Please do not write your names on the cards as they are supposed to remain anonymous." Ok. Good. "And so, as my editor would say —"

(A small nod offstage, then back.)

"Sit back, relax, and let your imagination run wild!"

(A grand gesture. An awkward moment of stillness.)

Ok.

(The Narrator beelines for the lectern. He stops halfway.)

THE NARRATOR (cont'd)

I just — I just want to let you know again that this is a very early first draft so. Just keep that in mind. With the comments. Thanks.

(He starts off; he stops immediately.)

Oh, and this is an original story, remember, so. Any resemblance to any other story is.... It's completely *accidental*. Ok.

(He starts off; he stops again.)

Oh, and uh, one more thing....

(Pause.)

Well. You'll figure it out.

(He moves to the lectern and sets up his manuscript. He clears his throat.)

THE NARRATOR

(Adopting a narratorial tone.)

Gulag 37 — chapter 3. Outside the Town of Malbork. Moonlight...

(The LIGHTS SHIFT. A SHAFT OF MOONLIGHT washes across the stage.)

THE NARRATOR

A single piano plucked in the distance....

(A soft piano number plucked note by note.)

THE NARRATOR

...And, of course, lights.

(Two green shaded train station warehouse lights fly in, completing the "train station feel".)

THE NARRATOR

The sound of distant trains chugging through the empty night rose out of the darkness.

(Mysteriously, it does.)

THE NARRATOR

A train station outside the town of Malbork in that dead time of night when only the trains were making noise and no one could be found within 10 miles of the little country depot. Funny, then, that someone should be waiting *inside* the Malbork train station. Funny, too, that he was not waiting on a train.

(TYLER slides onstage with one fell swoop, carrying a black briefcase and wearing dark sunglasses, a khaki overcoat, and no shoes. He acts very official.)

THE NARRATOR

The KGB agent codenamed "Tyler" had hired a taxi to drive him from his rundown hotel to the station. From then on, his instructions were clear.

TYLER

(In a horribly contrived accent.)  
I must wait here for the train that goes boom boom boom past. The mysterious woman will appear carrying our mark for this mission.

THE NARRATOR

Tyler paced up and down the waiting room.

(Tyler does, comically big.)

THE NARRATOR

A low hanging fog was moving in from the north and it was out of this fog that *she* appeared.

(KAI enters in a black leather coat, dark sunglasses, and crazy wig. She is also barefoot. She is also clearly a man in drag.)

THE NARRATOR

"Tyler" had never worked with her, but was constantly reminded by his superiors of the astonishing feats codename "Kai" was accomplishing everyday for mother Russia.

TYLER

Did you bring him?

THE NARRATOR

He said.

KAI

(In a just as contrived accent.)  
Of course. He's in the next room.

TYLER

He is still suffering from the — ?

KAI

Da. He *says* he remembers nothink.

TYLER

Hm. Bring him in.

THE NARRATOR

She reached inside her left breast pocket.

KAI

I also brought —

TYLER

I know! Keep it on you fer now. We may need it later, perhaps.

(Kai nods and exits, daintily.)

THE NARRATOR

Codenamed "Tyler" was pleased by all that had been accomplished. He set down his briefcase and cracked his knuckles, evilly.

(Tyler cracks his knuckles as evilly as he can.)

THE NARRATOR

When Kai returned she carried with her the strung out body of someone they both knew as Brad, codename "Agent X."

(Kai drags BRAD on and plops him on a trunk. His hands are "tied" behind him and he is dressed similarly to the Narrator. He too is shoeless. Tyler crosses to him and slaps him hard across the face, waking him.)

TYLER

Vell! How are you doing Agent X?

THE NARRATOR

Tyler said.

BRAD

Ughhh. What? Who's Agent...? What are you talking about? Why am I here?

TYLER

Dat is very conveeee-nient, all dis *forgetting*. But de contents of yer briefcase do not forget as much as you!