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Fire Island

by CHARLES L. MEE

This play is written to be performed on stage,
as a film,
and on the internet.

First, here is an indication of one way it could be done on stage,
And, after this, is a suggestion of one way it can be done on the internet.

For the stage,
there is a big screen filling the entire back wall.
The screen will be greatly obscured by set pieces,
but around the corners of the set pieces,
and for the entirety of the play
can be seen a projected Hollywood romance,
perhaps Casablanca or some other film in the public domain.

There is another large screen on the stage,
and two small television sets.

It could be that one of the television sets has another movie on
for the entirety of the play,
or it shows us the beach
for the whole of the play,
or it goes from beach to movie to golf tournament, etc.

At the opening of the play,
on the large onstage screen,
we see a movie of the first scene of the play (see the dialogue below).

It takes place on the ferry going to Fire Island
and follows these two characters as they get off the ferry
and walk along the boardwalk
to the summer house where most of the play will take place.

Just inside the theatre door,
the two actors are picked up, as they enter, by a live videographer
who follows them onstage,
filming them (and following them) as they walk onstage and finish the scene.

There is a second couple in the living room ,
and they pick up with the second scene
as the first couple passes through the room-
the woman going off, as she says, to get a cup of coffee,
the man standing, uncertainly for a moment,
and then taking his suitcase to another room.

And the second couple gives way to a third couple coming in from the beach.

And, at the end of the third couple's scene,
the woman from the third couple sits down in the living room,
and watches the fourth couple do their scene on the television.

And then the videographer is filming, live,
the fifth couple in the bedroom
and that film is shown on the large onstage screen.

And that gives way to the sixth couple live onstage.

And the seventh couple might simply be overheard as voiceovers
while the camera pans the beach.

So we have then, for example:

A couple walking on the beach.
Another couple on the beach.
A couple having drinks on the porch.
A couple in the ocean waves.
A couple in a bar.
Another couple on the beach.
A couple at dinner.
A couple on the porch in the evening.
A couple in bed together.
Another couple in bed together?
And so forth.
Some on stage, some on television, some on the bigger screen.

We see some couples we have seen before
in the background of the new couples scenes.

And, as we go along,
we return to some of the couples,
for a second or third scene.

In this way, the scenes tumble on, one after another,
in the house, outside the house, on the beach,
offstage—in a bedroom, for example,
and sometimes in what is frankly seen as a dressing room.

The last scene will then be filmed
so that we see the last couple leave the house,
after their weekend on Fire Island,
walk along the boardwalk,
and get back on the ferry.

FOR THE FILM:

The film wants to feel like a single, continuous tracking shot,
moving from couple to couple without a break.
An inexpensive, handheld, digital film.

FOR THE INTERNET:

Once these scenes have been filmed,
they can be put on the internet
in such a way that we see what are the first and last scenes
that frame the event as a whole,

but the other scenes can be called up at will, at random,

sometimes simultaneously on split screens
so that, among other things,
we can listen to one scene, while we watch another.

For the internet, too,
animations, popups, scene and character lists (for navigation)
and other features can be added,
and, with the dialogue shown on the screen,
or with new dialogue they write themselves,
people can also film their own boy/girl, boy/boy, girl/girl scenes-
with the little camera eye on their imacs or on their cell phones
and put them into the play.

Or they can join in a scene already filmed,
So that they dub themselves in for the dialogue
With one of the actors or actresses in the film.

And then, too, there are the random scenes
That come in any order,
Not because they are part of any particular story
But because they are part of the whole story,
And we know what they mean:

1. We see a woman walking on the beach weeping, while we hear a love song.
2. Or we see her walk into the ocean while we hear a love song.
3. We see a woman throwing three hundred plates and glasses against a wall.
4. We see a door in its frame-no room, no building, just a door in a free-standing frame, and a guy slams it, then another guy comes along and slams it, then a woman slams it, then a guy slams it over and over and over, then a guy looks at a woman, and steps through the door, slamming it behind him, and so forth.
5. A guy has a wooden box on the porch; he breaks one wine bottle after another by throwing it into the box-two dozen wine bottles-and then he sticks his head down into the box.
6. A woman lies on her back, seemingly comatose, a TV on her stomach.
7. A woman in a nice black dress
Comes into the living room,
Picks up the floor lamp
and dances with it to a love song.
8. A woman in bikini underwear runs through the living room and out,
Runs back through the living room and out,
Back through the living room and out,
Back through the living room and out onto the porch,
down the path to the beech,
while Yesterday plays.
9. A woman lifts her dress up above her head
hiding her upper body entirely
exposing herself from the waist down
and takes a long, slow exit from the living room.
10. A woman stands looking
at a man who throws himself repeatedly to the floor.
Finally she throws herself to the floor along with him.
But at last she leaves,
leaving him to go on until he is exhausted.
11. Guys on the beach
go into a football huddle-
while the football lies in the middle of the huddle.
Then they all grapple violently in the huddle with the ball and fall down-
and just that is the football play
12. 2 guys jump up and down

up and down
up and down
mostly harmoniously, and happily, not competitively.
13. A bunch of guys sit on plastic chairs on a lawn
Or on the beach,
Looking out at the water,
Listening to deafening music.
A woman walks among the guys,
yelling about something, but the deafening music drowns her out.
14. A guy in a clown outfit stops a woman on the beach,
not letting her pass,
gesturing at his cheek until she finally puckers up to kiss his cheek
and he turns his head and kisses her full on the mouth.
15. A guy on the beach
in a wet suit with suspenders holding a wash tub around his waist
And a shower over his head
carrying a placard saying: Don Quixote.
16. A clown on his hands and knees barking at a dog
17. An Asian woman appears in the living room in a chinky/junky outfit
looking like one of the dancers from the Strange Mushroom company.
She looks at herself in a full-length mirror.
And then she leaves.
She returns a few moments later in a red shirt, white undies
with a pillow in her arms
and turns abruptly and leaves at once.
She returns wearing a white shirt and tie and glasses
like an office worker—
as though, all this time,
she has been trying out identities that will be acceptable.
Finally she returns for the last time
this time only in white underpants.
18. 3 naked people at a dinner table
—and one woman at the table in evening clothes:
a snapshot of weekend society.
19. A long piano solo under the stars.
A vast, empty, dark space full of heartache.
.....and so forth.

Of course, for the stage version,
these performance pieces can be seen on the television screens,
or they can be done live in the intervals between the couples' scenes.

Or not.

MUSIC:

For music throughout the piece,
as background songs,
and, sometimes, as songs for a couple to dance by,
in the living room or on the beach,
or to stroll on the beach,
certainly for an opening song
while we are on the ferry
and at the end, when we are on the ferry again,
one good possibility is all the songs by one person:
the incredibly deep-voiced throat singer from the Russian Federation of Tuva,
Albert Kuvezin and Yat-Kha
doing covers of
Love Will Tear Us Apart,
Ramblin Man,
Her Eyes Are a Blue Million Miles
When the Levee Breaks
and Play With Fire.

Or not.

1. Lydia and Nikos

Nikos and Lydia
are talking as they arrive
and get settled.

NIKOS

I thought,
I've always liked you, Lydia
seeing you with your sisters
sometimes in the summers
when our families would get together at the beach.
I thought you were fun, and funny
and really good at volleyball

LYDIA

Volleyball?

NIKOS

which I thought showed you have a
well,
a natural grace
and beauty
and a lot of energy.

LYDIA

Oh.

NIKOS

And it's not that I thought I fell in love with you at the time
or that I've been like a stalker or something in the background
all these years.

LYDIA

No, I never....

NIKOS

But really, over the years,
I've thought back from time to time
how good it felt just to be around you.

LYDIA

Oh.

NIKOS

And so I thought: well, maybe this is an okay way
to have a marriage

LYDIA

A marriage.

NIKOS

to start out
not in a romantic way, but
as a friendship

LYDIA

Oh.

NIKOS

because I admire you

and I thought perhaps this might grow
into something deeper
and longer lasting

LYDIA

Oh.

NIKOS

but maybe this isn't quite the thing you want
and really I don't want to force myself on you
you should be free to choose
I mean: obviously.

LYDIA

Thank you.

NIKOS

Although I think I should say
what began as friendship for me
and a sort of distant, even inattentive regard
has grown into a passion already

LYDIA

A passion.

NIKOS

I don't know how
or where it came from, or when
but somehow the more I felt this admiration
and, well, pleasure in you

LYDIA

Pleasure.

NIKOS

seeing you become the person that you are
I think a thoughtful person and smart
and it seems to me funny and warm

LYDIA

Funny.

NIKOS

and passionate, I mean about the things
I heard you talk about in school
a movie or playing the piano
I saw you one night at a cafe by the harbor
drinking almond nectar
and I saw that happiness made you raucous.
And I myself don't want to have a relationship
that's cool or distant
I want a love really that's all-consuming
that consumes my whole life

LYDIA

Your whole life.

NIKOS

and the longer the sense of you has lived with me
the more it has grown into a longing for you
so I wish you'd consider
maybe not marriage
because it's true you hardly know me
but a kind of courtship

LYDIA

A courtship.

NIKOS

or, maybe you'd just I don't know
go sailing with me or see a movie

LYDIA

Gee, Nikos,
you seem to talk a lot.

NIKOS

I talk too much.
I'm sorry.

LYDIA

Sometimes it seems to me
men get all caught up
in what they're doing
and they forget to take a moment
and look around
and see what effect they're having
on other people.

NIKOS

That's true.

LYDIA

They get on a roll.

NIKOS

I do that sometimes.
I wish I didn't.
But I get started on a sentence,
and that leads to another sentence,
and then, the first thing I know,
I'm just trying to work it through,
the logic of it,
follow it through to the end
because I think,
if I stop,
or if I don't get through to the end
before someone interrupts me
they won't understand what I'm saying
and what I'm saying isn't necessarily wrong-
it might be, but not necessarily,

and if it is, I'll be glad to be corrected,
or change my mind-
but if I get stopped along the way
I get confused
I don't remember where I was
or how to get back to the end of what I was saying.

LYDIA

I understand.

NIKOS

And I think sometimes I scare people
because of it
they think I'm so, like determined
just barging ahead-
not really a sensitive person,
whereas, in truth,
I am.

LYDIA

I know.

I'm getting a cup of coffee, Nikos.

NIKOS

Now?

[she puts a hand reassuringly on his arm—
she's genuinely friendly and warm towards him]

LYDIA

I'll be right back.

[he is left alone

to his amazement
he overhears two other people having a conversation
on almost the same subject he has just been having]

2. Henry and Yvette

[they speak with French or Spanish accents]

HENRY

I wonder:

would you marry me

or

would you have a coffee with me

and think of having a conversation

that would lead to marriage?

YVETTE

Oh.

Well,

a coffee with you

I would have a coffee with you.

HENRY

You are free now?

YVETTE

Free now? No, well, no

right now

I am busy.

HENRY

OK then maybe later this evening?

YVETTE

Well, later this evening also I am busy.

HENRY

Or late supper.

Or breakfast tomorrow

or lunch or tea in the afternoon

or a movie

or dinner the day after

Thursday for lunch

or Friday dinner
or perhaps you would go for the weekend with me
to my parents' home in Provence
or we could stop along the way
and find a little place for ourselves
to be alone.

YVETTE

I don't think I can be alone.

HENRY

With me?

Or by yourself?

You don't like to be alone by yourself?

YVETTE

No, I mean with you this weekend.

HENRY

Oh.

Or then just we could

have coffee over and over again

every day

until we get to know one another

and we have the passage of the seasons

in the cafe

we could celebrate our anniversary

and then perhaps you would forget

that you are not married to me

and we can have a child.

YVETTE

A child?

HENRY

Because

don't you think

after we have been together for a year

it will be time to start to think of these things?

YVETTE

We haven't been together for a day.

HENRY

You know, I have known many women.
I mean, I don't mean to say....

YVETTE

No.

HENRY

I mean just
you know
my mother, my grandmother
my sisters
and also women I have known romantically
and then, too, friends,
and even merely acquaintances
but you know
in life
one meets many people
and it seems to me
we know so much of another person
in the first few moments we meet
not from what a person says alone
but from the way they hold their head
how they listen
what they do with their hand as they speak
or when they are silent
and years later
when these two people break up
they say
I should have known from the beginning
in truth
I did know from the beginning
I saw it in her, or in him
the moment we met
but I tried to repress the knowledge
because it wasn't useful at the time

because,
for whatever reason
I just wanted to go to bed with her as fast as I could
or I was lonely
and so I pretended I didn't notice
even though I did
exactly the person she was from the first moment
I knew
and so it is with you
and I think probably it is the same for you with me
we know one another
right now from the first moment
we know so much about one another in just this brief time
and we have known many people
and for myself
I can tell
you are one in a million
and I want to marry you
I want to marry you
and have children with you
and grow old together
so I am begging you
just have a coffee with me.

YVETTE
OK.

HENRY
When will you do this?

YVETTE
Right now.

HENRY
Oh.
Oh, good.
Good.

[he kisses her hand]

Good.
Good.

[Wilson rushes in.]

3. Wilson and Susan

WILSON
How could you just suddenly: disappear?

SUSAN
I didn't.

WILSON
I thought you did.
And I thought you loved me.

SUSAN
Well, I do love you.

WILSON
Yes, you love me,
but you don't love me in that way.

SUSAN
I never pretended to love you in that way.

WILSON
I can't go on in life
without being loved in that way.

SUSAN
A lot of people are never loved in that way.

WILSON
How can you tell
if you are really alive
if you're never loved in that way?

SUSAN

What do you mean: in that way?

WILSON

Unless I thought you were crazy for me
so crazy for me you couldn't stand it
you just had to kiss me
you just had to knock me down and kiss me
because you couldn't stand it
that you laughed at my jokes
or thought I was so cool
or like said really intelligent things that made you think
maybe not all of those things
but even just any one of them
just one of them

[Silence.]

You see what I mean, not even one.

SUSAN

I'm sorry.

WILSON

Why did you live with me, then?

SUSAN

I thought I loved you
but I guess I didn't know what love was.
I liked you in a way
not much
but in some ways
or at least in the ways I thought guys could be likeable
and the rest of it I thought maybe that's just
how guys are
and as time went on maybe it wouldn't matter so much
but then I find it does matter
I can't help myself
some stuff you do

I just can't get over it
and the stuff I liked:
that I thought you were a responsible person
and mature
solid and dependable
all those turned out not to be true at all
so what am I left with?

WILSON
It's not your fault.

SUSAN
No, it's not.

WILSON
Or maybe it is
that you weren't thinking very clearly
or being very focussed when you made your choice
and a lot of people were depending on that choice being really clear
or at least I was

SUSAN
I know.
I'm sorry.

WILSON
Being sorry doesn't cut it somehow.
I know people always say they're sorry
and probably they are
and I don't think it means nothing
I'm sure it means something
and it's essential for people to feel it
and to say it
in order for life to go on at all
and yet
the truth is
it doesn't cut it.
I'm sorry: but it doesn't.

SUSAN
I'm sorry.

WILSON
Is that somehow now
supposed to cut it?

[Wilson storms out.]

4. Constantine and Thyona

CONSTANTINE
What do you think?
You think you live in a world nowadays where
you can throw out a promise
just because you don't feel like keeping it?
Just because
drugs are rife
gambling is legal
medicine is euthanasia
birth is abortion
homosexuality is the norm
pornography is piped into everybody's home on the internet
now you think you can do whatever you want
whenever you want to do it
no matter what the law might say?

I don't accept that.

Sometimes I like to lie down at night
with my arms around someone
and KNOW she is there for me
know this gives her pleasure—
my arms around her
her back to me
my stomach pressed against her back
my face buried in her hair
one hand on her stomach
feeling at peace.

That's my plan
to have that.
I'll have my bride.
If I have to have her arms tied behind her back
and dragged to me
I'll have her back.

What is it you women want
you want to be strung up with hoods and gags and blindfolds
stretched out on a board with weights on your chest
you want me to sew your legs to the bed
and pour gasoline on you
and light you on fire
is that what I have to do to keep you?

The future is going to happen, Thyona,
whether you like it or not.
You say, you don't want to be taken against your will.
People are taken against their will every day.
Do you want tomorrow to come?
Do you want to live in the future?
Never mind. You can't stop the clock.
Tomorrow will take today by force
whether you like it or not.
Time itself is an act of rape.
Life is rape.
No one asks to be born.
No one asks to die.
We are all taken by force, all the time.
You make the best of it.
You do what you have to do.

5. Edmund and Herbert

EDMUND
I think you are lying to me, Herbert.
You are always lying to me
because you wish something would be true
but it isn't.

You are a weak spineless person, Herbert,
feckless, feeble and ineffective.

But I love you like a cicada.

HERBERT
A cicada?

EDMUND
Yes.

HERBERT
Like a grasshopper you mean?

EDMUND
Do you know what a cicada is?

HERBERT
I thought I did.

EDMUND
There was a time long ago, in prehistoric times
when cicadas were human beings
back before the Muses were born.
And then when the Muses were born
and song came into being
some of these human creatures were so taken by the pleasure of it
that they sang and sang and sang.
And they forgot to eat or drink
they just sang and sang
and so,
before they knew it,
they died.

And from those human creatures a new species came into being
the cicadas
and they were given this special gift from the Muses:
that from the time they are born
they need no nourishment

they just sing continuously
caught forever in the pleasure of the moment
without eating or drinking
until they die.

This is the story of love.
If you stay there forever in that place
you die of it.

That's why people
can't stay in love.

But that's how I've loved you.
And how I love you now.
And how I always will.

6. Phil the Trucker and His Girl

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
I look at you and I think
if it wouldn't be wrong
I'd like to make love with you on a pool table.

HIS GIRL
It wouldn't be wrong if you'd let me handcuff you to the pockets.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
You could do that.

HIS GIRL
What I think about is
I'd like to have sex with you in the parking lot
behind the Exxon station
near that diner on the Malibu highway
you know the one?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Near that road up into the canyon.

HIS GIRL

That's the one.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

That would be pretty public.

HIS GIRL

I'd like to have the whole world see

you want me so much

you can't wait.

I'd like to have the whole world see

you're not ashamed of me.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

Why would I be ashamed of you?

HIS GIRL

I feel ashamed myself.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

For what reason?

HIS GIRL

Who knows?

Every fifteen minutes I feel ashamed of myself at least once.

And humiliated.

For no reason.

It just comes back to me over and over again.

Do you ever feel that way?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

Every fifteen minutes I feel worried.

HIS GIRL

Do you feel you want to hurt someone?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

No.

HIS GIRL

Do you feel you want to get even?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

No.

HIS GIRL

That's good.

Do you feel you want to bite something?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

I don't think so.

Maybe I feel that.

HIS GIRL

Do you feel you want to take off all your clothes?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

No.

I usually don't feel that.

HIS GIRL

Do you feel you want more money?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

Oh, sure. Everybody feels that.

[Hiroko comes up to Catherine]

7. Hiroko and Catherine

HIROKO

I'm glad to see you again.

CATHERINE

So you say.

And yet

I don't know how it could be true.

HIROKO

How could it not be true?

CATHERINE

Because if you were glad to see me
you would never have left me.

HIROKO

Of course I would.

CATHERINE

No, because
if you love someone
you don't leave them.
You hold onto them for dear life
you hold onto them forever
unless you are a stupid person
which I don't think you are
so
what else can I think
except you never really loved me
I was just another one of your flings along the way
whereas I loved you
I knew
if you love someone
you don't let them go

HIROKO

And yet you did.

CATHERINE

I never did.

HIROKO

You said:
if one day you are going to leave me
then go now
don't just keep tormenting me.

CATHERINE

And so?

JACQUEINE

And so.

It's not that I left you.

CATHERINE

Excuse me.

I didn't leave you.

And yet, you are not with me.

What else happened?

HIROKO

It turned out

we were at different points in our lives

we couldn't go on.

CATHERINE

I could have gone on.

HIROKO

Shall we talk about something else?

CATHERINE

I see

in the world

people have wars and they die

entire countries come to an end

Etienne has died of cancer

HIROKO

I didn't know.

CATHERINE

How could you?

And yet

there it is.

And one day I will die

and so will you.
And yet
you could leave me.
I don't understand.
I will never understand
how it is if you have only one life to live
and you find your own true love
the person all your life you were meant to find
and your only job then was to cherish that person
and care for that person
and never let go
but it turns out
you can still think
for some reason
because this or that
you end it
you end it forever
you end it for the only life you will ever live on earth.
Maybe if you would be reincarnated
and you could come back to life again and again a dozen times
then this would make sense
to throw away your only chance for love in this life
because you would have another chance in another life
but when this is your only chance
how can this make sense?

Do you think
there will ever be a time
when we could get back together?

HIROKO
No.

CATHERINE
Not ever?

HIROKO
No.

CATHERINE
Not ever at all
even ever?

HIROKO
No.

CATHERINE
And yet
this is so hard for me to accept.

More than anything
I love to lie in bed with you at night
and look at your naked back
and stroke your back slowly
from your neck to your cocyx
and let my fingers fan out
and drift over your smooth buttock
and slip slowly down along your thigh
to your sweet knee
only to return again
coming up the back of your thigh
hesitating a moment
to let my fingers rest in the sweet valley
at the very top of your thigh, just below your buttock
and so slowly up along the small of your back
to your shoulder blade
and then to let your hair tickle my face
as I put my lips to your shoulder
and kiss you and kiss you and kiss you forever
this is what I call heaven
and what I hope will last forever

[Hiroko stands to leave]

HIROKO
I love you, Catherine.
I have never loved anyone in my life as I have loved you

and I know I never will.
But we cannot be together.

[she leaves;
Catherine watches her go.]

8. Harold and Edith

Harold lies stretched out over several chairs.

After a few moments, Edith enters.]

EDITH
Shove up.

HAROLD [awakened from sleeping—still half-asleep, disoriented]
What?

EDITH
Shove up I said shove up.

HAROLD
What what?

EDITH
I want to sit down here.

HAROLD
Goddam it to hell, this is my God Damn place.
Can't you see I am sleeping here?

EDITH
This is not your God Damn place.
This is a common place
and I said:
[shrieking]
shove up!!!

HAROLD [shouting]

Can't you see
I am trying to sleep in peace?

EDITH
You want peace?
You want peace?
Go someplace else.

HAROLD
I did go someplace else.
This is where I went.

EDITH
I am going to explain this to you:
I am not the sort of person who looks at a man and thinks
oh, I could take him on
make a project out of him
fix him up
he looks okay to me
not too disgusting
I am going to reason with the sonofabitch.
No.
This is not who I am.
I am the sort of person who says shove up
or
[she starts trying to kick him]
I will kick you black and blue,
because I am tired of walking around!

HAROLD
Okay, okay, sit.

[he makes room for her]

EDITH
Thank you.

HAROLD
Do we know each other?

EDITH

No. No, we do not.

[she rummages through her stuff,
brings out a bottle]

Sherry?

HAROLD

What?

EDITH

Are you hard of hearing?

HAROLD

What?

EDITH

Can't you hear too well?

HAROLD [shouting]

What does that have to do with it?

I don't enjoy the opera any more, if that's what you mean.

Or the symphony.

I used to go to Ravinia.

Do you know Ravinia?

EDITH

Ravinia.

HAROLD

Outdoors, in the summertime
every Friday night.

Fritz Reiner conducting.

You remember Fritz Reiner?

EDITH

Of course I remember Fritz Reiner.

HAROLD

That was lovely.

You know, lying out on the lawn listening to the music.

Mozart, all those fellows.

Like the Grand Canyon, you know,
a marvel of nature, that's all,
a complete breakthrough of the divine
or whatever, you know,
if you believe in that sort of thing.

EDITH

I don't.

HAROLD

Well, then, a breakthrough of the human.

But that's all gone
now that I can't hear a thing
you know there's a lot you can't enjoy any more.
When you get down to it, at my age,
I don't see so well either.

EDITH

Well, it's the end of an era.

HAROLD

That's for sure.

The end of a way of life.

EDITH

An entire way of life.

HAROLD

The end of poetry.

EDITH

Of the book itself.

HAROLD

Yes, well....

EDITH

Don't go gentle into that good night!

HAROLD

No. No. Right you are.

EDITH

Would you like a little nip of sherry?

HAROLD

Well.

Yes.

Okay.

Thank you.

Very kind of you.

9. Riff: The Boys

GEORGE [speaking to Joseph]

You know, you'll be wanting to go slow with girls
because

STEVE

Because you can scare a girl

GEORGE

You can scare anyone really.

STEVE

You can scare anyone.

GEORGE

And you don't want always
to be looking at women out the window

STEVE

The passersby on the sidewalk.

GEORGE

Because this can give a bad impression.

STEVE

You can scare a person.

PHIL

Do you ever take a girl home with you?

JOSEPH

Yes.

STEVE

And what do you do?

JOSEPH

Well, usually,
we will sit in the kitchen.

GEORGE

Yes?

JOSEPH

We will have tea usually.

STEVE

Tea?

PHIL

That's all?

JOSEPH

And I will open the window, usually,
so the birds can fly in
and eat crumbs from the kitchen table.

GEORGE

Eat crumbs.

JOSEPH

Yes.

PHIL

During the summer.

JOSEPH

Yes, well,
yes.

GEORGE

During the winter?

JOSEPH

Well. Yes.

GEORGE

I see.

JOSEPH

People like this usually.

STEVE

And then they leave?

JOSEPH

Yes. Well, by then it will be late afternoon.
So it's time to leave.

GEORGE

Yes, well.

PHIL

Tea and crumbs.

GEORGE

Tea and crumbs.

PHIL

Still, I like an herbal tea.

GEORGE

A peppermint tea.

PHIL

Or a tisane.

GEORGE

Something made with roots and berries.

[Joseph, ever a voyeur,
watches them as they continue the conversation.]

STEVE

I would say
probably
I would have to say
licorice root
that would be my favorite root
because it contains a
thick astringent mucilage
with a little aroma
which is a very good pectoral.

PHIL

A pectoral?

STEVE

Very good for illnesses of the chest and lungs.

PHIL

Ah.

STEVE

And that happens to be
my own personal
preoccupation.

PHIL

I see.

STEVE

Whereas I don't know
for you....

PHIL

For me it would be
the hawthorn
which used to be used always
to decorate the front door on May Day

STEVE

Oh, well
but of course
also it was said to invite death indoors.

PHIL

No.

STEVE

Yes.

PHIL

No.

STEVE

I am afraid so.
I mean, excuse me, but
I am an herbalist.

PHIL

Still.

STEVE

No. There is no getting around it.

GEORGE

I would have to say
my favorite herb
would be the common quince.

STEVE
Indeed?

GEORGE
Oh, yes,
because for two reasons
you know
it was once thought to be
the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden.

STEVE
I knew that, yes.

GEORGE
And so it was served
at wedding feasts in ancient Rome.

STEVE
Of course.

PHIL
Of course.

GEORGE
So, to me,
it is the sexiest herb.

STEVE
Fruit.

GEORGE
I beg your pardon?

STEVE
Fruit. It is a fruit.
Not an herb.

GEORGE
Oh yes, fruit.
I thought we could mention either herbs or fruits.

STEVE

Well, the conversation was about herbs.

GEORGE

And I brought the conversation around
to include fruits.

STEVE

If you are not going to stick to the point
I'm afraid
this is not my kind of conversation.

[he leaves;

the others look around
and, one by one, feeling uncomfortable,
they decide to leave, too]

10. Riff: The Girls

OLYMPIA

Now you see, there are men who are kind and decent.

THYONA

You think you found this man's good side.
Men don't have a good side.

OLYMPIA

I've known men who have a good side, Thyona.
I've known men you could sit with after dinner
in front of the fireplace
and just listen to the way he speaks
and hear the gentleness in his way of speaking
and the carefulness
I've known men who think,
oh,
a woman,
I'd like to take care of her
not in any way that he thinks he is superior and has control

but in the way that he understands
a woman is a different sort of person
and precious because of that
vulnerable in certain ways because of that
in ways that he isn't
although he might be vulnerable in other ways
because of his stuff that he has
and that he treasures what a woman has
and thinks, oh, if only I could be close to her
and feel what she feels
and see the world as she sees it
how much richer my life would be
and so, because of that, he thinks,
oh, a woman,
I can really respect her
and love her
for who she really is

THYONA

I know a man who will say I want to take care of you
because he means he wants to use you for a while
and while he's using you
so you don't notice what he's doing
he'll take care of you as if you were a new car
before he decides to trade you in.

OLYMPIA

I've known men like that, too.
But not all men are necessarily the same.
Sometimes you can hear the whole man just in his voice
how deep it is or how frightened
where it stops to think
and how complex and supple and sure it is
you can hear the strength in it
and you can know that you're safe

THYONA

The male
the male is a biological accident

an incomplete female
the product of a damaged gene
a half-dead lump of flesh
trapped in a twilight zone somewhere between apes and humans
always looking obsessively for some woman

OLYMPIA

That's maybe a little bit extreme.

THYONA

any woman

because he thinks if he can make some connection with a woman
that will make him a whole human being!
But it won't. It never will.

Boy babies should be flushed down the toilet at birth.

11. Phil the Trucker and His Girl 2

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

The woman next door
is having an affair with an orchestra conductor in Cincinnati.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

Does Cincinnati have an orchestra?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

I guess it does.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

Does her husband know?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

He doesn't know.

She just flies off to Cincinnati from time to time
when her husband is away on business
or the conductor comes to Denver.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
How did they meet?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
On an airplane.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
What does she do?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
I don't know.
She flies around a lot.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Is she a stewardess?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
Oh, right.
She's a stewardess.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
No wonder she can just go wherever she wants.

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
Right.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
It's a perfect job if you want to have love affairs.

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
Right.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Do you think all stewardesses are having love affairs?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
Well, most of them probably.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Why not?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

Exactly.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

Would you, if you were a stewardess?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

Yes, I think I would.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

So would I.

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

I have to pee.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

What?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

I have to pee.

Would you wait here?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

Oh. Sure.

[She leaves;

everyone stops what they are doing,

turn to look, and just stand around waiting for her to come back;

we hear a flush from offstage;

finally she returns.]

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

Times have changed.

[Everyone else resumes what they were doing.]

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

Since when?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
Since, oh, I don't know.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
I don't think they have.

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
Of course they have.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Well, of course they have
in the sense that now you have electric lights and so forth
the internet
whatnot,
but otherwise I don't think times have changed.

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
I think they have.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Compared to what?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
My grandmother.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
You wouldn't know.

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL
That's true.
I wouldn't know.
Maybe that's what changed.
But in Russia you know
they didn't have love affairs for years
all during the communists.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
How do you know?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

There was a study.

They didn't even have sex with their husbands and wives
not much.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

Why not?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

They didn't feel like it.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER

Are they having sex now?

THE TRUCKER'S GIRL

Now! Well, sure. I suppose they are.
You know, things have changed in Russia.

12. Riff: Ariel Ranks on Cowboys

ARIEL

You

are an ignorant shoot from the hip cowboy
with your boots in cowshit
like a cow puncher savage
thinking you are such hot stuff
rolling your cigarette with one hand at a full gallop
but in reality you are a baby
a baby dude ranch greenhorn dweeb
who knows nothing
nothing
nothing about whatever
nothing about life
nothing about women
nothing about men
nothing about horses
you are a guy that's all
you are just a guy

I could spit at you
[she spits]
I could spit at you and spit at you
[she spits and spits]
because what you are is a typical male
I'll say no more
a typical male
you are a
typical
male
which is to say a shithook
and a dickhead

13. Riff: Personal Ads

[she picks up a magazine,
turns some pages to the back of the magazine
and reads]

Very Pretty, Stylish, Gay White Female-40-something
seeking pretty, white, sweet, intelligent,
feminine wife, 35-45
I am a hopeless romantic
very fit, socially outgoing,
yet shy at other times.
I am mentally strong
yet emotionally tender.
I wear dresses/high heels by day
and jeans/sneakers at night.
I love excitement and spontaneity
yet balance and security.
I am financially stable and I do not look gay-
neither should you.
I am looking for a woman capable of emotional intimacy
and committed to a partnership-
and not just after 5 PM.
I have flexible working hours
and believe weekdays were made for play, not just work.
If you have worked on your relationship skills

and you are what I am looking for,
be prepared to meet a woman
with a generous heart, quick mind, good sense of humor
and lots of integrity.

[she looks up from the magazine,
thinks for a moment
and then says]

I could do that.

[she returns to the magazine
and reads]

Distinguished-Looking, Successful Man-
Company president, grey hair, tall,
sense of humor.

Two residences. Variety of interests
including music, horses, sailing, etc.
and just "hanging out."

Interested in meeting woman in her 30s or early 40s,
to share good times and friendship.

[she looks up from the magazine,
thinks for a moment
and then says]

I could do that.

[she returns to the magazine
and reads]

Warm, Loving, Happy
Accomplished Professional-
very youthful, active, 55
fit, fun, full of life and love
bright, kind, sensitive,

communicative and involved,
seeks fine-valued, accomplished soul mate
to share love, laughter, family, and friends.

[she looks up from the magazine,
thinks for a moment
and then says]

I could do that.

14. Riff: Bella on the Scooter

BELLA

I had a man once
I was walking along the Appia Antica
and he came along on his motor scooter
and offered me a ride.
A skinny, ugly fellow with dark hair and big ears
and skin so sleek and smooth
I wanted to put my hands on it.
I got on the back of his motor scooter
and ten minutes later
we were in bed together at his mother's house
and I married him
and we had our boys.
All his life he worked
giving the gift of his labor to me
and to our children
he died of a heart attack
while he was out among the trees
harvesting the olives

and
if he came along now
I would get on the scooter again just like the first time.

15. Riff: Frank on Faithfulness

FRANK

You know, one doesn't want to seize on any little thing
some doubt one has of another's love
or faithfulness
and blow it up.

Otherwise there's no end to it.

There's something every day you can make a case out of
if you choose.

JONATHAN

Unless it's clear someone is being unfaithful to you
and then you don't want to wander around oblivious
to the fact that you are being betrayed behind your back.

FRANK

Still, as a grownup
one has to let the little things pass
even if sometimes some little rumor might possibly be true
one has to let it pass for the sake of a larger love.

JONATHAN

If sometimes some rumor might be true?

FRANK

I'm not saying whether it is or it isn't.
I'm only saying
as man to man
you keep your eye on the goal line
you don't let yourself get caught up
in the details along the way.

JONATHAN

Unless, in fact, you can easily hear in the other person's voice
that she hates you.

As I could hear when Ariel spoke to me.

And then things are clear enough.

FRANK

I didn't hear that.

JONATHAN

Did you hear the way she spoke to me?

FRANK

No.

JONATHAN

The contempt in her voice.

FRANK

No.

JONATHAN

The scorn.

FRANCOIS

I didn't notice it.

FRANK

No.

FRANCOIS

This jealousy and suspicion,
it's like a rising tide,
it could swamp all boats.

JONATHAN

Did you hear her say:
"I'm not going to spend my life
defending myself against wild talk."

FRANCOIS

Perhaps it was a little wild.

JONATHAN

The sneering.

The derision in her voice.

FRANK

I didn't notice it.

JONATHAN

I did.

FRANCOIS

Still, seizing on these things—
sometimes women speak this way
even if in this case she didn't
sometimes they do
possibly sometimes we deserve it I don't know
but one lets it pass
water off a dog's back
if one wants to change the mood
and move on toward making love.

16. Riff: Bob on Fruitflies

BILL

She jumped in on purpose.

BOB

Ah. A suicide.

BILL

Yes.

BOB

Still, we don't judge people for these things.
Because a person can come into the world
different from all other people
and we don't know where such a person has come from
like fruitflies, like worms in cheese,
they come from nowhere,

like the universe itself
which, in the beginning,
was nothing but chaos
and out of that chaos a mass was formed
just as cheese is made out of milk
and worms appeared in the cheese
and these were the angels
and among the angels was also God
he too having been created out of the cheese at the same time
and all the creatures
of all kinds
as a result of which we have today
the inhabitants of the islands of Nacumera
who have the heads of dogs
and yet are reasonable people with good understanding
and the pigmies
who are beautiful and graceful because of their smallness
and they get married when they are six months old
and have children when they are two or three years old
and do not live more than six or seven years
and they battle against the birds in their country
and often are taken and eaten by the birds.

BILL

Indeed.

BOB

And we don't judge these people
because this is how they are
just like you and me.

BILL

Yes, indeed.

BOB

We don't judge them
just as I am not judging you
and you are not judging me.
Live and let live

this was God's intention
to love all the creatures of the earth
and try not to kill them or hurt them.

17. Riff: Willy on Marriage and Red Meat

WILLY

What is the point of marriage
any more these days anyway?

MARIA

I'm sorry?

WILLY

Do they think something is going to change
because they've had a wedding?

And then everybody has the same boring thing,
with the same boring speeches,
the same boring white dress,
the same boring food.

I would rather go to a funeral than a wedding.

At a wedding

everyone is supposed to have the greatest day of their lives
and they never do.

At a funeral no one expects to have a wonderful day
and so usually it turns out to be really nice.

why was this idea of marriage ever invented?

because women

because they have menstrual periods

are subject to chronic shortages of iron in their systems

and so they require constant infusions of meat

but because they were not hunters

they were never hunters

they had to find a way to manipulate men

with sexual favors

into bringing home blood-soaked dinners every night

and if they were good at it

to marry them
to have a steady supply of meat

18. Lydia and Nikos 2

LYDIA
Do you know about dreams?

NIKOS
Well, I have dreams.

LYDIA
But do you know what they mean?

NIKOS
I don't know. Maybe.

LYDIA
I had this dream
I was going to a wedding
of these old friends of mine
and part of the wedding—uh, sort of event—
was an enormous pond that they had built,
and I was late getting to the wedding
so I got someone to airlift me in,
and I dove into the pond but,
when I landed in the water,
the walls of the pond collapsed and it drained out
and 1500 fish died,
and everyone was looking for survivors
but I had to leave to take Yeltsin to the Museum of Modern Art,
because I had to get to the gym.

So, when I took him in to one of the exhibits
and turned around to hug him goodbye,
he turned to my mother and said,
"Wow, look at that Julian Schnabel bridge."
There was an enormous sterling silver bridge
designed by Julian Schnabel.

So I walked my mother into the water to say goodbye to her,
and this immense 25-story high tidal wave crashed over me
and threw me up over the Julian Schnabel bridge
and then I was completely alone in the middle of the ocean
until I realized:

I had the cell phone tucked into my undies.
So I phoned Olympia to come and get me,
and she said, oh, perfect, I'll send Chopin-
which is the name of her dog-
I'll send Chopin over in the car,
and then would you take him for a walk
and leave the car on 8th avenue?

What do you think of that?

NIKOS

Well,

I think things happen so suddenly sometimes.

LYDIA

Sometimes people don't want to fall in love.

Because when you love someone
it's too late to set conditions.

You can't say

I'll love you if you do this

or I'll love you if you change that

because you can't help yourself

and then you have to live

with whoever it is you fall in love with

however they are

and just put up with the difficulties you've made for yourself

because true love has no conditions.

That's why it's so awful to fall in love.

19. Wilson and Susan 2

WILSON [confronting Susan]

So

it turns out

you come to me

to be with me

and then

as soon as you feel reassured that I love you

you go back to your husband

and then if you talk to me on the phone

and I seem to be slipping away from you

if I seem anxious or uncertain

then you come back to me and make love with me

and stay with me

until you know you have me again

I can't help myself loving you

and then you go back to your husband again

so it turns out

the only way I can keep you is by making you feel anxious

keeping you on edge

making you feel I'm about to drop you

so the way to have you

is to reject you

and if I don't reject you

then I don't have you

we are in a relationship that is sick

where you show love by showing aversion

you show aversion by showing love

so that you live a backwards life

and the one person you want to love and cherish

and show how much you care

is the one person you will drive away by doing any of those things

how can we go on like this?

this is insane

this will make us both insane

this is how people go insane!

[He storms out.]

BECKER

I think I know how he feels myself.

I thought you cared for me, too.

SUSAN

I did care for you.
There was something about you
I don't even know what it was that just hit me
I couldn't help myself
but then it turns out
it was like a summer storm
it passed as quickly as it came
and then it was over.

BECKER

Maybe it wasn't over for me.

SUSAN

I'm sorry.

BECKER

I don't think you can just drop someone like that
and just say I'm sorry.

SUSAN

I didn't just say I'm sorry
I am sorry.

BECKER

This is why some people call women fickle.

SUSAN

I don't think it has anything to do with being fickle.
How it is for women:
Women feel what they feel when they feel it
and then when they don't feel it any more they don't feel it.
Unlike a man
who won't know what he feels when he feels it
and then later on
he'll realize how he felt
and so he'll talk himself into feeling it again

when he doesn't feel it
because he thinks he should be consistent about the positions he takes
and stick to them
so a man always thinks he feels things he doesn't feel
and so he never really knows how he feels at all.

BECKER

That could be true.

SUSAN

Of course it's true.

Pretty soon

you're going to thank god you had such a narrow escape
you're going to feel lucky I dumped you

BECKER

I'm never going to feel that.

SUSAN

Maybe not.

BECKER

I think you must be a sort of a tease
or worse
some kind of seducer and dumper kind of person
who is just a loose cannon
cutting a swath through men
leaving them wrecked all around you
what is that all about?

[She speaks, with a mouth full of cake,
eating as she speaks,
with greater and greater animation as she goes on,
till she is yelling through a mouth full of cake.]

SUSAN

Maybe that would be about something

if it were in any way true
but it is not in any way true
I'm a person who is looking for true love
like anyone else
except the difference is
I am trying not to be afraid of my feelings
and censor things
and lie and lie and lie all the time
pretending I feel like this or that
going with some guy because I couldn't be sure any more
how I felt about him
because he had some things I liked and other things I didn't
and trying to talk myself into not caring about the things I cared about
and caring about the things I didn't care about
because I've done that a lot in the past
so I am trying to let my feelings lead me through life
And
feelings are feelings
they come and go.
So probably I'm just as disoriented as you are
and left in the lurch
suddenly dropped
or thrown down the stairs
it's not as though this is not a struggle for me too
but the one thing you can be sure of is
if ever I am sure of how I feel
in a way that is the kind of feeling that I know will last
then when that time comes
if it so happens that I do tell you I love you
then you can be sure of it.

20. Yvette and Henry 2

YVETTE

You know I like to cook

HENRY

Yes

YVETTE

And I like to make apricot confiture

HENRY

Yes

YVETTE

And I straighten up
but not right away
and usually I live in a mess
but then I straighten up later on
only it's not always straightened up.

HENRY

Right.

YVETTE

I do dishes, and I do laundry,
but I'm not good at really cleaning.

HENRY

Unh-hunh.

YVETTE

So that's how it is if you live with me
that's how it will be
that's all.
I just wanted, if we're going to be together, you know,
for everything to be clear.

HENRY

Right.

YVETTE

So you understand about laundry and dishes
and not straightening up
and there are no surprises
like you're not suddenly going to discover
oh, she doesn't straighten up
this will never work out
because I can't stand a mess
I'm sorry I wish I could
I wish I could just rise above it
but chaos makes me crazy
I just fall apart
and I can't go on living with you.

HENRY

Like that.

YVETTE

Right. That's not how it is for me.
Because, moving in with you,
this is a big deal for me,
and I don't want there to be any misunderstandings
because this is a big move for me
and I don't think
after I do this
that there will be any going back
I mean, if a year from now you were to say
oh, you never straighten up
I don't think I can live with that
the point is
I think I'd shoot you.

HENRY

Right.

YVETTE

That's how it is for me.

HENRY

That's it?

YVETTE

Yes.

HENRY

That's all.

YVETTE

Yes. I don't think there's anything else. I think that's everything.

HENRY

The truth is

I can do the laundry, too, and I do dishes.

YVETTE

Oh.

HENRY

So, I think everything's going to be OK.

YVETTE

Oh. Good. Good. That's good then.

HENRY

Right.

Plus, I cook, too.

YVETTE

You cook, too.

HENRY

Right.

YVETTE

Oh.

HENRY

Plus, I love you like crazy.

YVETTE

Oh,

you do.

Oh, good.

Good.

That's good then.

I can accept that.

21. Riff: Maria and Bob on the Greeks

MARIA

I don't think the Greeks knew much about love.

BOB

Why do you say that?

MARIA

I've seen Greek plays, you know.

There's not a single one that's a love story.

BOB

Every single one of them is a love story.

MARIA

Not one.

They're all about killing your mother and killing your father.

BOB

Because the thing that starts everything is:

Helen

falls in love with Paris,

and he takes her

to Troy,

and then Helen's husband,

to get her back,

starts the Trojan war,

and then Agamemnon,
to get the favor of the gods for the war,
has to sacrifice his own daughter,
as a result of which Agamemnon's wife
Clytemnestra
kills him,
and their son Orestes
murders Clytemnestra—
all the murders and wreckage and ruin of Greece
comes from a love story.

MARIA
Really.

BOB
Why do people kill each other all the time
if it isn't because of love gone wrong
or hurt feelings
feeling someone was disrespected
or despised
or deprived of what should have been his
treated fairly
as a good person, given in return what he himself gave
to the other person
then maybe it would be something bad would not have happened.
Or you could say in a more general way
if society itself had provided
which is to say, been more generous,
which is to say, loving
maybe you would not be seeing certain social behaviors.
You could say
economic exploitation itself is a lack of social love
where selfishness has made love difficult to give
or possessiveness or a fear of loss has overpowered love
and when you see a person dying of poverty
of the lack of medical care
this is a symptom of perversion
of the withholding of love
or the positive imposition of sadistic impulses

and thus, as you can see,
it is not just the whips and chains of sadists and masochists in nightclubs
that you might call perverse
but the practice of politics altogether
when it deprives people of the life-giving sustenance they need.

JONATHAN

Oh, right, well, sure, OK, I can accept that.

FRANCOIS

This could be true.

BOB

This is how it is to be a human being.
You've heard of Jeffrey Dahmer.

JONATHAN

Sure.

BOB

That's how it is if love goes wrong.

JONATHAN

(laughing easily)

I hope I'm not going to kill someone.

BOB

How do you know?

JONATHAN

I'm not that sort of person.

BOB

Maybe you don't know what sort of person you are
until you do something
and then you see what sort of person you are.

22. Riff: Forgiveness

WILLIAM

Do you think forgiveness is possible?

JOHN

Uh, primarily, uh, uh, the, uh, the...primarily the question is does man have the power to forgive himself. And he does. That's essentially it. I mean if you forgive yourself, and you absolve yourself of all, uh, of all wrongdoing in an incident, then you're forgiven. Who cares what other people think, because uh...

WILLIAM

Was this a process you had to go through over a period of time. Did you have to think about it?

JOHN

Well, no. Not until I was reading the Aquarian gospel did I, did I strike upon, you know I had almost had ends meet because I had certain uh you know to-be-or-not-to-be reflections about of course what I did. And uh,

WILLIAM

I'm sorry, what was that?

JOHN

Triple murder. Sister, husband. Sister, husband, and a nephew, my nephew. And uh, you know, uh, manic depressive.

WILLIAM

Do you mind my asking what instruments did you use? What were the instruments?

JOHN

It was a knife. It was a knife.

WILLIAM

Knife?

JOHN

Yes.

WILLIAM

So then, the three of them were all...

JOHN

Ssssss...

(points to slitting his throat)

like that.

WILLIAM

So, uh, do you think that as time goes by, this episode will just become part of your past, or has it already...

JOHN

It has already become part of my past.

WILLIAM

Has already become part of your past. No sleepless nights? No...

JOHN

Aw, no. In the first three or four years there was a couple of nights where I would stay up thinking about how I did it, you know. And what they said...they told me later there were so many stab wounds in my sister and I said no, that's not true at all, you know. So I think I had a little blackout during the murders, but uh...

WILLIAM

I'm sorry, they said there were many stab wounds....

JOHN

Well, uh, they said there was something like thirty stab wounds in my sister, and I remember distinctly I just cut her throat once. That was all, you know, and I don't know where the thirty stab wounds came from. So that might have been some kind of blackout thing. You know, I was trying to re- re- re- uh, re- uh, uh, resurrect the uh, the crime—my initial steps, etc. You know, and uh, and uh, I took, as a matter of fact, it came right out of the, I was starting the New Testament at the time, matter of fact I'm about the only person you'll ever meet that went to, to do a triple murder

with a Bible in his, in his pocket, and, and, listening to a radio. I had delusions of grandeur with the radio. Uh, I had a red shirt on that was symbolic of, of some lines in Revelation, in the, in the New Testament. Uh I had a red motor...as a matter of fact, I think it was chapter 6 something, verses 3, 4, or 5, or something where uh it was a man, it was a man. On a red horse. And, and, a man on a red horse came out, and uh, and uh uh, and he was given a knife, and unto him was given the power to kill and destroy. And I actually thought I was this person. And I thought that my red horse was this red Harley Davidson I had. And I wore...it was just, you know, it was kind of a symbolic type of thing. And and and uh, you know, uh after the murders I thought the nephew was, was the, was a new devil or something, you know. This, this is pretty bizarre now that I think back on it. I thought he was a new devil and uh, uh. I mean basically I love my sister, there's no question about that. But at times my sister hadn't come through uh for me. You know and I was in another, one of these manic attacks. And uh, and uh, uh, uh, you know, uh, I was just uh, I was just you know, I mean I was fed up with all this you know one day they treat me good and then they tell all these other people that I was a maniac and watch out for me and etc. and like that. And uh, uh, so I went to them that night to tell them I was all in trouble again, you know, and could they put me up for the night, you know, and they told me to take a hike and uh so uh, believing that I had the power to kill, uh you know, that was that for them. You know. I mean when family turns you out, that's a real blow. You know. But uh, back to the original subject of forgiveness. If I forgive myself I'm forgiven. You know that's essentially the answer. I'm the captain of my own ship. I run my own ship. Nobody can crawl in my ship unless they get permission. I just (he nods) "over there." You know. "I'm forgiven." You know. Ha-ha. You know. (Laughs.) It's as simple as that. You know. You're your own priest, you're your own leader, you're your own captain. You know. You run your own show, a lot of people know that.

NOD

What do you think of the soaps?

JOHN

What?

NOD

The soaps.

JOHN

You mean the daytimes?

NOD
Right.

JOHN
They're OK.

NOD
I think they're wonderful. I think the clothes could be better, and they could use some comic relief, you know, but otherwise I think they're wonderful. Although, of course, I guess they could use some more fantasy. You know. In times like these, we need a little more "I wanna be," and not so much "I am."

JOHN
Unh-hunh.

NOD
I think it's incredible how much excellence you see in the scenes.

JOHN
Unh-hunh.

NOD
Although I think they could have more minority representation.
And I think they should move faster. You know, they should have shorter stories—beginning, middle, end, like that, and not just have the same story go on for a year or something. I mean they get lost in the past, they don't quite catch up with the times. You know, I like to see some stuff going on, I don't just want to watch my next door neighbors.

Do you think they're too believable?

JOHN
No.

WILLIAM
Yes, I do. That's what I would say.

NOD

I'm a little tired of seeing spouses coming back from the dead all the time and plots with missing babies. I think that's a little too obvious.

JOHN

To me, my only complaint would be that most shows are overly lit.

NOD

Too bright.

JOHN

Exactly.

23. Harold and Edith 2

EDITH

The truth is
I'm not a baby.

HAROLD

No.

EDITH

I've had a whole life
I've had other relationships in my lifetime
and other things, not even relationships
and people I've cared about

HAROLD

Yes, indeed.
So you've said.

EDITH

cared about deeply
people, in fact, I thought I loved
but it wasn't as though I looked at them
and felt at once I had to cry
because I felt such closeness

HAROLD
Empathy.

EDITH
Empathy.
Exactly.
Immediate empathy.
I looked at you
I almost fell on the floor.

HAROLD
Things happen so suddenly sometimes.

EDITH
Do you believe in love at first sight?

HAROLD
No.

EDITH
Neither do I.
And yet there it is:
I'd just like to kiss you.

HAROLD
Oh.

EDITH
I think for me it took so long to be able to love another person
such a long time to grow up
get rid of all my self-involvement
all my worrying whether or not I measured up

HAROLD
Yes.

EDITH
or on the other hand
the feeling that perhaps other people were just getting in my way

wondering if they were what I wanted
or what I deserved
didn't I deserve more than this
to be happier
is this all there is

HAROLD
Right.

EDITH
Or I thought
I need to postpone gratification
and so I did
and I got so good at it
I forgot how to seize the moment

HAROLD
breaking hearts along the way if someone else was capable of love
at that earlier age when you weren't

EDITH
exactly
and now I think: what's the point of living a long time
if not to become tolerant of other people's idiosyncracies

HAROLD
Or imperfections.

EDITH
you know damn well you're not going to find the perfect mate

HAROLD
someone you always agree with or even like

EDITH
and now you know that
you should be able to get along with someone who's in the same ball park

HAROLD
a human being

EDITH
another human being

HAROLD
because we are lonely people

EDITH
we like a little companionship

HAROLD
just a cup of tea with another person
what's the big deal

EDITH
you don't need a lot

HAROLD
you'd settle for very little

EDITH
very very little when it comes down to it

HAROLD
very little
and that would feel good

EDITH
a little hello, good morning, how are you today

HAROLD
I'm going to the park
OK, have a nice time
I'll see you there for lunch

EDITH
can I bring you anything

HAROLD
a sandwich in a bag?

EDITH
no problem
I'll have lunch with you in the park

HAROLD
we'll have a picnic
and afterwards

I tell you a few lines of poetry I remember from when I was a kid in school
what I had to memorize

EDITH
and after that a nap or godknows whatall

HAROLD
and to bed

EDITH
you don't even have to touch each other
sure, what
a little touch wouldn't be bad

HAROLD
you don't have to be Don Juan
have some perfect technique

EDITH
just a touch, simple as that

HAROLD
an intimate touch?

EDITH
fine. nice. so much the better.

HAROLD

that's all: just a touch
that feels good

EDITH

OK, goodnight, that's all

HAROLD

I'd go for that.

EDITH

I'd like that.

HAROLD

I'd like that just fine.

EDITH

I'd call that a happy life

HAROLD

as happy as it needs to get for me

EDITH

Sometimes in life

you just get one chance.

Romeo and Juliet

They meet, they fall in love, they die.

That's the truth of life

you have one great love

You're born, you die

in between, if you're lucky

you have one great love

not two, not three,

just one.

It can last for years or for a moment

and then

it can be years later or a moment later

you die

and that's how it is to be human

that's what the great poets and dramatists have known

you see Romeo and Juliet
you think: how young they were
they didn't know
there's more than one pebble on the beach
but no.
There's only one pebble on the beach.
Sometimes not even one.

24. Catherine and Hiroko 2

CATHERINE

I thought
how it was for us
you knew I loved you.

HIROKO

This is what you always said.

CATHERINE

This is what I meant.

HIROKO

And yet
whenever I was sad
you just
withdrew.

CATHERINE

I didn't think I did.
I thought I tried to help
or sometimes I put my arms around you
but sometimes it seemed
you needed space
or you felt if I just consoled you
I was condescending toward you
or if I tried to cajole you out of it
you thought I was dismissive of how you felt

or, so
then I would stand back
to give you the space you needed.

HIROKO

Yes, you would withdraw.
So that I felt
you had no empathy for me.

CATHERINE

But I did.
I did.

HIROKO

When I was with Henry
if I was sad or upset
he would just say
oh, I'm so sorry
and put his arms around me
and kiss me.

CATHERINE

You wish I would be like Henry.

HIROKO

No.

CATHERINE

You wish you were with Henry again.

HIROKO

No.

CATHERINE

I don't understand.

HIROKO

You don't understand anything I say.

CATHERINE

What are you saying?

HIROKO

I am saying
you could just say
Hiroko,
I pity you.
I pity you, Hiroko.

CATHERINE

I pity you, Hiroko.

HIROKO

You see,
it's not so hard.

CATHERINE

That's it?

HIROKO

That's all I need.
I don't need to be taken out to La Coupole
or some other restaurant
or for you to buy me little dresses
or take me to the oceanside
I just need to know
when I am sad
you pity me

CATHERINE

I pity you, Hiroko.
I pity you.
I pity you.

HIROKO

I love you, Catherine.

25. Riff: the Stars

ALLEN

The way the stars are, with your naked eyes you can't see much.

SUSAN

Oh.

No. Unless you know a lot.

ALLEN

But even looking at the stars,
I would rather say the night sky,
you see two kinds of things...3 or 4 kinds of things.

SUSAN

You see planets, you see stars, you see meteorites,
you can see aircrafts ...
all these things...

ALLEN

so it's a great show
the way the planets appear and dance around,
we follow it all the time
and we have on our bulletin boards in the back ...
and we have a chart of the whole thing,
and people record that stuff...
because we know these motions very well.
It's the foundation probably of qualitative science.

SUSAN

The early work of people trying to understand...

ALLEN

first just day and night,
then the seasons
and then the stars and then the planets...
there are different things that go back tens of thousands of years,
older than written history.

SUSAN
Right.

ALLEN
There is a great deal more space than time, you know.

SUSAN
No.

ALLEN
Yes.
And this is because the signals we can get
all come in at the speed of light...

SUSAN
that's really fast.

ALLEN
Yes. And they cover a great distance.
So it doesn't take them much time to cover a lot of distance—
that's how you get more space than time in the universe.

SUSAN
Right.
Right.

26. Lydia and Nikos 3

LYDIA
You know
I've been thinking about it
and it turns out
I do love you

NIKOS
You do?

LYDIA
Yes.

NIKOS

How could that be?

LYDIA

I look at you
and I think you're sweet.

NIKOS

Oh, sweet.

LYDIA

and good-natured.

NIKOS

Good-natured.

LYDIA

Yes.

NIKOS

You do?

LYDIA

Yes, I really do.

And I think

if you think a person's agreeable and warmhearted
then I think there's something there you can't explain
that gives you real
delight.

NIKOS

Oh.

LYDIA

I find

you give delight to me.

NIKOS

Oh. Well.

That's what I'd hope for more than anything.

LYDIA

So would I.

NIKOS

And you're not sorry about it?

LYDIA

How do you mean?

NIKOS

That you find delight in someone
who doesn't seem to you in any other way
desirable
who doesn't perhaps have those qualities
that you can count on
for, you know, the solid, long-term kind of thing.

LYDIA

I would just take delight long-term.

NIKOS

Oh.

So would I.

[The end.]

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