

she is listening, and more importantly, *enjoying* the music. I thought that in my family we all knew that enjoyment does not look like this.

While I was playing, my nose started to itch horribly, which I found very distracting. I played a few of the notes off. I know that the Mater noticed; I know that the Babushka couldn't tell the difference.

20:56

The Babushka has interrupted Bach's Prelude from the Third Partita by screeching at Yuri, who has found some bread crumbs on the floor and is consuming them.

21:10

The floor is now exceedingly clean. The Babushka informs me that she enjoys my playing but that she wishes I would play some of my own compositions because "those are better." I guess I won't be finishing the Prelude from the Third Partita. I tried to play something of my own, but halfway through they started talking to each other. I should remember that this likely had nothing to do with the quality of the music.

Reminder: Next time pretend Bach is own composition.

21:12

The Babushka was again asking the Mater for the dinner bill. I am suddenly struck by the realization that my visions of Thanksgiving were formed in the 1950s and that in many respects, this familial bickering has fully conformed to the modern Americana stereotype, and having no one, I turn again to the clawed embraces of Yuri Andropov for consolation.

20:49

The air is very dry and now I have a bloody nose. I ran to the bathroom spewing blood everywhere. I couldn't hold all of it in my hands so I had to swallow a lot as it ran down my face. It tasted like Thanksgiving dinner, it tasted of cranberries and pepper, very faintly of squash. There are bloody handprints all over the inside of the bathroom

door now, because I wasted time trying to lock it from the inside. I forgot how the Babushka's late husband, Edward of Transylvania (yes, really), was feeble in his old age. He had been blackballed by the Communists and was stuck here, in her "care." He might have fallen in the shower, so they took the lock off the door; she still sent him to a home, though. But what it meant is that anyone could have seen me like that, licking Thanksgiving Dinner off my hands—anyone could have seen me, but I was more worried about someone blaming me for the stains on the walls. Of course this is when Sydnie decided to text me back, but I couldn't do anything about it because I didn't want to stain my trousers as well.

Later, Comrade Andropov paid more than usual attention to the tips of my fingers, and I realized that I had missed some places. Anyway, if you want to understand what happened, I would refer you to that Dara Ó Briain joke. He says that everyone is a Catholic, just some of us are better Catholics than others. He is wrong, of course. Slightly. Everyone is Catholic except for the Eastern Church, and those Orthodox are just *heathens*.

RCA O'Neal enjoys Baroque music, fencing, travel, swing dance, and Graham Greene. He has played violin since the age of four, and composes in the Baroque style.

BLAISE ROSENTHAL

The Undefeated, 2016
Charcoal and acrylic on canvas, 68 x 96 in



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