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VIVA

In his motivational speech, Michael Stone urges Lisa and her colleagues to remember that there's a human being on the other end of the line. "I was very moved by the speech," Johnson confessed. "There's a lot of stuff in there. . . . I don't know what it has to do with customer service."

"He's telling people to see each other," Kaufman allowed, wary of explaining



Charlie Kaufman and Duke Johnson

too much. "Which he can't do. He's also saying, 'Everyone's an individual'—and looking out at this crowd of faces that are all exactly the same."

"It's also *how* he says it," Johnson said. "Sometimes saying something in the most direct, obvious way has the most meaning. 'Death comes, and it's as if you'd never existed.'" His gesture comprehended the surrounding monuments.

Kaufman corrected him, gently: "Death comes. That's it. Soon, it's as if we never existed."

—Tad Friend

subject of the article that the photograph accompanied. "He was totally unaware of anything but the chess," Pandolfini said recently. (In the movie "Searching for Bobby Fischer," which came out the year after Caruana was born, Pandolfini was portrayed by Ben Kingsley.) Caruana became a grand master in 2007, when he was fourteen, and is currently the third-highest-rated chess player in history, a few points behind Garry Kasparov. In March, he will compete in Moscow for the right to challenge the current world champion, Magnus Carlsen, of Norway, who is two years older.

Caruana lived in Brooklyn between the ages of four and twelve, then moved to Madrid, Budapest, and Lugano. He now lives in Florida. On a recent Monday, he was in Jersey City, at the Liberty Science Center, where he played a chess game against twenty players even younger than he is. "It's not so easy to work as a team," Caruana said afterward. "We played on a giant board, with giant pieces, and they quarrelled over moves." He was asked whether any of his opponents had made him fear for his world ranking. "Maybe in a few years," he said, smiling. That evening, he took on a similar number of opponents—individually, this time, though all at once—in a benefit for Chess Works!, a science-center program for children. The event was held at the W Hoboken, a hotel that has better views of Manhattan than Manhattan does, and the participants ranged in age from six to what appeared to be sixtysomething. Among them were a number of accomplished competitors, including Alice Dong, who is a senior at Princeton High School and one of the top-ranked female players in the United States.

The master of ceremonies was Paul Hoffman, the president of the Liberty Science Center. He was the author of that 2001 article about Pandolfini, and is quite a good chess player himself. He was wearing a dark suit jacket over a T-shirt imprinted with the chess notation for Bobby Fischer's eleventh move in the third game of his epochal world-championship match against Boris Spassky, which took place in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1972—a move that surprised nearly everyone, including Spassky, and helped reverse the momentum of the match. Hoffman explained the ground rules: talking would be permitted, within reason; Caruana would

have the white pieces, and therefore the first move, on every board; opponents would have to wait until Caruana had arrived at their position to move, so that he could see what they were up to; and as opponents resigned or were checkmated Caruana would autograph their board, which they could keep. "It's not a good sign if I come near you and wave the Sharpie," Hoffman said.

Caruana is slightly built, and he has curly hair and wears fashionable glasses. Even in a suit, he looks younger than twenty-three. He made most of his moves quickly but occasionally had to pause. After he had spent thirty seconds or so in front of the board of Angelica Chin—who is thirteen, and whose eleven-year-old brother, Jonathan, was playing at the board next to hers—Hoffman said, "Nice. You made him think." Steve Fulop, the mayor of Jersey City, lasted longer than most, and when he was eliminated Hoffman consoled him. "All right, Steve," he said. "You're a grand master at running a city."

After about an hour, there were more students than adults left; then the balance shifted; then it shifted again. Among the very last players to be eliminated—and the only one to survive beyond his bedtime—was Abhimanyu Mishra, six years old, who had been taking swigs from a Lightning McQueen water bottle. Like most of the participants, he used chess notation to record the moves in his game; but, unlike most of them, he needed several sheets of paper: he's still working on his letters and numerals. The last surviving adult was Donari Braxton, a thirty-three-year-old filmmaker. The last two players over all were Jonathan Chin and Alice Dong, who fell almost simultaneously.

Two of Pandolfini's current students were among the competitors: Lucas Foerster-Yialamas, eight, and TJ Fini, seven. They lasted well into the evening's endgame, and after Caruana had signed their boards they moved to the other side of the room and offered advice to Michael J. DeMarco, the president of Mack-Cali Realty Corporation, who had arrived late and had to make several moves quickly to get caught up. "When you get to be seventeen," he told them shortly before he was defeated, "come see me and I'll give you internships."

—David Owen

## UP LIFE'S LADDER YOUR MOVE



Fabiano Caruana appeared in a photograph in this magazine in 2001, when he was eight. It was raining, and he was wearing an oversized slicker and standing on a park bench. He held an umbrella with one hand and, with the other, reached across a chessboard to make a move in a game against his teacher, Bruce Pandolfini, who was the