Detective Scenes

(Before the Detective comes….)

(Evan toasts Beth and she exits. After struggling with the placement of a sugar cube, Evan loses interest in his castle. He picks up a robe of Olivia’s and smells it. He lies down with the robe crumpled over his face, breathing in her scent, which has started to fade. Then he sits up and flings the robe across the room onto the area where Olivia died. A sudden beep from Olivia's computer makes him look up. He goes to the computer and finds a note sent to Olivia.)

NOTE 1:

(Evan reads the notes in a mimicking voice.)

Dear Olivia. Your death has rendered a hole inside my soul. The world burned brighter with you in it. All that is left to fill me are the hollow sounds of your notes trapped in plastic and polish.

EVAN:

Who the fuck is *this* guy?

NOTE 2:

Olivia! I love your voice so much! I think you’re the best American soprano in the world! I would like you to visit my organization and perform. We are a retreat center for top business executives hoping to take a restive from the daily stressors of life. .... Can’t pay very much .... Welcome to our cleansing mineral hot springs and our detoxifying sweat lodge..... Happy Mountain Retreat and Recovery Center!

EVAN:

Someone missed a memo at the sweat lodge.

NOTE 3: Dear Ms. Holland-Pryce, I write from the Monteverdi Institute in Bulgaria … I have heard you are making extended travel through Bulgaria. … Opportunities to teach and perform…

(He trails off and stops. His eyes grow wide as he reads another note.)

EVAN:

“I’m sorry that you have been so sad. I hope you are happy now. I hope you can be at peace. Maybe it is quiet for you. But I hope it is not too quiet. I hope you get to sing. I hope you get to sing every song you like. And if you don’t like any songs, I hope I can make one for you….. Phillip.” … Phillip. Who’s Phillip?

(He needs to get away from this letter. He pulls up a large image of Olivia from her web site and studies it. Then he presses play on a video.)

OLIVIA’S VIDEO:

Hi, friend. Thank you so much for stopping by my page. I’m so glad you’re here. I hope you've been able to listen to my pieces and explore my work. Please, feel free to e-mail me or to leave comments.

Music is my passion, and my dream is to share this passion with the world. I believe that music has the power to transform and to heal, to unify and to transcend the petty banalities of everyday life. I suppose you can say I am a little bit dramatic, too.

For now, I will leave you with one of my favorite poems, which I believe is expressive of the mystery and depths of great music. This is Sonnets to Orpheus 9, by Rainer Maria Rilke.

EVAN:

I gave you that poem!

OLIVIA:

Only he who has raised

his lyre among shadows

may find his way back

to infinite praise.

Only he who has eaten with the dead

from the stores of poppy

will never again lose

the softest chord.

And though the pool's reflection

often blurs before us:

Know the image.

Only in the double realm

do the voices become

eternal and mild.

(The video freezes on a still image of Olivia, and Evan lingers on it for several minutes. Then he hits the Replay button. He forwards to the parts he wants to see. He knows how her movements fall to each second of video. As he watches, more notes arrive to Olivia.)

EVAN:

You’re a beautiful wretched conniving transcendent stinking deceitful slut. I hope you know that.

(He toasts her with a swig of whiskey and then puts on a CD of her singing. He lies down on the couch to go to sleep. When the song ends, the computer suddenly lights up again. There is a rustle at the side of the stage as the robe tossed over the area of the death begins to move. It fills out and Olivia stands up, dressed in the robe, or in her performance gown. After taking some time to adjust back to the physical world, she steps her way over to Evan’s sleeping form. She crouches down so that her face is level with his. She studies him lovingly.)

OLIVIA:

I never meant to lie to you, darling. I thought I always told the truth. But I didn’t recognize the truth, until it crawled into my skull.

There’s a pounding in my skull, baby. It echoes like a metronome. Clack. Clack. Clack. Clack. Every second is a half note.

Please help me. Oh, baby, please help me.

(She crawls on top of him and places her head over his chest.)

OLIVIA:

Please help me. Please help me. Please help me.

End of Scene 4.

Scene 5

(This scene occurs after Beth tells Evan about the detective, and Evan has already done some of his own searching.)

(What I want to get out of this scene: Evan is perhaps a little less bitter/a little more vulnerable. He has been searching through her files already, and has found the letters, but doesn’t understand them. The scene should probably be a little shorter, too.)

(Detective Samuels clears off a spot for himself to sit. Evan is overall not very impressed with him. His computer is on and he is more interested in the images of Olivia.)

DETECTIVE:

This is a very difficult situation for you, I’m sure. I don’t mean to come here and disturb your grieving, but, as I’m sure you’re aware, there are things I’ve been called in to follow up on. Don’t worry though. I’m not making any accusations, or judgments. I just want to talk. Here. 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.) What do you want to know? Why are you here?

DETECTIVE:

I’m just trying to puzzle this out. Lovely girl, from everything I’ve heard about her. Had her whole life in front of her. And then …. this. It’s a puzzle to me. I can’t figure it out, and I don’t have all the pieces.

EVAN:

Hmmph. (Maybe he’s doing a puzzle? Instead of making a sugar cube castle? Maybe he looks at the castle like it’s a puzzle?) Maybe you should check underneath the couch.

DETECTIVE:

Life’s funny, isn’t it? Its revolutions. It can be going along just fine, and then you get to a glitch, a moment you can’t get out of. And then life is all about escape.

EVAN:

What are you? A philosophy major?

DETECTIVE:

I was, kind of. I focused on second wave feminism.

EVAN:

Is that what all feminist philosophy majors do? Become detectives?

DETECTIVE:

I *have* found my educational background to be quite useful in my line of work. You wouldn’t believe how often I’m hired to track down a wife or a girlfriend suspected of infidelity. (Shakes his head.) Jealous men. They never learn.

EVAN:

That seems really feminist of you. Trailing women around with a camcorder.

DETECTIVE:

I use a Go Pro, but you’re right. I’m much more comfortable when my clients are women. They call me sometimes, when they’ve got a stalker, or they feel like they’re in danger, from their spouse or a boyfriend.

EVAN:

The avenging hero. With his Go Pro. A Go Pro Hero.

DETECTIVE:

Hey. I’ve seen some stuff I wish I could unsee. Crimes of passion. The violence of a lover. Now I’m not saying that that’s what happened here. But, well, it’s hard when it does happen. …Hey. Did you know Olivia was seeing a psychiatrist?

EVAN:  
What?

DETECTIVE:

She had a standing appointment every Wednesday evening.

EVAN:

(Confusion.) I … was not aware of that.

DETECTIVE:

Any ideas what might have been troubling her so much?

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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:

Now, do you know where we take the first step when solving a murder mystery?

EVAN:

Nope. But I bet you do!

DETECTIVE:

The murder weapon. This gun. It was registered in your name.

EVAN:

It was my grandfather’s gun. My inheritance.

DETECTIVE:

You ever… play around with it much.

EVAN:

It sat inside the top drawer. Never really saw the light of day. I didn’t even know it had bullets. … Olivia wanted it gone. She said it made it feel like we were in danger.

(The moment softens.)

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. Washburne?

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:

Then who’s on the other side?

(They partake in a stare down. Evan goes back onto his computer, flipping through photographs of Olivia.)

DETECTIVE:

She was a beautiful lady.

(Evan plays a video of her singing.)

OLIVIA:

[Music]

(They sit in silence for a moment, soaking in the residue of her voice.)

EVAN:

What do you want to know, detective?

DETECTIVE:

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

EVAN:

Do you have any pieces that I don’t?

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

DETECTIVE:

What do you want to know?

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.)

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:

What are you? A philosophy major?

DETECTIVE:

I was, actually.

EVAN:

Is that what all philosophy majors do? Become private investigators?

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 the truth.

EVAN:

Hit me. What have you got, Nietzche?

(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.... (Pause, and then that moment where you arrive upon exactly what it is you want to tweet.) I want to curl up inside the curve of the fermata.

(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 sparrow stop in flight. I want to watch the sparrow fall out of the sky. There are thirteen ways of watching a sparrow 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, as an outpatient at Hillcrest Hospital?

OLIVIA:

Stop. Stop. Stop. Stop.

(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:

She had a standing appointment every Wednesday evening.

EVAN:

Why?

Thank you for your time, Mr. Hamilton. 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 take it. 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 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 exchange.) Poor little bird. You never liked surprises. What a shock, when the wind knocks you off-course.

EVAN:

(Asking the emptiness.) Why were you going to the doctor’s?

(He gets up and goes over to her computer, pushing her out of the way and taking her seat. Olivia stands and looks over his shoulder.)

OLIVIA:

Look at that. Pictures for our slideshow. You were such a cute baby. Look at those chubby little cheeks. Did you know I was making a slideshow? I had to ask your mom for those pictures….Mmm, okay. That might not be your cup of tea. I get it.

EVAN:

(Browsing, browsing, browsing.)

OLIVIA:

Internet history? You don’t think I clean that up? Oh, don’t go for that folder, baby. Not that one. There, that’s better. That’s a good one.

EVAN:

(Pauses and smiles at the screen.)

OLIVIA:

We were so young then, weren’t we? So young and poor and hopeful. Where did we take those pictures? Were we at the beach?

(Shadows of them playing at the beach run across the wall.)

OLIVIA:

There were seagulls at the beach. You held French fries above your head and they all came swooping down at us. I thought they were going to bite off your fingers.

EVAN:

I laughed at you for being scared of birds, and you said, “God damnit. They have talons.” And then…(He gets up and gets closer to the shadows)…and then, one of them brushed by your hair.

OLIVIA:

Nooo. It landed in my hair. It was going to build a nest and make a tree out of me. Or….wherever seagulls sleep.

EVAN:

You screamed, “Get it off! Get it off!” It was a full soprano scream. Probably scared the birds off for weeks. You grabbed me by the neck.

OLIVIA:

No. You took me by the hands. You touched my face.

EVAN:

You kissed me.

OLIVIA:

Liar. You kissed me first.

EVAN:

You didn’t want to go home. You wanted to stay out there all night.

(He sits down in the place of the male shadow. Next to the female shadow, who makes dramatic conversational gestures.)

OLIVIA:

You thought we were going to have sex. But I made you listen first.

EVAN:

We made a fire and watched it burn out. You told me the stories of all your favorite heroines.

OLIVIA:

You asked me why they all died such gruesome deaths.

(The female shadow stills and quiets down. As if she too is listening.)

EVAN:

There was Carmen, the untamable one. You liked Aida, who saved her country, but wouldn't save herself. And then Floria Tosca, an opera singer, too, made an exchange to save her lover, but she was tricked. You didn’t have a favorite role, though. You didn't want to be any of them.

OLIVIA:

I wanted to be a new role. A woman who survives.

EVAN:

You trained so hard you made me feel guilty. Writing was so ... capricious.

OLIVIA:

I told you you just had to do the work. And be ready for anything that came up. And be ready to give up everything when anything did.

EVAN:

I asked you what the hardest part was. You said it was all hard, but ...

OLIVIA:

... but you just had to remember how much you want it.

EVAN:

And then you lay down. And you pointed at the sunrise. (He turns to look at the female shadow.) Even then you were hiding things from me, weren’t you? Why couldn’t you tell me?

(The female shadow fades away, and Olivia exits the stage as well. Evan goes back to Olivia's computer. He begins composing a note.)

EVAN:

Where are you? Where the fuck are you? ... Please come back. I just want to talk to you. I just want to see you. … Come back here, you bitch! … Please. Please come back? I need to talk to you. I need to know you.

End of Scene 5.

EVAN AND OLIVIA SCENES:

EVAN ON HIS WEDDING DAY

(He has dressed Olivia up in her wedding dress and he is wearing his tux.)

EVAN:

Today's the day. All of our dreams come true today.

OLIVIA:

EVAN:

You make such a beautiful bride.

OLIVIA:

EVAN:

Remember, in Port Townsend? I got down on one knee. I said I was doomed to love you, so, if you could put me out of my misery, would you please just marry me?

OLIVIA:

EVAN:

No? You don't remember that? That's okay. It doesn't matter.

OLIVIA:

EVAN:

Almost time to get to the church. Are you ready?

OLIVIA:

EVAN:

What do you mean, you can't? Of course you can.

OLIVIA:

EVAN:

Don't be silly. How are we supposed to get married if you won't go outside?

OLIVIA:

EVAN:

Nothing will hurt you outside. I'll be with you. I'll be right by your side. I won't let anything hurt you. I promise.

OLIVIA:

EVAN:

Don't say that. You know I don't like it when you say that.

OLIVIA:

EVAN:

Stop saying that. It's not true. We're getting married today. Come on. Be happy! Just be happy for once!

OLIVIA:

EVAN:

Urggh! You fucking bitch! (He stands up and walks away from her for a moment, frustrated. When we turns back, all he sees is the dress, laid out on the bed.)

* Maybe this is where he has a more real reaction, something that shows that we can still save him. He knows he is dead, but he doesn't want to deal with it.
* Gavin wants to see him try to be natural in that scene where they’re preparing for the wedding, and a little bit of his frustration that she can’t be more responsive.
* If there is another scene before this that shows a conversation involving them where you see her speaking that reflects the way Evan has been tampering with her profile.
* What he would do if she disappears is that he would open the computer. Maybe he reaches into the computer, and he pulls a handful of dirt.

EVAN:

Where did you go?

(Silence.)

EVAN:

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. I was just — I just got a little bit upset, but I'm not mad at you. Come back here.

EVAN:

Please? Come back?

(He looks for her around the house. He doesn't find her, but he finds a doll's face or a mask coming out from underneath the grave. He kneels down and begins digging.)

EVAN IN THE UNDERWORLD

(When Evan first gets into the underworld, he sees Olivia performing on stage, kind of far away from him. But he can still watch and see her. When she's done, she bows, and he claps loudly for her. A whole chorus of claps rise up and echo around him. He motions towards her, but her face registers no recognition.)

EVAN:

Hey. Hey, Liv.

(She turns to go off stage/back stage.)

EVAN:

Hey, wait for me.

(He crawls up to the podium and steps behind the curtain as well, but back here, there is room of smoke and mirrors. A bunch of Olivias walk around him, sometimes appearing, then disappearing, then appearing again. At first this is beautiful for him. He is at peace here. But then he finds that he can't get any of them to stop and talk to him.)

EVAN:

Olivia... Are you playing hard to get? ... Hey. Hey, Hey. What do you say? ... Red light. Red light. Green light. RED LIGHT.... Groom to bride groom. Groom to bride groom ... Come on. You'll stop for me, right? Right?

(A knock overhead.)

BETH (off-stage):

Evan? Are you there?

EVAN:

(Calling back out. As he is distracted for a moment, all of the Olivias disappear.) Be right there. (To himself.) Where were we?

ADVERTISEMENT:

(Bursting forward.) Win 10,000 dollars! You can win 10,000 dollars! Win 10,000 dollars! You can win 10,000 dollars!

ADVERTISEMENT:

Warning. You have 171 incidents of Malware on your computer. Buy Ad Sweeper today, to clean off your hard drive.

(Evan waves both of them off and catches a glance of her skirt, turning around the corner.)

EVAN:

Hey. Hey. Stop. There you are.

OLIVIA:

(Turns around and smiles brightly.) Hello, friend. I'm so glad you're here.

EVAN:

Olivia, it's me.

OLIVIA:

Please, stay a while. We have so much to explore.

EVAN:

Come on, Liv. Talk to me.

OLIVIA:

For now, I will simply leave you with one of my favorite poems.

EVAN:

(Dejected, he drops a curtain over her and moves away. He turns back around and a sea of white and off-white envelopes fall from the sky. An ocean of voices murmur around him. He bends down and searches through the envelopes, but none of them are addressed to him.)

EVAN:

Why won't people learn to address their envelopes? Why send this all out there just so it'll get lost?

OLIVIA:

(She appears on the other side of the stage. Writing a letter.)

I just want to stop sometimes. I want the world to stop. I want there to be still point. A silence.

EVAN:

No. You stop. I'm not going to fall for this one again.

OLIVIA:

(Beat.) I want you to suck my tits. Kiss my breasts and bite your way down my stomach.

(This gets Evan's attention. He looks up at her.)

OLIVIA:

I want you to put my clit between your teeth. I want the tip of your tongue,

(They have a little sex scene, or almost sex scene, but Evan can't quite complete the coitus, because when he looks into the mirror, he can only see himself there. He lets go of sexy Olivia, who falls to the ground stiff as a board, and he keeps on digging into the Internet.)

* He is searching for her, because he can tell that she is slipping away. In the other scene, it seems like he doesn’t know that he is losing her.
* More of the sense of losing her in the previous scene.
* What we want at the end: Do we want him to find her essence at the end? So we need to find a few ways
* A bright and shiny beginning to it. A lot of bright lights.
* Find a way to make it so that he’s searching for her essence. It’s not clear what he is searching for. We don’t know that he’s looking for her soul. How to solve that?
* Animal in a corner of the cage kind of deal.
* If we keep the arc of her secret/suicide, he shouldn’t give up looking for the secret of her death.
* More sensory stuff. “I forget the way you smell or taste.”
* One thing about the letters: It kind of feels like Evan wouldn’t want to accept the letters when he finds them. Maybe he chooses to reject them afterward because they are not in line with his image of her.
* Also, the letters are physical, not in the Internet realm. Maybe they are burned. But then they are still existing in the Internet world.
* What we need right is what reveals the essence.
* Maybe part of the real world that he’s denying is that he’s trying to burn them, but there are so many around. Maybe Beth is aware of their existence. Maybe he can’t even read them because they are so difficult.
* Talking about smells makes Gavin think about the ties to the physical world. Smells are part of the physical world. You can’t smell or taste a physical person.