

SHIVAH

A play

By

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Characters: *BEN, SAM, DAVE, EVE, MAY, and JOEY. All in their sixties and seventies, writers or actors, friends of JOEY, who has recently jumped off the George Washington Bridge. OLGA is only heard VOICE OVER, but her emails are projected as CRAWLS, and a photo of her, a very beautiful young Russian WOMAN, is projected at the end. Other possible projections throughout include shots of her home town, house, dog, family, etc.*

The Scene: *A room in JOEY'S house, probably his spacious office, full of up-to-date digital technology -- where his friends have gathered to mourn his recent suicide. A button is pressed when he speaks. JOEY, however, is still present, perhaps on a riser behind a screen or in a frame, with the help of lighting (backlit), like a halo, which goes on when he speaks -- establishing the convention of being "dead" but "onstage."*

Prologue:

OLGA: (V.O.) Hello!

Finally I decided to write you a letter. I ask you to read it to the end. I know it's a bit surprising, but it is not a spam. My name is Olga, I'm 30 years old and I live in Russia. I'm looking for a soul mate. In my life is everything but love. I want to love and be loved, to have a happy family and comfortable home. I am honest, sincere, loyal, kind, caring and cheerful person. I told you a little about myself. Now it's up to you to decide to write to me or not? Will be very sorry if you do not use this feature. I will be very glad to receive your answer. I'll tell you about myself. Best regards, Olga.

Lights up.

BEN: He jumped.

DAVE: Maybe he fell.

SAM: He jumped. We had a friend. Years ago. Took acid and jumped off a building. He thought he would fly. Lower East Side. Fifty years ago. I remember him. From Staten Island. Steve. Guy lived to tell the tale. He became high up in the Hari Krishna movement. Lives in a mansion in India. Today, as we speak.

BEN: We had a friend, he made sugar cube LSD at the Rockefeller center. Remember him?

SAM: I can't remember his name.

BEN: Jim Frazier.

SAM: Yeah, we were the first. Sugar cubes. With the blue dot.

BEN: Amazing.

DAVE: What a moment. You're standing on the edge of the roof. Do you let go and take a step? The rest is falling. It was raining. He could have slipped. Too much acid. As for Joey, I think he realized it was over. Everything he believed in. Theater, literature, America. Quantum Science. An old Hipster. Down the tubes. No more family, nothing. He had no idea where he belonged anymore. And he's tired.
(Sound off)

EVE: What was that?

BEN: That was a grunt. Someone grunted.

SAM: Wasn't me.

BEN: You were going to say something, Sam?

SAM: Where does anybody belong?

DAVE: No place.

SAM: The existentialist.

BEN: At home with his family. And his people should be there to watch him die.

DAVE: Joey. He thought he was good, he thought he did his best, but nobody ever heard of him.

SAM: Nobody ever heard of anybody.

DAVE: Right, Sam.

EVE: You're talking about him like he's not here.

SAM: He isn't here.

EVE: He can hear you.

SAM: Electronically?

EVE: Maybe not. But then to cook and clean for himself and drive around L.A.. Forget about it.

BEN: What's with the *Shivah* like we are doing now?

EVE: He is here among us. In spirit.

DAVE: He was never kosher, he never went to *Shul*, and so on. He never kept a holiday. Maybe he fasted.

EVE: Nobody fasts. Who fasts?

SAM: He wanted to be buried like an American Jew.

DAVE: They don't bury people who jump off of bridges in the middle of the night.

SAM: He's in an urn now.

EVE: We'll scatter his ashes.

SAM: Where?

EVE: I don't know where.

DAVE: Maybe in Brooklyn.

EVE: Maybe he'll tell us.

BEN: How will he tell us?

EVE: On the tapes.

SAM: It's a solidarity issue.

EVE: What is?

SAM: Jewish Burial is.

EVE: His Grandmother would cross the street if she was coming to a church. And then she threw salt over her shoulder. And she avoided the evil eye. She was in no way kosher. She cooked the same for everybody equal. Then three or four of her children married out. She had cascades of sorrow, his Grandmother.

SAM: "Cascades of sorrow?"

DAVE:: The Christians have a soul, the Jews have memory.

BEN: All our lives we wonder what they'll think of us when we're gone.

EVE: I don't.

DAVE: Yes, you do.

EVE: No, I don't. I couldn't care less.

DAVE: Joey did.

BEN: Definitely.

DAVE: I mean the business with the tapes.

BEN: Oh.

DAVE: What is that all about? He's gone, but he wants to still be here?

EVE: Anybody want to eat something? *(No answer)* I brought all this food.

BEN: I've always wondered, the genes passing through the generations, like water in a faucet.

SAM: I agree with that.

DAVE: You agree with what?

SAM: Burning is not kosher.

BEN: We weren't talking about kosher.

EVE: I got some good lox and bagels here. *(Pause)* His kids wanted him burnt. He didn't entirely agree with it.

DAVE: In the end, he agreed with it.

BEN: Did you bring the cards?

SAM: Let's play. Bridge or Hearts?

EVE: Not me.

DAVE: Let's eat something first.

SAM: Maybe it's on tape. What Joey wants with his ashes.

EVE: He 's a Trickster, that Joey. (*Presses button*)

JOEY: Prospect Park.

EVE: There you go. (*Silence*)

DAVE: What the fuck?

JOEY: Under a bench. (*Another silence*)

DAVE: Now what do we do?

SAM: Did you touch anything?

EVE: I thought I did.

BEN: What happened? How did he do that?

EVE: I don't know.

BEN: What happens now?

EVE: We press the button?

BEN: When do we do this?

SAM: Randomly?

EVE: I think he meant random.

SAM: What does that mean?

EVE: He means random.

SAM: I see.

EVE: As far as I know.

DAVE: The horrors of technology.

EVE: That's our Joey.

DAVE: Go. Let's see what he's up to.

EVE: Here's a letter. (*Button*)

JOEY: "Dear Olga, I understand about your internet cafe problem. What I don't understand is why a beautiful young woman like you is not sought after by all the single young men of Pavlovo. They can't all be drunks and idiots, and if I was younger and taller and braver (and Russian), I'd be calling you every five minutes, bringing you flowers, and chocolate *bonbons*, and taking you to dinner, and so on. In the meantime, to me, you're like some kind of Angel from the internet that I barely have the right to speak to, though it is fun to be in touch with you, because you deserve someone more your age who won't ruin your life with oldness and foreignness and a life in the theater. But I do appreciate you, Olga, you have a wonderful face. And Pavlovo sounds like a nice place, too, and an interesting one, though it's doubtful I'll ever go there. Your English is also very good, though I think we misunderstand each other a little. You don't seem to believe me when I tell you I am an older man, and I'm not sure what you mean by the "trust" issue. You seem like an honest, sincere person to me, and are, like I say, unbelievably attractive. Like I said, if I was a young man back there in Pavlovo, I'd be in love with you already, so, even at this distance, I have to be careful. Take care, Joey."

SAM: Wow.

OLGA: (V.O.) Hello, my dear Joey. I thank you for what you have written to me. I am very pleased to receive, and especially read your letters. Forgive me for not writing to you at the weekend. But I can not write to you at the weekend, because my internet cafe is closed on weekends. I already told you that I do not have my computer and I have to depend on an internet cafe. With each new letter, we are more and more getting to know each other. It is very pleasant to me, and you get more and more attracted to me like a man! I'm glad this event. I think we need to start more and more to trust each other. I think it would be a big step in our relationship. In this letter I will tell you a little about the city, and I want to give an idea about our future relationship with you, I want to develop in a good way! Do you agree? My Pavlovo city is not very big, but not too small. As I said it is Nizhegorodskayz region of Russia. My city is on the river «Oka». The population of the city of about 60,000 people. We have a lot of attractions - beautiful streets, squares, parks, gardens and much more. The most famous sights of the city are: the war memorials of famous people and famous writers as well. As there is a church, a museum. I can talk about for a long time things my city Pavlovo. But it's time to move on to our relationship with you. Since

this is the most important thing that interests me. Our city is very nice, but there are no decent men. All Russian men do not respect women and believe that a woman has no rights and all Russian men are mostly alcoholics. And I need a man with a rich inner world, who will love and respect me. I went to the Internet - dating and met with you, and I think you're the kind of person. Because men respect women from abroad. Am I right??? You??? You respect women??? I am 30 years old and I think it's time I start to create their own family home! I saved the money for a long time, and now I have enough to come to you in the future. I do not want to rush things, but I think to get to know each other better, to do this face to face. But this will happen only when we mutually want this! If we decide that I arrive to you, or you can come to Russia. This is a very important step in our relationship, which we will talk later!! I believe that the relationship is important not only love, trust and understanding. At the head of the family must stand the man, but he must consult with the woman to take her advice, criticism, discuss mutual problems. I can totally take all the chores themselves. I love to cook, I'll cook you a meal such that you forget about the bachelor meal. So I will work to maintain our budget with you. And as soon as we're ready to have a child, then we'll do it! I hope I did not scare you, asking these questions so quickly. I'm sure you are the one man who I need hope for reciprocity. But of course this is just my opinion of you. But time will tell. We will have plenty of time to know each other in our letters. At this point I will finish my letter, and I await your reply with great anticipation! I am sending this letter to my friendly kisses. Olga.

SAM: Incredible.

EVE: Yeah. She sounds legit.

BEN: Love to see her picture.

DAVE: Too bad.

EVE: She was very beautiful, apparently. A knockout. Here's Joey. *(Button)*

JOEY: I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to jump off something. Probably the George Washington bridge. I'm telling you in advance, so it doesn't come as a shock. Either a bridge or a tall building. I'm tired of taking care of myself. I'm tired of all the self-maintenance. And I don't say two words to anybody for days at a time. I'm starting to feel like a ghost. I have a companion, and he's me. He talks too much. The only thing I know how to do as myself, in order to be myself, individually, is to be myself. I know that makes no sense. And there's two of me then, too. There's me and the other one. There's also the writer. There's also the scientist. *(Pause)* You

probably didn't understand that. This companion, he's either talking to me or watching me to see what I do.

DAVE: Stop. *(Button)* Let's digest. *(Pause)*

EVE: Okay?

DAVE: Go.

EVE: Olga. *(Button)*

OLGA: *(V.O.)* Hello, dear Joey.

EVE: It's Olga. Olenka.

OLGA: (V.O.) Finally I have the opportunity to come to the Internet cafe to chat with you. I am very pleased to read your letter, which raised my spirits. We seem to know very little, but I'm very attached to you. It scares me at the same time and at the same time makes me happy. Scares me because I am very much afraid of falling in love with you, and my love will not be divided. I do not want to be rejected. I sometimes can not understand you through. I can not understand your feelings that you feel me. I ask you to be completely open to me, and say only what you really feel for me. I will be much easier to communicate with you. I hope you use my advice, and be more trusting and open to me!? I sure hope so! I am very glad that I have you! You're very close to me spiritually. I am very easy to communicate with you. I understand that you live in a very good location. I am very happy for you. I told my friends that I found very interesting man, to whom I have very great sympathy. They were glad to hear it, because my friends wish me luck. By the way, my friend sends you his greetings. I also told her parents about our relationship with you, with you about our virtual link. I told them what a wonderful man you are. I showed them the letters that you write to me. I told them that our sympathy for each other is very large and can grow into a great love. Do you agree with me? I hope you remember what I said in my last letter about the phrase, "I love you." You know I'm serious about this word! While it is too early to talk about it. But I really want to our liking for each other grew into love! Do you want it? Joey, Today when I went to the internet cafe, in my eyes the car hit an elderly grandmother in a crosswalk. People who have seen this accident immediately ran to her grandmother and began to help her. But my grandmother had a broken leg and she could not move independently. Of the people who called an ambulance. When the doctor arrived, the grandmother loaded into a car and taken to hospital. But the man who knocked on the car grandmother, it is not even out of the car. He fell asleep. As it turned out, the driver was

drunk driving. I felt very sorry for the elderly grandmother, but I'm happy and I do not that he could not spoil the mood, because I've got you! I have a dream that I want to implement. I want to spend my holiday with you. In my work, I give leave at the end of the month. I believe that we should meet once than to share many letters. So we can understand our feelings through. You agree with me? I believe that if we make it together, we are no one will ever be able to separate. And our love will last forever!! If all this happens in real life, and we will have the opportunity to meet, I decided to buy a computer to my parents. This will be the best way to communicate with them via the Internet. I will do everything that depends on me. I'll do all the paperwork for a trip to the fastest time only in order to be with you! But again, I look too far. I like to dream. As in dreams you can do anything you want, and there are no obstacles! I will finish on this his dream. Do you like to dream? Or you used to live a real life? I love to listen to everything you say! How are you? What do you do in your spare time? How is your mood? I hope you are fine and you often think of me? I did not notice how time flew, I got to go. And when I come home, I try to fall asleep quickly, to see you in my sleep. Your Olga ... P.S. I send you my photo, I hope you like it.

DAVE: Damn, no photo?

EVE: No.

SAM: Did he go?

EVE: To Pavlovo? No. But he thought about it.

BEN: I would.

DAVE: Amazing.

EVE: He definitely thought about it. *(Button)*

JOEY: Now I'm thinking of you guys, my friends, my colleagues. I'm hoping the photos show up. I'm hoping the photos can be retrieved. So far, no. Beautiful woman, Olga. Selfing they call it. My daughter does it all the time. She selfs herself. You see how the language is disintegrating before our eyes and ears? The question is, if I'm not here, then what? A particle in a flying, endless wind? A vibration of myself? Not bad. An absolute nothing, which is absolute nothing? A vibe? Maybe fertilizer? But you're listening to a facsimile of myself now, now. You are listening to a version of me, which is not exactly me, as I'm actually a dead person, at the moment, where you are now, listening to this, but I'm glad we don't have things like viewings. As far as I know. Maybe in San Francisco they do that. I ordered some playing cards, vodka and Calvados, and black bread. It will go quickly, and that goes

for you, too. Except for your kids, those of you who have kids. That's the way it goes for us, it all goes into the blood, into the generations, who are supposed to remember us, and that is immortality. For us. That's why you have to multiply, have intercourse and multiply. It's a race against extinction and disintegration, the end of Time. I think I'll take a break now, keeping in mind that I can't breathe forever, plus the limited attention available, even to the so-called sitters who are supposed to be remembering me. Now. *(Pause)*

DAVE: Absolutely amazing.

SAM: Wait. Make sure he's done.

EVE: He's done. *(Pause)* He's done.

SAM: I hope he's done.

EVE: He's not done. *(Button)*

JOEY: Actually, I didn't like any kind of people no more anyway, the shitters and complainers. God had played a trick on us and I said fuck this shit. In the old country they hid out in the synagogue, until the *Goyim* burned the synagogue down. Now I go for walks and pray for sleep. At least we don't have *pogroms* around here. So far.

SAM: He's definitely not done.

DAVE: He told me a hundred times. He didn't want to be alone. He didn't want to be helpless. But, he wasn't going to no home for the aged and decrepit. And now, he wants to live on. On tape?

BEN: Is there a photo of Joey?

EVE: Here it is. *(Photo)*

BEN: Look how young he looks!

EVE: He looks good. *(Button)*

JOEY: The one thing I hated the most -- Going to my presentations, was sitting behind a couple who had trouble being there. Usually, it's a handsome couple. Good-looking woman, in her forties maybe, successful guy, they're waiting for a laugh or two, and after a while the guy starts to squirm, he doesn't want to hear anything serious, or that sounds like mathematics, or ideas, or writing, or thinking, and the wife, ever solicitous, puts an arm around him, hugs him, caresses him, rubs his head, starts doing whatever she can to soothe him, to ease the poor guy's pain, while he suffers, and I'm sitting there behind them, the Author, the manipulator of

his chamber of horrors, and I just want to hit them both over the head with a suitcase. *(VOICES OFF)*

SAM: I think that was May in the background.

DAVE: That is pure Joey.

EVE: Believe me, you could see them from the stage, too. That couple. I could never understand it. Why is that woman rubbing that poor guy's head?

BEN: Mainly, speaking for myself, you have to sit there and bear it.

SAM: I never went. Opening night, that was it. How old was he? Seventy-nine?

EVE: Seventy-nine.

DAVE: No rest home for Joey.

SAM: No way.

EVE: I offered to set it up. Believe me. He said, "No."

SAM: Of course, he said "No."

EVE: I was glad he said, "No."

SAM: Can you blame him?

EVE: He also said "No" to his kids. They were too boring for him, his kids. They had no idea why he was so interested in writing if it didn't get you a TV job or a YouTube or something. He couldn't stand his kids, Joey.

BEN: YouTube doesn't work that way, Eve.

SAM: What is it with these kids? They'll die on the street while their teeth fall out.

EVE: It's the attitude of the whole country.

BEN: I liked to play Hearts with Fay, the female drummer, up in the Catskills, when people used to go there. We were counselors and busboys. Teenagers. Everybody wanted to make it with everybody. No more taboos. Whether anything actually happened is another story.

SAM: It's a lot like bridge.

EVE: What is?

BEN: Hearts. Hearts are trump.

DAVE: So let's play.

SAM: Can we play, or what?

EVE: Now, I can play.

BEN: She can play.

SAM: I just don't feel like it.

BEN: He doesn't feel like it.

SAM: It seems weird, in the circumstances.

DAVE: Should we wait, more commentary?, or what?

EVE: I don't know.

DAVE: Why'd he do it, Eve?

EVE: Olga. You heard her, did you not?

BEN: That was it?

EVE: That was the trigger.

DAVE: Joey didn't like old age. He didn't like anything about it.

EVE: True. Joey got tired of cooking for himself, maintaining himself. Commercials had a lot to do with it. That's the trouble with living alone. Too much television. You can't live a life when it's surrounded by all that bullshit and lies. He couldn't stand it anymore. He was in love with this young woman, Olga, whom he never met, who was scamming him, and he couldn't tolerate it. He's an old man and he can't stop thinking about a beautiful young woman in a foreign country. He can't stop thinking about her, but he's an old man. He realizes it's over. This threw him into a terrible depression.

DAVE: So he put his life on tape, and jumped off a bridge?

EVE: Listen. *(Button)*

JOEY: She seemed like the best thing that ever happened to me and I was tempted to lie. I wanted to say I was only fifty and then go to Russia and meet her family and

her dog. She was one of those provincial girls, I thought, they get past thirty and they're scared that they'll never find a man or have a family. Or so she said. I wracked my brains to find a way to finesse that. But you can't lie about these things. They're too cruelly obvious. One artery is blocked. High blood pressure. Chronic bronchitis. Diabetes. And so on. *(Pause)* "Olga, you seem not to be reading my letters. I keep telling you I am too old for you. Way too old. There are 40 years between us. You need a younger man, or it will ruin your life. I think you're great but I'm too old for you. Can't be helped. But this should stop before we both get hurt. They made a mistake giving you my email. I 'm sorry. Joey."

DAVE: So he jumps off a bridge?

BEN: It's a good way to go, in my opinion.

SAM: He loved his techno equipment.

EVE: Timing was his thing.

BEN: Should we hear more? *(Silence)* Okay. We'll wait.

EVE: Let's wait a minute. *(Pause)*

SAM: We shouldn't have to watch commercials, we shouldn't have to pay for health care.

DAVE: What's that got to do with anything?

SAM: Joey. There used to be a Left in this country.

BEN: What do you mean a Left?

SAM: Left is left. To the left. Where labor was a movement and it could do things for the working man.

BEN: Revolutions do things, labor movements get co-opted and eaten by multi-national corporations and the Republican Party.

SAM: We should tell our kids the truth, at least. They're into phones and apps. Texting. Movies on phones. How do you tell them anything?

DAVE: He responded to her? Olga?

EVE: Yes. A beautiful Russian woman, thirty years old, and he fell. Not right away, but he fell in love.

SAM: Did you hear something? *(Silence)*

EVE: No. *(Silence)*

DAVE: No. Hit the machine, Eve. *(Button)*

OLGA: *(V.O.) Dear Joey, it makes me so happy to receive letter from you and so sincere and respectful.*

EVE: It's Olga.

OLGA: *(V.O.) You must be a good man. I can tell so how you write. I am just poor Russian girl in poor Russian village. It is very beautiful village with nice churches and river going through. The only problem here the men are more drinking and whoring than what I need. This is not your problem. It is my problem. Maybe we can write to each other and learn to love each other. Can I send you pictures of my village? My dog? Whatever you want. It makes me so happy to hear from you. Please write back soon. I have hope now. Love, Olga.*

EVE: Love.

SAM: We used to have hope.

BEN: There is only going on, or not going on.

SAM: I can't listen to this. I never believed any of it. And you?

BEN: Let me ask Ecclesiastes here.

DAVE: Yes?

BEN: There's no such thing as natural selection leading to evolution. Am I right?
(Pause)

DAVE: No. *(Pause)*

SAM: Hit the button, Eve. *(Click of button)*

JOEY: It's tough to have doubt all the time. You read stuff over and it looks like crap or some kind of an illusion. I got up every day and tried to keep to a routine, a discipline. But the first thing I did, automatically, was to see if Olga had written. To be loved, to be sought after, paid attention to. ... I used to be in search of something, like sartori or a magical structure from another world. By some miracle, you succeed in making an essay, or a play, or a movie. But all I really wanted was to hear those kind words from Olga. That's the truth. *(Static)* And to this day, the day of my near-coming decease, of my imminent death, I have no idea why I did all that. *(Static)* When the theater was still the theater, and not some spectacle with wires

and acrobats and flashing lights, and screens full of shit. *(Static)* And then there are the key women in my life, whom I should not, and will not, mention. Then, on top of that, I fell in love in my old age. *(Pause)*

BEN: What was all the static?

EVE: I don't know.

DAVE: Stop for a second. *(EVE stops the tape.)* Nobody falls in love with email and photographs.

SAM: He's talking about Desire.

DAVE: How do *you* know?

EVE: Here he is. *(Button)*

JOEY: That is right, that is correct. I thought it was over. I thought I was done. But I couldn't get her out of my mind. I got erections thinking about her. Over and over. I thought I knew her in a past life, even. Which she definitely picked up on. *(Pause)*

SAM: See, it was still there, as he got old. The love of women. The weakness for women. The lust. It never went away.

EVE: It doesn't go away with men. I think that really bothered Joey.

DAVE: You have to do something. Stay active. Keep an active mind.

EVE: I think that's what he's talking about here. Listen.

JOEY: She comes into my life, and it's life! I'm in love! I want sex! Romance! Touch! Feeling! Instead of holing up in my apartment like a recluse. Even though I knew I was going to get hurt. No doubt about it. It was the willingness to be hurt, that was kind of surprising. *(Coughs)* Excuse me.

EVE: I hope nobody walks in here in a good mood today.

DAVE: How does this work, anyway? How did he pull it off?

EVE: I don't know how.

BEN: He liked random.

SAM: He liked timing.

EVE: And he has a surprise, he says.

DAVE: What's the surprise?

EVE: It's a surprise. At the end. Should we play cards? While we wait?

DAVE: There's nothing in the beginning and nothing at the end.

EVE: Appropos of what, Dave?

DAVE: Kabbalah.

BEN: Oh, for cryin' out loud.

DAVE: It's called the Tree of life.

SAM: Here's to a good, quick death, and a fast funeral. *(Drinks)*

EVE: *l'Chaim. (They all drink)* You shouldn't drink, Sam.

SAM: I know. To Joey. *(Drinks)*

EVE: So he falls in love with a Russian peasant. She's an incredible beauty from a provincial Russian town, with the steeples and so on, and a flowing river, and a nice house, and she 's probably never set eyes on a Jew before, but she says she 's in love with him, Joey, by email. And he falls in love with her.

DAVE: How could that happen?

SAM: I was just thinking.

EVE: Should we continue?

DAVE: What were you thinking, Sam?

SAM: I was thinking -- about the virtues of a Socialist State. I don't know why I was thinking that.

BEN: I wouldn't mind going out with a shot. I wouldn't mind a fix. I wouldn't mind exiting on a wave of pleasure. Instead of the ridiculous horrors of dying. And I'm tired of dating. Phoning and texting, flowers and dinners, drinks and endearments. So I made a decision. I'm not sure why. I'll be off the street. I won't shoot up. I'll hang out. I'll talk to my friends. I'll teach acting. Maybe not. I had student once. I had tried to make him into an actor, which you cannot do, if the person is not an actor. In those days, I believed a person could do that.

SAM: Where was this?

BEN: This was in San Diego in the Sixties. Mexican Red. The brand of dope I was using at the time. Good stuff, for a change. The Mexican stuff was good. Brown, actually. Reminds me. There was a beautiful blonde in the company there, in San Diego.

SAM: So?

BEN: I had an impulse, and she responded. In person. Not like with Joey.

SAM: And?

BEN: It was wonderful. That's all I'll say.

SAM: And the actors?

BEN: There are certain mechanisms from childhood. They're hard as steel. You can't change them. I thought I could make non-actors into actors. The hubris of youth. The Sixties were hard. People think it was hot stuff, but it was hard and violent and bad things happened. Even in the theater, it was too competitive, too egotistical. And people fucked around too much.

SAM: We stopped the war.

DAVE: We lost the war. We exchanged it for another one. We got politicians, they were the stupid ones in the back row, in the third grade, picking their noses. Then they figured out that most people were as stupid as they were, so they could make a living in America, in politics, representing all the dummies and ignoramuses and bigots.

SAM: So what were *your* mechanisms, Ben?

BEN: Most Jewish families, the eldest son, he can do no wrong, he's made a Prince of the family. Enough said.

EVE: I started dancing in the Orpheum on Second Avenue. I couldn't speak English until I was twelve. My mother stood in the wings.

BEN: It was the wrong business for this kid in San Diego. His mother drove him to rehearsals, she watched his rehearsals, she put him to bed, she got him up early. He was her life. At least you were in the right business, Eve. You had some real talent.

EVE: Thank you, Ben.

DAVE: It's a *mitzvah* to love one's parents. Or you won't love God.

SAM: Where the fuck did that come from?

EVE: Okay. Back to Joey. (*Button*)

JOEY: You have delusions. Every single one of you. You are deluded. You're thinking *immortality*. You're thinking somewhere, somehow, "my work will survive." It will not. It goes into Bolivia, like everything else. I meant to say *Oblivion*. Oblivion. Not *Bolivia*. Everything is gone, but somewhere, in some subtle hidden place in the universe, is a library. And in that Library, are my works. Saved forever from the ravages of Time, the absurdity of Time. But there is no library, no theatres, no audiences, no nothing. Even the master of Uplift, Shakespeare, the Bard, peerless con of cons, done endlessly all over the world – is gone, gone forever like he had never been. (*Static*)

BEN: Thanks a lot, Joey.

DAVE: Is that it? The surprise Message from Joey?

EVE: No.

SAM: He has a point.

DAVE: Turn him off. (*Button*)

BEN: Definitely, he has a point.

SAM: We might as well live for the moment. We have a lot to look forward to, so let's play cards.

BEN: I don't feel like it yet.

SAM: Why not?

BEN: I don't know why.

DAVE: We have to talk about Joey, anyway. We're sitting here for him. Say something, Eve.

EVE: Have a bagel. It's good lox. Nova.

SAM: Is what's-her-name coming over?

EVE: You know her name. She's your wife. May.

SAM: There was a mistake made there between an impulse and a misunderstanding of certain results that followed. (*Pause*)

BEN: What the fuck was that?

DAVE: I don't know what he's talking about.

EVE: What are you talking about, Sam?

SAM: I'm talking about my wife, I mean my ex-wife, May. There's a misunderstanding, a confusion of values. The impulse comes to say something, it stays spoken, in the air --

BEN: Let's play cards.

SAM: And consequences appear, and the result is loneliness.

BEN: Lighten up, Sam.

SAM: Ben. If you could shoot up in the bathroom right now?

BEN: I would.

EVE: What's the matter with you guys?

SAM: I'm sorry I brought it up. Everything leaves a mark on the kids. They're using stuff now we never even heard of. They go to parties and end up dying in emergency rooms.

DAVE: Get help.

SAM: I don't think so.

DAVE: See a shrink.

EVE: Remember Joey?

BEN: It's the The Long Con. Therapy. It's like a morphine drip.

DAVE: No, you're totally wrong about that, Ben. It's been a tremendous help to me in my life. Fifty years, off an on. Maybe twice a week. For years on end.

EVE: Joey would approve.

SAM: I says, "What's the point? You want to start over? Again? You'll find happiness with a different dickhead? And in the meantime, the varicose veins, the wrinkles, the fat, you think they'll stop coming?" People have habits and some of them are disgusting.

BEN: It's so true. My mother, may she rest in peace, she was a nutcase since she was seventeen years old. Maybe before.

SAM: How old were you?

BEN: When?

SAM: When you were born?

BEN: You are losing it again, Sam.

SAM: Sorry. I meant, how old was your mother.

BEN: When?

SAM: When you were born.

BEN: Nineteen. I think she had a disease, it came from the ghetto, first cousins marrying first cousins.

BEN: Right. I go up to the mountains, there's her bones, my own mother rattling around in a coffin. Into the depths of the Earth. Which is molten metal, by the way. Molten iron. The center of the earth.

SAM: Dave? The moment the universe began?

DAVE: Is what?

SAM: The moment the universe began.

DAVE: Was what?

SAM: What was before that?

DAVE: Nothing.

SAM: Nothing was what?

DAVE: Nothing was there.

SAM: Hawkings says it was a singularity. A condensed point.

DAVE: Some people say God was there. Look inside yourself.

BEN: No, you look.

SAM: The moment of nothing?

BEN: Silence. Nothing.

SAM: Say goodbye to Kabbalah, Dave.

DAVE: No.

SAM: Let's play cards.

EVE: No, it's time to check in on Joey. *(Click)*

JOEY: I never thought Judaism was a religion, with a doctrine and a hierarchy, and so on. It's a way of life. A culture. And you have idiots over there dressed like black demons with hair on their faces, and huge black hats, who do bad things. And they have stupid ideas from the middle ages, and too many children, and then they don't serve in the army, which really pisses people off. Furthermore, they think too much and believe their thoughts. And they have too many legalisms to obey. And that's all I'll say about those fanatics.

DAVE: I agree with him, actually.

EVE: Let's break. *(Stops the tape.)*

SAM: How does he know we're here?

EVE: He 's here in the room. This is a *Shivah*. It's a *Shivah*. We're keeping our end of the bargain. He really wanted to talk about Olga. He was amazed that he could get aroused. Just gazing at her photograph was all it took, apparently. *(Pause)*

SAM: I don't drink anymore at all. That's why I can't sleep. Maybe once in a while.

DAVE: Once in a while, you sleep?

SAM: No, once in a while I'll have a drink.

DAVE: I get it.

EVE: So, let's play cards. Dave should go with Ben.

DAVE: Okay, fine.

EVE: And I'll go with Sam.

DAVE: Done.

SAM: Let's have a drink first.

DAVE: Let's.

SAM: Pour.

BEN: Ah, the elixir of the Gods. To Joey!

EVE: To Joey!

BEN: To Joey! *(Pause)* Hearts or bridge?

DAVE: Hearts.

EVE: Hearts.

BEN: Hearts.

SAM: Bridge.

DAVE: Forget that. I don't want to think too much.

BEN: More Calvados?

SAM: Why not?

BEN: Excellent.

DAVE: Bring some vodka in, just in case.

SAM: It's here already.

DAVE: Where?

SAM: In the box.

DAVE: What else?

SAM: Chocolate bon bons.

DAVE: We're all set. Say a thank you to Joey for the pleasures of drink and dope and cards and chocolate. Vodka and calvados.

BEN: Don't forget the pumpernickel and cheese.

EVE: And the bagels.

DAVE: Thank you, Joey!

SAM: *Amen.*

DAVE: And to friendship.

SAM: *Amen.*

BEN: And longevity.

SAM: *Amen.*

EVE: Stop saying that, Sam. Everybody is thinking about their eulogies. "What are they going to say about me when I'm dead?" So here's another bulletin, maybe from Joey. From the past. When he was alive. *(Button)*

JOEY: You saw the movie? You saw the dibbuk? You don't have to tell me. Eat. Drink. Play cars. I mean, cards. Have a good time.

EVE: I thought he would say more there. *(Button)*

SAM: It's more like he wants to talk more than us wants to talk.

EVE: You mean, "he wants to talk more than we do."

SAM: Right. So I don't know if it's right to do all this eating and drinking.

EVE: Wrong. It's what he wanted.

BEN: He was good at timing. The secret of all Comedy.

SAM: Somebody drops dead, we keep on going.

BEN: Who is going to drop dead?

SAM: Joey.

BEB: He did already.

SAM: So, I don't know.

BEN: Me or you, or somebody?

DAVE: Then we call an ambulance.

EVE: Okay, here's more Joey. *(Click)*

JOEY: Another thing that annoyed me was the passage of Time. I was watching Time, so to speak. You can think whatever you want about that. Because I had failed at everything. Even my daughter didn't talk to me anymore, and I had all these illusions about her. Hit me like a bolt of lightning. I kid you not. I was afraid to tell her how my heart hurt. Time was running out. *(Pause)*

EVE: Why is he telling us all that?

SAM: Why? I don't know.

JOEY: I'll tell you something else I noticed. Ninety per cent of my thoughts lately are about the New York Knicks. The other ninety are about Olga. Go figure. I should have been a high school English teacher, and coached basketball. Ninety percent. Thank you.

DAVE: No, thank you! Stop it, Eve. *(Button)*

SAM: I don't feel like eating.

DAVE: Me, niether. Deal the cards.

SAM: Not yet. *(Weeps)*

EVE: He's crying again. Ben.

BEN: Stop crying, Sam.

DAVE: Deal the cards.

SAM: *(Weeping)* I'm not ready yet.

BEN: Let him stop crying first.

DAVE: Ben. What's the matter with you?

BEN: Me? What do you want from me?

DAVE: Stop him from crying.

SAM: *(Still weeping)* A lifetime of blind mistakes. Should we call that a life?

EVE: I can't stand this.

EVE: Ben, he'll stop if you help him. Take a minute, here's a tissue. *(Ben succeeds. SAM stops crying.)*

BEN: You shouldn't drink, Sam.

SAM: I know that, Ben. So, fuck off.

BEN: Thank you very much.

DAVE: Good job, Ben. Come on, I feel like we're on the clock.

EVE: What clock?

DAVE: I don't know. The clock. Well done, Ben.

BEN: Forget about it.

SAM: Yeah, yeah.

DAVE: You all right, Sam?

SAM: Yeah. What are you thinking, Ben?

BEN: Memories of times past.

EVE: Please don't cry, Sam.

SAM: I was just getting to know Ben, years ago. We were doing Off-Off Broadway when it was really Off. We did it in the back of the church or on top of the church. I forget now.

BEN: You couldn't do it on top of the church.

SAM: Right. It was in the patio, in a yard. A birdbath in a patio. Man who wrote it, Lenny, may he rest in peace, died alone recently, drunk in a flea bag hotel in Syracuse, New York.

BEN: Leonard.

SAM: Yeah. Anyway. *(Silence)*

BEN: Our relationship has never been the same.

SAM: Since when?

BEN: Years ago, when I started shooting up.

SAM: But he DID get better.

BEN: You NEVER get better. Let's get back to Joey.

SAM: No. I'm going home.

BEN: Home to what? May is coming over. Stay. *(SAM sits back down.)*

EVE: Here 's Joey. *(Button)*

JOEY: I'm going to try to talk about something, which is the confusion I felt when I was in an audience. That's the advantage of Literature. I was suffering too much and I could never get over it. Now you're listening to me in captivity and I'm wondering what it was all for.

BEN: Captivity?

JOEY: *(He stands -- attached to an oxygen tank.)* See, she's comforting him and he's sinking deeper and deeper into his seat. And I'm thinking: "How could I be causing such suffering? Why am I doing this? What is wrong with me? Something is awfully wrong with me that I can't see the truth about anything on the stage," and then they clap politely at the end and some people come over to me and they are actually complimenting me -- that is, I'm standing in the lobby fretting about seeing people suffering through my play, and now people are congratulating me and I'm nowhere -- I'm not inside or outside or in between. I'm nowhere, like a ghost, like now, talking. *(Sits back down.)*

BEN: Wait a minute.. He jumped off the Washington Bridge, remember?

SAM: Right. Excuse me. I'm going.

EVE: Wait.

SAM: Goodbye.

EVE: Let's take another break.

DAVE: Take a leak.

SAM: Take a hike.

EVE: Have a drink.

SAM: No. Is this life? You call this life? This can't be real life.

EVE: Wait, Sam. Here's Joey. (*Hits button.*)

JOEY: You should have a protagonist and an antagonist and a *denouement* and a resolution. And you shouldn't talk to the audience. And the issue is entertainment. Not instruction, not thought, not too serious -- good, entertaining acting, good-looking broads, sex, a nice environment, and so on.

BEN: What happened to Olga?

JOEY: And not too dense.

BEN: What is dense?

JOEY: (*Muttering*) Dense is dense. (*A groan from JOEY.*)

BEN: What was that?

SAM: Joey? (*A groan.*)

EVE: It's him again. Joey?

SAM: No, it was me.

DAVE: What's the matter?

SAM: I don't know.

EVE: Where's May already?

BEN: May is on her way.

JOEY: Who knows which tube got blocked? It's called a stroke. That's why we need doctors. How are ya? Don't bother to answer. I can't hear you. And I already know all your secrets and all your lies. One person tells me one thing, another person tells me another. I don't go to certain plays because I'm jealous of the motherfucker. I think about quantum theory. I listen to the radio. I think about making a copy of myself in a copy machine.

BEN: What'd he say?

SAM: He's making a copy of himself.

EVE: Of himself.

DAVE: Holy shit.

BEN: A selfie.

JOEY: Yes. I set up a camera. I look younger. The worst thing is to be out of sync. I hate that. You see it all the time. It's another evidence of the American decline. But I couldn't write a word in the beginning that didn't sound like a bad translation of the Old Testament. Goes to show you something. What, I don't know. I got a lot of energy now because I took a pill. I'm not sure which one it was. I tend to lose track.

DAVE: God help us.

JOEY: Now I'm on the phone. I don't know how I did that. It's like radio. Whoops. I'll continue anyway, thanks to the blessings of modern pharmacology. Now I'm on screen, via my phone. That used to be the point of *Shivah*, listening to the dead, remembering the dead. Now I don't know what's going. On. There could be different levels of reality, based on phones. You could go to a phone and call your connection. I'm thirsty all the time and there's not enough blood going to my brain, which is actually right up here in my skull. I think I took a sleeping pill. Hopefully, there was morphine in it. *(Silence.)*

BEN: What did he mean by the copy machine?

EVE: Too much alcohol and meat. Clogged up his arteries.

BEN: So what was it he took, morphine or what?

DAVE: We don't know if he O.D.'d or took an aspirin.

SAM: What was the color?

DAVE: I think it glowed in the dark.

BEN: Blue, maybe. Viagra. He got a hard-on.

SAM: Thank God he didn't show it to us.

EVE: I'll bet he's thinking of Olga. He wants to talk about Olga.

JOEY: *Yes. Olga.* There was something reminiscent about her. Like a movie moll. Like Barbara Stanwyk. Something nervous and excited about the way she sounded in her emails. The way she looked. Like I knew her in a past life. I wanted to get in her pants in the worst way. I thought those days were over, but as time went on, I got more and more libido. I was grateful for that alone. I started to feel younger, like I was worth something, like I had a dick. I know you think I'm naïve, I know you think I'm deluded. And I am. I mean, I was. I think so, too. *(Pause)* It is the timing. It's tribal and practical. And timely. All I can think about is Olga. Blonde hair, like in blonde, almost white, brown eyes, long legs. A woman putting

her arms around me. A woman speaking gently with me. A woman who wants to know what I'm thinking. Soft-spoken.

SAM: Now what do we do?

EVE: This is terrible.

BEN: Don't start crying, Sam.

DAVE: Should we turn it off?

JOEY: All right, I'll stop.

BEN: Stop.

JOEY: I'm thinking of the losses.

SAM: Stop, already.

JOEY: Excuse me.

BEN: Scammed by the Russians.

SAM: What a shame.

EVE: Thank goodness he realized it, finally.

JOEY: Are you still there?

DAVE: Where else would we be?

SAM: Home.

JOEY: Olga had re-awakened my love of feminine beauty. I had been trying to ignore it for almost twenty years. She was truly attractive and naïve, a provincial Russian type. I tried talking myself into all kinds of ways and lies so I could pull it off, but there was nothing I could do with the difference in age and all the other differences. I imagined ways around all of them, astonished at my ability to fantasize. I thought, "why not? It's my last chance for happiness." Various selfish, sexual fantasies, including starting an experimental theater in the wilds of central Russia, and making her the Star. All I would need to do is teach her how to act, which, as has been said already, is impossible. She would become a star overnight, and I would be her – what? Her mentor? Her agent?

DAVE: It all fades eventually, Joey.

JOEY: Shut up, Dave. You're talking to a dead man.

DAVE: Excuse me.

JOEY: Somebody's got a heart problem or blood problem, they could drop dead any minute. I'm sure you've talked about that. Which, by long and deep association, brings us to the question of pretending that the audience isn't here, participating in this process. The dead coming alive. I'm going to leave that to you because I couldn't care less anymore, obviously. So they're sitting out there and they're going along with it, or not going along with it. You gotta be good, that's what it comes down to, whatever that is. Make 'em laugh. Ha, ha. I can feel the resentment rising out there, as I speak. Resentment and restlessness and the sensation of stupidity. How could Olga deal with all that – heart problems, bronchitis, a blocked artery? The Theatre? Forget about it. Here is Olga.

OLGA: (V.O.) Hello my dear Joey. I've been waiting for the beginning of the week to write you a letter. Excuse me I have not written to you on Monday, I had a lot of work. I very much missed you. I so wanted to write you a letter soon. But as you know, I can not write on the weekends because of the internet cafe. Now I'll tell you how I spent my weekend. My weekend went well. On Saturday, my dad went fishing. He loves to fish. I was very surprised how much he brought fish. My mother and I cleaned it, and then cooked fish soup (fish soup). Have you tried ear? I hope that I can make it for you, I think you will love. Later in the afternoon came to me and my girlfriend called me to play bowling. Have you played? I loved to play, it was very fun and interesting. But this game has one drawback, today I have a sore arm and shoulder. I think I sprained my shoulder a little bit. I work at a medical center there. I asked the doctor that my shoulder. Doctor confirmed my suspicion, I really sprained his shoulder and arm. He said that it is not dangerous, I just gave a great exercise. My body is not used to it, so I got a little sprain. I think it will be a two or three days. But despite the fact that I'm pretty good day, I am constantly thinking about you. I thought, what does the my Joey. I'd like to spend a weekend with you. I always thought about you and missed. In the evening, I even felt sad. I dreamed that together with you we will hold off. We could go to a cafe or a movie or just spend these days at home. It was very wonderful. On Sunday, as I was always in church. I try never to miss going to church. I asked God to you all was well and that our relationship with you was free. In the evening I was sitting at home. My mom cooked dinner and spent the day with your family. I had a long talk with my parents about you. They are very happy that I found you. They say that I even began to look better. My parents passed on greetings to you, they are very grateful to you, because it is thanks to you, my life has become much better. That's how I spent my weekend. Forgive me that I write a short letter, but I can not

write to you anymore because very tired. You know that on Monday I have a lot of work and I am very tired. I still have to get to my house and go to the store. I'll wait for your letter tomorrow. Tomorrow I'll write you a long letter. I send you my kiss. Your Olga ... (Pause. EVE stops tape.)

DAVE: She sounds so real!

EVE: It was a scam.

JOEY: We'll never be sure. I was beginning to think, you know, that she was intellectually challenged. Olga. I kept telling her I was too old and she never seemed to hear it. It was very depressing to be biologically trapped like that. To be in love and not to be able to do anything about it. But she forgave me everything. *I don't care how old you are. I love you. You are good man, and that's all that means for your Olga.* I began to think another way about timing, about dimensions, about certain machines. *(Static.)*

DAVE: He was losing his mind. He lost his mind.

BEN: Eve. Turn him off for a minute. *(EVE hits button.)*

EVE: He 's not senile. He just forgets. No one knows how they got his address. It's a mystery. She said she wanted to find somebody on the internet and they came up with Joey.

DAVE: How could that happen?

EVE: I don't know. That's one of the mysteries of the internet. Scams appear. Some guys could have cut her picture out of a magazine and wrote the letters. She was too good-looking to be true. Lonely old man in Manhattan falls in love with a beautiful young Russian woman whom he's never met.

SAM: I had a wife. You know her. You don't have to believe her, he says. See you next week. That's not the whole story. Come and see me next week.

BEN: I couldn't follow that.

DAVE: And?

BEN: I'm dumbfounded.

EVE: Listen to this: *(Button)*

OLGA: (V.O.) Hello my dear Joey. I am very pleased to be able to write you another letter to his. I love to write to you and read your emails. When I read your letter,

then my chest starts to burn the fire and my heart starts beating at a furious pace. I myself still cannot believe that I found you in this world. I never thought that I could find such a wonderful man on the Internet so fast! But I hope that my feelings do not deceive me. Generally a long time I thought about how to meet you. I want to visit your country and spend time with you. Generally documents are difficult to obtain and have to wait a long time. Because now a lot of tourists. I decided to start making their documents to visit your country. It will not take long. But during this time as long as they do the documents, we will know each other better in our communication through the Internet! Today I took the day off work to go to find out all the information and to gather the necessary documents for my visa request. I consulted the travel agency. I explained to the agent my whole problem. The agent said that it would be better to get a work visa for your country. Such a visa I will be much easier to get to your country. I was told that now a lot of tourists who go to your country and I will be hard to get a visa. But a work visa I will get much easier and faster. I decided to try to make a work visa for your country. Such a visa for me to be easier to get to visit your country. I will do all my documents through a travel agency. Yesterday evening I was at home. At this time, we come to the guests. This girlfriend mom with her husband. My mom and I quickly made dinner. We all talked and ate dinner at the table. Later when we were having tea with cake, my mother told me that I found you for a serious relationship. Girlfriend mom asked me about you. I told him everything I knew. Girlfriend mom was very happy for me that I still managed to find a man. I am told that you are a great man. I did not sit with them for a long time in the kitchen because I was very tired. I went into the room to watch TV. There was a program on TV about animals. You look at this program? This is such a wonderful program. I really love animals. At home I have lived a wonderful kitten. His name is "Ralph". Just my grandmother lives in the village dog. I always play with it when I come to visit my grandmother. After transmission on TV I fell asleep. But the visitors were still with us. At first I could not sleep for a long time, because I was thinking about you. I have many dreams and I hope that when I'm with you, we will fulfill all our dreams a reality! When I was lying in bed, I heard on the street drunk man shouting loudly and sang songs. I could not sleep for a long time. But then, I fell asleep. I slept very soundly at night. My parents are very happy that I found you in this world. Generally when I told my parents about you and that I want to visit your country, my parents were against it. My parents do not know you, and fear that I could fall into the wrong hands and that you will only play with me. But I was able to convince parents that you're not a man as men in Russia. Now my parents are really hope that you can make me happy. They asked me to give you his greetings. After we met, I had the great joy and a smile on my face.

My parents noticed this! We're still never really saw each other, but you've given me joy in life and a good mood every day! But now my parents are grateful that you have made me happy. Now I start my day with a big smile! My parents are happy for what you came into my life, my parents want me to be happy. Probably every parent would want their children to be happy! Joey, I'll finish my letter on this. I have to go now and still learn some information about my visa. I also will collect necessary information. I hope that you are pleased to receive my letters. Forgive me if I sometimes forget to take your questions. Sometimes my emotions overwhelmed me and I write too much about myself, but I will definitely pay more attention to your letters. I am always glad to read your letter, it is your letters give me the greatest pleasure. I also will wait for your answer. I wish you good to spend your day. I hope that my letter just give you a big smile on your face. I send you a picture of his dog. In another picture you can see my mom. Your Olga.

EVE: Olga. She seemed so honest, and was beautiful, he was touched by her. So they had this correspondence. He tried to tell her the truth – that he was too old and so on. She hung on for a while, until he got it finally and stopped writing. But she wouldn't give up on him for a long time. And it was a thrill for him, to sort of have her in his life.

DAVE: Maybe she loved him. Maybe it was true.

SAM: In Russia? "From Russia, with Love."

EVE: Yes. A small town. In a Western province. Rural. Her friends were all married and she was lonely. She wanted a family. Very beautiful, but she seemed sincere about Joey. He almost went to Russia.

BEN: How did she find him?

EVE: She paid some agency to find her a prospect in America. Sad, really. Or a very sophisticated scam, like I said.

JOEY: Her name was Olga. I found myself looking forward to her emails. She was so young and fresh and beautiful and straight. It was an absolute mismatch. I tried to be truthful with her, but at the same time, I realized I was falling in love. And that I didn't know myself at all, and I didn't know life, the meaning of life, or happiness. And somehow, she did. She knew exactly what she wanted and why. This beautiful girl on the other side of the world. She was like a gift from the gods. From the sky. From the internet. Gorgeous woman. Well, enough.

SAM: I won't ask what happened.

EVE: Don't ask. What are you thinking, Dave?

DAVE: I'm thinking she sounded real to me. Maybe it was a very sophisticated trick, but it sounded real.

EVE: Come on.

DAVE: Someone I knew when I was young. Someone who wanted to love me but I wasn't ready for it. Too hung up on being a so-called *artiste*. A wise-acre. She had the most exquisite, delicate, softest, silkiest, smoothest, loveliest skin. The skin of an immortal, a goddess. Diane. God bless her. Anyway, she really loved me, and proposed marriage. After a night of wonderful sex. I said "No." One of the dumbest things I ever did. I thought I had bigger and better things ahead.

BEN: *Homage* to Diane. I'm sure we've all had one of those. Did I ever tell you about Rita?

SAM: Maybe you did.

BEN: Remind me, if I didn't.

SAM: You did.

DAVE: I don't know why I'm thinking of this, but that reminds me, the sexton – what was he called, in Yiddish? –The *shamus*?-- anyway, the guy who took care of the synagogue and the Hebrew school. He opened the doors, swept the floors, lived in the back, had a certain body odor -- you know who I mean?

EVE: And? So?

DAVE: Who remembers him? Who talked to him? He lives alone, he's old, he has no attention from anybody, he cooks a simple meal at night and goes to bed, maybe he gets drunk once a year, on *Rosh Hahsonah*.

BEN: So?

DAVE: What's his life?

BEN: His life is his life.

DAVE: Then he dies. Who knew him? Who will remember him? Does God?

BEN: Why should God remember him?

DAVE: I don't know why.

SAM: He had a place to live, something to do.

BEN: Sounds like you're talking about yourself.

DAVE: I'm talking about all of us.

SAM: It takes a certain understanding: this is my life and there's nothing I can do, that's it.

EVE: It's sad.

SAM: Life. That's it. *(Slumps over)*

EVE: Holy shit.

DAVE: Dial 911.

BEN: No, no. He'll wake up in a minute. He passes out once in a while.

DAVE: Who knew?

BEN: I knew. Eve knew.

EVE: Here, Sam, eat something. *(SAM stirs.)*

BEN: Yeah, that's good. A bagel and cheese. If he don't eat something, he'll faint and fall over.

DAVE: Good grief.

SAM: Thanks, Eve.

EVE: Say something, Sam.

SAM: What about?

EVE: Anything.

SAM: I dreamt about Irene last night. Very vivid. Downtown somewhere, in a bar, then in the woods, some kind of park, then the woods again. She was glad to see me and wanted to talk. But we couldn't find a place to talk. We were wandering around downtown, bars mainly, but we couldn't talk. It was in the morning and I kept wanting to prolong the dream, so we could work it out and talk, finally, but I couldn't pull it off in my mind, in my dreaming, and I got up.

BEN: Irene. Wonderful playwright and teacher, who knew how and where actors should stand, how they should speak her fine language and move gracefully – the impeccable staging and costuming, the sense of the whole art in a play. A Master.

SAM: She's lost her memory, as you know, and didn't recognize me. That's what the dream was about.

BEN: You feel better, Sam?

SAM: Yeah. *(Stands)*

EVE: Where you going?

SAM: I'm going to the bathroom.

EVE: Don't fall down or anything.

SAM: Don't worry about it. *(Goes)*

BEN: I think he got dizzy.

DAVE: He gets dizzy? He sounded completely rational.

BEN: He wants us to say nice things about him.

EVE: So does Joey. *(Pause)* Am I right?

DAVE: Totally.

BEN: This is a *Shivah*, after all. We ponder, we reminisce. *(A grunt)* What was that?

DAVE: That was a grunt. Sam. *(Re-enter SAM)*

BEN: You all right?

SAM: Yeah.

EVE: You get dizzy?

SAM: Sometimes.

BEN: You take your pills?

SAM: No. I forgot.

BEN: Take 'em now.

SAM: Okay.

EVE: Water?

SAM: No. (*Swallows*)

BEN: He's an old hand at taking pills.

SAM: So are you.

BEN: This is true.

EVE: You should talk to someone.

SAM: I do talk to someone.

BEN: We all need to talk to someone.

EVE: I mean a doctor.

SAM: I have at least five doctors.

DAVE: The horrors of life, the vanities of life.

BEN: It's him again. Proverbs.

DAVE: What's next with Joey?

EVE: Memory is all there is for us, he said.

BEN: We talk, we remember.

DAVE: A warrior's death, it's a good thing. You prepare to die and sing your death song. There's somebody home when the time comes.

SAM: More Ecclesiastes.

DAVE: The Indians know more than you think. To die intentionally is a very high achievement.

EVE: Like Joey?

DAVE: I don't know about Joey.

SAM: He jumped off The Washington Bridge. Can you imagine that – sloshing around in the Hudson river?

EVE: Death is death, intentionally or not.

DAVE: That's not saying anything, Eve.

EVE: Never mind.

DAVE: Not even *Job* lost his memory.

EVE: Joey was losing his.

BEN: He was worried about being alone, Joey. He chose to be alone, basically. He thought it was just bad luck, but he chose it. He had his chances. He just wouldn't make any moves. He had begun to be moved by young women again, a little bit, because of Olga -- talented, bright women, especially, and of course the pretty ones. Actresses. Look, but don't touch.

DAVE: He appreciated them. He appreciated them so much, he thought there was something miraculous about it. The thought of messing with them in any way but professionally was repulsive to him.

EVE: Good for him.

DAVE: The sorrow of it all was, he knew they would get old, get old and lose their charm, and die. He thought the sex impulse was a waste of energy, something he was carrying around unnecessarily.

EVE: And then there was Olga, out of the blue. He was moved by her in a different way. She was looking for a husband, she was looking for a man. He was no longer a *Grandpa*. The idea of sex was taking on new meaning, new possibility.

BEN: Right. So now we're doing *Shivah*, and he's got us talking about him. This is good. Somebody bring some more *shnapps*.

EVE: Excuse me. It was also Olga, the story of Olga.

DAVE: Let's take a break. Have a drink.

SAM: *Amen*.

EVE: No. Wait. Here she is. (*Button*)

OLGA: In Russia, the man has no respect for the woman and they are alcoholics, the men. I wish to have a real relationship with a man, with a true inner life and feelings

of love. That's why I'm so glad you have answered me so respectfully and you seem to be attracted. I'm sorry I couldn't respond over the weekend. As I explained, I have no computer and the internet café is closed on the weekend. My hometown here in Russia is a small city, very beautiful, with parks and walks and nice streets and cafes. I think it would be good if we could meet each other here. Maybe you would like it and we could be face to face.

JOEY: Russia is too far away. I don't think you heard me when I talked about age. It would be completely unfair to you, who is still young and who wants the kind of life you want. That's all too late for me, I'm afraid to say. But you are such a beautiful woman it kind of knocks me for a loop, which is to say, shocks me into fantasies and unrealistic hopes. *(Pause)*

EVE: Amazing. You can't tell if she's on the level, or not.

DAVE: She's on the level. She sounds very sincere to me.

BEN: She does. *(Pause. SAM'S cell phone rings.)*

SAM: It's May. Hi, May.

MAY: *(Off)* Sam?

SAM: Yes, it's me. Who else would it be?

MAY: *(Off)* How are you?

SAM: Fine.

MAY: *(OFF)* I'm on my way.

SAM: Okay.

MAY: *(Off)* Is it almost over?

SAM: Is what almost over?

MAY: *(Off)* The funeral, I mean the *Shivah*.

SAM: No, I don't think so. I don't know.

MAY: *(Off)* I'll be there soon.

SAM: Fine. *(Clicks off)*

BEN: You okay?

SAM: Yeah. Why shouldn't I be?

EVE: I meant to say, Hi.

BEN: Maybe she won't come over, Sam.

SAM: She's on her way.

DAVE: I remember when there were phone booths. I also remember black and white television. Amos and Andy on the radio. The Lone Ranger. Sid Ceasar died the other day. There's a loss.

EVE: Definitely.

BEN: I used to wait on him when I was a kid. In the Catskills. At the Avon Lodge. I never told this story?

EVE: Tell it again.

BEN: Wait. What was up with Joey and Olga?

EVE: Who can say? Tell the Sid story, Ben.

BEN: Okay. The Avon Lodge. It had a little lake with ducks and row-boats. The Neversink river ran nearby. It was a quiet spot, not exclusive, but it had like a private feeling, not like the rest of the joints up there. I think Sid was related to the owners. The place was closed in the off season and Sid would rent the lodge in the Fall just for him and his family. A couple weeks quiet vacation. Autumn leaves. They'd call me to come in as his busboy while the family cooked for him and waited on him.

EVE: Why you?

BEN: I don't know why. Maybe they knew we needed the money. And I was a quiet kid who never said nothing to nobody. He tipped really well, I remember that.

DAVE: What was your impression of him?

BEN: Tall. Very smart. He liked the quiet and the privacy. Never complained. Nice man, really.

SAM: What'd they do all day?

BEN: I can't remember. Maybe they went rowing. They went for walks. A little tennis or ping pong. Gin rummy was popular in those days.

DAVE: I heard he drank.

BEN: So what?

DAVE: Did he?

BEN: What did I know? I was a teenager.

SAM: It's nobody's business.

DAVE: I agree. Here's to Sid. *(They drink)*

BEN: Sid.

EVE: The Show of Shows. A little mention on the radio and he's gone. So it will be with all of us.

SAM: I'm not sure we exist at all, in the first place.

BEN: Don't start.

EVE: We should mention that Joey had seven Uncles and four Aunts and about three hundred cousins, none of whom had any interest in him, or his work. Another reason why this thing with Olga was so hard on him. *(Noises off)*

SAM: Here she comes. May. *(Enter MAY)*

MAY: Where's the vodka? Where's the bread?

EVE: Right there.

MAY: More Joey?

EVE: Right here. *(Button)* Listen.

JOEY: So. Sexually, you're in a bind.

MAY: Is that him?

EVE: That's Joey.

MAY: He sounds good!

JOEY: You can't fuck a 20 year-old, but the energy there is good. It's nice to feel the impulse. So, what do you do? You have to be smart, like the Taoists, they were not

idiots, these people, you have to use the energy—make a new body, a body that lasts, that is immortal. They weren't fooling around, these people, or, to put it another way, they had to find an alternative to fooling around, because that's the biology of the situation, which is more or less out of our control, unfortunately. But you can't dream about a beautiful young Russian woman. like Olga, who, sadly, is no longer available to an old man like you, whether she 's hustling you or not, or on the level. It's scarier really, when she's on the level, because then you realize that you're really out of the picture, and it would take a miracle, and you have no excuses. Something absolutely mortifying about that. (*Button*)

MAY: How astonishing!

SAM: Loneliness will call us all. I mean *kill* us all.

MAY: We're doing perfectly fine, Sam.

BEN: No one is exempt. The only trouble is, you have to do something. You can't just play cards. You can't woo old ladies. You can't sit around and be sick. In the old days they would just leave you and move on. And you died alone under the stars or suffocated in the heat and dust, or crapped out in the rain, or froze to death in the cold. Or jumped off a cliff. Or a bridge.

EVE: You don't know, Ben. You should hear yourself.

BEN: That's why I'm happy to be here, Eve. You've seen these TV commercials, dying old people, happy, happy.

EVE: I do see them.

BEN: Happy, happy.

DAVE: We don't know what goes on there. Something could be gotten from life that can survive death. There could be other dimensions, like the dimension of time.

SAM: It's Leviticus again.

DAVE: What do you think, May?

MAY: I don't know what to think.

EVE: You're a Hindu.

MAY: I'm not a Hindu, I'm an American. I think they're very hopeful, the Hindus. And that's what we need. Hope. Immortality. The eternal vibration. Energy that cannot be lost.

SAM: Along with the caste system, righteousness, mass murder, cows, overpopulation, and cows.

EVE: Cows?

SAM: I'm against all religion. Religion of any kind.

EVE: Including Jewish?

SAM: Including the Jewish – the Orthodox, with the silly black hats and the beards and the fringes – come on, they should stay home. And they shouldn't have children.

BEN: Slow down, Sam.

SAM: I don't think it's a real religion in the first place. It's more like an ethnic school or a racial life-way, or something. Something good, maybe, but not a religion. A study. A system of ideas.

EVE: Where would the world be without religion? Think about it, Sam.

SAM: In the shithouse.

MAY: Take it easy, Sam.

BEN: Excuse me. There was a guy on 116th street. I forget how I knew him. Maybe I once took guitar lessons from him -- blind Gary Davis, I think that was his name, he was pretty famous at the time. He was a friend of this big old black junkie I knew -- they called him the Buddha because he was a quiet motherfucker who meant no harm. He became one of my connections. Huge, gentle, black man who stayed home and shot up and played the cornet. Reminded me of Eric Dolphy, who lived down the street from me on the Lower East Side. I used to listen to him practise all night.
(Pause)

SAM: Did you get lost?

BEN: When?

SAM: Just now.

BEN: I was changing the subject.

MAY: The Buddha?

BEN: I got caught out there alone one night and someone tried to kill me with a key.

EVE A key?

BEN: A door key. Cut my throat with it. *(Pause)* What happens to all these memories if you don't talk about them? Dave?

DAVE: I'm right here.

BEN: What happens?

DAVE: We don't know, Ben. Maybe they lie dormant somewhere in the brain.

BEN: I could tell you more stories. If I could remember them. Talking helps.

MAY: What about Joey? *(EVE shrugs.)*

EVE: It's up to you guys.

BEN: Blind Gary Davis.

MAY: Can I say something about Sam? *(Pause)* His whole life he tried to do the right thing, Sam. All along, as you know, people took advantage.

SAM: Please don't talk about me now, while I'm still alive and sitting here, May.

MAY: Now I'm talking about your friend, Joey, the deceased. *(JOEY hunches his shoulders.)* So Joey takes my husband's script and adapts it without telling him and then he sells it to his brother in law – my brother -- and some bad checks get written by somebody and meanwhile, Sam knows nothing. Sam writes a prose poem in his typical obscure Off-Off Broadway fashion, which is nearly incomprehensible, and then produces it in a church somewhere, with some good actors who love him – I forget now who they were – and Joey takes the script to my brother and pitches a screenplay based on it, and promises to put my sister-in-law in the movie, so my brother puts up a bunch of money and checks get written and there's some funny business with the checks, and meanwhile Sam knows nothing about it. And you know, Joey is a fellow traveler, so he justifies the whole thing by saying he 's soaking the rich, and he never tells Sam here a thing.

SAM: That was incomprehensible, May.

MAY: It's a true story.

BEN: But where's the story?

SAM: There is no story.

MAY: And where's the justice there?

SAM: I don't believe in Justice.

EVE: Why not?

SAM: There is no such thing as Justice.

EVE: Okay, Sam.

DAVE: Not on this level.

SAM: *The Book of Job*.

DAVE: I don't think so.

SAM: I'll say it again, *The Book of Job*.

DAVE: I still don't think so.

SAM: "Life is hard and then you die."

EVE: Enough. Let's hear from Joey. (*Button*) Listen.

JOEY: I knew I was going to die soon, so I decided to go back to the old neighborhood where I was born, see what's what. It's seventy years later, but I wanted to see it. Deep Brooklyn, except my mother got it wrong. She always talked about Greenpoint. I looked at the subway map and it was, in reality, Bushwick. All the way up DeKalb. Greenpoint is below the old Navy Yard and it's not so bad anymore. But if you go east from Williamsburg, you hit Bed Stuy and right above that is Bushwick. And next to that is Greenpoint. Central Brooklyn. The Myrtle avenue line, which I remembered from my childhood, which was 65 years ago, was still there. So I find the old neighborhood and I don't know what I was thinking was going to be there, but the neighborhood was unrecognizable. The school was gone, the hospital where I was born was gone, the carts on the street were gone. The tenements were all torn down. There were new parks. You could see the Manhattan skyline, which you could never do when I was a kid, because the tenements were five, six stories high. Now, the tenements are gone. Three story tract houses up and down Dekalb replaced them. And now you can see the river. When I was a boy, I didn't know there was a river there, and beyond it, the towers of Manhattan. Spanish and black people live there now, mainly, where I used to live. In the old days it was Polish and Black and Irish and Jewish, all mixed up, with candy stores on every corner. Trolley cars came down the middle. I couldn't believe how narrow the street was. When I was a boy it seemed like the biggest street, room for two trolleys. You could take one all the way to Coney Island. (*Pause. Button. Silence*)

MAY: What was that all about?

EVE: A nice story.

BEN: I'll tell you one thing. You don't need to say a speech while eating a banana or ironing a pair of pants. Joey was the only one who actually did it. Everybody else had to have something they could be doing onstage before they could talk. Who was the idiot who figured that out?

EVE: Comes down from Stella Adler and the Yiddish theater.

MAY: No, it was what's-his-name at the Actor's Studio.

SAM: No, I think it was Marlon.

BEN: No, Marlon read cards. Where's Olga? Is there more Olga?

SAM: He read dialogue on the cards. He's not looking at the other actors, he's looking at the cards.

BEN: Dave?

DAVE: What?

BEN: You seem to be receding.

DAVE: So?

BEN: Say something.

DAVE: I was thinking. Around 500 B.C. – you can check it out, if you want – the Jews of Alexandria, which is in Egypt, there were seventy old men, they decided to make a translation of the Torah from Hebrew into Greek. This was in the Hellenic Age. It's called the Septuagint. So, they make the translation, seventy old men, the Sanhedrin. Naturally, it's got errors. Some of the words, they don't make it all the way from Hebrew to Greek. But in the Greek world, they think it's the word of God, and you can look it up. Jesus comes along, and he speaks Aramaic, the language of the time, which is also a long way from Greek. But Paul proselytizes in Greek? So, you figure it out.

SAM: I don't want to think so hard right now.

EVE: Thank you, Dave.

MAY: The important subject right now is Joey, what happened with Joey.

SAM: We know what happened to Joey. Love on the internet.

BEN: Some people can't tell jokes. I'm one of them. Joey couldn't do it, either. He could never tell a joke.

BEN: Did you hear something? Eve?

EVE: No. Did you? *(Silence)*

DAVE: You're walking around, your hands are black with dirt, snot is coming out of your nose, it's freezing, your ass stinks – and you tell a joke. Back in Warsaw where people lived in alleys and women carried water for the toilets, and the baths and the cooking, one bathroom on every floor, if you were lucky. Sometimes one toilet in the courtyard for everybody in the building.

(THE LIGHTS DIM A BIT. A MOMENT. WHEN THE LIGHTS COME UP AGAIN, JOEY IS SPEAKING IN A MORE MECHANICAL TONE OF VOICE.)

JOEY: I grew up mainly in the Catskills. There I saw all the old comedians. Saturday night was entertainment night. The singers and the jokesters would do their thing. I saw the famous and the unfamous. I hated the singers and I was tired of the jokes. All about sex and money and sex and money and bowel movements. I liked the vaudeville acts, though. It was a style that worked for me, perfect for the stage. There's a built-in irony there, and sorrow. *(MAY FAINTS.)*

EVE: What happened to May?

BEN: Do something, Eve!

JOEY: I liked the vaudeville acts though. It was a style that worked for me, perfect for the stage. There's a built-in irony there, and sorrow. *(Pause)*

EVE: Someone wake up May.

DAVE: Throw some water on her.

SAM: You do it. *(DAVE throws water on her. She wakes.)*

MAY: WHAT THE FUCK? WHAT THE FUCK?

JOEY: Yes, all about the failure of rational, quiet living. *(Pause)* Now I'm alone in Tarzana, where I don't see any Jews, and I hardly know where the place is on the map. And I can't drive.

MAY: I'll kill him all over again!

JOEY: A two-room apartment near a mall. You have to find a way to survive. I had social security and the writer's guild pension and some investments, which weren't

worth what they were worth, thanks to the bankers, so it was tight. I realized there wasn't much time left. I hadn't been laid in ten years, maybe more. I had kind of packed it in for this life. Not much testosterone left, I thought, and too much stress was involved. So I lived like a monk. Then I get this email from a beautiful young Russian woman who wants to get to know me, even marry me. God knows how – how she got the address. She was a knockout, one of the most beautiful women I've ever seen. I was stunned. She had an angelic, open, longing, honest face. I read the email for hours. I started to think, this is a real Angel, coming to me from God himself.

MAY: I felt a vibration. In the room. If anyone cares.

DAVE: It's the electrical.

MAY: Olga. What's with Olga?

EVE: So, May -- there's lots of young Russian girls these days, hustling rich American guys on the Internet. You can put any kind of picture in the email. It doesn't have to be Her, it could be a smart young cabal of guys cutting out pictures from magazines, or using their girlfriends. You know?

JOEY: I was touched by her, actually. She seemed really sincere. Something in me knew it was too good to be true. But I began a correspondence. I fell in love with the idea of her. It never occurred to me that the pictures I was seeing were not even her. Finally, I showed the emails to Eve. I'm so naïve, I was disgusted with myself.

EVE: That was part of the problem.

JOEY: Anyway, enough of that for now. It was so embarrassing. And we're sitting *Shivah*, so we have a lot to talk about.

BEN: What the fuck?

DAVE: What the fuck, indeed!

BEN: Where's the tape?

EVE: He IS the tape.

BEN: What does that mean?

EVE: It's an electrical phenomenon.

BEN: Don't be an idiot.

EVE: He used lasers, quantum theory.

MAY: He's dead!

EVE: I can't explain it. It's a love story.

MAY: It's a suicide! Sam?

SAM: What?

MAY: Say something.

SAM: I don't feel good.

MAY: Are you here? Are you with us?

SAM: It was just piss.

DAVE: Is what?

MAY: About what?

SAM: Now we know.

BEN: Enough to kill himself?

SAM: That I don't know.

EVE: No. How could you?

MAY: You don't know anything! None of you!

EVE: Fuck you. Here is the last email from Olga.

OLGA: (V.O.) *Hello my dear Joey.*

Thank you for your letter. Your letters give me confidence in the development of our relations. And I am more and more eager to write to you. But most of all I look forward to our meeting when I can see, nestle, feel your tender kisses and the warmth of your body! Yes, I really want it all. We waited a very long time, and the time has come when you can start to take the first step to further our future, a new life, in which we will just you and me! I want to tell you that I did all the paperwork to get the passport and visa to start doing. I've been waiting for the moment when we will take the first steps to our meeting. I also want to tell you that I have the money for a visa and ticket, so that you do not have to spend your money on me, because I have my own money. I had been saving money for a long time, and now I

have enough to come to you. I knew what I go, I knew that I needed the money. And I do not in any way want to take money from the man with whom I will build relationships. Because I knew that the meeting can change everything. And including our relationship to each other. But I am 100 sure that our feelings will only become stronger when we are together! I spoke about the money immediately, as in a previous life I heart broken because of money. It happened about 1 year ago. It was very painful, and for a long time could not survive it. I have not touched a computer 1 year, because she was afraid that it could happen again. I do not want to tell you about it, since it was in the past, and I remember this very painful. But I do not want to have secrets between us, which we would not know. So I decided to tell you about it! 1 year ago, I corresponded with a man from the USA. Everything went well and we were thinking about marriage. He invited me to his home in the USA. At that time I had no money for such a trip, and I asked him for help. After I asked him for help, I did not receive letters from him 5 days. On the fifth day, I receive a letter from which I felt very bad. All these days I thought. That something happened to him, he had some problems, and he can not write. But the letter was very short. He started to say that all the time I lied to him that I only needed his money, and at the end of the letter he called me - SCAMMER. I cried for a long time, and could not understand why he did it with me. I still do not understand why he left me. I realized that this man the most important thing in life - it's his money. And I told him was not necessary, and he did not love me, he loved only his money. My heart was broken and I wanted to die. But my parents supported me, I calmed down and started life anew. I ask you to promise me that you will never throw me and will love me for life. I do not want to have my heart broken again. I for some time ceased to believe in true love. But after I met you, a feeling that is called love, came back to me! I thank you for that. I learned that it is very difficult to get a visa, especially after the terrorist operations that take place in this world. But I have the opportunity to get "working" visa. I went to the agency. The Agency does not work the first year and a lot of girls left abroad through this agency. They through their people find me a job in your country, and sent me there as a worker. After arriving to you, we take a closer look, and if we decide for a serious relationship, it will collect all documents, to make a fiancée visa for me, then I can stay with you forever. If all goes as planned, we'll be together very soon! This is my biggest dream! I'll give you all my love! This will be the best time in my life, and I think your too! What do you think about this???

I know what you want to know how I feel about sex! I have not had sex for a long time. But I will do for you whatever you want, because a woman should do everything for her man. I love sex, but for me the most important thing that I loved her partner. And if I do not love a

person, then I will not have sex with him. Maybe that's why I have not had sex for a long time, because I did not like. I will finish my letter on this. I'll wait for your answer tomorrow. I apologize if I did not get to write every day.
Your Olga ... (Pause)

EVE: I tried to tell him. But he loved getting those emails. They kind of kept him company and kept his spirits up. He had hope. He even made plans. So it was tough. Finally, he figured it out for himself, and was very sad after that. And he jumped. It's a shame, really.

(The special lights go out on JOEY. He remains in silhouette and we hear him now VOICE OVER. A PORTRAIT of the Beautiful OLGA appears, as JOEY finishes up:)

JOEY: *(V.O.)* It wasn't just Olga. It wasn't just falling in love with Olga, the humiliation of Olga. I had lost faith. No, I never had faith to begin with. Nor hope. No faith, no hope, no love. I knew that the Science was right-- that the planet was inevitably going to shake us off like larvae. That we as a species was finished. People can't give up anything and they can think only in one limited way: "What's good for me now? How can I live another five minutes? How can I enjoy myself?" It just infuriated me -- the inherent stupidity and religious certainty and the constant mayhem. This is one dumb, murderous species of animal. I couldn't take it anymore, seeing what we are really like. Me, included. The way we lie and justify. The way we can't think, can't reason, can't listen. Make the same stupid mistakes over and over. No more diseases, no more hospitals. I'd already told Olga, whoever she was, if she was anything but an electronic scam, that I was going to jump. The water looked good. It was at least water, polluted, but real, which would, by its nature, totally accept me and bury me deep into nothingness, into H2O, and away from this absolute nightmare -- toward which we give such insane reverence -- of ourselves. The Indigenous Peoples had it right -- they put the Earth first. Of course, Olga advised me not to jump, that she was coming over to save me, but I had lost faith in her, too. She wasn't real, just a fragment of the general human delusion. In which I participated. I can't tell you what it was like to hit the water, but I can't wait, and I'm going to hit it **hard**....*(Stay on OLGA a moment, then dark.)*

THE END

Murray Mednick
9/8/15

