EVAN

You were once a writer. Now you are an investment banker. Your fiancée Olivia, an up-and-coming soprano, has recently shot herself in the middle of the night. Now you spend most of your days looking at pictures and videos of her on the Internet. Your neighbor comes by sometimes to talk to you and help you clean. She is a great neighbor. You can’t get away from your dead girlfriend. Her things are everywhere. You hear her voice and you smell her scent. Soon, you begin to see her.

Your lines

OLIVIA:

How was your day?

EVAN:

Uneventful. As per usual. Adulthood was exciting the first five years. Then the tedium set in. And after that, it’s one six-month performance review after the other. And free everything bagels on Fridays.

OLIVIA:

Sounds pretty bleak.

EVAN:

It’ll be different for you. You’ll be famous. You steal the show every night.

OLIVIA:

I don’t care about being famous. I just want to sing and I want them to listen.

EVAN:

And that’s why you’ll be famous. (Kisses her.) When you’re famous, I’ll be all like, hey, my towels are monogrammed with her towels. We share monogrammed towels.

OLIVIA:

Does the tedium never end?

EVAN:

No, but sometimes the sunlight breaks through. And I get to marry you. Have children with you. Watch you sing and see you own the crowd. I get to do all of that, so I am pretty damn lucky.

…

OLIVIA

Your Lines

EVAN:

How was your day?

OLIVIA:

Good. I walked around town a lot. I smelled hot dogs everywhere. Coming out of doughnut shops and up the sewer grates. You wouldn’t believe how much I wanted a hot dog. I salivated for hot dog.

EVAN:

Was today the day you gave up being a vegetarian?

OLIVIA:

No. I ate a lettuce tofu wrap instead.

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OLIVIA:

Can I tell you something? I did eat a hot dog today. In fact, I ate three.

EVAN:

How was it?

OLIVIA:

They tasted so good. I didn’t know a hot dog could taste so good.

…

OLIVIA:

(Reciting her thoughts as she composes e-mails.)

Hi, Evan!

Thanks for your note, as well as your poem. Smiley face. I would love to grab coffee but my schedule is a bit full this week. But I am heading downtown to the symphony on Sunday, and would not mind having company, if you would like to….. if you are not bored by orchestral instruments. The Frankfurt Philharmonic will be performing Bach, so it will be a classic, and I am friends with one of the violinists....Does he need to know that? It's not like we’re GOOD friends.... There is also decent coffee…. There is also a great wine bar around the area that I’ve been told to check out.

(She prints this letter out and puts it in an envelope.)

DETECTIVE:

That’s the problem with my job. I go through the past picking up stray pieces, but for all that I collect, I can’t do a thing to change the present.

EVAN:

Are you trying to compare your mid-life crisis with my quarter-life apocalypse?

OLIVIA:

There is never enough time in our lives to do what we love and what we must. That is the biggest dissatisfaction, isn’t it? I know that what you want to do in life is to write poetry, just like what I want to do in life is to sing, and what we both want is to love each other, but then there are the things we must do, like go to work, buy groceries, eat, sleep, commute. If only time were limitless, I would spend ten thousand years just loving you....

(She prints this letter out and puts it in an envelope.)

DETECTIVE:

Sometimes though, what I find is that the past isn't what it seems. There is no solid thing we call the past. The past is fluid. It's constantly repeating, constantly changing.

EVAN:

A regular philosopher, aren't you?

DETECTIVE:

The past can sneak up on you. That's all I'm saying. Sometimes it'll surprise you.

OLIVIA:

Do you know what I love about art? I mean, what it is about art that makes it necessary and impossible to live without? The thing about art is that there is truth in it. Even if it is just a tiny tiny kernel hiding somewhere inside the highest, most difficult, most unpleasant note. Underneath all the makeup, and the costumes, and the stage lights, and the interviews, and the posturing, and the smiling, there is truth. And that is the only time I can ever, ever tell the truth.

(She prints this letter out and puts it in an envelope.)

DETECTIVE:

Listen, kid. I'll leave you alone. I just want to ask you two questions, and I want you to tell me the truth.

EVAN:

Hit me. What have you got?

(The detective ruffles through his papers.)

OLIVIA:

I just want the world to shut up sometimes. I want there to be a still point, a silence. I just want things to stop sometimes. How can we ever think, to know our thoughts, to feel our bodies, if we aren't ever able to stop? I just want to stop. I want to stop.

(She prints this letter out and puts it in an envelope.)

DETECTIVE:

How would you describe Olivia's mood these past few months leading up to her death? Did you notice anything unusual?

OLIVIA:

Birds stop in flight. I want to watch the swallow stop in flight. I want to watch the swallow fall out of the sky. There are thirteen ways of watching a swallow fall out of the sky.

(She prints this letter out and puts it in an envelope.)

EVAN:

Unusual? No. Was she indescribably happy? No. Did she give the slightest indication she was about to fuck it all and off herself? No.

OLIVIA:

Stop talking about me. Stop looking at me. Stop thinking about me. Stop wanting me. Stop waiting for me. Stop masturbating to me. Stop re-naming me. Stop manifesting me. Stop creating me.

(She prints this letter out and puts it in an envelope.)

DETECTIVE:

Were you aware that Olivia was seeing a psychotherapist named Dr. Candie Silvester's, as an outpatient at Hillcrest Hospital?

OLIVIA:

I am so cold. I have no soul. Everything is cold. Everything must go.

(She prints this letter out and puts it in an envelope.)

EVAN:

I was not aware of that. No.

OLIVIA:

Goodbye, little bird. I'll miss the flutter of your wings as you fly next to me.

(She prints this letter out and puts it in an envelope.)

DETECTIVE:

Thank you for your time, Mr. Anderson. I know it's been hard on you.

EVAN:

Wait. You're just going to leave now?

DETECTIVE:

I understand and respect your need to be alone.

EVAN:

You didn't even eat your sandwich.

DETECTIVE:

You can use it more than me.

EVAN:

Why was she seeing a doctor?

DETECTIVE:

I don't know. A patient's rights can't be violated. It's called HIPPA.

EVAN:

Why do you think she was seeing a doctor?

DETECTIVE:

I think your girlfriend had more secrets than you realized. I think maybe in this case it's best to leave the past alone.

EVAN:

You're full of bullshit, you know that? You asked me what I want to know. This is what I want to know.

DETECTIVE:

Knowledge isn't an easy pill to swallow. Just remember. I'm on your side.

(Detective exits. Evan is confounded by his sandwiches.)

OLIVIA:

(Who has been watching this interchange the whole time.)

Poor little bird. You never liked surprises. If you want me to regurgitate into your mouth a worm as long as the equator, please be prepared to swallow the worm, dripping with my saliva and my bile.

DETECTIVE

DETECTIVE:

This is a very difficult situation for you, I’m sure. It’d be a difficult situation for anyone. I don’t mean to come here and make things worse for you. I hope you know that. I brought you a sandwich.

EVAN:

You take sugar in your coffee?

DETECTIVE:

Just cream.

EVAN:

Of course. (Under his breath.) Fucker.

DETECTIVE:

I got a roast beef hoagie and a Portobello eggplant. I wasn’t sure if you were veggie or not. I know your wife was.

EVAN:

She was my fiancée.

DETECTIVE:

Right. You had about two months till your wedding, didn’t you?

EVAN:

(Hands the guy some coffee and sits his ass down.)

DETECTIVE:

(Shakes his head.) A real shame, buddy. It’s a real shame. A tragedy.

EVAN:

Some people would see it that way. Shakespeare, for instance.

DETECTIVE:

How do you see it?

EVAN:

What do you mean?

DETECTIVE:

Well, what do you think happened? What’s your perspective?

EVAN:

Do I get a perspective?

DETECTIVE:

I’m going to be honest with you, buddy. Because I feel your pain. Some people see this like a tragedy. But others, they see a murder mystery. And after investigating Olivia’s contacts, there aren’t too many suspects in the pool.

EVAN:

She didn’t make it onto too many hit lists.

DETECTIVE:

How did you and Miss Holland-Pryce meet, bud?

EVAN:

(Considers his answer.)

I was walking in a rainstorm, looking for shelter. Found a bus stop, and there she was, drenched within an inch of her soul. Or rather, she was on the balcony of a manor on the lake. I saw her from the garden below and after that I was a lost man. Or try this one on for size. We were children together, living on opposite sides of the shire. Our fathers tried to keep us apart but we still found each other. We went on an adventure and scaled a mountain in the moors.

DETECTIVE:

You enjoy telling stories, Mr. Anderson?

EVAN:

We met the usual way. On the Internet. She was still a student then and I was still a writer.

DETECTIVE:

How long have you been together?

EVAN:

Something tells me you already know.

DETECTIVE:

I’m trying to help you out here. I’m on your side.

EVAN:

Who’s on the other side?

DETECTIVE:

This isn’t a pretty picture for you. And you’re not painting yourself well. Eat your sandwich. You look like you could use a balanced meal.

…

DETECTIVE:

There are pieces that are missing to this. I’m just trying to puzzle it out.

EVAN:

Pieces that are missing.

(He picks up a sugar cube and studies it before dumping it into his coffee.)

DETECTIVE:

What do you want to know? What’s eating you up?

EVAN:

I want to know how to go back in time. How to stop myself from waking up to a dead body.

(Olivia, dressed in an outfit from her younger days, with no injuries apparent on her body, steps onto a corner of the stage, unseen by the men.)

DETECTIVE:

What would you do if you could go back in time? Tell her you love her? Keep yourself from picking a fight? Swallow your temper and count to ten, or wake yourself up before she does?

(Evan doesn’t answer. Olivia sits down and takes out her computer, plugging in the charger and getting comfortable.)

DETECTIVE:

Whatever you do different, the results will remain the same. That’s the problem with digging in the past.

OLIVIA:

(Reciting her thoughts as she composes e-mails.)

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BETH