Scene 1

(EVAN and OLIVIA’s bedroom. Olivia undresses and gets ready for bed, rehearsing a song as she does so. Evan steps in and watches her. This is the last night he will spend with her while she is alive, but he has no idea. There were no signs.)

OLIVIA:

[MUSIC]

EVAN:

New tune?

OLIVIA:

Old tune. The lament of Ariana. It’s the only long remaining from Monteverdi’s second. *Lasciatemi morir.*

EVAN:

Sounds like a riot. Hey, did you send out the invitations today?

OLIVIA:

Mmhmm. Post office didn’t have any roses or ring stamps, so we got Snoopy instead. It was that or Abraham Lincoln.

EVAN:

You chose a cartoon dog rather than a former president representative of honesty and equality as the image that will forever brand our envelopes?

OLIVIA:

Lincoln — victim of assassination. Snoopy — proprietor of the happy dance. It seemed a little more celebratory.

EVAN:

Good point. What’s Lincoln doing on a stamp anyway? Snoopy it is.

So, invitations are sent. The world is alerted. No backing out now.

OLIVIA:

Cancel that one-way ticket to Peru.

EVAN:

Throw out that Carmen San Diego disguise.

OLIVIA:

Two more months.

EVAN:

Two more months.

(They get into bed.)

EVAN:

When we’re married, do you think we should get our initials carved into some kind of rubber stamp? We could get some fabric paint and glassware paint. That seems like the easiest way to monogram all our dishtowels and wine glasses, right? We should have our own seal, you know. All the properly married people do.

OLIVIA:

(Distracted.)

Uh-huh.

EVAN:

How were rehearsals?

OLIVIA:

They were good.

EVAN:

After the show is done, maybe we can take a trip somewhere.

OLIVIA:

We’re going to Paris in two months.

EVAN:

Just a small trip. A day trip. It’d be nice to spend a day with you.

OLIVIA:

Yeah. I guess that would be nice.

EVAN:

We could go back to that inn, in Cremona.

OLIVIA:

You hated Cremona.

EVAN:

And you found dusty flea markets and lopsided pottery unequivocally charming. I’ll never know why.

OLIVIA:

Thank you.

EVAN:

How was the rest of 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 vegetarian?

OLIVIA:

I had a lettuce tofu wrap instead.

EVAN:

Ahh, so you’ve only increased in your martyr status. Another pig has lived to see tomorrow. All because of you.

OLIVIA:

How was your day?

EVAN:

Uneventful. As per usual. Adulthood’s exciting the first five years. Then the tedium sets in. At least there’s Free Bagel 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:

Not tonight, please. I’m tired. It was a long day.

EVAN:

Okay.

OLIVIA:

I’m sorry. I love you.

EVAN:

I adore you.

OLIVIA:

I’ll see you in the morning.

EVAN:

Sleep well.

OLIVIA:

You, too. (Pause.) 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.

EVAN:

Did you get toppings? You got toppings, right?

OLIVIA:

Everything I could.

EVAN:

Good. That’s good. I’m happy for you.

OLIVIA:

I’m going to dream of hot dogs tonight.

EVAN:

You could dream of worse.

OLIVIA:

I’ll dream of you and I, eating hot dogs by the Arc de Triomphe.

EVAN:

Like Lady and the Tramp? With Django Reinhardt playing guitar in the background?

OLIVIA:

Precisely.

EVAN:

Leave the onions off mine, please.

OLIVIA:

Will do.

EVAN:

Hey. Tomorrow’s Third Wednesday. Can you run to the bank?

OLIVIA:

Sure. No problem.

EVAN:

Okay. Thanks, love. Good night.

OLIVIA:

Night.

(Lights off until the middle of the night. Lights up on Olivia as she sits up in bed and ponders Evan’s sleeping form.)

OLIVIA: I love you so much, baby. Will you please please remember that?

(She kisses him.)

(Olivia gets up and walks around the stage. She takes a gun out of a drawer and then curls up in a fetal position on the floor. It takes a while for her to press the trigger, but she does it, she puts that fucking bullet inside her brain. The sound of it jolts Evan awake.)

End of Scene 1.

Scene 2

(Two weeks later, both Evan and his apartment are in shambles. Evan is sitting in his bathrobe with his balls hanging out. Withered bouquets and deviled eggs left over from the funeral service sit around the apartment. The area where Olivia died exudes negative energy. Evan is drinking whiskey and building the greatest sugar cube castle in the world.)

BETH:

So, the wedding planner said she’ll handle everything. And she’ll only charge 15 percent of her fees. It’s not a bad deal.

EVAN:

Yeah. What a sweetheart, that one. Just like you.

BETH:

I picked up your mail. You got a few bills, and your work sent you an orchid. There’s a card. Do you want to look at it?

EVAN:

Nope. Those bastards can eat their heads.

BETH:

(Opens the card anyway.)

It says, “Dear Evan, We’re so sorry for your loss. We hope you’re recovering from this unfortunate incident and we know we’ll see you back on the bench soon. Please let Sally know how soon exactly. The retail accounts are really pushing right now. It's catalogue season. All our condolences.”

EVAN:

Yep. Bastards. Want an egg, Beth? This one’s got celery and dill. Here we’ve got original, with a dash of chili pepper. And THESE. These sick looking things have crab meat! They look green, but don’t be alarmed. It’s just the avocado. Avocado deviled eggs! Can you believe it?

BETH:

That's a new twist on an old classic.

EVAN:

You’re not kiddin’, sister. The world's just full of twists. One day you’re planning your honeymoon to Paris. The next you’re mopping up the pieces of your dead girlfriend’s brain. Never stop twisting, world.

BETH:

Did you eat any of the other left-overs? I brought a beef stroganoff. Should I heat it up?

EVAN:

No, no, Beth. You're too kind. Come sit down. I'm a terrible host.

BETH:

Olivia’s parents have stayed in town. They want to know what happened.

EVAN:

(Examining a sugar cube.)

Don’t we all.

BETH:

I mean, they hired someone. He came by my place this morning to ask me questions. About you.

EVAN:

Did you tell him all about my wit and my charm?

BETH:

I told him you would never hurt anybody. But then he asked me why you owned a gun.

EVAN:

(Leans his head back and squeezes his eyes shut for a long time.)

How does the sugar stay in such a perfect cube, do you think? Look at this thing. Just look at it. This is geometry.

BETH:

Did you know she was depressed? Did she ever…say anything?

EVAN:

Olivia wasn’t depressed, Beth. She was just a rotten bitch.

BETH:

Please don't say that.

EVAN:

Can I get you some tea? Coffee? Are you sure you don’t want an egg?

BETH:

Evan, I’m going to help you.

EVAN:

(Surprised, and a little light-hearted?.)

You’re already helping me. You’re keeping me alive, Beth.

BETH:

I want you to let me look through Olivia’s things. She must have left something behind.

EVAN:

She left lots of things behind. Look at all this crap she left behind. We should have a garage sale. Or a parking ramp sale, rather.

BETH:

We need something that discredits … that proves that she … oh, never mind. Is it okay if I look through her things?

EVAN:

Knock yourself out. Feel free to take some jewelry. Anything you’d like. She’s outgrown them now anyway.

BETH:

I need your help. I want to get access to her email account, and her other things online. Do you know her passwords?

EVAN:

A-B-C-1-2-3-all-I-want-is-a-bullet-in-me.

BETH:

They might be saved on her computer, if I can have her computer. You can also apply to get her email password, but with the investigation, it could be difficult.

EVAN:

Take the laptop. Take it all.

BETH:

They set up a memorial fund in her name, you know. Donations are being made to the music school downtown. They do musical therapy there, and give free lessons.

EVAN:

Great!

BETH:

I thought that would make you … feel better.

EVAN:

Couldn’t be happier.

BETH:

Evan, I have to go soon, but I found this number for you. I think it’d be good for you to talk to this woman.

EVAN:

(Looks at the card.)

She’s a psychotherapist. Named Candie.

BETH:

She’s very good at her job. The Internet says so. I think it’d be good for you to talk to someone.

EVAN:

Beth, you’re a peach. I toast you for your peachiness.

BETH:

Will you make sure you eat well tonight? And maybe, you know, you can think about taking a shower?

EVAN:

Of course. Of course.

BETH:

I’ll come by tomorrow, okay? And, if you need anything, just knock. I’m right next door. So if you need anything at all.

EVAN:

(Building onto his sugar cube castle.)

Beth is the best. This turret is for Beth.

BETH:

(Sighs.)

All right, Evan. Have a good night.

EVAN:

And a good night to you, Madame!

(Beth 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. Then he sits up and flings the robe across the room onto the area where Olivia died. He flips open his computer and looks through pictures of her, of the two of them together. He goes to her web site, where fans have left messages and posted videos. He finds her tour dates, and a video message that she posted to her fans.)

OLIVIA’S VIDEO:

Hi, friend. Thank you so much for stopping by my page. I’m so glad you’re here.

I’m Olivia Holland-Pryce, and if you’re here, you probably know that I’m a soprano at the Birchwood Conservatory of Classical and Contemporary Music, and you’re probably at least a little bit interested in my work.

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.

On my web page, you can find out more about me and listen to some of my work, so please, stay a while. We have so much to explore.

In these videos, I hope to share with you more of my thoughts on music and, in particular, the pieces that I perform. I hope this helps you to better connect with the music and to increase your understanding of my work at the Birchwood Conservatory. Thanks for listening!

For now, I’d just like to read you 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.

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.)

NOTE 1:

(On screen in text. Perhaps Evan reads it aloud 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:

~~Great. A regular Romeo. I hope he makes himself barf, too.~~ Gross! Gotta rinse my mouth out after that one.

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 taking a restive from the daily stressors of life. We can’t pay very much, but you are more than welcome to ALL of our amenities, including our cleansing mineral hot springs and our detoxifying sweat lodge. We hope very much that you can come visit us at the Happy Mountain Retreat and Recovery Center!

EVAN:

Memo got lost at the sweat lodge.

NOTE 3: Dear Mrs. Holland-Pryce, I write from the Monteverdi Institute in Bulgaria, as I have heard from colleagues that you will be making extended travel through Bulgaria. I have also heard that you are a talented prima donna, and so would like to correspond with you regarding teaching and performing opportunities with the Institute...

EVAN: Blah, blah, blah.

(He pulls up a large image of Olivia and studies it.)

EVAN:

You’re a beautiful wretched conniving transcendent stinking slut filth pit liar. 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. After the CD ends, the song continues. The voice seems to inhabit the whole space, echoing out from all corners. After the singing ends, 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, covered in the robe. The right side of her head is matted with blood. After taking some time to adjust back to the physical world, she steps or crawls 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 2.

Scene 3

(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. 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.

EVAN:

Balance. Right. (Takes a bite.)

DETECTIVE:

The gun that killed your fiancée — it was registered in your name. You don’t seem like the type to own a gun. When was the last time you shot a gun?

EVAN:

Haven’t shot one in my life.

DETECTIVE:

Your print was on the trigger. Interlaid with hers.

EVAN:

I bought that thing when I was eighteen. At a gun show with my grandfather. Almost forgot I had it.

DETECTIVE:

But Olivia knew you had it.

EVAN:

She said she didn’t want it in the house. She said that knowing it was close made her feel like we were in danger.

DETECTIVE:

But you forgot you had it.

EVAN:

(Studies the detective a moment.)

It’s not something that often saw the light of day.

(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? ~~What can you know? What can any of us know?~~

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 letting it splash 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.)

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

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 be honest.

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…. I want to curl up in the arc of the [what is that long symbol that denotes a long rest?)

(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, 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:

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 take it. You can probably 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. The 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:

Carmen was the one who….. You liked Aida, because she was ….. And Butterfly was…… , but she was weak and subservient. You didn’t have a favorite role you wanted to be.

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. Olivia watches Evan, and then slides back into the computer seat. She begins to type a long note, but does not narrate it. When she is done, she prints the letter out, and puts it in an envelope.)

End of Scene 3.

Scene 4

(Beth and Evan hang out in Evan's apartment. Beth does not have Olivia's computer. Evan is in an increasingly confused place. Beth tries to clean Evan's apartment.)

EVAN:

Beth, I will not allow you to clean my dishes. Please don't clean my dishes.

BETH:

I'm beginning to think that there are things living in your sink.

A mini kraken. Borne out of food bacteria.

EVAN:

I'll battle it down tomorrow.

BETH:

Should we throw out some of these eggs? I think that they're the main cause of the smell.

EVAN:

(Sniffs himself and smiles deprecatingly.) That's kind of you, Beth.

BETH:

(Throws a few things out and picks up Olivia's robe. She takes it and sits down with a heavy sigh.) It's so strange. To think that she's just gone. She's never coming back.

EVAN:

(Sits down next to her.)

BETH:

I'm so sorry, Evan. I'm just — that's all I can say.

~~EVAN:~~

~~Yeah. Hey. Did you ever find anything on her computer? You were looking through it, right?~~

~~BETH:~~

~~Um, yeah. I took a look.~~

~~EVAN:~~

~~Did you find anything unusual?~~

~~BETH:~~

~~(She is a bad liar.) No, not really. It felt strange, looking through her private things. It felt like I was violating her.~~

EVAN:

You give up your privacy when you die.

BETH:

She already gave up so much of her privacy just by being a little bit famous. Did she ever show you, the fanmail she received?

EVAN:

Sometimes. Not everything. There was this crazy guy for a while. He would send her pictures of his cat sitting on top of a piano or inside a violin case with captions like "Meow! I love your mew-mew-mew-sic" or "Your voice is fantasti-cat!" But then she got the agent and they made her contact info private. That took care of most of the weird ones.

BETH:

I never thought about what it might be like to be her. I was always just jealous of her.

EVAN:

You were jealous?

BETH:

(Nervously) Right. A little bit. Because she was so successful, you know? But, I guess, there's always more than meets the eye, right?

EVAN:

Was I a good man to her?

BETH:

(Startled.) What do you mean?

EVAN:

Was I good?

BETH:

You were wonderful.

EVAN:

But. Not good enough.

BETH:

You were wonderful.

EVAN:

How did I not know then?

BETH:

None of us knew. No one in their wildest dreams would ever have imagined it. Look at how shocked everyone is. Her parents hired a detective!

EVAN:

What did I do wrong?

BETH:

You didn't do anything wrong. You didn't.

(She raises a hand to touch him, but then changes her mind. It is not her place to touch him.)

BETH:

It's not your fault, Evan. I swear to you. None of it is your fault. Olivia was troubled. There were things, in her life. She had her own demons.

EVAN:

She never told me. She never told any of it to me.

BETH:

Maybe she just couldn't.

EVAN:

Maybe I didn't listen. That was all she ever wanted. For people to listen.

BETH:

Evan, I think...there's...Don't be so hard on yourself, okay? It's not your fault.

(Evan starts to cry. Beth is uncertain how she fits into this particular moment. She squeezes his hand, but there is like a force field preventing any further intimacy.)

BETH:

I should go. I'll come back tomorrow, okay?

EVAN:

Wait. Please don't go. I'm sorry. Please? Stay?

BETH:

("Do I get myself into this?") Okay. I'll stay.

EVAN:

Thank you.

(She sits down next to him again. Neither knows how to proceed.)

EVAN:

Do you want to play cards?

BETH:

(At the same time.) Let me clean up a little.

(Beth gets up and engages herself in sweeping or some other cleaning activity. Evan watches her, then watches his hands. Beth eventually finds herself standing in front of The Stain. She doesn't know what to do about it.)

BETH:

Do you think...? Should I call a carpet cleaner for you?

EVAN:

Olivia wanted to clean the carpet once. She thought she was allergic, like it was making her throat itch. I told her she was being neurotic. We'd buy a house soon. But she never even wanted to move. She said she'd never found a bathroom with such great acoustics.

(He picks up a sugar cube with shaky fingers.)

BETH:

("Okay. Touchy subject.") Okay, forget that. I'll just ... pretend it's not there.

EVAN:

Sometimes I hear her, you know? Singing in the bathroom. She's all over the place.

BETH:

Maybe you should have that garage sale. Or, you know, start to get rid of some of her things.

EVAN:

I know. I'm just, so tired.

BETH:

Go to sleep, then. I'll be here.

EVAN:

You will?

BETH:

Yeah. I won't leave you.

EVAN:

Thank you, Beth.

(Some time passes and Evan is asleep on the couch. Beth covers him with a Navajo blanket. She sits down on the ground next to the couch, or maybe on a loveseat. Soon she is asleep as well. Some unearthly, but also not very digitally manipulated, music begins to waft into the air. Evan wakes and sits up. A light appears in the bathroom. Water begins to run. The singing gets louder. Evan walks over and opens the door, careful not to wake Beth. When he does, he sees a female profile shadowed behind the shower curtain. The voice in the music becomes clearer. Evan watches but does not disturb her. After a while, a male figure springs up from behind the shower curtain as well. The two figures begin to talk and kiss, but their voices and the sound of the water seem to bounce across the whole space, not confined to the country of the tub.)

MALE FIGURE:

Let me soap you. You're so lovely. How did you get so lovely?

FEMALE FIGURE:

It took a lot of hard work and dedication. No dithering around here.

MALE FIGURE:

I love being with you like this. Nothing between us. Everything washed off. No makeup, no costumes. You're just you.

FEMALE FIGURE:

I don't even know who I am anymore.

MALE FIGURE:

You're just you. I love you.

FEMALE:

I love you, too.

MALE FIGURE:

(Begins kissing more aggressively.)

FEMALE:

When I was little, I loved watching my mom put her makeup on. She called it making her face. Sometimes she put makeup on me, too. But once we were at the beach, it was hot, and her makeup started to melt. She used surgical makeup. A lot of it. And it started sliding off her face, like ice cream dripping down. It was horrible. I dream about it still. My face sliding off. And nothing underneath the makeup but a dark hole.

MALE FIGURE:

Your face isn't going to slide off. Your face is beautiful. I'd lick your face if it were ice cream.

FEMALE FIGURE:

Oh! Stop that.

MALE FIGURE:

What flavor ice cream would you be? Something sweet, but tangy.

FEMALE FIGURE:

Mango?

MALE FIGURE:

Passion fruit.

FEMALE FIGURE:

You'd be pistachio. Or pecan. Something nutty.

MALE FIGURE:

Hmmm.

(He gets on his knees to eat her out. Then kisses his way back up.)

MALE FIGURE:

I can't get enough of you.

FEMALE FIGURE:

I want you inside me.

(Sloppy shower sex ensues.)

MALE FIGURE:

I want to stay like this forever.

FEMALE FIGURE:

(Something changes in her voice.)

You can't. You have to go back to where you belong.

(A beat.)

MALE FIGURE:

That doesn't belong here.

FEMALE FIGURE:

Neither do you.

MALE FIGURE:

Don't talk. No more talking. Just touching. Just feeling.

(He renews this escapade with vigor, gaining in momentum and pleasure as she becomes more and more detached.)

FEMALE FIGURE:

You can't stay here. There's no place for you here. No place for either of us.

MALE FIGURE:

I don't care. I just — uhnn.

FEMALE FIGURE:

They're trying to scrub me out. Rub me down with bleach and alcohol.

MALE FIGURE:

Oh God. Oh God. Stop talking.

~~FEMALE FIGURE:~~

~~I'm going to drown.~~

~~MALE FIGURE:~~

~~I'm going to come.~~

FEMALE FIGURE:

The metronome is clicking. One two three four. One two three four. You have to count the note to the very end. There's no coda in this one. There's no break. There's no —

MALE FIGURE:

Be quiet. Just be quiet. (Covers her mouth with his hand.)

FEMALE FIGURE:

(Shrugs his hand off. Whispers.) We're almost at the end again... one... two... three...

MALE FIGURE:

Ah ... ahh ... ah ...

(A gun explodes. Blood splatters over the shower curtain. The female figure slumps against the male figure.)

EVAN:

Don't! No!

(Olivia creeps up behind him.)

OLIVIA:

It's okay, darling. I got out.

EVAN:

(Whips around at the sound of her voice. Shock and disbelief slowly turn into joy.)

You're home.

(Lights out.)

SCENE 6

(Evan and Olivia sit next to each other on the floor of the bathroom. The blood on the shower curtain has been washed away. Beth, unseen, sleeps in the living room.)

EVAN:

Does it hurt?

OLIVIA:

(Touches the wound on the right side of her head.)

Not really. It's just uncomfortable. It's like I've got a splinter in there, and I can't dig it out.

EVAN:

It went in deep, huh?

OLIVIA:

I guess so.

EVAN:

I could get tweezers. Do you want to try tweezers? That's how they do it in hospitals, right?

OLIVIA:

Calm down. I'm fine. You don't have to worry.

EVAN:

I don't have to worry? You — you just — do you know what you did?

OLIVIA:

I can't stay long. Let's not fight.

EVAN:

Why can't you stay? Where are you going?

OLIVIA:

I don't know. London. France. Bulgaria?

EVAN:

Why did you leave me?

OLIVIA:

(Staunchly.)

It wasn't intentional. It was just — it was just a mistake.

EVAN:

It can happen to anyone.

OLIVIA:

Exactly.

EVAN:

I missed you.

OLIVIA:

I missed you so much.

EVAN:

Seventeen days. You've been gone seventeen days.

OLIVIA:

Those days made some lines on your face. I'm so sorry.

EVAN:

Why did you do it?

OLIVIA:

(Shakes her head.) I don't know. I'm like a song that got misarranged, and half the notes went missing. They’re lost underneath the couch.

EVAN:

You're keeping things from me. You always were. I found your letters. Were they for me? Did you leave them for me?

OLIVIA:

I used to write a journal. But then I realized that no one would ever read it. So I started writing letters, instead. Sometimes even e-mails. I never addressed them to anyone, though.

EVAN:

What did they even mean?

OLIVIA:

Do you remember Cremona? The crooked pottery and dusty flea markets? Do you know why I liked it so much? We had a fight there.

EVAN:

That's why you liked it?

OLIVIA:

You don't remember. It was when we were walking by the marina, and you told me I should try pottery, and I said, I didn't have time for anything but music. And we argued about “the place of art” in our lives. You said I revered it too much, and I said you couldn't be a poet and a copywriter both, and that a serious poet would never have children, because they wouldn't want to bring their children into such a cruel world. And then you said I was full of romantic bullshit, and we fought, and in the end you said, "Let's just stop. None of this will change the fact that I'm doomed to love you." And then you pecked my cheek like a little bird.

EVAN:

I do remember that.

OLIVIA:

That was the first time you told me you loved me. (Laughs.) I'm such a silly girl. A stupid, silly girl.

EVAN:

You're not stupid. Sometimes you're stupid.

OLIVIA:

I couldn't breathe. I would get so scared. Out of nowhere. This fear would curl up in me. And I’d just want to stop.

EVAN:

Why didn't you tell me? I would have helped you. What were you afraid of?

OLIVIA:

Of the future.

EVAN:

Of us? Of the wedding?

OLIVIA:

No. Just the unknown. The door that hasn't been opened. Do you know I have this dream? I had it the night before my first audition. When I was, like, sixteen. And it hasn't gone away since. I'm about to get on stage, and I have my sheet music, and I'm wearing my grandmother's white dress. So I step onto the stage, clutching my music, and the audience starts laughing at me. Everyone is laughing. (Insert bizarro laugh track and strange stage music.) The auditorium is endless. It stretches forever. I try to run away, but I can't move, because suddenly there are strings attached to my arms and legs. I'm a puppet. And everyone is pointing and laughing. (Another wave of bizarro laughter). And that's the future.

EVAN:

No. The future is us, together. Our marriage. Our kids. Our mortgage bill and family vacations and retirement plan. Our condo in sunny Florida. Is that what you're afraid of? Normal, mundane life creeping its normal pace forward?

OLIVIA:

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

EVAN:

What is so bad about tomorrow? What is so fucking bad about tomorrow?

OLIVIA:

Sometimes I didn't even want to sing. I hate stepping onto the stage. Did you know that? I hate that moment in between, when I’m still me but I’m not me, and I’m about to be someone else, but it’s not just anyone, it’s —

EVAN:

Answer the question.

BETH:

Evan?

(Evan turns around and finds Beth peering in.)

BETH:

Is everything okay? I heard you ... shouting.

EVAN:

I ... (He looks back at Olivia.) I'm just losing my mind.

BETH:

It's okay, Evan. I know this must be so hard for you. You can — Whatever you need, you should just do it.

OLIVIA:

You're in the audience, too. You’ve got box seats. You’re in the middle of everyone. You’re sitting next to her.

EVAN:

None of this makes any sense.

OLIVIA:

You talk to her so loudly I can overhear what you say. "What a waste," you say. "Did you know she's been waiting for this her whole life?" And then you laugh. And you say, "I just can't stop laughing. I'm crying!"

BETH:

Maybe it will never make sense.

OLIVIA:

No, it doesn’t make sense, does it? But isn’t it nice? Isn’t it nice to be able to *talk* like this?

EVAN:

(Laughs.)

BETH:

Evan?

EVAN:

I just can't stop laughing. I'm crying.

OLIVIA:

In my dream, you shout up to me, "Is this what you've worked for?" "Is this what your life is about?" And then you turn to her again. "What a waste," you say. "Did you know she's been –"

BETH:

Come on, Evan. Get up from there.

OLIVIA:

"Did you know she's been waiting for this her whole life?"

BETH:

Get up. Let's get you back to bed. (She touches his shoulder, and he grabs onto her hand like it's the rope on his lifeline.) It's okay. It's going to be okay.

EVAN:

How will it be okay?

BETH:

You just...you just have to stop looking behind you. And slowly it'll become part of the past.

OLIVIA:

We don't have a future, Evan. One little bullet blew it all up. All we have is history. But didn't we have a beautiful history?

BETH:

Come on. Stop reliving it. Stop looking back. It wasn't your fault. And you couldn't have done a thing to change it.

OLIVIA:

Remember Cremona? Remember the vineyard? Remember busking? Remember Chopin? Remember Pioneer Square in the rain?

BETH:

~~Bury her.~~ She wanted to leave. So let her go.

OLIVIA:

Remember Christmas?...Remember sunrise on the beach?... Remember...?

(Beth leads Evan back outside. They walk past the stain on the carpet.)

BETH:

Let's clean this up.

(Together Beth and Evan make a mound of dirt over the blood stain. They plant the various flowers strewn around the house into the dirt.)

BETH:

I hope she rests in peace.

(From the bathroom, Olivia looks out at them.)

Scene XXX

(Evan has just called Beth over after her session with the Detective, in which she poses as Olivia to converse with a mysterious stalker.)

BETH:

Evan? What is it? Is everything okay?

EVAN:

Look! (Proudly gestures at the clean apartment and the pile of Olivia’s clothing, shoes, jewelry, photographs, sheet music, and bathrobe next to her garden grave.) I cleaned up!

BETH:

Oh.

EVAN:

Isn’t it great? My clothes — they actually fit in the closet now. And I rearranged the furniture a little.

BETH:

That’s … nice.

EVAN:

I’m no interior designer, but I’d say this is catalogue-worthy.

BETH:

Did you call me over just to show me this?

EVAN:

I’m sorry. Were you in the middle of something?

BETH:

(Shakes her head.) Of course not.

EVAN:

I also wanted to thank you. I made you dinner.

BETH:

You cooked for me?

EVAN:

Well, cook is a strong word. But yes, I cooked. Loosely. We’ve got salad, quiche lorraine, and beef stroganoff.

BETH:

Oh.

EVAN:

Some of it are, uh, leftovers. But I didn’t think you’d mind.

BETH:

It’s the thought that counts.

EVAN:

The detective called. He said that the investigation is off. And that I should take it easy and put the past behind me. Let things fall where they fall. So … cheers to that.

BETH:

(Smiles weakly.) Cheers. Did he, um, say anything else?

EVAN:

Yeah, I think he mentioned something about Sisyphus and the Rock and nobody being strangers or something or other. Funny guy, that one. Hey! I got the reels of this Japanese game show. Nothing more hilarious, right?

BETH:

The ones Olivia didn’t want to watch?

EVAN:

Well, she didn’t have a great sense of humor. Took things too seriously, most of the time. But you and I, we should dig into this.

BETH:

Okay. Sure.

EVAN:

Great. Just let me grab our food.

(Evan runs off stage to retrieve the plates of food. Beth wanders over to the pile. She picks up a necklace of Olivia’s, studies it, and then pockets it.)

EVAN:

What are you doing?

BETH:

Nothing! I, um —

EVAN:

Sit down. Sit down. Look at how impeccable this couch is.

(They seat themselves and he starts the video. Muffled Japanese comes out of the screen. Evan smiles broadly at the screen, but Beth has a hard time focusing.)

BETH:

Evan. What do you think…?

EVAN:

What do I think of what?

BETH:

Nothing. This food is delicious.

EVAN:

Well, I can’t really take credit, but thank you.

BETH:

I just…Sometimes I just wonder what she was thinking.

EVAN:

We buried her, remember? No more talking about her.

BETH:  
You’re right.

EVAN:

To letting things lie.

(Beth smiles and sips. A lot.)

EVAN:

God. Look at these guys. Do they know everyone is watching?

BETH:

I don’t know. Maybe it’s hidden camera or something.

(The two of them laugh. Evan pours out more wine.)

EVAN:

Oh, man. Check out that girl.

(Perhaps they could stare out at the audience with a screen glow on their faces and comment on things they did?)

BETH:

Must be weird. Knowing that everyone’s going to see what you do.

EVAN:

Like being an ant.

BETH:

Do you think that’s how she felt? Being on stage and posting those videos and things online?

EVAN:

Beth.

BETH:

Right. Sorry. I was just thinking about her today. I’m glad you’re doing better, Evan. What was her favorite color?

EVAN:

(Not looking away from the screen.) Thanks, me too.

(They laugh once more. Evan tries to pour more wine, but it is empty.)

EVAN:

Be right back. No need to pause it.

BETH:

Oh, God. This guy. He just cracks me up.

EVAN:

I know! Isn’t it great? (He grabs another bottle, and still chuckling, stops in front of the grave. He crouches down and brushes some dirt away, revealing Olivia’s resting face. Smiling, he looks down at it.) It’s just wonderful.

End of Scene XXX

Scene 999

(Logan and Beth have been creating a new Olivia who is both more docile and vindictive. While walking past his patch of earth, Evan discovers a porcelain doll’s face in place of Olivia’s. \*Olivia is off-screen for this entire scene.)

EVAN:

(On the phone.) Okay. Sounds great, Beth. You’re right. I think a nice afternoon would be good for me, too… Yeah, absolutely. I — (Sees the doll.) Sorry. What did you say? Uh huh. — Hey. I have to call you back, okay?

(He crouches down and claws the dirt away, revealing a porcelain doll in a white dress, or in Olivia’s robe. He takes it out and studies it a moment, then throws it aside and goes to look for her in the bathroom.)

EVAN:

Where did you go? Are you playing games with me?

OLIVIA:

(Off-stage) Don’t accuse me of playing games. You’re the one playing games.

EVAN:

Hide and seek. Is that your game?

OLIVIA:

(Off-stage) If you’re doing both the hiding and the seeking.

EVAN:

(Crouches down by the grave again.) What was wrong with this? It was nice like this. You had flowers. You had worms. You had all the quiet you needed.

OLIVIA:

(Off-stage) You know I was never there. You couldn’t keep me there.

EVAN:

You go wherever you want to go. You're free now.

(A music swells from below the grave.)

OLIVIA:

I chose to go away from you. For that, I am sorry.

EVAN:

Are you?

OLIVIA:

If I could do it over…

EVAN:

It’s not too late.

OLIVIA:

Oh, yes it is. You buried me. Bury me again.

EVAN:

We — We can’t have it all, but we can have something.

OLIVIA:

Don’t listen to that sweet make-believe.

EVAN:

(Covers his head up in his arms.)

OLIVIA:

You’re doing well, baby. Go outside in the sun. Put that faceless doll back inside the dirt and cover up the hole. Don’t mind me. You’ve still got tomorrow to get to.

EVAN:

Beth. I need to call Beth.

(He dials her number, and we hear the phone ring, and ring, and ring, but no one picks up.)

(Lights up on Beth, who is sitting mesmerized in front of her computer, trying and failing to type. Finally she types, and the ringing stops.)

BETH:

Hi. It’s me. Olivia. Are you still there?

(Lights up on Logan on the other side of the stage.)

LOGAN:

I’m here. I don’t get out very much.

(They do their thing and Olivia is created in the space between Logan and Beth. She stumbles forward in a white dress that is slowly decomposing along with her body. Her first movements are stiff. Her hair is matted with dirt and sticks and her wound seems to have grown bigger, or more rotten. She pulls a worm out of her nostril. Later, she begins to sing to Logan. Her song floats over to Evan. Evan talks to her voice while she continues to hover on stage behind or near him, singing.)

EVAN:

I hear you. You sing to them online. You leave them notes. Why won’t you … why won’t you leave something for me?

OLIVIA:

You have to let go, baby. I know it’s hard.

EVAN:

I hear you but I don’t know where you are.

OLIVIA:

I’m nowhere. I’m everywhere. But that’s okay. I’ve gotten used to it.

EVAN:

How can I be with you?

OLIVIA:

Stop looking for me. I don’t want you with me. I just want you to remember me. Like this.

EVAN:

Are you in pain? Does it hurt? Are you cold? You hate being cold.

OLIVIA:

I’m not cold. I’m okay. It’s not so bad.

EVAN:

(Begins digging in the dirt again.) I just want to see your face again. Just one more look, okay? One glimpse. Then I’ll cover you up.

OLIVIA:

Don’t. No. Don’t come looking for me.

EVAN:

Shh. It’ll be okay. One look. That’s all. I won’t disturb you.

OLIVIA:

No. No, no no.

EVAN:

It won’t take long at all.

(He keeps digging, into an endless hole.)

(Logan and Beth and Olivia continue to talk. Perhaps Logan masturbates or has sex with Olivia? But with Evan’s arrival, Olivia breaks free of them, until they have no more control over her.)

OLIVIA:

(Looks up and seeing Evan.) You came.

EVAN:

Did you ever doubt that I would?

OLIVIA:

I told you not to.

EVAN:

Like I could stay away.

EVAN:

What is this place?

OLIVIA:

(Looking around.) Some kind of heaven.

(Beth and Logan talk in the background.)

EVAN:

There are voices.

OLIVIA:

It’s a very crowded heaven. Sometimes you can’t help but overhear things.

…

Evan and Olivia talk about what they could have had together. As they talk, things appear. It’s all very beautiful. Logan perhaps watches from behind a pillar. Olivia tells Evan it’s time for him to go, but he doesn’t want to. Overhead, we can hear Beth talking to Evan. Evan ignores her, and stays with Olivia. They embrace. Stage is super vivid and alive, but then it fades away. Evan is lying over the patch of earth on Olivia’s grave. Flowers have bloomed around him. Beth kneels nearby and sobs.

End of Play.