

CONnection

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By

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CAST

EVA BENTON.....	40s
SHELDON.....	50
JESSICA.....	70s
GEORGE.....	70s

TIME

The Present

PLACE

A living room and props suggesting baseball stand, Gettysburg Park, Rocky Steps,

SCENE 1

SET: A living room in a Philadelphia town house with a large comfortable sofa and a large, modernistic painting on the wall. Nearby is a desk loaded with liquor bottles and a table with chessmen arranged on it.

AT RISE: It's dusk outside. EVA, a woman in her 40s, is on the phone.

EVA

(Shouting into the phone)

One hundred.

COMPUTER VOICE

Five hundred dollars. If this is correct, say one. If it is not correct, say two.

EVA

(Talking into the phone)

Two.

COMPUTER VOICE

Please restate amount.

EVA

One hundred. One. Hundred. Dollars.

COMPUTER VOICE

One hundred dollars. If this is correct, say one. If it is not correct, say two.

EVA

(Talking into the phone)

One.

COMPUTER VOICE

One hundred dollars. If this is correct, say one. If it is not correct, say two.

EVA

(Yelling louder)

One.

COMPUTER VOICE

One hundred dollars. If this is correct, say one. If it is not correct, say two.

EVA

(Yelling even louder)

One.

COMPUTER VOICE

Congratulations. You have successfully completed your donation of one hundred dollars to the West African Relief Fund. The children of Nigeria thank you.

Hanging up rattled and agitated, Eva gets up, pours a glass of wine, returns to her seat and takes a deep swig. The phone rings. She answers it.

EVA

Hello.

VOICE ON PHONE

Hello, Eva. I just heard a review of your book on NPR.

EVA

They weren't going to do that until next week.

VOICE ON PHONE

They called *Lonely Child* a glowing success. Witty. Amusing. A laugh or smile on almost every page, they said.

EVA

Lonely Child was a sad book about a lonely child. Me.

VOICE ON PHONE

Apparently a very witty lonely child.

EVA

What's so amusing about both my parents being orphans? About me having no grandparents? Or uncles? Or aunts? Or cousins? No brothers. Or sisters. Or children of my own?

VOICE ON PHONE

Your wit relieved the pain.

EVA

I wanted to share the pain, not relieve it. Show readers what it's like to be so lonely.

VOICE ON PHONE

Well you won't be lonely anymore. Now that you're a famous author. Gotta go now. To buy that book everyone is raving about. Bye.

EVA

Thanks for calling.

EVA hangs up. She hears keys in the door, gets up and pours another glass of wine. SHELDON, a man in his 50s, enters, with his hand held out. Eva puts the glass of wine she's just poured into his hand.

SHELDON

I need something stiffer than that.

He goes to the liquor table and pours scotch.

EVA

(Weary)

I assume you had another bad day at work.

He drains the glass in one long swig and pours a second glass.

SHELDON

The phone was ringing all day.

EVA

Monday is always busy.

SHELDON

I should be toasting you. I just heard the review of your book on NPR.

(Quoting)

Witty. Amusing. A laugh or smile on almost every page. That's what they said.

(Toasting)

To Lonely Child.

EVA

It wasn't supposed to be an amusing book.

SHELDON

I was chuckling a lot when I read your first draft. I thought it was very amusing how you defined grandmothers as serial adopters, who adopt their children's children on weekends and major holidays.

EVA

I was just trying to relieve the somber tone of the rest of the book.

SHELDON

And how it's a lot better to be an only child than to have an older brother because older brothers are always mean to younger sisters.

EVA

NPR never thought my satirical books were that funny.

Sheldon turns on the TV and the theme music of a news program comes up as he pulls out a bunch of books and lines them up on the coffee table.

TV VOICE

A teenage honor student was killed in the cross-fire of two gangs battling over seats in the demonstration lab of a sex education class. A fire in West Philadelphia destroyed a two-story house and killed a cat, as well as five senior citizens. But the big story on Action News tonight is the suicide death of a new mother shortly after receiving the bill from her obstetrician.

Sheldon snaps off the TV, opens up his laptop and starts taking notes on the books.

EVA

We're having smoked salmon with caraway mayonnaise and toasted French bread for dinner. Vanilla creme brulee for desert.

No response.

EVA (cont'd)

Mayonnaise is not good for your heart. But what the hell.

No response.

EVA (cont'd)

Creme brulee is not exactly a health food, either.

She looks at Sheldon totally engrossed in his computer.

EVA (cont'd)

I guess that's the end of conversation for tonight.

She waits for a response that never comes.

EVA (cont'd)

Anything interesting happen today at work?

He doesn't respond.

EVA (cont'd)

Shelly.
(Yelling)

Shelly.

SHELDON

What?

EVA

I've been trying to get your attention.

SHELDON

I'm sorry, dear. These new books I got put death in a very positive light. I want to add them to my notes before I forget.

EVA

Anything interesting happen today at work?

SHELDON

(Preoccupied with his note taking)

Same old tragedies.

EVA

Any tragedy that was particularly tragic?

SHELDON

An elderly couple. Lost their entire life savings.

EVA

How did they lose their entire life savings?

SHELDON

The usual way.

EVA

Would it be an imposition to be more specific?

SHELDON

Phony Nigerian bonds. All they got for their money was an email saying the people of Nigeria thank you.

EVA

Oh dear.

Sheldon stops typing and looks at Eva. She is looking very sheepish.

SHELDON

What do you mean oh dear?

EVA

Nothing.

SHELDON

Eva, you didn't.

EVA

The little starving children looked so sad in the pictures.

SHELDON
How much?

EVA
A hundred dollars.

SHELDON
Oh, Eva.

EVA
Their appeal for money sounded so sincere.

SHELDON
Some of these appeals are legit. But not from Nigeria.

EVA
The appeals from Nigeria are never legitimate?

SHELDON
You are a very complex woman.

EVA
I take that as a compliment.

SHELDON
You believe all this nonsense from Nigeria, but you distrust everything said in Washington.

EVA
For good reason. Maybe I should have been more suspicious of the Nigerians. But I refuse to believe that every request for help is a scam.

SHELDON
Eva, come here. Sit down.

She sits down besides him.

SHELDON (cont'd)
You have to protect yourself from these con artists

EVA
Did anything nice happen to you today?

SHELDON

Is that a trick question?

EVA

Why do you think it's a trick question?

SHELDON

Because nice things don't just happen. This is a dog-eat-dog world ruled by greed and power. Everyone is out to get everyone else.

EVA

That's certainly true of Washington and Wall Street.

SHELDON

It's not just the Nigerians screwing unsuspecting old people. It's the pharmaceutical companies bankrupting the sick and the old with outrageously expensive drugs. It's the politicians serving only the rich and the powerful. It's the investment bankers who steal from everyone. It's religious people persecuting and killing in the name of God. We do not live in a pretty world, Eva.

EVA

Something nice must have happened to you today. A rewarding coffee break?

SHELDON

The coffee was cold and overpriced.

EVA

Something nice happened to me today. The review of my book.

SHELDON

I'm so happy for you. And proud, too.

EVA

You are?

SHELDON

I know it wasn't easy for you. So many times I came home and saw you at your computer with tears streaming down your face and laughing.

EVA

Doing the book made me realize what I've been missing not having a family.

SHELDON

What you've been missing is a lot of squabbling and spending holidays with people you have nothing in common with but your genes. I've always envied you not having to deal with the craziness of families

EVA

People take their families for granted.

SHELDON

You used to be happy about being an only child and having two loving parents.

EVA

I wasn't so lonely then.

SHELDON

How can you be lonely?

EVA

We don't do things together anymore. Remember those wonderful outdoor concerts in the park on hot summer nights. We'd spend the night on the lawn, getting a little drunk, looking up at the stars and listening to the wonderful music.

SHELDON

It's been a while since we did that.

EVA

We should be going out more and having fun like that.

SHELDON

There's nothing to do in this town.

EVA

What are you talking about? This isn't the 1960s when the city slogan was "Philadelphia isn't as bad as Philadelphians say it is." We've become a destination city.

SHELDON

A destination for what?

EVA

We've got one of the most diverse and exciting restaurant scenes in the country. Theaters are popping up all over the place. And walkability? No city is as walkable as Philadelphia.

SHELDON

There are a lot of bad things, too.

EVA

Name one thing.

She waits as Sheldon thinks.

EVA (cont'd)

One thing.

She waits.

EVA (cont'd)

Well.

SHELDON

I'm trying to think of the worst thing.

EVA

I'm waiting.

SHELDON

The Philadelphia Parking Authority.

EVA

The parking authority is one little thing.

SHELDON

Not if you own a car.

The doorbell rings. Eva exits and the sound of her talking to someone can be heard. Sheldon goes back to his computer.

Eva enters, takes some money from her pocketbook and exits. Eva returns.

SHELDON (cont'd)

What was that all about?

EVA

The poor guy was desperate. His car broke down and he needed money for a cab.

SHELDON

And you gave it to him?

EVA

He said his wife was in labor and he was rushing her to the hospital.

SHELDON

(Disapproving)

Eva. Do you really think he was driving his wife to the hospital?

EVA

No.

SHELDON

So why did you give him the money?

EVA

I don't want to think I denied someone truly in need.

SHELDON

How much did you give him?

EVA

Twenty dollars.

SHELDON

You'll never get that back.

EVA

He asked me when I'd be home tomorrow so he could return the money.

SHELDON

You're going to be gone all day. You didn't tell him that. Did you?

EVA

I told him he could come by in the evening.

SHELDON

You just told someone when they could burglarize our house. I'm working at home tomorrow.

EVA

Because you believe this young man is going to break into our house?

(Playing with him)

After his wife gives birth?

SHELDON

No one's giving birth, Eva.

EVA

Wouldn't it be nice if this was one of those one in a million miracles where it was an honest appeal for help?

SHELDON

That's a lot of twenty dollars before you find your trustful beggar.

The phone rings. Sheldon answers it.

SHELDON (cont'd)

(On phone)

Hello...She's right here.

(Handing her the phone)

It's the credit card company.

EVA

(On phone)

Hello...This is Eva Benton...Seventeen purchases?...Thirty-five hundred dollars? I was never in Nigeria.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 2

The living room, the next day. It's early evening. A large arrangement of flowers is on the coffee table next to a wine glass with an elaborate ice cream sundae jammed into it. EVA is sitting in the chair next to the sofa, staring at the front door with a mischievous smile. Sheldon enters with his hand held out. Eva hands him the sundae. He snaps on the TV.

TV VOICE

...on the New Jersey Turnpike. A teenage honor student, seeking to impress fellow classmates, shot up his high school and burned down the building.

SHELDON

Oh damn, I missed the news.

TV VOICE

But the big news on Action News tonight is the Phillies' 27th loss in a row, beating the all time record of 26 losses set by the Louisville Colonels in 1889.

Sheldon snaps off the TV and starts to drink what he assumes is a glass of wine, pushing the sundae into his face.

SHELDON (cont'd)

What the hell? What is that?

EVA

A chocolate sundae.

SHELDON

Why are you giving me a chocolate sundae?

EVA

Chocolate is your favorite.

SHELDON

This is our cocktail hour.

EVA

We're in a rut. And we've got to get out of it.

Sheldon makes a drink for himself and brings out his books, sitting down at the coffee table. He starts taking notes.

SHELDON

We're not in a rut. We're going on a Caribbean cruise in a couple of weeks.

EVA

I married you for your sardonic wit. I didn't care that your glass was always half empty. But now your glass is completely empty. You spend all your time reading those awful books about death. Don't you think it's gone too far?

He doesn't respond.

EVA (cont'd)

It's morbid.

SHELDON

I'm learning a lot about death.

EVA

Why do you do this to yourself, Shelly?

SHELDON

I'm going to die.

EVA

You're not going to die?

SHELDON

You don't think you're going to die?

EVA

I'm going to die eventually.

SHELDON

Eventually might not be that far away. I've already lived more years than I have left to live.

EVA

You still have a lot more years ahead of you.

SHELDON

It's the unknown that makes it so scary. That's why I've got to understand what it's all about.

EVA

What's to understand? You die. You don't exist. End of story.

SHELDON

And all the things I love won't exist either. How can you deal with a thought like that? I can't believe you never think about what it means to be dead.

EVA

The thought of dying crosses my mind now and then.

SHELDON

How often is now and then?

EVA

I don't know. Every couple of months. How often do you think about it?

SHELDON

It's the first thought I have when I wake up in the morning. Autumn comes and I wonder if I'll see another summer. Is this my last Thanksgiving? Is this my last Christmas? Will I live long enough to have another birthday party? Dare I get a subscription for two years instead of one.

EVA

We should see a therapist.

SHELDON

This is beyond the reach of any therapist.

EVA

This preoccupation of yours is affecting our marriage.

SHELDON

It is?

EVA

Our marriage isn't working.

SHELDON

Of course it's working.

EVA

Whenever I try to talk to you about this, we always end up fighting.

SHELDON

What's your problem, Eva?

EVA

I feel so alone.

SHELDON

I thought our marriage was working fine.

EVA

It's gotten worse gradually.

SHELDON

What do you want from me, Eva?

EVA

I want you to stop reading all those awful books and love me.

SHELDON

I do love you.

EVA

I want you to show me like you used to.

The doorbell rings. Sheldon exits to answer it.

SHELDON (O.S.)

Oh shit...No. Go away... I'm an atheist. Leave us alone...I said leave us alone or I'll call the cops.

The sound of the door being slammed shut.
Sheldon enters.

SHELDON (cont'd)

That's an outrage, bothering people like that.

EVA

You could have been nicer to them.

SHELDON

They're violating my privacy.

EVA

They think they're saving you from hell.

SHELDON

Shit.

EVA

What would you do if someone rang the doorbell and said the top floor of our house was on fire? Yell at them and say you don't believe in fire?

SHELDON

It's not the same thing.

EVA

It is. From their point of view.

Eva's computer beeps, indicating a message has come in. She checks her screen.

EVA (cont'd)

Do we know someone in England?

SHELDON

No. Why?

EVA

We got a message from the U.K.

SHELDON

It must be an ad.

They both look at the screen as she opens the message.

JESSICA (VOICE ON COMPUTER)

Please excuse this intrusion. But is your father's name Albert Smith and is your mother's maiden name Wilma O'Henry? Thanking you in advance, Jessica.

SHELDON

Who's Jessica?

EVA

I don't know. Why would someone want to know if they were my parents?

SHELDON

It doesn't make any sense.

EVA

Maybe Jessica was a friend of my father and they're trying to make contact.

SHELDON

Your father's been dead for fifteen years.

EVA

Maybe Jessica doesn't know.

Eva starts to reply to the message.

SHELDON

What are you doing?

EVA

I'm going to reply to the message.

SHELDON

I'm not sure that's a good idea.

EVA

It sounds suspicious. But I'm curious about what will happen next.

SHELDON

You can't be sure what these people are up to.

EVA

One little word won't hurt.

Eva types on her computer and pushes the send button.

EVA (VOICE ON COMPUTER)
(cont'd)

Yes.

She waits several seconds for a reply. But there is none.

SHELDON

(Seeing the flowers for the first time)

Where'd the flowers come from?

EVA

That young man from last night.

SHELDON

What?

EVA

He came back with the twenty dollars. The flowers are his thank you.

(Handing him a photograph)

It was taken a few minutes after she was born.

SHELDON

I'll be damn.

The room fills with glowing rays of a setting sun.

EVA

It looks like it's going to be a beautiful sunset. It's giving the room a rosy glow.

SHELDON

Sunsets make me sad.

EVA

Normal people think they're beautiful.

SHELDON

That's because they don't stop to think about it.

EVA

I feel a Shelly Whopper coming on.

SHELDON

You do?

EVA

All right, I'll bite. What don't people stop to think about?

SHELDON

Eight minutes ago the photons burst from the surface of the sun and zipped through the vacuum of space at the speed of light, in a glorious trip, spanning 92 million miles, only to end up splattered against our living room wall.

EVA

Poor little photons.

SHELDON

It's sad when you think about it.

EVA

Terribly sad.

SHELDON

What grand thoughts were going through their little minds as they sped through space?

EVA

Photons can think?

SHELDON

Photons have feelings like everyone else.

EVA

They can laugh.

SHELDON

They can cry.

EVA

They can hope.

SHELDON

They were filled with hope, thinking they were headed towards another star.

EVA

Another galaxy.

SHELDON

A black hole.

EVA

Wouldn't that be exciting to be sucked into a black hole?

SHELDON

But instead, they splattered on our living room wall.

EVA

Poor little photons.

They high-five each other and laugh at their shared fantasy.

EVA (cont'd)

Most people don't think photons have feelings.

SHELDON

The same people who're forever talking about how this plant loves the sun, that one hates the shade and a third one that couldn't be happier than where it is.

The computer beeps.

EVA

It's that woman in England.

SHELDON

The plot thickens.

Eva opens the message.

JESSICA'S VOICE ON
COMPUTER

I can't believe I finally found you. The last we heard from your father is that his fiance, Wilma O'Henry, had just given birth to a girl, who they named Eva. We lost contact with him after that. And here we've finally found you. Your family welcomes you. Love, Aunt Jessica

EVA

What the hell is this all about?

SHELDON

They're obviously setting the stage for some complicated con.

EVA

I'm going to play along.
(Eva starts typing)

SHELDON

Be careful.

EVA

Dear, Aunt Jessica, I can't tell you how excited I am to think I have a family in England. That's a long way away from Philadelphia, where I live. You say you're my aunt. Do I have other aunts and uncles? Are my grandparents still alive? Do I have a lot of cousins?

Eva's laptop beeps, indicating an incoming message. It's Jessica. She opens the message.

JESSICA (VOICE ON COMPUTER)

My dearest, Eva. I've told the family that we've finally found you and everyone is so excited. This has been such an exciting week. Jane, your grandmother, celebrates her birthday in three days. She'll be 93, can you believe?

EVA

I have a 93-year-old grandmother?

JESSICA VOICE ON COMPUTER

She's doing surprisingly well though her arthritis has been acting up. She's applied to the National Health Service for a hip replacement. Another exciting thing. I'm a travel writer and my editor wants me to do a piece on how Philadelphia has become one of the destination cities in the States. Love, Your Aunt Jessica.

SHELDON

You don't have a 93-year-old grandmother.

EVA

She's a frail woman with billowing white hair and a smile that makes you want to hug her.

SHELDON

This is an elaborate con.

EVA

Yes, I know. But wouldn't it be something if this was one of those one-in-a-million miracles.

SHELDON

In a little while Jessica will tell you that Jane couldn't get a hip replacement from the National Health Service. Then she'll tell you that she's trying to raise funds to pay for a private physician. A little while later she'll tell you that she couldn't get the money and Jane is in desperate pain. And then you'll volunteer to help.

EVA

Of course I'd help. If this wasn't a scam.

SHELDON

Your father never talked about any of his relatives?

EVA

He never talked much about his life in England. He said he was raised in an orphanage. Dr. Barnardo's Home for Destitute and Homeless Children. I remember the name because it was so awful.

SHELDON

He never mentioned Jane, did he?

EVA

No.

SHELDON

A little suspicious, wouldn't you say?

The computer beeps. Eva looks at the screen.

EVA

It's her.

She doesn't do anything.

SHELDON

Delete it.

She starts to push the delete button but can't do it.

EVA

I've got to look.

She opens the message.

JESSICA VOICE ON COMPUTER

Dear Eva. Jane just told us something about your mother and father that has been a deep, dark secret. At least here in England. They weren't wearing a stitch of clothing when they saw each other for the first time. Isn't that funny?

EVA

No one knew that but me.

SHELDON

They really were nude when they met?

EVA

My parents frequently joked about it. I think my father liked shocking people before he explained what they were doing when they were nude.

SHELDON

My God, what were they doing?

EVA

They were nude models in an art school.

SHELDON

How would Jessica know about that?

EVA

Jane told her. Aunt Jessica is for real. I really do have a family.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

3

3

SCENE 3

The living room, a few weeks later. It's daylight outside. Eva is on her computer.

EVA (VOICE ON COMPUTER)

Shelly and I have just returned from a seven-day trip to the Caribbean. The weather was beautiful even though Shelly was expecting a hurricane every day. The ship was rolling just a little bit. I loved it but Shelly was worried about getting seasick.

Sheldon enters. He is not happy. He makes a drink for himself and sits down with his books and computer.

EVA (VOICE ON COMPUTER)

(cont'd)

The nightclub shows were magnificent. Shelly thought they were gaudy. He got bored sitting on the promenade deck looking at the ocean. I lost weight jogging around the promenade deck. Four times around equalled a mile. Can you believe how huge these ships have become? Love, Eva.

Sheldon takes a big swallow and puts on the television. A television commercial is heard and then the anchor for the evening news. Eva patiently waits for the news report to end.

TV VOICE

A newly married couple, heading for their honeymoon, will never celebrate their first anniversary because they were killed in a road-rage incident. The owner of a fast-food franchise shot and killed a nun in a church where she was praying for an increase in the minimum wage. But the big news on Action News tonight is the fire bombing of Citizens' Stadium by angry Phillies' fans.

He snaps off the TV.

EVA

I made an appointment with a family counselor. This Saturday.

SHELDON

You did what?

EVA

He's been working with Bob and Millicent. They say he's very good.

SHELDON

I thought we put all that nonsense to rest.

EVA

I never put it to rest.

SHELDON

We're not in a rut anymore.

EVA

You think we're out of the rut because you're making your own drinks?

SHELDON

What about the cruise?

EVA

The cruise was a disappointment.

SHELDON

I thought you were having a ball.

EVA

You ruined it for me. You spent the whole cruise worrying about hurricanes and sea sickness and shipboard fires. You were miserable the whole time we were on that ship.

SHELDON

I can't go around pretending that everything is all right when it isn't.

EVA

Why do you have to pretend? You didn't think it was magical sitting on the promenade deck and watching those glorious sunsets?

SHELDON

Half the time there were clouds on the horizon.

EVA

That were turned a glorious orange and gold by the setting sun. Wasn't the food good?

SHELDON

There was too much of it.

EVA

You didn't have to overeat.

SHELDON

And pass up a midnight chocolate buffet?

EVA

We can talk about your attitude when we meet with Dr. Hirshfeld.

SHELDON

You're not giving up on the therapist thing, are you?

EVA

No, I'm not. I'm asking you to do this for me, Sheldon. No. I'm not asking you. I'm telling you.

SHELDON

This is what you need to be happy?

EVA

It's not a matter of making me happy. It's about making our marriage work again.

SHELDON

We can figure it out on our own.

EVA

Next week, either we go there together or I go alone.

SHELDON

I don't want you going alone.

EVA

So then come with me. Saturday at 11 o'clock. I got another message from Aunt Jessica. She wants me to help her with her travel article about Philadelphia. Can you believe that?

SHELDON

Oh.

EVA

Don't rain on that, too, Shelly.

SHELDON

I've been doing some research in the library at work.

EVA

And?

SHELDON

I know what kind of scam this is.

EVA

Enough with your suspicions, Sheldon.

SHELDON

I have to admit. This is one clever bunch of people.

EVA

Be careful what you say about my family.

SHELDON

It's called The Orphan Scam.

EVA

I don't want to hear any of this.

SHELDON

You fit the scam profile perfectly.

EVA

I'm not listening.

SHELDON

The victim is always someone who has no family. Like you. With Google and the social media it's not hard for the con artists to build a pretty complete dossier on their intended victims. Or in this case her family.

EVA

I'm not listening.

SHELDON

They ply her with personal information to get her emotionally involved with her so-called family.

EVA

I love my new family.

SHELDON

Once she's hooked, they start demanding money.

EVA

So this is how you spent your day at work. You son of a bitch.

SHELDON

Hey, I'm not the enemy.

EVA

If this a scam how did she know all these things about my family?

SHELDON

I checked the newspapers. Your father's obituary said that he and your mother met when they were models in an art school. Aunt Jessica just guessed that they were nude. She knew their names because you mentioned them in your book. Don't you think it strange that you know nothing about Aunt Jessica. All you know is her email address, which can't be traced. You don't know her real address.

EVA

She said she lives in London.

SHELDON

But no street address.

Sheldon takes Eva's laptop and starts typing.

EVA

I've never given her my street address.

SHELDON

There's no way you'll ever get her address.

EVA

Why would she keep that a secret?

SHELDON

Con artists don't want to be easily traced.

EVA

She'd give me her address if I asked her for it.

SHELDON

Even if she did, how would you know it was a real address?

EVA

Apparently there's no way for Aunt Jessica to prove herself to you.

SHELDON

There's one way to check her out.

Sheldon hands the computer to Eva.

SHELDON (cont'd)

Send her this message. Once she gets that, you'll never hear from her again.

EVA

(Reading the message)

Dear Jessica, I want to send you pictures of me and Sheldon and our house, but I don't have your street address. Could you send it to me? Some of the pictures were taken before there were digital cameras so I can't email them to you. I asked Shelly if he could scan the pictures at work. But he said it's against government regulations using their high-speed computers for personal business. He's an anti-scam investigator for the Cyberspace Fraud Division in the Justice Department. Hope to hear from you soon, Love, Eva.

EVA (cont'd)

I don't want to send her something like this.

SHELDON

You afraid of scaring her away?

EVA

This isn't going to scare her away.

SHELDON

Then send it and let's see what happens.

EVA

All right, I will. If this is the only way to prove to you that she's for real.

Eva pushes the send button.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

4

4

SCENE 4

Sheldon and Eva are having morning coffee, while both are on their computers. The sun is streaming through the windows. Birds can be heard chirping.

SHELDON

Don't you find that annoying?

EVA

What?

SHELDON

The chirping.

EVA

You find the happy sound of birds chirping annoying?

SHELDON

How do you know it's a happy sound? Maybe they're hurting and the chirping is a scream of pain.

EVA

I never thought of that.

SHELDON

They've just woken up. Their joints are stiff with arthritis and they're groaning.

EVA

But of course a bird can't groan so it chirps.

SHELDON

They're scared.

EVA

They don't want to jump off a tree with arthritic wings that can't flap.

SHELDON
So they chirp.

EVA
Calling for help.

SHELDON
And help does come.

EVA
With the rising sun that warms their wings and eases the arthritis.

SHELDON
And so the screaming stops.

EVA
The chirping is no more.

SHELDON
And they fly off.

EVA
Into the sun.

SHELDON
And the start of a new day.

They go back to their computers.

EVA
It's been more than a week without a reply to your message. I feel like I'm at a funeral. For a whole family.

SHELDON
You've still got me.

EVA
Yeah.

Eva's laptop beeps, indicating a new message. Eva checks the mail and sees it's from Jessica.

EVA (cont'd)

It's her.

SHELDON

I'll be damned.

EVA

Your stupid message didn't scare her off because she really is my aunt.

Eva reads the message.

JESSICA VOICE ON COMPUTER

Jane's been put on a waiting list for a hip replacement. It's five years long. That means she won't get one until she's 98 years old, if she lives that long. I'm trying to raise money so we can send her to a private surgeon. I'd love to see your photographs, but I don't really have a street address. I'm a travel writer and constantly on the road. Home for George and me is our suitcases and my computer and whatever place I'm writing about. Love, Jessica.

Eva looks shocked.

SHELDON

I'm sorry, Eva.

EVA

I feel like such a fool. I'd even bought Jane a silly little thing for her birthday.

SHELDON

They're mean people.

Eva starts to cry. Sheldon hugs her.

EVA

It would have been better if I never knew what could have been.

The computer beeps. Eva looks at the screen and is surprised to see a message from Jessica.

SHELDON

She's rattled. She knows you're suspicious.

Eva opens the message.

JESSICA VOICE ON THE
COMPUTER

Oh, I forgot. I wanted you to have this.

EVA

There's an attachment.

SHELDON

Don't open it. They'll get control of your computer.

EVA

I want to see.

She opens the attachment and gasps.

EVA (cont'd)

Oh, my God.

SHELDON

What is it?

EVA

This is amazing.

SHELDON

Let me see. What is it?

EVA

A photograph of my father when he was a little boy.

SHELDON

How do you know this is your father?

EVA

Look at the cap he's wearing.

SHELDON

I can't make out all the letters. Dr. Ber... I can't read the rest.

EVA

Bernardo. Dr. Barnardo's Home for Destitute and Homeless Children.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

Online Sample Reading Only

SCENE 5

The following exchanges are between Jessica and Eva, on either side of the stage, their heads in silhouette.

JESSICA VOICE ON COMPUTER

Dear Eva, I have some very sad news. Jane died yesterday. We were all with her by the bedside and she passed peacefully. Love, Jessica.

EVA (VOICE ON COMPUTER)

Dear Jessica, that is sad news. I wish I could have met Jane. I bet she had a lot of wonderful stories about our family. Love, Eva.

JESSICA (VOICE ON COMPUTER)

Dear Eva, I'm learning so much about your wonderful city. I do have one question that maybe you can help me with. Someone told me that Philadelphia once tried to promote tourism with advertisements that said "Philadelphia isn't as bad as Philadelphians say it is." Could this possibly be true? Love, Jessica.

EVA (VOICE ON COMPUTER)

Dear Jessica, there was a time when Philadelphians were always complaining that we weren't as good as New York and some mentally challenged advertising executive thought that would be a good way to promote Philadelphia. Love, Eva.

JESSICA VOICE ON COMPUTER

Dear Eva, I don't think I can do much more on this story without coming to Philadelphia and seeing it for myself. I'm meeting with my editor tomorrow to see if he's willing to pay my way over. Love, Jessica.

EVA (VOICE ON COMPUTER)

Dear Jessica, it's so exciting to think that you might be coming to Philadelphia. Love, Eva.

JESSICA VOICE ON COMPUTER

Dear Eva, good news. We hope to come to Philadelphia July 5, but only if we can find an affordable hotel. At first glance, it doesn't look very good.

Most of your hotels charge more than two hundred dollars a night, but we'll keep looking. Love, Jessica.

LIGHTS COME UP on the living room.
It's daytime. Sheldon and Eva are in the middle of a fight.

SHELDON
Are you out of your goddamn mind?

EVA
My goddamn mind is doing just fine, thank you.

SHELDON
It's a crazy, fucking idea.

EVA
I wish you wouldn't swear like that.

SHELDON
Finally you have gone too far. Too far, goddamnit. Too fucking far.

EVA
They'll be here only for a few weeks.

SHELDON
Here, in our house?

EVA
What's the matter with that?

SHELDON
They're complete strangers. She's not coming here. That's final.

EVA
What does she have to do to convince you that she's really my aunt. She knows details about my father that only a relative could know.

SHELDON
Or someone who read your book and your parents' obituaries.

EVA
What about the picture? How do you explain that.?

SHELDON

Didn't you think there was something strange about the picture? He was just standing there looking at the camera. Without smiling.

EVA

So.

SHELDON

It's an ID photo. The orphanage has photographs of all the kids.

EVA

How do you know that?

SHELDON

I checked.

EVA

You called the orphanage?

SHELDON

I did.

EVA

While you were pretending you were Sherlock Holmes, did you ask them if someone had asked for a copy of my father's photograph?

SHELDON

No.

EVA

So all of this is just another one of your goddamn paranoid theories.

SHELDON

I want you to write that woman back and say we'll be out of town in July.

EVA

I will not. She's my aunt. Finding me is a miracle. And I should be thankful.

SHELDON

I don't believe in miracles.

EVA

(Starts to cry)

This means so much to me. So much. And you don't give a damn because you never believe in anything.

He goes to the liquor table and makes himself a drink while Eva sobs. He looks at her sadly. He makes a second drink, gives it to her and sits down next to her.

SHELDON

I know how hard it must be to lose the family you just got.

EVA

I never dreamed she would be coming here.

SHELDON

I wish there was something I could do.

EVA

You've got to be kidding.

SHELDON

I mean other than that.

EVA

I keep imagining what Aunt Jessica must be like. Shelly, what harm would it do to take a chance? What has she done to make you so suspicious?

SHELDON

It's true she hasn't done anything that is really suspicious.

EVA

She sounds like a wonderful person.

SHELDON

If she's pretending, she's doing a damn good job of it.

EVA

Maybe because she isn't pretending?

SHELDON

You want this so much.

EVA

I can't let this go by, Shelly.

SHELDON

Maybe it wouldn't be such a risk if we're on our guard.

EVA

Then we can do it?

SHELDON

Yes.

She kisses him and starts typing on her computer. She pushes the send button.

EVA (VOICE ON COMPUTER)

Dear Jessica, Shelly and I have come up with a wonderful idea. Why don't you stay with us? We have plenty of room and it would be so great to spend time together.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 6

Eva is sitting nervously at her computer. It's daytime. Sheldon enters, carrying a big box and a little box. The big box is obviously very heavy. He plops the boxes down and collapses on a chair, out of breath.

SHELDON

I'm not as young as I used to be. They're not here yet?

EVA

They should have been here hours ago. Their plane must have been delayed by bad weather. Did you check it on the computer?

SHELDON

How could I do that? We don't know their flight number. Why don't we have the flight number?

EVA

They never gave it to me.

SHELDON

You didn't ask?

EVA

Yes, Sheldon, I asked. Jessica said she would send it. But she must have forgot.

SHELDON

How could she forget a thing like that?

EVA

They didn't want us to pick them up. So the flight number wasn't important.

SHELDON

Why didn't they want us to pick them up?

EVA

They said they didn't want to inconvenience us. I wish you'd stop with all these questions. I'm not one of your alleged suspects.

SHELDON

U.S. Airways Flight 272 was the last plane from England. It was only 17 minutes late. They should have been here two hours ago. All of this is very suspicious.

EVA

What's suspicious?

SHELDON

The fact that they never gave you their flight number and arrived two hours late. God knows what they'll be doing in our house while we're asleep. I'm sorry I ever agreed to do this.

EVA

We don't have anything worth stealing, Shelly.

SHELDON

They could be sociopaths who'll kill us in our sleep.

EVA

I never thought of that. It makes perfect sense. To go to the trouble and expense of flying over here so they can kill us in our sleep. There's no one in England who a sociopath would want to kill?

SHELDON

England has a lot of sociopaths. You never heard of Jack the Ripper? He slashed his victims' throats.

EVA

His victims were prostitutes, not American couples who invited him into their homes. You are really something, Shelly. Our guests are a few hours late and you start thinking like this. You said you wouldn't do this. You said you would accept them at their word.

SHELDON

Until something suspicious turned up.

EVA

Like being a few hours late?

SHELDON

And we do have something that's worth stealing. Something that will become very valuable.

EVA

Like what?

SHELDON

The painting.

EVA

(Indicating with disdain the painting on the wall)

That painting?

SHELDON

Yes. That painting.

EVA

Why would anyone want to steal that?

SHELDON

Because it could be very valuable some day. The artist is hot. He's young and one of his paintings just sold for \$10,000.

EVA

The artist was dying of starvation and his rich uncle bought the painting. That's why he got so much for the painting. That's why there was a story in the newspaper. Fairy Godmother Is Really an Uncle. Everything you're saying is getting more and more ridiculous. What's in those packages?

SHELDON

Packages?

EVA

The two packages you just came in here with.

SHELDON

You mean these?

EVA

Yes, Shelly. I mean those.

Sheldon pulls back paper revealing a small safe.

EVA (cont'd)

You bought a safe?

SHELDON

We have to keep our valuables and personal papers safe.

He unwraps the second package and pulls out an assault gun.

EVA

You bought a gun? Because my aunt and uncle are coming?

SHELDON

It has nothing to do with them. With all the crime lately, I've been thinking a lot about protection.

EVA

This is going too far. I don't want a gun in our house.

SHELDON

Just think of it as peace of mind.

He starts loading the gun.

EVA

What are you doing?

SHELDON

An unloaded gun doesn't help much in an emergency.

EVA

Are you sure this has nothing to do with them coming here?

SHELDON

Nothing.

EVA

It's just a coincidence? You getting a gun the day they arrive?

SHELDON

Just a coincidence.

EVA

It'll be so embarrassing if they see a gun here. It'll confirm everything Europeans say about our gun-crazy country. I want you to hide that thing. Put it in the attic.

SHELDON

If someone breaks in here, you want me to run up to the attic, bring down the gun and say put your hands up? No, we have to have it at the ready. I'll put it here.

He puts the loaded gun in the nearby desk drawer.

SHELDON (cont'd)

Even if they're not sociopaths, the next three weeks are going to be terrible.

EVA

Why do you think that?

SHELDON

They're English.

EVA

You don't like the English?

SHELDON

They're boring people.

EVA

How can you make a sweeping generalization like that?

SHELDON

Have you ever eaten English food? People who accept food like that are invariably dull.

EVA

Would you remind me why I ever married you?

SHELDON

We're about to spend the next three weeks talking about gardens and the weather. Assuming they talk. The English don't talk much.

Eva looks out the window.

EVA

I see a man and a woman coming down the street pulling suitcases.

Sheldon looks.

SHELDON

They're two old people. That can't be them.

EVA

You're right. The woman must be in her 70s.

SHELDON

Didn't Jessica tell you how old she was?

EVA

She never said.

SHELDON

They're checking house numbers.

EVA

Were any of our neighbors expecting a visit from their aging grandparents?

SHELDON

Great grandparents, if you ask me.

EVA

They're staring at our house number.

SHELDON

And they're smiling.

EVA

My God, it's them. Hide that stuff.

Sheldon packages everything up and hides it.

SHELDON

They don't look English. The guy looks like he's a slick fashion model. For AARP.

EVA

Does she look like me?

SHELDON

I couldn't get a good look.

The doorbell rings.

EVA

You get it.

SHELDON

Why me?

EVA

I'm a little nervous. Can't you see that?

SHELDON

Shouldn't it be you who welcomes them?

EVA

No.

Sheldon exits. The sound of people greeting each other is heard. JESSICA and GEORGE, both in their 70s, enter with Sheldon.

JESSICA

Eva?

EVA

Aunt Jessica?

Eva and Jessica hug. George hugs Sheldon.

They have English accents.

EVA (cont'd)

Welcome to America..

JESSICA

We finally made it after all these months.

EVA

I can't believe you're here.

(Not sure what to say next)

Please, have a seat.

Everyone sits down and looks at each other awkwardly.

SHELDON

So you're Eva's aunt and uncle.

They smile a yes.

GEORGE

You have such a beautiful home.

Sheldon and Eva smile a thank you.

EVA

(Finally)

We've been very happy here.

SHELDON

We're always making house repairs.

GEORGE

We've arrived in your country on such a beautiful day.

JESSICA

The predictions for the rest of the week are very positive. Weather men have become very accurate. Wouldn't you say? I guess I should have said weather man slash woman. Being politically correct is a never ending job. I particularly like the way they give you hourly predictions. Sunny at 7. Cloudy at 8. Rain at 9. Of course, that is a typical U.K. weather report. Except for sunny at 7. I understand it's always sunny in the states.

Sheldon sighs, giving Jessica I-told-you-so look. George looks with displeasure at something on the wall.

JESSICA (cont'd)

I understand it's particularly important to have such precise predictions in the middle of your country where there are so many tornados. I've never been in one of those dreadful things. But I've seen pictures. They do look terrifying. We don't have tornados like you have. I don't know why. I'm sure Google could explain it.

GEORGE

I do like it when it rains.

JESSICA

The flowers in your garden are just lovely. What are they?

(Before Eva can answer)

I love spending time in the garden. Just me, the beautiful flowers and a freshly brewed pot of tea, of course. Do you like tea when you're gardening?

(Before Eva can answer)

George doesn't care much for gardening. He prefers long walks in the rain. Don't you, dear?

(George doesn't bother to answer)

Because we have so much rain our flowers do very well. And George can walk a lot. We take credit for our beautiful flowers, but it's all about soil and weather. Isn't it? Is the soil good here in the city? I suppose you buy soil from the people who sell that kind of thing. I always thought it strange that you could sell dirt. I don't know where the expression "dirt cheap" comes from. Dirt certainly isn't very cheap when you buy it from someone.

SHELDON

Didn't you say that you and George live out of your suitcases?

JESSICA

Yes, I think I did say something like that. It's been a while since I've been in my garden. We've rented out our house to a family of Americans and have been on the road for the past couple of years.

SHELDON

Our house? You and your brother live together?

JESSICA

George moved in with me when his wife died. Which made perfect sense. It was our parent's house and huge by British standards.

George doesn't like a picture on the wall.
Sheldon sees this.

SHELDON

Is something wrong?

GEORGE

When you sit in this room, do you have the feeling that the energy is being drained from your body?

SHELDON

Only if I drink too much.

GEORGE

The feng shui is all wrong.

SHELDON

The fung what is all wrong?

GEORGE

Feng shui. It's a way to harmonize your human existence with your environment.

SHELDON

I think this room is harmonizing with my human existence just fine.

GEORGE

The harmonizing isn't happening with that picture hanging there.

George goes to the wall and takes down the painting.

SHELDON

Son of a bitch.

GEORGE

There. Isn't that better?

EVA

Yes, it is. Don't you think so, Sheldon?

SHELDON

I like the painting where it was.

GEORGE

You see, now the energy comes down from the corner of the room and reaches you uninterrupted. Before, the flow was stopped by the painting.

EVA

This is amazing.

SHELDON

Are you kidding me?

GEORGE

Aren't you being renewed by the energy, Sheldon?

SHELDON

I feel nothing.

GEORGE

That's probably because this room isn't in complete harmony. You really should think about moving that desk.

SHELDON

Move my desk?

GEORGE

It's an energy blocker. Like the painting. Are you sure you feel no increase in your energy?

SHELDON

I feel absolutely nothing.

GEORGE

Moving the desk shouldn't be hard.

George tries to lift it, but it's too heavy.

SHELDON

What the hell.

GEORGE

My God is it heavy. What do you have in the drawers?

He starts to open the drawer, but Sheldon slams it shut.

SHELDON

We lost the harmony when you walked in that door.

GEORGE

Everyone, sit quietly and let the harmony seep into your bodies.

SHELDON

This must be a dream. A nightmare.

EVA

Please, Sheldon.

All but Sheldon look down as though meditating or in deep prayer.

SHELDON

This is crazy.

GEORGE

Shhh.

SHELDON

It's just a painting, goddamnit..

EVA

Give it a chance, Shelly. Give it a chance.

GEORGE

The energy is beginning to happen to me.

He breathes deeply.

JESSICA

Is it happening for you, Eva?

EVA

I think it is.

SHELDON

Oh for God sake.

EVA

Yes, definitely. I'm feeling it now.

GEORGE

You should also move that desk.

SHELDON

I like the desk just where it is.

GEORGE

Why?

SHELDON

It makes me feel safe.

GEORGE

Why would that desk make you feel safe?

SHELDON

I don't want to get into that.

EVA

I always thought there was too much clutter in this room.

SHELDON

You never complained about that.

GEORGE

Clutter is bad che. The yang isn't acting and the yin isn't receiving.

SHELDON

Huh?

JESSICA

George is the feng shui expert in our family. Aren't you, dear? He's been studying it for years. All our friends in the U.K. come to him for advice when they're decorating their homes.

After talking to George, they're very concerned about getting the yang and yin just right. I'm sure he'll get rid of all the bad che in your home before we leave.

GEORGE

Jessica is a gourmet cook.

EVA

You're a gourmet cook?

SHELDON

I'm not moving that desk.

GEORGE

She's rather good. Won several cooking competitions.

SHELDON

That wouldn't take much in England.

GEORGE

In France and Italy.

SHELDON

Oh.

George yawns.

EVA

You must be exhausted from your trip.

GEORGE

We could use a bit of a nap.

EVA

Let me take you to your room.

They get up and prepare to leave.

EVA (cont'd)

What would you like to do while you're here?

GEORGE

I know exactly what I want to do. I've known for 20 years. Run up the Rocky Steps.

SHELDON

You mean walk up the steps. Slowly.

GEORGE

No. I mean run.

SHELDON

You're in your 60s.

GEORGE

I'm 79.

SHELDON

And you want to run up the Rocky steps?

GEORGE

You have to run. It's a display of personal victory.

SHELDON

We're not kids any more.

GEORGE

Maybe not in body but in spirit I am. And I suspect you also are young in spirit.

SHELDON

Not enough to run up the Rocky steps.

GEORGE

Nonsense. We're both running up the steps tomorrow.

They start to leave the room.

SHELDON

Wait. Before you go upstairs could you tell me what your flight number was.

GEORGE

I beg you pardon.

SHELDON

Your plane from England. You did leave from England, didn't you?

GEORGE

Why yes, of course. Why do you want to...

JESSICA

The flight number was U.S. Airways Flight 272.

SHELDON

Oh. What time did it get into Philadelphia?

JESSICA

It was supposed to get in at 2:35 but it was 17 minutes late.

SHELDON

But you didn't arrive here until 5. Even with a lot of traffic it shouldn't have taken more than a half hour to get here by cab.

JESSICA

I'm so sorry. Was our arriving late a problem?

SHELDON

It wasn't a problem. I was just curious about your late arrival.

JESSICA

I told you, George, we shouldn't have done that. The Philadelphia neighborhoods are so beautiful we asked the cabbie to drop us off in the center of town so we could walk to your house and enjoy your beautiful city.

SHELDON

You walked?

EVA

Yes, Sheldon, they walked. And enough of these questions.

(To George and Jessica)

Come, let me show you to your room.

They exit. Sheldon gets up and makes a drink. Eva enters.

EVA (cont'd)

What the hell was that all about? This grilling about flight numbers and arrival time.

SHELDON

They never arrived on a plane from England.

EVA

Why do you think that?

SHELDON

She was much too precise is remembering the flight number and the time the plane landed.

EVA

You're suspicious of that?

SHELDON

She looked those facts up on her smartphone, in case we asked her about that.

EVA

She can't win. If she knows the number you're suspicious. If she doesn't know the number you're suspicious.

SHELDON

Why were they two hours late?

EVA

She explained. They walked here.

SHELDON

Does that make sense? You arrive in a new city and you decide to walk to the hotel.

EVA

Isn't that what we did in Paris? We walked all the way from the metro because the sights were so lovely.

SHELDON

This is Philadelphia, for God's sake. It's not Paris.

EVA

You're impossible.

SHELDON

Con artists have an explanation for everything. The only way to catch them is to challenge every suspicious thing they say or do, no matter how small it might seem. After a while they slip up

EVA

You mean you're going to keep grilling them like that?

SHELDON

That's right. I'm going to keep grilling them like that.

Sheldon starts to replace the painting.

EVA

Now what are you doing?

SHELDON

What does it look like I'm doing? This stranger walks into our house and starts redecorating? Talk about nerve. There's a reason this picture is here.

EVA

Why?

SHELDON

Because I like it there.

EVA

There's always been something about this room that's bothered me. And I think it's that painting being there.

SHELDON

Because it's sucking the energy from you? What bullshit. And that woman. She never stops talking.

EVA

That's how some people react when they meet someone for the first time and are nervous. Talk a lot. I found her enthusiasm a breath of fresh air.

SHELDON

First she talks endlessly about the weather. And then she talks endlessly about gardens. She's doing everything I predicted. She's the one who's sucking the energy out of the room. Didn't you find it interesting how this guy was immediately attracted to my painting? He knows it's valuable.

EVA

It's not valuable.

SHELDON

Then why did he make such a big deal about the painting?

EVA

Because it was messing up the ying and the yang.

SHELDON

If I don't do something, we're going to wake up tomorrow and the painting's going to be gone.

He starts taking the painting back down.

SHELDON (cont'd)

I'm locking this up in the garage.

EVA

Why?

SHELDON

So they can't steal it.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

END OF ACT I

7

7

SCENE

ACT II

Online Sample Reading Only

SCENE 8

Sheldon is sitting on one of the Rocky steps, exhausted and desperately trying to catch his breath while the others stand nearby.

EVA

That was marvelous, dear. Absolutely marvelous. I can't believe you did it.

SHELDON

(Barely able to talk)

Yeah.

GEORGE

You almost beat me to the top, old boy. And you said you couldn't do it.

SHELDON

(Still too winded to talk)

Yeah.

EVA

I'm so impressed.

GEORGE

A little positive thinking. That's all it took.

SHELDON

All these years I just assumed I couldn't do it.

GEORGE

Lots of opportunities are lost thinking like that, my friend.

SHELDON

I kept saying to myself "just one more step." And suddenly -- maybe not so suddenly -- I'm at the top. Of the Rocky Steps.

EVA

You've been wanting to do that for longer than I can remember.

SHELDON

I guess the old body isn't in as bad shape as I thought.

JESSICA

How can really old people visit this museum with all these stairs? Do they have an elevator?

Sheldon is surprised that a Brit would use the word "elevator."

EVA

Yes they do. Sheldon uses it a lot.

GEORGE

I read in the guide books that there's a statue of that famous boxer in Philadelphia.

EVA

Rocky. He's down there where everyone is waiting to have their picture taken with him. People from all over the world come here to see him.

(Demonstrating)

They hold their hands up in victory, just like Rocky did when he reached the top.

GEORGE

I want to do that.

SHELDON

It's just for tourists.

GEORGE

I pass inspection. That's what I am.

He starts to head for the statue.

EVA

I'll go with you, George.

SHELDON

(Stage whisper)

Don't leave me alone with her.

EVA

Try to be a good host, Sheldon.

Eva and George exit.

JESSICA

(Looking down at the statue)

Are there always so many people having their picture taken with Rocky?

SHELDON

It's always crowded. On weekends vending trucks are even there serving food.

JESSICA

(Taking out a notepad)

How many people in a day see it, would you say?

SHELDON

Probably a couple of hundred. Certainly in the summer when the days are longer.

She writes in her notepad.

JESSICA

Today is the longest day of the year.

SHELDON

That's very depressing.

JESSICA

The longest day of the year depresses you?

SHELDON

Tomorrow the days start getting shorter. I was surprised that George could make it to the top.

JESSICA

George is always working out. That's why he doesn't look his age.

SHELDON

How old do you think I am?

JESSICA

I couldn't guess.

SHELDON

Sure you can.

JESSICA

I'm not very good at that sort of thing.

SHELDON

Come on, give me a figure. Forty? Sixty?

(Laughing at the thought)

Eighty.

She shakes her head.

SHELDON (cont'd)

Guess.

JESSICA

(Very timidly)

Sixty?

SHELDON

(Disappointed)

Sixty?

Jessica nods timidly.

GEORGE

You think I'm 60 years old?

JESSICA

I told you I'm not very good at this. It was just a guess.

SHELDON

You could have guessed 40.

JESSICA

You're right. Forty. You look 40.

SHELDON

I'm fifty.

JESSICA

The light's not very good here.

SHELDON

I'm going to the gym, starting tomorrow.

JESSICA

I was always guessing the wrong ages for people in New Zealand, where I was living for a while, and later in London. The people in New Zealand were always a lot older than I guessed. And in London, a lot younger.

They become silent.

JESSICA (cont'd)

(Finally)

It's very beautiful up here. Is that your city hall way down there?

SHELDON

Yeah. It's the most ugly thing in this town. And that's saying something.

JESSICA

I think it's beautiful. People like you and me are so lucky to be living in such beautiful, exciting cities. But we don't realize it. Do we?

Sheldon is doing a lot of things to indicate he's bracing for another tirade of words.

You probably weren't even aware that city hall was down there. Because you've seen it so much before, don't you think? Parisians don't see the Eiffel Tower. New Yorkers don't see the Empire State Building. People who work near the White House don't see the White House. One week in a foreign country feels like a month. Because we're not on automatic pilot. We're experiencing every little thing. We should be experiencing every little thing where we live. I do that now. Thanks to George.

SHELDON

Where in New Zealand were you raised?

JESSICA

(Uncomfortable)

Where?

SHELDON

What city?

JESSICA

(As though the name just came to her)

Auckland.

SHELDON

I guess everyone knows that Auckland is in New Zealand.

JESSICA

I suppose they do.

SHELDON

I'm told there're a lot of beautiful mountains in New Zealand. One of them is very famous. What's it called?

JESSICA

I don't keep track of those sort of things.

George and Eva enter, laughing.

GEORGE

That was a bit of good fun. Jessie, we've got to have our picture taken together with Rocky. Holding our arms up like this.

JESSICA

What a wonderful idea.

GEORGE

(Maintaining the pose)

Do I look like Rocky?

EVA

You're much more handsome.

GEORGE

I was hoping you'd say sexy.

EVA

That, too.

GEORGE

Saying something like that makes a man want to run up those steps again.
Come on, Jess. Lets get our picture taken with Rocky. We'll be right back.

They exit. Eva joins Sheldon on the steps.

EVA

I've never seen anyone having so much fun with that silly statue.

SHELDON

(Mimicking him)

Saying something like that makes a man want to run up those steps again.

EVA

I'll be damned. You're jealous.

SHELDON

No, I'm not.

EVA

Just because he was flirting with me.

SHELDON

He's too old to be flirting.

EVA

We're never too old to flirt. George told me he likes to be thought of as a sexy senior citizen. George even flirts with his sister.

SHELDON

It's obscene.

EVA

Don't be so stuffy. Affection like that doesn't happen often with brother and sister.

SHELDON

She didn't know the name of the tallest mountain in New Zealand.

EVA

She didn't?

SHELDON

Someone from New Zealand should know the name of the tallest mountain, Eva.

EVA

You would think so. Do you know the tallest mountain in the United States?

SHELDON

The Rockies.

EVA

No.

SHELDON

What do you mean no?

EVA

The Rockies are not the tallest mountain in the U.S.

SHELDON

Sure they are.

EVA

They're not.

SHELDON

They are.

EVA

Mount McKinley is our tallest mountain. Since you don't know that, I'm beginning to think you've been lying to me all these years. You're not really an American.

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LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

10

SCENE 9

The living room. It's night. The four are talking.

JESSICA

I'm looking forward to the theater tonight.

GEORGE

Doesn't Jessica look beautiful?

JESSICA

George, you're embarrassing me.

GEORGE

Nothing to be embarrassed about. You are a very beautiful and seductive woman.

JESSICA

You're my brother. Or have you forgotten?

GEORGE

Yes, of course. You're my sister.

George looks at Eva seductively. There's an awkward silence.

SHELDON

I can't get over that you found Eva. There're more than 300 million people in this country and you were able to find the person you were looking for. Did it take you long to find Eva?

GEORGE

How long had we been looking, Jess?

JESSICA

We started in 1999, didn't we?

GEORGE

Yes, of course. We'd been searching for 15 years.

SHELDON
How did you do it?

GEORGE
Do it?

SHELDON
What methods did you use to find her?

GEORGE
Well, I don't remember, exactly.

SHELDON
I'd think you'd remember something like that.

JESSICA
We put ads in newspapers.

GEORGE
Yes, that's right.

JESSICA
But it wasn't until Google came along that we had any hope of finding her.

SHELDON
And her book being published.

JESSICA
Eva published a book?

SHELDON
You didn't read it?

JESSICA
I would love to read it. What's it about?

SHELDON
It's an autobiography.

JESSICA
Oh, now I really want to read it.

GEORGE
A marvelous invention that Google.

JESSICA

We contacted every Eva Smith we could find on Google.

SHELDON

How many Eva Smiths did you contact?

GEORGE

Quite a few.

SHELDON

How many is quite a few?

GEORGE

I don't know exactly.

SHELDON

After all that work, you don't remember how many you contacted?

JESSICA

Two hundred and seventeen.

EVA

You sent messages to 217 people?

JESSICA

It wasn't difficult. We sent the same message to everyone. Like the one we sent you.

GEORGE

I'm sure all of this is boring to you.

SHELDON

It's not boring me at all. What kind of responses did you get to the 217 messages?

GEORGE

Well, all sorts of things.

SHELDON

Like what?

GEORGE

Nothing very interesting.

SHELDON

Someone must have said something interesting.

JESSICA

Most didn't even respond.

GEORGE

Everyone is so suspicious. There are a lot of con artists on the internet.

JESSICA

What a silly thing to say to Sheldon, George. Who would know better about these things than Sheldon?

GEORGE

Quite so.

JESSICA

You have a very green city.

GEORGE

But your subways could use a little sprucing up.

Sheldon is surprised that a Brit would say
"subway."

SHELDON

Don't change the subject.

EVA

Yes, Sheldon. We should change the subject.

JESSICA

So many beautiful buildings are covered with ivy. Ivy is a demonstration of how robust nature is, wouldn't you say?

SHELDON

Yeah, like metastatic cancer.

GEORGE

You're not one who's easily jollied up, I can see. Would it be possible to see one of your baseball games?

SHELDON

You don't want to see the Phillies. They're not very good.

GEORGE

It's the American sport. I want to experience everything American.

EVA

Get sick and experience medical bankruptcy.

GEORGE

Oh, my. Look at the time. We better leave or we'll miss the curtain. Are you sure you won't come with us, Sheldon?

SHELDON

Theater is a waste of time.

GEORGE

Theater is rather good these days, wouldn't you say?

SHELDON

The only good thing about today's theater is that the plays are only 90 minutes long.

EVA

The audience's attention span has grown that short.

SHELDON

The attention span of playwrights has grown that short.

GEORGE

Well, perhaps we can go to a movie some time. Some of them go on forever.

Sheldon is surprised that a Brit would say "movie."

GEORGE (cont'd)

We better hurry.

They exit. Sheldon starts working his computer.

SHELDON

Look at all those American words they've been using. Elevator instead of Lift. Movie instead of cinema. Subway instead of tube.

EVA

And when we were in Paris what did we call the subway? We called it the metro. Jessica and George are very cultured people and want to use the word's we'll understand. I couldn't believe how rude you were.

SHELDON

And the affectionate way they are with each other. They're not brother and sister

(Attention drawn to his computer screen)

Seventy-seven. Just as I thought.

EVA

What's 77?

SHELDON

The number of Eva Smith hits you get on Google.

EVA

So what?

SHELDON

Jessica said they messaged 217 Eva Smiths. There's nowhere near that many. She just grabbed a number out of thin air.

EVA

That is odd.

SHELDON

They didn't spend 15 years looking for Eva Smith. It's no coincidence that they found you just after your book came out. They were looking for an orphan to scam and along comes your book.

EVA

She said they didn't know I had written a book.

SHELDON

She would have to say that.

EVA

It is a hell of a coincidence. Contacting me just after my book is published.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

Online Sample Reading Only

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SCENE 10

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The next day. Sheldon and George are at the ballpark, loaded down with paper containers of beer and hot dogs. George is savoring a hot dog.

GEORGE

These hot dogs are bloody good.

SHELDON

Not good for your heart.

GEORGE

I'm glad you didn't say that at the start of the game. This is my third one.

George jumps up cheering. Sheldon stays seated, shaking his head.

SHELDON

You're cheering for the wrong team. Our team is the one wearing white and making all the errors.

GEORGE

Well done. Well done. Both teams seem to be doing a splendid job.

SHELDON

The Phillies never do a splendid job.

GEORGE

The fellow who struck the ball ran past the first marker without stopping.

SHELDON

He hit a double.

GEORGE

A double?

SHELDON

They couldn't get the ball back to the first marker in time to stop him. So he was able to reach the second marker. That's why we call his hit a double. And we also call the markers bases.

GEORGE

The players in this game of yours are so graceful. They're such a pleasure to watch. Almost like watching ballet.

SHELDON

Yeah, that's what the Phillies are good at. Dancing around and losing.

GEORGE

Win lose what does it matter? It's how they play that's a joy to watch. Don't you think?

SHELDON

The biggest joy is watching your team win.

GEORGE

Would Bobby Thomson's home run have been any less exciting if the Giants had lost?

Sheldon is shocked that George should know about that.

GEORGE (cont'd)

Would it have been?

SHELDON

Winning at the last moment like that is what made the home run so important. If they didn't keep score it would have been just another ball hit into the stands.

GEORGE

We put too much emphasis on who wins and who loses.

SHELDON

Then why watch the game?

GEORGE

To enjoy the game.

SHELDON

Winning is what it's all about. Just like life.

GEORGE

And that's a shame, wouldn't you say?

SHELDON

How come you know about Thomson's home run?

GEORGE

Everyone knows about it.

SHELDON

Maybe American baseball fans. But a Brit?

GEORGE

We do try to keep up. We also know that you chaps landed two men on the moon.

The crowd roars. George roars.

GEORGE (cont'd)

Look at that jump. And he got the ball. Simply splendid.

SHELDON

But too late to get the batter at first base.

GEORGE

Still a marvelous play, don't you think?

SHELDON

Only if you don't keep score.

GEORGE

My point exactly.

The crowd roars.

GEORGE (cont'd)

What happened?

SHELDON

They caught him trying to steal a base.

GEORGE

Why would anyone want to steal a marker?

SHELDON

It's an expression. He tried to advance to the next base but they caught him. It's the end of the inning.

GEORGE

Ah, now's the time for another one of the many pauses you have in this game.

SHELDON

You're not about to tell me you like the time wasted between innings, are you?

GEORGE

I certainly am. These, what do you call them, innings are ingenious. They give you a lovely chance to chat, don't you think?

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 11

The next night. Sheldon, Eva and George are gathered around the dinner table. Jessica enters with a tray of food. Everyone eagerly takes their portions. Sheldon starts eating.

JESSICA

I was going through my notes last night and saw two places I think I should check out. Are King of Prussia and Gettysburg terribly far from Philadelphia?

EVA

An easy drive. Would you like us to take you?

JESSICA

Would it be too much trouble?

EVA

No trouble at all.

JESSICA

Then that would be splendid if we went out there. I do think I should mention it in my story, even though they're not actually in Philadelphia.

SHELDON

(Savoring the food)

This is wonderful.

JESSICA

I'm glad you like it.

SHELDON

What is it?

JESSICA

Beef Tournedoes with Foie Gras and Red Wine.

SHELDON

That doesn't sound very British.

JESSICA

It's French. Why cook pub food when the best cooking in the world is just across the channel in France? Would you say grace, George?

SHELDON

What!

GEORGE

Yes, of course.

Sheldon is not happy with this.

GEORGE (cont'd)

Dear Whomever, thank you for what we're about to consume. Show us the way and give us the strength to eat slowly and appreciate the many subtle delights in every bite. Amen.

JESSICA

Amen.

SHELDON

You say grace before every meal?

GEORGE

We don't do it with the food on airplanes.

SHELDON

It would be a sin to ask Whomever to bless airplane food.

Sheldon continues to shovel the food into his mouth while Jessica and George take very small bites and chew for a long time. Sheldon sees this and is confused.

SHELDON (cont'd)

You don't like the food?

Jessica and George are chewing 15 times and can't answer immediately.

GEORGE

(Finally)

The food is absolutely delicious.

SHELDON

You seem to be picking at it.

GEORGE

Savoring it, my boy. Savoring it.

JESSICA

George and I have taught ourselves to eat very slowly.

GEORGE

Pause, to enjoy one of life's greatest pleasures.

JESSICA

Savor.

GEORGE

Linger with delight.

George cuts a piece of meat and changes hands when he puts it into his mouth. Sheldon sees this with suspicion.

JESSICA

We've found so much happiness in eating slowly that we've made it our mission to show others the way.

GEORGE

(Looking at Sheldon gorging himself)

Most people shovel down the food without ever tasting it.

SHELDON

(Embarrassed that he is one of those people)

How come you eat the American way, George?

GEORGE

The American way?

SHELDON

You hold the meat in place with a fork and cut with your right hand. And then switch the fork to the right hand, to put the meat in your mouth.

GEORGE

This is the American way?

SHELDON

It's a dead giveaway that you're American. Saw that in an old World War II movie. The American spy was eating in a Berlin restaurant and the Gestapo agents sitting nearby saw him switch hands. They arrested him.

EVA

Are you planning to arrest George?

SHELDON

Can you explain why you eat the American way?

EVA

George doesn't have to explain anything.

GEORGE

It's a perfectly valid question, Eva. I'm surprised that Sheldon hadn't figured it out. I switch forks because it takes longer to eat that way. It helps me to remember to eat slowly.

SHELDON

Oh.

Sheldon starts to take a huge piece of food in his mouth.

GEORGE

Wait. Don't put that in your mouth. It's much too big. Cut it in half.

SHELDON

What?

GEORGE

I want to share with you the joy of eating slowly.

SHELDON

I know how to eat. I've been doing it for years.

JESSICA

I thought I knew how to eat. And then George showed me what I'd been missing.

EVA

Let's try it, Shelly.

Eva and Sheldon cut their pieces of meat in half.

GEORGE

Now put it in your mouth.

They do so and start to chew.

GEORGE (cont'd)

No. Don't chew.

They both stop chewing and look at George startled.

GEORGE (cont'd)

Taste the food.

They taste the food.

GEORGE (cont'd)

Now chew it.

They chew it a couple of times and are about to swallow.

GEORGE (cont'd)

Don't swallow. Chew it 15 times.

SHELDON

Fifteen times!

GEORGE

Fifteen.

Eva happily chews 15 times. Sheldon reluctantly does it.

GEORGE (cont'd)

Now swallow.

They do.

GEORGE (cont'd)

Well, what do you think?

SHELDON

I think I just ate a tiny piece of meat.

GEORGE

Did you like it?

SHELDON

It was OK.

EVA

I liked it.

SHELDON

Dinner would take all night, eating like that.

GEORGE

Would that be bad?

SHELDON

It wouldn't be bad if you don't have something else to do.

GEORGE

We always have something else to do. That's why we must force ourselves to be in the present. The future is always just about to happen.

SHELDON

I suspect you're not very big on multi-tasking.

GEORGE

The art of doing everything and experiencing nothing? No, I'm not.

JESSICA

George and I think of ourselves as missionaries in a world that moves too fast.

GEORGE

We realize that we've been chosen to show others the way.

JESSICA

Nothing angers George more than people who aimlessly pass through life on automatic pilot.

GEORGE

It pisses me off. Excuse my French. I see them going from one mindless diversion to another, never appreciating, always anticipating. Life is to be savored, not blindly consumed. These people should be punished for their wasteful ways.

EVA

That sounds a bit severe.

GEORGE

It's for their own good. They would thank us for enriching their lives. If I could, I would make laws, very strict laws, against wasteful lives. The penalties would be severe.

Eva and Sheldon look at him with concern.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

LIGHTS COME UP on the same scene, indicating the passage of time. Sheldon and Eva are now alone, sitting at the table.

SHELDON

Are they ever going to come back from their walk?

EVA

George says walking after every meal is just as important as eating slowly.

SHELDON

George is a very strange guy.

EVA

I think he's delightfully different.

SHELDON

The talk about punishing people for meaningless lives was a little, I don't know.

EVA

Creepy?

SHELDON

More than creepy.

EVA

He was just being a little melodramatic to make a point.

SHELDON

I was envisioning him handcuffing people in restaurants and feeding them soup with very small spoons. He acts like he's on a religious crusade. You've got to watch out for religious crusaders like that.

EVA

The food really did taste better eating slowly. Don't you think?

SHELDON

(Reluctantly)

It tasted better. I'm not going to wait any longer.

EVA

Is your brandy that important?

SHELDON

A brandy after every meal is more important than walking after every meal.

Sheldon gets the bottle of brandy with four glasses.

SHELDON (cont'd)

Not only do we have two con artists living with us, but two religious nuts as well. Don't you find it suspicious that they've said nothing about your so-called family in England?

EVA

I'm a little surprised.

SHELDON

They haven't said anything because there's no real family to talk about. The evidence just keeps growing. They didn't want us to pick them up at the airport. George knew about the Thomson home run.

They switch hands when they're eating. And they use American words instead of British. They're Americans.

George and Jessica enter.

JESSICA

It's a beautiful night. You should have joined us.

GEORGE

Can't beat getting a little fresh air in your lungs.

SHELDON

Fresh air in Philadelphia? Better to stay inside. Brandy?

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They both nod yes.

13

JESSICA

I'm so glad you're such trusting people. All the way over in the plane, George was warning me not to expect too much. He said you'd be very suspicious of us. Because of the type of work Sheldon does. Do you find it terrible investigating all those horrid criminals?

SHELDON

Well, I'm not...

JESSICA

You must love the work.

SHELDON

I would rather coach lacrosse.

GEORGE

Then you should do it.

SHELDON

It doesn't pay enough.

JESSICA

I know a lot of unhappy rich people.

SHELDON

I know a lot of unhappy poor people.

JESSICA

We should enjoy the simple things in our lives. Like this lovely old couch.

EVA

Shelly and I fell in love with it the moment we saw it in an antique shop. We were on our honeymoon. Over the years it got all messed up and stained. Now we're thinking of replacing it. Isn't that something? You love something so much, mess it up and then decide to throw it out.

SHELDON

Sounds like a metaphor for marriage.

EVA

Some things can't be restored.

JESSICA

(Meaning Eva's husband)

You have a lovely sofa, Eva. Don't get rid of it.

SHELDON

(Trying to brighten the suddenly sad mood)

Why are we talking about an old sofa? We should be talking about Eva's new-found family. Shouldn't we, Jessica?

Jessica is taken back by Sheldon's accusatory tone.

JESSICA

I told Eva everything in our emails.

SHELDON

Which wasn't very much, was it? I find it surprising that you don't know more. Don't you find it surprising, Eva?

EVA

I was hoping...

JESSICA

Where should I begin?

SHELDON

At the beginning.

JESSICA

(Attacking tone)

Eva, your great grandmother, Ivy, was born in 1894. She left school at the age of 14 and went into service in London as a chamber maid in the mansion of a wealthy family. In those days a young woman had very few choices. She met Herbert Edward Smith, the man who was to be her husband. Herbert Edward Smith died after the fourth child was born, quite possibly fathered by a lodger in their house.

SHELDON

Fathered by a lodger?

EVA

Let her talk, Sheldon.

JESSICA

Ivy met Edward Ambrose Charles, a married man who made her pregnant a fifth time with your grandmother, Jane. Because Charles was a merchant seaman, absent from home for long periods, it was possible for him to maintain two families at the same time.

SHELDON

First a lodger and then a merchant seaman with two families?

JESSICA

Jane gave birth to four daughters and five sons. One of the boys was your father, Albert. Poor and facing the workhouse, Jane placed three of her children, including Albert, in Dr. Barnardo's Home for Destitute and Homeless Children. After leaving the orphanage at the age of 15, Albert joined the Royal Marines as a band-boy. He left the Marines after four years and began working with his step-father on board a passenger ship to New York. On one such trip, he jumped ship and stayed in America, working first as an artist model -- he was very handsome -- and then as an illustrator of pulp fiction magazines. We lost contact with him shortly after you were born. Does that satisfy your curiosity, Sheldon? I don't want a brandy after all. I'm awfully tired.

She stands to leave.

GEORGE

I'm suddenly exhausted, too.

George and Jessica exit.

EVA

It's terrible the way you behaved.

SHELDON

You don't think that was a bit much?

EVA

What a colorful family I have.

GEORGE

It sounds like something from a Gothic romance. In fact, I think I just saw something on Masterpice Theatre with those same elements.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 12

The next day in Gettysburg. The four are standing on an observation deck, overlooking the battlefield.

GEORGE

So this is where it happened.

EVA

Turning point of the Civil War. The South never recovered.

SHELDON

Lee thought his army was invincible. So many young men died here.

GEORGE

Almost ten thousand.

Eva looks at George, surprised that he knows this.

SHELDON

They were all convinced this was something worth dying for.

GEORGE

(Reciting)

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure.

SHELDON

You know the Gettysburg Address?

GEORGE

A beautifully stated justification for a war, not that war is ever justified.

SHELDON

American school children all had to memorize the address. But you weren't an American school child, were you?

GEORGE

All of my countrymen, at least the cultured ones, know about this address and many have memorized it. Looking out on these rolling fields and hills, it's hard to think that so many died here.

EVA

Would you like to see some of the monuments honoring the men and the generals who fought here?

GEORGE

I'd rather not, thank you.

JESSICA

George thinks war monuments are evil.

SHELDON

He's absolutely right.

JESSICA

Finally George has found someone to agree with him about this.

EVA

Finally Sheldon has found someone who agrees with him about this.

SHELDON

Every city in this country has a statue honoring some general or other.

GEORGE

The worst one is in Richmond, Virginia. Robert E. Lee, sitting proudly on his horse after sending almost 4,000 young men to their deaths in only three days.

SHELDON

It's a monument to arrogance.

GEORGE

Lee even admitted it. "It's my fault, all my fault. I thought we were invincible," he yelled to his troops, rushing to escape the Northern onslaught.

SHELDON

How do you know all these things?

GEORGE

I used to work in a London shop that specialized in war memorabilia.

SHELDON

They had stuff about the American civil war in an English war memorabilia shop?

GEORGE

Your country is a big player on the war memorabilia circuit.

SHELDON

We should make statues of statesmen who avoided war with diplomacy, not the poor bastards who had to fight. But patriotism demands that we honor the generals, who order the killing.

GEORGE

Patriotism substitutes passion for reason.

SHELDON

Well said.

EVA

Well I'm going to check out the gift shop for something that's not patriotic.

GEORGE

I'll go with you.

EVA

Jessica?

JESSICA

I think I'll stay here with Sheldon.

EVA

We'll be back in a bit.

Eva and George exit.

JESSICA

I've never been one for souvenirs.

SHELDON

Waste of money.

They're having trouble getting a conversation going.

JESSICA

(Finally)

I hope us being here isn't interfering with your work.

SHELDON

No problem.

JESSICA

Your work sounds very interesting.

SHELDON

I suppose so.

JESSICA

Just what do you do?

SHELDON

I try to catch the bastards.

JESSICA

Are you very successful?

SHELDON

Not very. Hard to catch someone when you don't know who they are or where they are. If we're called in before the con is completed, we might be able to get them talking long enough on the internet that they say something that gives them away. But it doesn't happen often. They're too smart.

JESSICA

That must be very frustrating work.

SHELDON

More depressing than frustrating. People usually don't call us until after the con is completed and they've lost everything. Then there's no hope of catching them.

JESSICA

I've always wanted to be a con artist. Does that surprise you?

SHELDON

What surprises me is that you'd say that to someone like me.

JESSICA

I think it would be grand fun to pretend I'm something or someone I'm not and fool everyone. Con artists play roles like actors on the stage. But the stakes are so much higher. If you're not good, you go to jail. That's what makes it so exciting.

SHELDON

Con artists are awful people.

JESSICA

I'd have no trouble conning someone if it didn't hurt them.

SHELDON

That's not possible.

JESSICA

So I guess I'll never be a con artist.

Eva and George enter.

EVA

They were closed.

GEORGE

So that gives us time for a drink before we return home. Come. I saw a nice pub down the road.

They start to leave, with Jessica and George leading the way.

EVA

I was afraid to leave you with her.

SHELDON

Actually we had a very interesting conversation. She was the first person -- other than you, of course -- who's shown any interest in the work I do.

EVA

This is what you talked about? Your work?

SHELDON

That and how she'd like to be a con artist.

EVA

I don't think I heard you correctly.

SHELDON

That's what she said.

EVA

She said that to you?

SHELDON

It sure as hell surprised me.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 13

The living room one week later. George and Sheldon come in from a soaking rain, carrying golf bags.

SHELDON

I knew it would rain.

GEORGE

They were predicting only clouds.

SHELDON

Doesn't matter what they predict. It always rains when I play golf.

GEORGE

They should give you a call before issuing their predictions.

SHELDON

Let's see how the Phillies did in Boston.

GEORGE

You've become a fan again?

SHELDON

If winning isn't important, they're the team to watch.

Sheldon snaps on the TV. The sound of an anchor's voice in the middle of a special news report.

TV VOICE

...decomposing bodies. The family of three -- a mother, father and grandfather, each one in their own bed -- were found in their luxury condo overlooking the Delaware River. For an exclusive report on this insensitive, brutal massacre, we go to Nancy Cheer, who is standing with other reporters in front of the doomed home.

NANCY CHEER'S VOICE

Yes, Jim, I'm standing here in front of the house of doom, where a husband, wife and grandfather were killed in a cold-blooded, heartless atrocity. Police said the throats of all the victims had been slashed with a long, and we presume, very sharp knife. Neighbors called police after becoming alarmed because no one had been seen entering or leaving their house for a month. There was no sign of forced entry, suggesting that the Camden Slasher was someone the family knew or a stranger who had gained the family's trust.

TV VOICE

And now we go to Chopper Six for a view of a neighborhood engulfed in grief and asking one question. Why?

SHELDON

(Snapping off the TV)

Camden Slasher. Television news doesn't get much better than that. I'm betting an estranged lover killed that family.

GEORGE

Why do you think that?

SHELDON

That's the sort of stuff estranged lovers do.

GEORGE

It could have been a stranger.

SHELDON

Not a chance. No one is going to let strangers into their house, let alone let them stay there while they're sleeping.

GEORGE

That would be foolish, wouldn't it?

(Indicating chess board)

Do you play?

SHELDON

Only on the computer. The board is just interior decoration, like the shelves of unread books people use to decorate homes.

GEORGE

I challenge you to a game if you don't mind playing with an amateur. I suspect you're rather good

SHELDON

It doesn't matter. I always lose.

George hides a white piece in his right hand and a black one in the left.

GEORGE

Which one?

Sheldon picks the right hand.

GEORGE (cont'd)

You go first. Why do you expect to lose?

SHELDON

I have to protect myself.

They start playing.

GEORGE

From what?

SHELDON

Disappointment.

GEORGE

Are you disappointed a lot?

SHELDON

My first big disappointment came at the age of 10 when I didn't get the train set I wanted. It was just the beginning of disappointment. I was counting on making the high school basketball team but was too short. I expected to get into Harvard and didn't even get an interview. I wanted to be a trial lawyer and ended up in the cyberspace fraud division. Yes, this is a very disappointing world. Don't you watch television? Do you ever see a happy news report? No, you don't.

GEORGE

Disappointment usually has to do with attitude.

SHELDON

What's my attitude got to do with a disappointing life?

GEORGE

Only a few things in life are clearly good or bad. You're struck by lightning on the golf course. That's clearly bad. You hit a hole in one. That's clearly good. But things like rain could go either way.

SHELDON

Rain is rain. It's wet. It's cold. It keeps you inside when you want to play golf.

GEORGE

And here we are playing chess because we can't play golf. One door closes. The other opens. It's sad how people are always focussing on the door that closed.

SHELDON

Check.

GEORGE

What?

SHELDON

(Pointing at the board)

The queen.

GEORGE

Bloody hell. That was fast. I didn't see that.

(Surveying the board and finally making a move)

SHELDON

There is one good thing I can anticipate.

GEORGE

What?

SHELDON

Winning this game. Check mate.

GEORGE

(He studies the board)

Those knights are clever little buggers.

Sheldon clears the board and starts repositioning the pieces.

GEORGE (cont'd)

It's stopped raining. We can play golf.

SHELDON

You want to play golf?

GEORGE

You don't?

SHELDON

We're not sure the storm is gone.

GEORGE

If it comes back, we can find shelter.

SHELDON

We could be struck by lightning.

GEORGE

I haven't heard any thunder.

SHELDON

The course will be soggy.

GEORGE

Then the ball is less likely to roll into the rough.

SHELDON

I don't like playing when it's overcast like this.

GEORGE

I think I'm beginning to understand.

SHELDON

Understand what?

GEORGE

(Moving a chess piece)

Your move.

They both break up laughing.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

19

19

Online Sample Reading Only

SCENE 14

The actors will be lit up in different places on the stage to suggest different places and time.

GEORGE

I hear there's a theater in Philadelphia that shows wonderful movies.

SHELDON

The Ritz in Society Hill.

GEORGE

Yes, that's the one. Let's see a movie there.

SHELDON

When?

GEORGE

Right now.

SHELDON

It's Saturday night. The lines will be awful.

GEORGE

If they're too long, we can explore Society Hill.

AFTER THE MOVIE

SHELDON

I can't believe there were no lines.

GEORGE

Look at that boat on the river. It's huge.

SHELDON

That's the Moshula. An old sailing ship.

GEORGE

Can you go aboard?

SHELDON

Yes, of course. They're turned it into a fancy restaurant.

GEORGE

Let's go there for lunch tomorrow.

SHELDON

It's a tourist trap.

GEORGE

We can sit on the deck and feel the sun in our face.

AFTER THEIR VISIT TO THE SHIP

SHELDON

I never thought it would be so much fun, watching the ships go by.

GEORGE

When we were at the orchestra, I saw a very attractive building down the street.

SHELDON

Academy of Music. They do ballet and opera there.

GEORGE

That would be a treat. To go to the opera.

SHELDON

This is a bad month for seeing the opera. They're doing Wagner.

GEORGE

That's bad?

SHELDON

It's Wagner.

AFTER THE OPERA

SHELDON (cont'd)

Wagner does write beautiful orchestral music.

ANOTHER MOMENT

Sheldon is alone with Eva.

SHELDON (cont'd)

George has been running me ragged from one end of town to the other.

EVA

Jessica has been keeping me pretty busy, visiting every tourist attraction, filling one notebook after another.

SHELDON

I'm beginning to think there might be something to George's positive thinking. He sure seems a lot happier than I am.

EVA

His glass isn't half full. It's overflowing.

SHELDON

I've even started watching Phillies' games.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 15

It's late at night and Sheldon is working at his computer, surrounded by books and papers. George, wearing a bathrobe, enters.

GEORGE

You're still up. Couldn't sleep?

SHELDON

This is the best time of day. It's quiet and I can think.

George checks out the books surrounding Sheldon.

GEORGE

(Reading the titles of the books)

Being Mortal. Life After Life. The Denial of Death. This is your bedtime reading?

SHELDON

I find it calming.

GEORGE

Reading about death?

SHELDON

Yes.

GEORGE

(Reciting from a book jacket)

This book is required reading for anyone who wants to live deeply with inspiration, less fear of dying and increased insight.

(Not reciting)

Books like this never helped me.

SHELDON

You must be thinking about death all the time, considering how old you are.

GEORGE

It used to be the first thing I thought of when I woke up in the morning.

SHELDON

I know what you mean.

GEORGE

It wasn't the most uplifting way to start the day. So I stopped doing it.

SHELDON

I wish I could stop doing it.

GEORGE

It's something you have to work at. You have to be very disciplined.

SHELDON

How'd you do it?

GEORGE

Goldie taught me.

SHELDON

Who's Goldie?

GEORGE

She was my Irish setter. A lovely animal. It was a sad, sad day when I had to put her down.

SHELDON

A dog helped you deal with death?

GEORGE

Goldie had no fear of dying.

SHELDON

Of course she didn't. We're the only species cursed with the knowledge of our mortality.

GEORGE

Even if she did know, I don't think she would have been spending much time worrying about it. Blondie never thought much about the future.

Maybe she'd look a few minutes ahead, to the next time she got fed or walked. But not more than that. Blondie lived only in the present.

SHELDON

How can you know that?

GEORGE

Obviously you'd never had a dog.

SHELDON

No, I haven't.

GEORGE

Whenever I played ball with Blondie, the only thing she was thinking about was getting that ball. No distraction came between her and that ball. Children could run by. People with food could be watching her. Even other dogs could wander by. But all Blondie wanted was that ball. It was like that with everything she did.

SHELDON

I focus like that on my books.

GEORGE

Obviously a poor choice of subject. Sheldon, there're only three ways to deal with your mortality. You can turn to religion and look forward to a good afterlife. But you're an atheist. You can spend all your free time doing aerobic exercise and expecting to live forever. I can't see you doing that. Or you can live in the present.

SHELDON

Like Blondie.

GEORGE

Yes. I admit it's easier for a dog than a human, especially humans like you and me. But you can train yourself to instantly push death away the moment it pops up and think only of what you're doing at the time.

SHELDON

Eva says it's illogical for an atheist to worry about what it's like to be dead. If you don't exist after death, she says, you don't know you're dead.

GEORGE

Jessica said the very same thing when we first met.

SHELDON

You were talking about this when you first met?

GEORGE

It almost ruined our first date.

SHELDON

You talked about it on your first date?

GEORGE

It was always the elephant in the room before Blondie showed me the way. Envisioning the total absence of everything is terrifying if you're cursed with the ability to imagine it. You can't explain why it's scary. You can't understand it. You can't deal with it. That's why it's better to just chase after the ball.

LIGHT FADES TO BLACK

SCENE 16

The living room. Eva is sitting alone. She looks troubled. Sheldon enters, full of energy and happy.

SHELDON

(Making himself a drink)

I was watching the kids playing lacrosse in the park. They weren't playing very well. You can't just run onto the field and start chasing the ball. You need training, practice, discipline. What would you think of me doing some volunteer work at the high school? Coaching lacrosse.

Sheldon sees that Eva hasn't been paying attention.

SHELDON (cont'd)

Is something wrong?

EVA

I don't know.

SHELDON

Something's wrong.

EVA

Jessica and I were in the museum having a grand time. We stopped in that cafe on the second floor to have tea and somehow Jessica's handbag got knocked off the table. Everything in the bag went flying. So Jessica and I rushed to pick everything up. One of the things I picked up was her passport.

SHELDON

So?

EVA

It was an American passport.

SHELDON

Are you sure?

EVA

I know what an American passport looks like.

SHELDON

Maybe it wasn't hers.

EVA

I never saw the passport picture because she snatched it out of my hands so fast. But why would she be carrying someone else's passport? Shelly, you've been right all along. Those two people are American con artists.

SHELDON

You're being unfair. They're delightful people.

EVA

Isn't that what con artists have to be? Delightful. To earn your trust.

SHELDON

If they're con artists, what are they conning us out of?

EVA

We don't know yet. They're very clever.

SHELDON

Eva, I'm a professional and know how to look at a person, size them up, and know if they're up to no good. I've looked at Jessica and George and can tell you they're OK.

EVA

I feel like I've lost the family I just got.

SHELDON

Would it make you feel better if they can explain everything?

EVA

And if they can't?

SHELDON

We'll send them packing. And change all the locks on the house. But it's not going to come to that.

EVA

OK, you confront them.

SHELDON

Why me? You're the one who's so suspicious.

EVA

You're the professional at these sort of things. Do what you do with your alleged suspects.

SHELDON

You want me to grill our house guests?

EVA

Yes.

SHELDON

Even by American social standards it's rude to grill your house guests like they're criminals.

EVA

You've been doing that ever since they arrived. And you bought a gun and a safe to protect yourself from them.

SHELDON

That's before I knew them.

EVA

Be totally frank with them in that charming way of yours. So they don't even know you're grilling them.

SHELDON

I don't feel good about doing that.

EVA

I don't feel good about thinking my aunt isn't my aunt. If you're subtle about it, she won't even know that you're grilling her.

SHELDON

Subtle grilling is an art form. I can't do that.

EVA

Of course you can. You're a master of enhanced interrogation.

SHELDON

Now you want me to waterboard her?

EVA

I'm asking you to put my mind at rest, one way or the other. Is that too much to ask? Please.

George and Jessica enter laughing.

GEORGE

Thank God it started raining again. It forced us to take shelter in a wonderful restaurant.

JESSICA

The pasta was rather good.

GEORGE

This is America, Jessica. You don't say rather good. The pasta was awesome.

They see Sheldon's and Eva's somber expression.

JESSICA

Is something wrong?

SHELDON

Eva thinks you're American con artists.

EVA

Goddamnit, Sheldon.

JESSICA

Oh, Eva. Is that true?

EVA

I wouldn't have put it that way. I saw your American passport.

JESSICA

Oh that.

EVA

All this time you've just been pretending to be British.

JESSICA

There's an explanation.

EVA

I don't think there is.

JESSICA

We really are British.

EVA

Then why do you have an American passport?

JESSICA

That must seem odd to you.

EVA

Just a teeny bit.

JESSICA

When I come to America, I always use my American passport because it makes it easier to clear customs.

EVA

The United States government gave you an American passport so you could clear customs more quickly?

JESSICA

I was born in America.

EVA

You said you grew up in New Zealand

JESSICA

My parents moved there after giving birth to us in America. Which automatically made us American citizens. We have dual citizenship and two passports.

EVA

So let me see it.

JESSICA

See what?

EVA

Your British passports.

JESSICA

I left mine at home. I knew I wouldn't need it here.

EVA

You didn't think you'd need it when you returned home to clear British customs more quickly?

JESSICA

Customs isn't so difficult in England. Did you bring your British passport, George?

GEORGE

No. Like you, I used my American passport.

SHELDON

Jessica gave you a perfectly plausible explanation for carrying an American passport and we should leave it at that.

EVA

I want to believe that Jessica is my aunt and George is my uncle. I want to believe that I have a big family in England. I want to believe that I'm not all by myself again.

She starts crying. Jessica takes her in her arms.

JESSICA

There, there. It's perfectly understandable that you should be suspicious after seeing that passport. But you'll have no more doubts when you come to England and meet all your relatives who want to welcome you into our family.

EVA

There really is a family in England?

JESSICA

I should have sent you a picture of Ron's birthday. There must have been two dozen people gathered around the cake.

EVA

Ron?

JESSICA

Your cousin Ron.

EVA

I wish I was there.

JESSICA

I wish you were, too.

EVA

Do you celebrate everyone's birthday?

JESSICA

We try to. I think the biggest party we ever had was Pauline's birthday. Your cousin Pauline. She loved the beach so on the day of her birthday, 37 of us gathered around a bonfire on...

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 17

Several days later. It's night. Everyone is gathered around the dinner table, with after-dinner drinks. George had drunk too much. He's almost in a stupor.

JESSICA

A marvelous dinner, Eva. And a marvelous way to end our visit. I've never had deer before.

SHELDON

This time last week the deer was walking in the forest. Unfortunately towards my friend, who is an excellent shot.

EVA

The trick is serving it rare.

JESSICA

Rare meat and guns. What could be more American?

EVA

Capital punishment?

JESSICA

I can't believe our visit is coming to an end.

SHELDON

To think none of this would have happened if Eva had listened to me.

EVA

He was terrible.

JESSICA

I'm so glad you were able to convince him that I really was your aunt.

EVA

He was so suspicious of everything.

George comes out of his stupor startled.

GEORGE

(To Sheldon)

You are not eating slowly.

SHELDON

I'm up to 10 chews a portion.

GEORGE

Are you making fun of what I taught you?.

SHELDON

Look.

He puts a piece of meat in his mouth and
chews 10 times as Eva counts out each bite.

SHELDON (cont'd)

There.

JESSICA

I do believe you've made another convert, George.

SHELDON

You make it sound like a religious experience.

GEORGE

It is a religious experience.

SHELDON

Surely you're exaggerating.

GEORGE

I am not exaggerating.

(Menacingly)

What I've been talking about, my good friend, is the way to spiritual
enlightenment. Nirvana.

SHELDON

(Jokingly)

Chew slowly, find God. Is that what you're saying?

GEORGE

(Becoming angry)

This isn't something to make jokes about. What I've taught you will bring you closer to nirvana.

SHELDON

(Unnerved by George's intensity)

If you say so.

JESSICA

You've made your point, George.

GEORGE

All these fools who go through life on automatic pilot.

JESSICA

You've had enough wine.

GEORGE

They're wasting the most precious gift we have -- life. It would be more merciful if their lives were snuffed out.

EVA

I think we should change the subject.

JESSICA

I think we should call it a night.

GEORGE

Are you a true believer?

JESSICA

You've said enough, George.

SHELDON

(With some fear)

I'm a true believer.

GEORGE

Are you making fun of me?

SHELDON

No. No. I'm not making fun of you. I'm eating more slowly. I'm not letting the Phillies' defeats bother me.

GEORGE

You're trying to humor me.

SHELDON

I'm being serious, George. You've changed my life.

GEORGE

The more you talk, the more I realize I've failed you.

He pours more brandy.

JESSICA

You've had enough, George.

Defiantly, he pours more.

JESSICA (cont'd)

I'm going to bed.

GEORGE

What more can I do?

JESSICA

There's nothing more to be done.

Jessica tries to get George to stand.

GEORGE

(Resisting Jessica)

You are an evil man.

JESSICA

Come on, George.

She drags him to the door and they exit.

SHELDON

That was a bit much.

EVA

Would you ever?

SHELDON

He's a little too obsessed with this stuff for my comfort.

EVA

He was a little drunk.

SHELDON

And look what came out. All that talk freaked me out.

EVA

You've been known to say some freaky things when you got drunk.

SHELDON

I suppose.

JESSICA

I'm ready to call it a night, too.

SHELDON

I'm still a bit wired. I think I'll sit up for a while.

EVA

Don't stay up too late.

She kisses him and exits. Sheldon pours a brandy.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK AND COME UP AGAIN, SUGGESTING THE PASSAGE OF A FEW HOURS. .

Sheldon is bent over the table asleep. George enters, carrying a large chef's knife. Sheldon wakes with a start.

SHELDON

Who's that?

GEORGE

Ah, there you are.

George walks toward Sheldon, who is shocked to see the knife George is holding.

SHELDON

No.

GEORGE

I was looking for you.

SHELDON

Oh my God.

GEORGE

There's nothing like eating freshly slaughtered meat. Wouldn't you agree?

SHELDON

Stay back, you crazy son of a bitch.

GEORGE

Some people don't like the blood but blood doesn't bother me. Does it bother you?

Sheldon goes to the desk and pulls out the gun.

SHELDON

Drop the knife or I'll drop you.

GEORGE

What are you doing?.

SHELDON

You wormed your way into our home so you could kill us. You're The Camden Slasher.

GEORGE

I don't know what you're talking about.

SHELDON

Drop the knife. Drop the knife, I said.

George doesn't know what to do. Sheldon fires two shots. George drops the knife.

SHELDON (cont'd)

Hands on your head.

George complies. Sheldon grabs a phone and dials 911.

SHELDON (cont'd)

(Into the phone)

I need help. I've got the Camden Slasher.

Jessica and Eva come running in.

JESSICA

What happened?

EVA

What are you doing, Sheldon?

SHELDON

(Into the phone)

He was about to kill me with that knife of his. But I have a gun. He's standing here with his hands held up. Please send someone right away.

GEORGE

It's not what you think.

SHELDON

You were coming at me with a knife.

JESSICA

I asked him to make me a sandwich.

SHELDON

(Into the phone)

Just a minute.

(To Jessica)

He was making you a sandwich?

(Into the phone)

I said just a minute.

(To George)
That's why you had the knife?

GEORGE
I was cutting the meat. You almost killed me with that gun of yours.

SHELDON
(Into the phone)
Sorry to bother you.
(Hangs up)

SHELDON (cont'd)
This is a bit embarrassing.

EVA
A bit embarrassing? You can't get more embarrassing than this.

The phone rings. Everyone ignores it.

GEORGE
You thought I was going to kill you?

SHELDON
You were coming at me with a knife.

Jessica and Eva start laughing. George joins in. Finally Sheldon starts laughing.

GEORGE
Were you actually trying to shoot me?

SHELDON
I thought you were actually going to kill me.

GEORGE
Thank God you're such a bad shot.

EVA
I think we could all use a nightcap.

The sound of a police siren, getting louder.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 18

Later, Jessica and George are in their room. George is working on his laptop and Jessica is packing. Their English accents are gone. They're speaking like Americans.

GEORGE

I got the boarding passes.

JESSICA

The packing is almost finished. What time is the plane?

GEORGE

Five o'clock.

JESSICA

So we get into Chicago in time for dinner.

GEORGE

Goodbye, Philadelphia.

JESSICA

Philadelphia is a lot more fun than I thought.

GEORGE

See, you shouldn't trust the guide books.

JESSICA

I'm so glad that I got out of that business.

GEORGE

Now we've got to pay for our trips.

JESSICA

Not exactly.

They laugh.

GEORGE

(Referring to his computer)

We're being swamped with messages.

JESSICA

Yes. I see we've got one from San Francisco.

GEORGE

Already? What does it say?

Jessica calls up the message on her laptop

SAN FRANCISCO VOICE

Hi, Aunt Jessica. You've only been gone a month and already we're missing you terribly. Everyone is eating so slowly now that our dinners are taking almost two hours. Dad is working out like mad in the gym when he's not racing up Nob Hill. And mom's getting the hang of Tai Chi. Hope you are enjoying Singapore. Please stop by on your way back to England. Love, Susan.

JESSICA

I have to write to her.

GEORGE

You have nine pen pals, Jessie. You can't keep in contact with everyone.

JESSICA

We have a responsibility to them, George. We gave them a family. We can't take that away from them.

GEORGE

What are you going to do when they want to come visit their families?

JESSICA

There'll always be a reason why that's impossible.

GEORGE

And when we die?

JESSICA

Their families will disappear as suddenly as they appeared. I'm not happy about that. I try to convince myself that the joy of having a family for a little while is better than not knowing what it would have been like.

GEORGE

Do you really believe that?

JESSICA

At least that's what Tennyson said.

GEORGE

'Tis Better To Have Loved And Lost Than To Never Have Loved At All?

JESSICA

Yeah, that.

GEORGE

I think he had something else in mind when he said that.

JESSICA

I suppose.

GEORGE,

So where do we go next?

JESSICA

I think Elio is ready.

GEORGE

Italy is very expensive.

JESSICA

When our Social Security checks come in, we'll have enough for the plane tickets.

GEORGE

Hopefully we won't be eating out that much.

JESSICA

I don't think we'll be paying for any dinners. Elio has a lovely house and he says he loves to cook.

GEORGE

I'm dying for some Italian food.

JESSICA

Then Verona it is.

GEORGE

What a wonderful place to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary.

JESSICA

We couldn't have planned it better.

(Typing)

Dear Elio, good news. We hope to come to Verona Aug. 1, but only if we can find an affordable hotel. It doesn't look very good at first glance. Most of your hotels charge more than two hundred Euros a night, but we'll keep looking. Love, Aunt Jessica.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 19

The next day in the living room. George and Jessica are standing with their luggage by the door, chatting with Sheldon and Eva.

SHELDON

The cab should have been here by now. Let us drive you to the airport.

GEORGE

They promised they would be here. Let's give the chaps a few more minutes.

SHELDON

It's no problem to drive you.

JESSICA

We wouldn't think of it, after all the trouble we've put you to.

EVA

I don't envy you the long flight home.

JESSICA

Hopefully we'll sleep on the plane and get into London fully refreshed.

A car honking is heard.

GEORGE

Ah, there they are now.

Hugs and kisses.

JESSICA

Thank you again for such a wonderful three weeks.

SHELDON

We should thank you.

GEORGE

Bloody good chap. Bloody good.

George hugs Sheldon. They get their luggage and all four exit. Sheldon and Eva enters.

SHELDON

Well, that turned out a lot better than I expected.

EVA

You two really bonded.

SHELDON

That George is one hell of a guy.

EVA

The last week has been wonderful. You were like your old self, having a ball with Jessica and George.

SHELDON

(Seductively)

Having a ball with you.

EVA

It's been very nice.

SHELDON

What do you think about getting a dog.

EVA

What!

SHELDON

An Irish setter.

EVA

Where did that come from?

SHELDON

I should get out more. I spend too much time reading all those books.

EVA

I'll be damn.

SHELDON

The Philadelphia Orchestra is performing in the park tonight. Why don't we go?

EVA

A concert under the stars and a picnic on the lawn. Could anything be more wonderful?

SHELDON

I'll go to the Italian Market and get a long Italian loaf from that bakery we used to go to.

EVA

Don't forget the cheese and grapes.

SHELDON

And wine.

EVA

Yes, we can't forget the wine.

They hug joyously.

SHELDON

It's a shame that George and Jessica aren't here to join us.

EVA

We don't need them to have fun.

SHELDON

You don't think you're going to miss your aunt and uncle?

EVA

I don't think they were my aunt and uncle. They left for the airport ten hours before the first plane to England takes off. I think they were catching a local plane.

SHELDON

There must be an explanation.

EVA

That's the problem. Every time you caught them in something, they had an explanation. I was becoming uneasy about that and then the American passport thing.

SHELDON

You've got to stop questioning them. You're part of a big family. Enjoy it.

EVA

Our little family of two is doing just fine.

SHELDON

You should send them a message. Tell them how much we enjoyed their visit.

EVA

Why should I do that?

SHELDON

You're the woman. Aren't women good at that sort of thing?

EVA

You are walking on very thin ice, my friend.

SHELDON

You and Jessica are the ones who've been messaging each other.

EVA

You really are taken with them.

SHELDON

They're very nice people.

EVA

(Typing on her computer)

Dear Aunt Jessica and Uncle George. Shelly and I had a wonderful time with you. We wish you could have stayed longer. Sheldon plans to start running up and down the Rocky steps and we'll both eat more slowly, though we've lost our taste for fresh deer meat. Love, Eva and Sheldon.

She sends the message.

EVA (cont'd)

So much for that. Don't get your hopes up, Shelly. We'll never hear from her again. Not one chance in a million.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

END OF PLAY

Online Sample Reading Only

SCENE

Online Sample Reading Only