

Time Laps: A Fugue of Sorts

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DESCRIPTION

Adam and Eve have quite a life through their seven ages, from the initial date which included arm wrestling to the final wrestling that love requires as death approaches.

Movements

- Isn't A Date In Eight Great, Or What?
- Undress Me
- Burning Issues
- Hold On
- "You Will Live A Long and Prosperus Life"
- No Great Loss
- Glaciers

CHARACTERS

- Adam (younger)
- Adam (older)
- Eve (younger)
- Eve (older)

SETS

- Can be determined from the text. Nothing outlandish.

TRANSITIONS

- The director(s) can select any method to transition from one movement to the next.

NOTE

- ADAM and EVE, up to "No Great Loss" means ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER.

Isn't A Date In Eight Great, Or What?

Lights up on ADAM and EVE sitting at the table. They look, smile, hesitate, clearly ill-at-ease but trying to make the best of it. Let the hemming and hawing go on until it is almost irritating the audience, then sound the timer. Begin.

ADAM
Well -- isn't speed dating a great idea, or what?

EVE
It can help.

ADAM
Quick, clean, know if you want in or out -- if
out, then -- bam! on to the next one.

EVE imitates his gesture.

EVE
On to the next one. I guess it's a good idea.

ADAM
You're not convinced.

EVE
A little cold --

ADAM
My eight-minute theory? I think -- no, I know
you can size up a body's spirit in a flash.

EVE
Really?

ADAM
In a flash -- in one quick hot synch. Eight
minutes is way too mucho tiempo, in some cases.
Sometimes in a minute -- less than, even -- I got
it.

EVE tries for some lightness.

EVE
You're one for the quickie, hey?

ADAM
This -- all this -- it's not about dating.

EVE
It's not?

ADAM
It's not about repairing the loneliness --

This surprises EVE.

EVE
Repairing the loneliness --

ADAM
-- by pairing each other up. Two by two up into
the ark, off you go. Nah-uh.

EVE
I thought --

ADAM
This -- this what we are doing -- is about
maneuvering.

EVE
Really?

ADAM
Enfilade, defilade, outflank, storm the beach.

EVE
Storm the beach.

ADAM
You, me, and this --

ADAM taps the table top.

ADAM
-- the DMZ.

EVE
A demilitarized --

ADAM
Zone -- you got it!

EVE
That's what you think this --

ADAM
This is? I do. Eight minute maneuvers, they
should call it. Eight minutes of plucking the
crow.

EVE
Plucking the crow.

ADAM
Because that's just the way things are.

EVE looks at ADAM steadily; ADAM looks back just as steadily.

EVE
Maybe you're right --

ADAM
Not maybe.

EVE

And maybe you're not.

EVE throws her arm up onto the table in preparation to arm wrestle.

EVE

Let's fact-check this logic of yours.

ADAM looks at her angled arm.

ADAM

You against me?

EVE drops her arm from the table.

EVE

Has the legendary hot synch already been synched, then?

ADAM

No.

EVE

Didn't get me in a flash, hey? Didn't predict I would --

ADAM

I was being metaphoric --

EVE

Which translated means --

ADAM

I don't want --

EVE

You're all gas, no sass.

ADAM

Not that I'm a --

EVE

All squawk and no walk.

ADAM

Just that -- you're a --

EVE

Stop that! Either you mean what you say or you don't -- screw your metaphor. Who gives two turds about "you're a". You're a what? Woman? For that one you shine, Einstein.

EVE throws her arm up on the table again.

EVE
Metaphor -- rat's ass. Now didn't I hear that it
was either in or out with you?

ADAM hesitates.

EVE
Our little toy Mars hesitates, our god of war
waffles. Or should I just call you Mars-ipan
[marzipan]? Mars-ipansy?

ADAM throws his own arm onto the table.

ADAM
En garde, then.

They clasp hands in the certified way arm wrestlers position
themselves, and they begin. For perhaps 10 seconds they strain,
neither moving far, and as they continue to strain, they begin
exchanging insults. This surprises them at first, that such language
erupts, but then it becomes both insults and erotic inducements.

EVE
Bastard.

ADAM
Bitch.

EVE
Prick.

ADAM
Cunt.

EVE
Shithead.

ADAM
Asswipe.

EVE
Buttfucker.

ADAM
Cum guzzler.

EVE
You're just like cement --

ADAM
What?

EVE
You're just like cement -- it takes you two days
to get hard.

ADAM
Oh, yeah?

EVE
Yeah?

ADAM
Well, you're so ugly -- you couldn't get laid if you were a brick.

EVE
Hah! If you spoke your mind --

ADAM
And you're like a doorknob --

EVE
If you spoke your mind -- you'd be speechless.

ADAM
Just like a doorknob --

EVE
Yeah?

ADAM
Everyone gets to take a turn.

EVE
And you'd come off in everyone's hand.

Getting breathless, they strain for advantage until, by some mutual agreement, they decide that neither should win, though it becomes clear that EVE is no real match for ADAM. They stand down, silent for the moment.

EVE
(without rancor)
Hey!

ADAM
Yeah?

EVE
I heard you were getting sex all the time until your wrist got arthritis.

ADAM
(equally without rancor)
I can see that your tits are so small, you'd have to tattoo "front" on your chest.

EVE
Not that small!

ADAM
No, they are not. Actually, they are not.

EVE
I know.

ADAM
What?

EVE
You could have beaten me.

ADAM shakes out his arm.

ADAM
I don't know --

EVE
Don't sugar me.

ADAM
You've got some goddess-like strength in those
fins of yours --

EVE
Enough. You didn't -- why?

ADAM
Let's talk about something else.

EVE
Stop shaking out your arm. We're coming down to
the end here.

ADAM
Then let's talk about something else.

EVE
Why are you here?

ADAM
Something else.

EVE
I'm pressing you. You with the hot synch. You
with the great male --

EVE snaps her fingers.

EVE
-- "I got it." Hot Synch -- what can you tell
about me that kept you at the table and didn't --

ADAM takes a moment to lean back and look at EVE. Then he smiles a
not altogether pleasant smile.

ADAM

You --

EVE

People like me --

ADAM

Ah -- let me finish! Not people like you -- but you. Hot synch! Let's see -- music, right? Things that heal. I can see I'm pegging you. Already had you pegged -- wouldn't mind pegging you --

EVE

Shut up.

ADAM

And?

EVE

Keep talking.

ADAM

Intuition -- from the gut. Mending the great pain of the world. The elements that move you. Shape you -- are they not? The giving, the making, the thrust of life, yes?

EVE

And not for you?

ADAM looks straight at her and smiles.

ADAM

I could have, you know -- snap! But -- intuition -- I wanted to make weakness look attractive to you.

EVE look at him directly, then gets up.

ADAM

You leaving?

EVE

Change places with me. Change!

They exchange places. EVE throws her left arm up on the table.

EVE

Let's try our weaker sides, then. In a few minutes, when that timer blows, we are going to have to want something different from what we want now, or this will all be a waste. So c'mon. C'mon -- take your eyes off my tatas and get your weak-ass arm up here!

ADAM matches her arm for arm, and they again take the certified beginning stance of arm wrestlers. At an agreed-upon signal, they begin, and this time the fight is to the finish -- whatever that happens to be. The director can stage this any way possible as long as the action stays close and mostly -- but not always -- on the table. But, for instance, it is not out-of-bounds for EVE to get on the table and use her whole body weight to get his arm to go down. Desperation, excitement, pain -- all these elements should come to the fore. After all, this is a battle, and it should look like one. The only restriction is that neither can use their dominant arms -- they must be held behind their backs or to their sides. And they can't break their grip at all -- during the battle, they must always remain connected by the hand-grip.

After a brief fight it is clear that there is no clear measure for winning. Instead of winning -- that is, instead of creating an artificial separation -- winner/loser -- they have become linked, like it or not. They come face-to-face when it is clear that they are no longer clear about what they are doing.

EVE
What are you doing?

ADAM
What are you doing?

EVE
What do you want?

Hesitating.

ADAM
I don't know.

EVE
Are you winning?

ADAM
I don't know!

EVE
You can't win.

ADAM tries -- they are locked.

EVE
Even if you could flatten me right now, you couldn't win.

ADAM
You can't win either.

EVE
I can't do what I don't believe in. Call it a character fault.

ADAM

What do you want?

EVE

I have what I want.

EVE takes a drop of sweat off ADAM, tastes it.

EVE

Do you know what that tastes like?

ADAM

No.

EVE

It tastes like this: What will make love come?

They disengage.

EVE

And what will make love stay?

ADAM

Come here.

ADAM takes a drop of sweat off EVE, tastes it.

ADAM

I have a different taste.

Timer rings.

EVE

What might that be?

ADAM

We have to go --

EVE

Tell me.

ADAM

-- they're very strict about the rotation.

EVE

You aren't going to tell me, are you?

ADAM

This much: say I'm iron -- you're gold. In their pure states --

EVE

Gold is so soft --

ADAM
And iron, though considered less precious --

EVE
Will always be able to cut --

ADAM
Yes.

EVE
Then I prefer loneliness.

ADAM
And isn't that what we came in with? So we
haven't lost a thing.

ADAM moves closer to her.

ADAM
You can't expect a common metal like me --

EVE
Go.

ADAM
-- to turn into a golden one like you. Easier
for you --

EVE
Go!

ADAM
-- to become common common common like me. And
way more interesting for the lonely goddess.

ADAM smacks his lips.

ADAM
That was what I tasted off of you.

ADAM smacks his lips again.

ADAM
Sweat of our brows -- who wouldn't want to dare
to make love out of that!

EVE scoops another drop off ADAM's forehead and tastes it. Tastes her own sweat. They lock eyes for several seconds, then abruptly get up, eyes still locked.

Timer timer timer timer. Eyes still locked. Lights bump to black.

Transition.

Undress Me

A bar -- chatter in the background. ADAM and EVE are sitting, drinking. She turns and looks at him, pauses, then speaks.

EVE
Undress me now.

ADAM
Undress you.

EVE
Yes.

ADAM
Here.

EVE
Here and now.

ADAM
And why?

EVE
It is time.

ADAM
For?

EVE
For our leap forward.

ADAM
This is quite a leap.

EVE
Aren't you ready?

ADAM
Quite a leap forward from the wrestling of arms.

EVE
Your point?

ADAM
Well, to go from that to this without spending a little more time there and here --

EVE
You're scared.

ADAM
No. Of what?

EVE
Of me.

ADAM
No.

EVE
That I would go from that to this without following you there and here.

ADAM
It is quite a lunge --

EVE
He's thinking, "I should leave --

ADAM
I don't want --

EVE
" -- before she takes me over the edge."

ADAM
-- to leave. I don't want to leave.

EVE
You want to stay.

ADAM
Yes.

EVE
Then you'll have to undress me.

ADAM
The price of staying.

EVE
The blessing of being here with this, which you say you want.

ADAM
And only required that I undress you.

EVE
In a manner of speaking.

ADAM
And how?

EVE
In a manner of speaking.

ADAM
How?

EVE
By word of mouth.

ADAM
Meaning?

EVE
With your mother tongue.

ADAM
I am to unhinge you by vocables.

EVE
Singe my ears.

ADAM
Lay siege by syllables.

EVE
Desire by diphthongs. [pronounced "dif-thongs"]

ADAM
What brew are you drinking there?

EVE
Lay it not to the alcohol, sir.

ADAM
Then what?

EVE
I want you to undress me here. In public.

ADAM
Because?

EVE
I want to sit here with my eyes closed, in eye-
range of everyone, while you whittle at my
buttons and clasps and elastics, knowing that no
one here knows what you are knowing about me.

ADAM
Low-rent strip-tease.

EVE
Now you see it, now --

ADAM
That -- moistens you?

EVE

Like a stamp.

ADAM

A new way to "go postal."

EVE

Harden your resolve -- and do it.

ADAM

And if I -- refuse? From modesty, of course.

EVE

Modesty? From the cunning linguist?

They laugh.

ADAM

Fair enough. You drive a sweet bargain.

EVE

My dotted line awaits.

ADAM

Any particular style?

EVE

No disquisitive evelysis, please! Any style -- just make it bold and italic.

ADAM

Then close your eyes -- I am going to sit on the porches of your ears and tell tales of steam. Imagine --

EVE

I obey.

ADAM

Good. Imagine this: in a room, warm -- with light, lucent -- and music, dulcet. You know I'm there, but can't see me.

EVE

Slow stalk or a pounce?

ADAM

Sshhh! You know I'm there because I am close enough for you to feel my breath trace your neck -- to trail along the slope of muscle that runs from just behind the ear to your shoulder. I say to you --

EVE
"You are as savory as -- "

ADAM
Who is telling here?

EVE
Sorry.

ADAM
In fact, I say nothing. I want to begin with
your jewelry.

ADAM takes off her earring as he says the line.

ADAM
Lifting the silver slick of your earring, I slip
the back off and ease the post through the lobe -
- a slight fleshy tug, and then it's free. Then
the second.

ADAM puts both in his pocket. He does not actually lick her ear.

ADAM
With just the tip of my tongue, I trace the crimp
and cockle of your ear --

EVE
Which one?

ADAM
The right one -- you shiver.

EVE
I -- squeeze.

ADAM unclasps the pendant.

ADAM
The clasp of the pendant kneels on the top of
your spine --

EVE
You unlock it --

ADAM
-- and let the pendulous weight slide through the
valley --

ADAM lets the pendant fall into his hand, which he positions at EVE's
waist.

EVE
It is not the valley of shadow.

ADAM

-- and then catch it at your waist --

EVE

At the equator --

ADAM

And the light dances on the silver.

ADAM puts the pendant on the table.

EVE

What else?

ADAM

Self-restraint! Miles to go. Your latté-colored sweater has small buttons that squeak as they squinch through the button hole. My fingers, thick and calm --

EVE

Calm?

ADAM

Narrator's prerogative. Thick and calm -- I poke them clumsily, but they're agreeable. Separation is their freedom.

EVE

How many buttons?

ADAM

What will your impatience endure?

EVE

Twelve -- no, fourteen.

ADAM

I am at seven, then -- half done, half unopened gift.

EVE

And what do you see?

ADAM

Undergarmental infrastructure --

EVE

Unlink it.

ADAM

Low on the agenda.

EVE

Move it up!

ADAM

Seven buttons left -- unbutton or rip through --
no, this instead: I will lift the sweater off,
leaving the remaining seven buttons enslaved.
Feel the slide of the yarn's grain --

EVE

My hair sparks --

ADAM

The hesitation of the cuffs over the wrists, then
--

EVE

Off.

ADAM

Like a fallen flag.

EVE

What color?

ADAM

What?

EVE

The brassiere.

ADAM

Burgundy.

EVE

Underwire?

ADAM

Soft cotton.

EVE

What to do.

ADAM

Indeed! Though the question is, What does she
want to have done to her next, now that the outer
is gone but the inner is not yet touched?

EVE

I'm thirsty.

ADAM stands behind her, guides her drink to her mouth. She drinks, he
puts the glass down.

EVE

The length of you -- good. These breasts are nothing -- "tits" are like a snack food. But my grottoes and groves --

ADAM

Are deeper divisions.

EVE

Give deeper nourishment. Do you plan to pillage?

ADAM

No -- ponder.

EVE

Loot?

ADAM

No -- linger.

EVE

Disappear?

ADAM

No -- discover.

EVE

Can I trust?

ADAM

You wouldn't have started if you didn't.

EVE

You have your passport, then.

ADAM

Urgency -- the skirt unzipped, run down the rigging of your legs -- the gartered stockings, puddles at your feet -- the silk diphthonged underwear, darted off hummingbird-quick. Thick and no longer calm.

ADAM hesitates.

EVE

Go on!

ADAM

We have arrived.

EVE

Where?

ADAM
At the border.

EVE
Cross it!

ADAM hesitates again. EVE opens her eyes.

EVE
What?

ADAM
Wait.

EVE
For what?

ADAM
Should we cross this border?

EVE
Imagine it!

ADAM
The room, warm -- the light, lucent -- the music,
dulcet. The discarded clothes watchful. The
narrator -- the narrator is at a loss for words
as he looks upon --

EVE
What?

ADAM
Close your eyes.

EVE
What?

ADAM
Close your eyes.

EVE
And then?

ADAM
The narrator looks upon more sweet beauty than
his eyes deserve.

EVE
And what sayeth the tongue?

ADAM

This: "nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals / the power of your intense fragility... / (...the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses) / nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands" [from e.e. cummings, "Somewhere I Have Never Travelled, Gladly Beyond"]

EVE

(opens her eyes)

That's what it says?!

ADAM

Consider it a moment of -- ripeness. Consider it -- stepping on the border. Not over.

EVE

Close your eyes. Close them! All right: the room, warm -- the light, lucent -- the music, dulcet. Urgency -- the pants unzipped, run down the rigging of your legs -- socks and shoes, scattered -- cotton briefs darted off hummingbird-quick.

ADAM

The shirt?

EVE

Ripped open like a veil. Now -- thick, and no longer calm. "His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters... / his cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers... / his hands are as gold rings set with the beryl... / his mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend." [from Song of Solomon, 5:10-16] A second foot on the border.

ADAM opens his eyes.

ADAM

How well do we know each other?

EVE

How well should we?

ADAM

How well can we?

EVE

How much to risk?

ADAM

How much more undress to undress?

They close their eyes.

ADAM

Those two people standing in the room, warm --

EVE

The light, lucent --

ADAM

The music, dulcet.

EVE

They are standing breathful and poised.

ADAM

Let's leave them there.

EVE

Next to their tree of knowledge.

ADAM

Growing on the border.

EVE

The fruit hanging.

ADAM

Their mouths prepared.

EVE opens her Eyes and picks up her beer.

EVE

And as for our mouths --

She proceeds to drink. So does ADAM. They finish and put their glasses down. They bring their faces close together but do not kiss. Instead, EVE throws her dominant arm onto the table. ADAM matches. They clasp but don't fight, hover the joined hands between like an apple dangling from a tree. EVE bites, gently. Sounds of chatter in the background. Blackout.

Burning Issues

Early morning. ADAM sits outside on a deck at a table writing by hand. Coffee cup nearby. Second chair, empty, nearby. Perhaps an umbrella. Perhaps some background birdsong. Perhaps crumpled paper strewn around.

ADAM is exasperated -- something is not working out.

EVE enters, coffee cup in hand, looking as if she has just gotten up. Sips, watches. ADAM, aware of her presence, tries to keep his irritation contained -- but does not do it well.

EVE

Not going well?

ADAM

No it's not.

EVE

Okay.

Time passes. Some sipping. Some irritation.

EVE

Anything I can --

ADAM

No.

EVE

You're sure?

ADAM

Yes.

EVE

Okay.

Time passes as EVE sits, sips.

EVE

It's a tough assignment. That you've given yourself.

ADAM pushes away the pad and paper, takes up his coffee cup.

ADAM

The dramatic situation -- it's built right in -- I mean, the conflict is right in there -- but --

EVE

Uh-huh.

ADAM

Uh-huh.

EVE sips, gazes outward, doesn't respond.

ADAM

You gave me the "uh-huh."

EVE

Uh-huh.

ADAM

I know that "uh-huh."

EVE

Hmm -- maybe.

ADAM

I know your lexicon of monosyllables -- the "uh-huh." The "hmm-hmm." The "ah." I know them [all] --

EVE

Because you're so smart --

ADAM

Come on.

EVE gives him a look.

ADAM

Yes, I'm really asking --

EVE

Uh-huh.

ADAM

Really --

EVE faces him.

EVE

Dramatic.

ADAM

Yeah.

EVE

Really? That situation?

ADAM

Yes I do.

EVE
The one written there?

ADAM
Yeah.

EVE shrugs in a loving way.

ADAM
How can it not be dramatic?

EVE
"Conflict" I'll buy, right in there, like you say
-- but drama -- hmmm --

ADAM
Really?

EVE
I don't think so --

ADAM
The Koran-burners on one side --

NATAHS
Yes --

ADAM
The the the the --

EVE
The non-Koran-burners?

ADAM
No -- yeah -- but I wouldn't call them that --
the the the the --

EVE
Good guys?

ADAM
Well, yeah, but that's not the name -- the
defenders --

EVE
The defenders. Of what?

ADAM
Tolerance, toleration, freedom of religion -- you
know, like so you can go to Mass on Sunday --

EVE
Or Saturday --

ADAM

-- to believe as one wants --

EVE

But also to disbelieve as one [wants] --

ADAM

Like disbelieving that this situation has drama.

EVE

My constitutional right -- my freedom of speech.

ADAM

What does [that] --

EVE

Freedom of speech. Your defenders the defenders
of that, too? I hope?

ADAM

Well, yeah.

EVE

And therein, mi amor, lies your problem.

EVE sips, gazes out, waits out ADAM.

EVE

I just love it out here -- so restful, so --

ADAM

What problem?

They look each other over.

ADAM

What problem?

EVE

You never really like me to --

ADAM

But you brought it up.

EVE

No I didn't, I just -- well --

ADAM

Go on.

EVE

You just looked so exasperated --

ADAM

I am exasperated --

EVE

And I just wanted to say that I can appreciate that -- it's a tough writing assignment you've given yourself --

ADAM

And so what's the problem? My problem?

EVE

It's just a problem -- touchy --

ADAM

Sorry --

EVE

Not needed -- all right -- in the way you told me last night about what you wanted to write this play about --

ADAM

Yeah.

EVE

Passionate, you know, very passionate --

ADAM

Because these yahoos --

EVE

The yahoos, right -- I'm with you a hundred percent on that, one hundred percent. Bring, like you said, your writing to bear on the situation.

ADAM

Like a citizen. So what's the [problem] --

EVE

You call your set-up dramatic -- book burners here, defenders there -- let me finish -- but I see you frustrated because you can't seem to get it to work in a way that makes it work as a play, right?, and I think -- this is just a point for you to consider -- that it's because your set-up isn't dramatic, isn't drama, but really just friction -- yeah? Light, heat, rub it together, boom!, "I'm right!", "No, I'm right!", two faces, you know, nose-to-nose, neck veins ready to burst, moral principles on high alert --

ADAM
Like arm wrestling?

EVE
Mmmm --

ADAM
But that's not drama?

EVE
That is exactly what I am saying.

ADAM
I'm not agreeing, I'm -- I'm --

EVE
Think about it, like you usually do after I say such insightful things to you. You're a smart guy.

ADAM ponders.

ADAM
Just friction?

EVE
Flint and tinder. Matches and, well, in this case, paper.

ADAM
You're saying that all I've got down here is a screamfest.

EVE
I don't know what you've got down there -- you haven't given me anything to read -- yet -- I'm just going by the set-up you gave me last night --
- book burners on the one side [and] --

ADAM
I get it.

EVE
I didn't want to pour water on anything -- but you were so exasperated -- watched you through the screen door for a while -- bit my tongue -- I can show you the bite marks --

EVE may stick her tongue out. They gaze outward.

ADAM
The whole thing just makes me so angry.

EVE

That is the thing about you that keeps me sparkling with you. Ha ha --

ADAM

Ha ha --

ADAM picks up the pad.

ADAM

But you're right -- it doesn't have any heart.

EVE

I didn't say that.

ADAM

Not outright.

EVE

I will say, like I always do, you're a smart guy.

ADAM

You always say that just before you say "but sometimes you're too much in your head."

EVE

Sometimes you are -- that's why I keep myself around -- to free you up -- put a pin in the balloon.

ADAM

But something needs to be said -- I need to say -
- something -- I need to --

EVE

You're a smart guy, mi amor -- what would give that -- whatever you've got on your paper there -
- what would give that some heart?

ADAM bangs his two fists together.

ADAM

Each of them lost somebody on --

EVE

Sentimentalized -- and crap.

ADAM

True. Audience would expect that, anyways.

EVE

What wouldn't they expect? What would you not expect if you were sitting and watching?

ADAM looks at EVE -- she returns the gaze. Suddenly ADAM smiles.

ADAM

You are so clever --

EVE

Me?

ADAM

The way you slip it in, what you said before --

EVE

Which was?

ADAM

Freedom of --

EVE

Did I say that?

ADAM

Because you knew. You knew.

EVE

Always easier to critique someone else's work.

ADAM

Something like this --

ADAM bumps his fists together.

ADAM

"If you really believe in what you say you believe, then you will let me burn the Koran."

EVE

That would throw your Defender for a loop.

ADAM

The unexpected --

EVE

And the response --

ADAM

Make that unexpected --

EVE

Makes it dramatic -- don't make it easy for them --

ADAM

Screaming is the easy [thing] --

EVE

And the most boring.

ADAM rips the written pages from the pad, hands some to EVE. He rips two-thirds of each page into thin strips so that when he holds them from the untorn bottoms and shakes them, it looks like the paper is in flames. EVE does the same thing.

And they laugh as they do it.

EVE gets up and leans over ADAM. She kisses him on the forehead and then slaps his cheek -- just hard enough to make her point. ADAM stares at her.

EVE

There's enough crap in the world, wordsmith, way more than enough. Don't add to it.

EVE takes up her coffee cup and starts for the house.

EVE

I'll get you some more coffee.

ADAM takes up the pad of paper and writes, with vigor.

EVE watches him.

Lights out.

Hold On

EVE is sitting on a bench, alone, outside somewhere. She is dressed in a dress nice enough for a wedding reception. In the background, sound of occasional traffic. ADAM runs up and sits down as if he's sliding into base at a baseball game. He is wearing a tuxedo.

ADAM

Safe

EVE

Out.

ADAM

Safe!

EVE

Out at home. Play ball somewhere else -- like with your bar buddies back in there.

ADAM

So you don't want me here?

EVE

Go away.

ADAM

Free bench.

EVE

For human beings.

ADAM

I'm not?

EVE

Not today. Not after today. After today you go back to your original tribe of baboons. I can't believe -- Begone.

ADAM

You're sweating the small stuff. Proven fact: Bad attitudes will kill you early.

EVE

And you won't? I've decided that in order for me to be healthy, I need to flush you from my system. An ultra high colonic. The enema to top all enemas. From stem to stern and back. It's the least someone of your quality deserves. And you deserve the very least.

ADAM

Finished?

EVE

With you. I've got a big hole in my personal ozone from your toxic waste. Time for you to be phased out.

ADAM

Anything else?

EVE

When they passed out brains --

ADAM

Ah, something from your second-graders.

EVE

I'm not going to dance this jig any more.

ADAM

C'mon, you're supposed to play out --

EVE

-- I get mad -- again! --

ADAM

-- it brings out your best colors --

EVE

-- you sit there and soak up my spew --

ADAM

-- such lovely spew, well-crafted --

EVE

-- we jig this over and over again, and I feel stupid seven different ways for saying what I feel, and you come off squeegee-clean and well-defensed, which I hate, and it's never going to change. Just for the record. You really hurt me back there.

ADAM

We were just exchanging guy stuff --

EVE

"Guy stuff:" Cigars so fat you looked like you were sucking on sawed-off billy clubs and brandy with a testosterone chaser. You don't even smoke.

ADAM

Peer pressure. Out of my hands. But I didn't inhale.

EVE

And you attribute the high level of discourse to --

ADAM

Just conversational riffing. Male mouth music.

EVE

Riffing. Riffing. I can't believe you said -- what you said.

ADAM

We were just telling stories.

EVE

Why didn't you tell me you didn't like them?

ADAM

Moonpie --

EVE

Why didn't you? I went to all this trouble, for your birthday, to buy you some nice French silk underwear.

ADAM

Low-cut bikinis.

EVE

Excuse me, Mister B.V.D. -- how was I to know you'd changed your tastes about the rise of the leg hole?

ADAM

They just rode -- up -- you know. Up. They weren't comfortable.

EVE

So why didn't you say something? Especially when I bought you some more for Christmas.

ADAM

Didn't want to hurt your feelings.

EVE

You don't even know what those are, which is pathetic for a literature professor --

ADAM

Associate prof[essor] --

EVE

Instead I get the news flash from a bunch of gargling primates wreathed in blue smoke. A turkey basted with ridicule. The Portuguese in you will always leak out.

ADAM

I'm not that Portuguese.

EVE

Except when you're in a room full of Silvas and Costas and Bettencourts with Portuguese brandy warm in the palm of your hand. Then you become the macho Mediterranean man who cares more about how to get your underwear off than the kind you wear. You didn't have to tell everyone I bought you those. Bought them twice. No, that wasn't it. It was how you made me look like an idiot for wanting to do something nice for you. Like I was this bubble-brained -- bubble brain! As if I didn't know you. After seven years. As if I didn't know you -- that's what hurt.

They sit, undecided.

ADAM

Nice wedding.

EVE

They often are.

ADAM

Am I still out at home?

EVE

Lover boy --

ADAM

Lullaby, don't --

EVE

What are we up to?

ADAM

Jeez, I told you not to!

EVE

Seven years.

ADAM

Good ones. Can we go back in?

EVE

Not all good.

ADAM

On average. Back? Go back?

EVE

I watched you today, a lot. As the priest blessed them, as everyone clapped, as people came up to them and just bathed in their happiness. And I realized that you and I will never have anything like that. Ever. Not the marriage necessarily. Just that kind of connection. In *cigarus et brandius veritas*. We're holding on to nothing. No trumps.

ADAM

That's not true.

EVE

It's true, no matter what you say.

ADAM

You're still mad. This isn't the first time. This has come up.

EVE

I think it's the last.

They sit in silence for several beats.

SOUND: In the distance is the sound of a speeding car approaching, the squeal of brakes, and a crash.

ADAM

Christ, look at that! It's hanging off the edge of the bridge. C'mon.

They both stand.

EVE

It's Jim's aunt, the one that smelled like fermenting apples.

ADAM

She's going for a header in the river if we don't do something. Grab!

EVE

What?

ADAM

Anything. There. The trunk's popped.

They mime grabbing the open trunk of the car. They are holding the car up by their own strength and weight. It teeters.

ADAM

See if we can keep it from see-sawing. Ah -- hey -- what the hell's her name?

EVE

I kept thinking of her as Red Delicious gone bad.

ADAM

Ah, Jim's aunt! Granny Smith!

EVE

Granny Smith?

ADAM

You're gonna be okay. Whoa!

The car teeters again.

ADAM

Stay still in there you old fruit. Stay still -- don't rock the car or we're all going down together. Help is on the way.

Several beats. They look around.

ADAM

Someone must have heard it. I thought it was pretty loud.

EVE

The band was pretty loud.

ADAM

Not that loud. People weren't bleeding from the ears yet.

Several beats.

EVE

I hope someone heard.

ADAM

The band was pretty loud.

EVE

What the hell was she doing?

ADAM

Probably a geezer spasm -- you think the accelerator is the brake and it's off to the races. I read a story once where Mr. Senile USA drove through a plate-glass entrance into a mall.

EVE

What are we going to do?

ADAM

What are our choices?

EVE

We could let go. Make room for the new generation. My hands are going to decide this pretty soon.

ADAM

I've given you many opportunities to exercise those hands. Not my fault if --

The car teeters again, a little more wildly.

ADAM

What's she doing in there -- a full gallop? Settle down, Mrs. Appleseed.

EVE

My hands don't have too much grip left.

ADAM

No one's coming.

EVE

Cramp!

She takes one of her hands off and waves it in the air. The car teeters. ADAM teeters with it, stabilizes it.

ADAM

Warn me at least!

EVE

A spasm doesn't come with trumpets!

EVE puts her hand back.

EVE

Christ, that hurt!

ADAM

Yeah -- but he got it through the palm. You "knead" to make bread more often. Get it? Knead? Build hand strength?

EVE

Shut up.

ADAM

Just trying to lighten things.

The car rocks slightly, gently.

ADAM

Well.

EVE

Well.

ADAM

Not what I expected to "come to hand" when I came out here.

EVE

Me neither. I guess we're hanging on.

ADAM

To Granny Smith.

EVE

Who had a geezer spasm.

ADAM

Almost drove her car.

EVE

Into a chasm. Wait! Wait! Another one.

Takes her other hand off and shakes out a cramp. The car teeters again, even more wildly. EVE clutches madly.

ADAM

She's running in the home stretch.

EVE

Sit still, Auntie --

ADAM

-- frisky, isn't she --

EVE

-- or the Social Security check --

ADAM

-- she's probably buried a husband or two --

EVE

-- gets it in the neck!

ADAM

That -- was -- a -- good -- one.

They stabilize the car. EVE shakes out her hand.

ADAM

A reminder.

EVE

What?

ADAM

Remember to shoot me when the dementia sets in.

EVE

Should do it right now, then.

ADAM

No, the senile. Not the juvenile.

EVE

That means I'd have to be around that long.

ADAM

I guess it would. Man, I wish someone would hurry up.

EVE

Doesn't help that the band sounded like a car crash.

ADAM

This'll be quite a story for your class on Monday. This is good second-grade material.

EVE

Assuming we don't have to go bobbing for apples. I'd like a happy ending for them.

ADAM

Were you serious?

EVE

What?

ADAM

You want it over?

EVE

It is. Not what I want. Just is.

Car teeters slightly.

ADAM
Granny! You think it's over?

EVE
Well, life support.

ADAM
I gotta agree, I guess.

EVE
Everything's been boiled down to shoulds.

ADAM
I take you for granted.

EVE
Granted.

ADAM
And the underwear -- you're right, it wasn't fair.

EVE
I should have asked.

ADAM
We coast.

EVE
We're in Lazy-Boy recliners.

ADAM
We're flipping the remote without a tune.

EVE
We're shaving with old razors.

ADAM
I know all your dances.

EVE
I know how you drive to the hoop.

ADAM
So what do we do?

SOUND: Approaching fire truck.

ADAM
What's that?

EVE

Someone must have called in. Fire truck. And here come your Portuguese men of war to the rescue.

SOUND: Voices of people approaching.

They let go as, clearly, other hands take over to hold on to the car. They back up and sit on the bench.

SOUND: Voices out.

ADAM

I can come in to your class, and we can do a show-and-tell.

EVE

Which part?

ADAM

The "so what do we do" part.

EVE

I could come to your class and lecture them about the techniques of narrative surprise --

ADAM

Then they might understand about the short stories they're not understanding right now --

A moment of suspended silence.

EVE

Maybe we should find another car to hold on to.

ADAM

Yeah.

EVE

So we can finish the conversation.

ADAM

Yeah.

EVE

It seems to clear the mind. Granny Smith!

ADAM

Sweet and tart at the same time. Safe at home?

EVE

Call under protest -- for the time being.

They end by massaging each other's hands. Blackout. Transition.

"You Will Live A Long And Prosperus Life"

ADAM seated on a bench in the university quad. He drinks from a bottle of water. Next to him on the bench is a small oblong black box holding a bracelet.

EVE enters. They see each other.

ADAM

Ah --

EVE

Your text said "The bench. 6."

ADAM

I knew you'd know.

EVE

You knew I'd know. You knew I'd come.

ADAM

I hoped you'd come.

EVE

You knew I would.

EVE takes her time walking to the bench as he watches her take her time.

ADAM

Not sure I had the right to assume that. And this is just water. Just plain health-giving water.

She sits, takes the bottle, smells it.

ADAM

I know what I need to know.

EVE

Sometimes.

EVE sips.

EVE

Sometimes not.

EVE hands the bottle back. Waits.

EVE

The bench. At 6.

ADAM
And you have arrived.

EVE
How did it go?

ADAM
Are you sleeping with him?

EVE
Your lead issue of the moment?

ADAM
No.

EVE
That's my answer, too.

ADAM
I think he's the kind of guy who would think it was a privilege.

EVE
He's right -- you're right.

ADAM
(without heat)
The churl. The bastard.

EVE
With Dr. Solomon, it is all just about getting him the grants.

ADAM
The grants --

EVE
He's a rock star --

ADAM
A rock star --

EVE
-- in what he does -- what can I say? Makes it easier for me to chase down the grants he needs.

ADAM
So you're not?

EVE
You want my smart-ass answer?

ADAM
Deliver.

EVE

It would be that I thought I'd save adultery for some lesser crisis in my life.

ADAM

But you are close enough to Dr. Solomon to ask him this very intimate favor.

EVE

I am close enough to you to embarrass myself asking a professional colleague I somewhat know for this very intimate favor.

ADAM

It must have been embarrassing.

EVE

To think about asking.

ADAM

And actually asking?

EVE

Not so much because --

ADAM

Because he likes you.

EVE

Because he has manners. Is that clear enough?

ADAM

I wish I were a rock star.

EVE

That's true.

ADAM

I wish I were a lesser crisis.

EVE

No you don't.

ADAM

I guess I don't -- a literature professor rock star wouldn't be bad, though, right?

EVE

(with affection)

You can be such a --

ADAM

I'm glad you're here -- I'm glad you came.

EVE

We live in the same house, we swap fluids --

ADAM

Yeah, but still -- you know, it's nice to have just a simple meeting, a simple congress -- a simple beverage for our simple meeting --

EVE

Professor --

ADAM

Ah --

EVE

I am about ready to leave.

ADAM

"Leave" leave?

EVE

"Go home" leave. Unless you tell me.

ADAM

The doctor and I are in negotiations.

EVE

About what? He has an opening in his clinic, you need an opening -- what's to negotiate except a meeting time?

ADAM

I can't do his clinic.

EVE

Won't do his clinic.

ADAM

Won't do --

EVE

So when's your next appointment with the sheet or the rope or the belt -- I need to calendar it --

ADAM

Don't be [cruel] --

EVE

Or are you past the common-man methods? Something worthy of a rock star --

ADAM

I want to work with him on the human trials.

EVE

What?

ADAM

I asked him if I could work on the human trials -
- for his device -- that's what we're in
[negotiations] --

EVE

You're not who they're looking for.

ADAM

Which he double underlined.

EVE

So how useful could you be to him?

ADAM

In these "trials of humans" as I called them --

EVE

Just get to the point.

ADAM

I offered him to be a guide --

ANA

Tours have guides, Clu -- mountain climbs have
guides --

ADAM

Your doctor is a man studying depression and
addiction without, it seems, having suffered from
either, so how does he know what he's missing?

EVE

And the oh-so-stable you is going to tutor him in
--

ADAM

I am schooled in such things. We agreed that I
am not a lesser crisis.

They pause to let the temperature drop.

ADAM

He did do his best to steer me into the clinic --
you should know that -- he tried to do what his
favorite director of development asked him to do,
so I wouldn't be hard on him --

EVE

On him?

A moment of suspended silence.

EVE

I cut you down --

ADAM

You don't [have to] --

EVE

But you don't know that I chose to pick up that knife, I decided to cut you down, it didn't come from --

EVE stops herself.

EVE

Not without a referee and a thick book of rules.

One of these spells of silence where the way forward is not clear.

ADAM

Chose.

EVE

I said I didn't --

ADAM

Chose. Chose.

EVE

You're -- damn! -- you're there -- just there -- and I'm thinking -- split-second, like lightning -- you selfish -- you selfish son-of-a-bitch -- how's that sound, huh? -- you self-centered dickhead --

ADAM

Chosen by the one whose "thighs are like jewels"
--

EVE

Don't -- just, for a minute, just don't -- be such a cozy bastard -- it wasn't automatic, the choice -- it wasn't automatic -- and for that I eat out my heart --

EVE stops speaking. Again, not sure of the way forward. ADAM reaches out to touch EVE, which she lets him do -- it is clumsy, indefinite, but allowed.

ADAM

My thought, such as it was, about the guide thing -- the cozy bastard at work -- that is a good one -- always trying to be the cozy bastard --

EVE

Just --

ADAM

Apparently my strategies for getting out of my own way are limited and not very healthy -- I need to know how this thing ticks, deep into it -- the clinic, maybe, maybe it would work -- but what he wants to do -- with that device of his -- to short-circuit such pain, control the neural networks -- my thought, such as it was -- hook myself to that to get past whatever I'm at the end of -- I have no understanding left, of anything, to draw upon, to sustain -- so I thought maybe --

ADAM picks up the box, holds it.

ADAM

I, um, needed to, well, decompress after seeing the good doctor, so I walked myself through the district -- just seeing how much of the jewelry trade I remember --

EVE

What is it?

ADAM

One of those Thai bracelets you like, with the invisible set for the rubies -- I wanted to get you a cabochon-cut pink tourmaline but nothing popped --

EVE

That's a very old voice.

ADAM

Comes on like a worn shirt.

ADAM hands EVE the box.

ADAM

At least open it.

EVE opens it. She takes out a small slip of paper, such as one would find in a fortune cookie.

ADAM

From that time we went out to eat Chinese, after
I undressed you in the bar --

EVE looks at him with a mixture of affection and incredulity as she reads.

EVE

"You will live a long and prosperus life."

ADAM

We laughed about the typo.

EVE

(sotto voce)

Cozy bastard.

EVE puts the paper back into the box, closes it, then puts it down between them.

EVE

It'll make a find for whoever sits here next.
Don't you dare pick it up.

Again, not sure of the way forward. ADAM throws up his arm as if in a wrestling match. EVE takes it without force. They hold it for a moment, then drop it.

ADAM

He's going to give me a call, one way or the other.

EVE

I have to get home.

ADAM

So do I.

EVE gathers herself, rises, leaves. ADAM toys with the box, opens it, takes out the fortune, closes it, leaves it on the bench, leaves as well.

No Great Loss

ADAM OLDER and EVE OLDER sit at their respective hair-care establishments with their thinning hair.

ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER prepare to cut their hair.

As one, ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER snap out their aprons and drape them over their customers.

ADAM OLDER
I'll have the usual. The usual.

ADAM YOUNGER
Do I detect a little hesitation?

EVE YOUNGER
Tell me what happened.

EVE OLDER
Nothing -- much -- happened.

EVE YOUNGER
Liar liar pants on fire.

ADAM OLDER
How long have you been cutting my hair?

ADAM YOUNGER
I started cutting when you had some hair.

EVE OLDER
Doing the dishes the other night --

ADAM OLDER
Same way every two weeks.

EVE OLDER
-- he reached for the new dish soap, and by chance grabbed the Miracle-Gro --

ADAM OLDER
Every fortnight --

EVE OLDER
He does his repotting in the sink --

EVE YOUNGER
I know --

EVE OLDER
-- which drives me -- sorry --

EVE YOUNGER

I know --

ADAM OLDER

Every two weeks.

ADAM YOUNGER

And?

ADAM OLDER

It's just that she said something -- a joke, of course -- nothing --

ADAM YOUNGER

But it means something to you.

EVE OLDER

And he made a great joke of pretend-pouring it over my head --

ADAM OLDER

It does.

EVE OLDER

-- with -- references!! -- about wisps and vines
--

EVE YOUNGER

No poof on the roof.

ADAM OLDER

We were in the kitchen, finishing the dishes, and she put her hand on my head, and said, "No thatch on the hatch."

ADAM YOUNGER

No shingle on the dingle.

ADAM OLDER

It's not funny.

EVE OLDER

It's not funny.

ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER think it's very funny.

ADAM YOUNGER & EVE YOUNGER

No, it's not.

ADAM YOUNGER

But you do have a dilemma.

EVE YOUNGER

There's a dilemma in the house.

ADAM YOUNGER

The dilemma of the combover.

EVE YOUNGER

The dilemma of the thinning hair.

ADAM YOUNGER

All is vanity--

EVE YOUNGER

-- saith the Preacher.

ADAM OLDER

It's not that.

EVE OLDER

It's not that at all.

ADAM OLDER

It's regret.

EVE OLDER

It's remorse.

ADAM OLDER

Everything's become soft, like a beanbag chair.

EVE OLDER

I am a downhill fleshy mess, I am.

ADAM OLDER

I'm an every-two-weeks haircut guy who finds himself cranky and geezerish, like I was already wearing lime-green golf pants.

ADAM YOUNGER

Aw.

EVE OLDER

I am a twice-a-month-get-a-rinse-to-hide-the-goddam-gray-body-past-the-due-date-stuck-up-on-the-shelf colleen!

EVE YOUNGER

Oh.

ADAM YOUNGER

Just peeing in your pants now with self-pity.

EVE YOUNGER

Pissing self-pity into your pants.

ADAM YOUNGER

Warm for a moment, but --

EVE YOUNGER

-- then it gets clammy, and only people who are quite silly --

ADAM YOUNGER

-- never change their pants.

ADAM YOUNGER & EVE YOUNGER

So stop it.

EVE YOUNGER

So change --

ADAM YOUNGER

So choose.

ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER snap off the aprons.

ADAM OLDER and EVE OLDER get out of the chairs, come downstage. As they do ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER move the chairs behind them, then exit.

They both stand in front of individual "mirrors" assessing themselves.

EVE OLDER

An every-two-weeks haircut guy who finds himself cranky and geezerish, ready for the lime-green golf pants.

ADAM OLDER

A twice-a-month-get-a-rinse-to-hide-the-goddam-gray-body-past-the-due-date-stuck-up-on-the-shelf colleen.

Slowly and deliberately, they disrobe, putting their clothes on the chairs, until they stand naked.

ADAM OLDER

More weights.

EVE OLDER

Definitely more weights.

ADAM OLDER

I am going to look sufficiently all right in a Speedo --

EVE OLDER

I am going to wear a bustier without excessive embarrassment --

ADAM OLDER

Life is crude.

EO

Ill-fitting.

AO

We have these fine glimmers up in the grey swamp
--

EO

-- and then this funky apparatus to carry them
out.

AO & EO

Like a one-legged man on a unicycle with a flat
tire.

AO

And some of us get hair --

EVE OLDER

-- and some of us don't --

ADAM OLDER

-- and we act like that really matters --

EVE OLDER

-- distracted by random sparks of ego.

They face each other.

ADAM OLDER

The only good thing, maybe, is that we can use
our grey swampy brain to recall our crisper salad
days --

EVE OLDER

-- and do something to approximate them again.

ADAM OLDER

Falling apart is what we do best.

EVE OLDER

Look at what hair didn't do for Samson.

Slowly and deliberately, EVE OLDER and ADAM OLDER put on their
clothes, and they talk to each other as if they've just spent some
quality time in bed.

EVE OLDER

Well that was interesting.

ADAM OLDER

That was very interesting.

EVE OLDER
That it still, you know --

ADAM OLDER
Works.

EVE OLDER
Works! I had my [doubts] --

ADAM OLDER
Me, too. The hydraulics --

EVE OLDER
The plumbing --

ADAM OLDER
The framing --

EVE OLDER
Like we're some handyman special!

ADAM OLDER
A fixer-upper!

A moment of silence.

EVE OLDER
So why haven't we --

ADAM OLDER
I've wondered --

EVE OLDER
More often --

ADAM OLDER
Too -- what?

EVE OLDER
Too something.

ADAM OLDER
Embarrassed?

EVE OLDER
Goes without saying. Scared.

ADAM OLDER
Yeah -- that we could come to be afraid of what
had once been --

A moment of silence as they finish dressing.

EVE OLDER

Distrustful -- not of you, of -- well, what had made it all happen in the first place.

ADAM OLDER

Talk about a dream.

EVE OLDER throws up her arm like an arm wrestler. ADAM OLDER takes it, and they laugh as they mock-wrestle. Then they stop.

ADAM OLDER

"nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands"

EVE OLDER

"yea, he is altogether lovely"

ADAM OLDER & EVE OLDER

"You will live a long and prosperous life." Typo and all.

ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER enter with two chairs and sit downstage while ADAM OLDER and EVE OLDER move the other chairs slightly upstage behind and to the side of ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER. At various times during the next scene they will hold up objects referred to or suggested by the text.

Glaciers

ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER speak.

ADAM YOUNGER
As kids --

EVE YOUNGER
Sister --

ADAM YOUNGER
Brother --

EVE YOUNGER
We always loved glaciers.

ADAM OLDER holds up a glass full of ice.

EVE YOUNGER
Some kids get hooked on microbes or chemistry or
guns or cars or music -- glowing fruit dangling
from the tree of knowledge.

ADAM YOUNGER
But we liked something about the grind of these
"rivers of ice" -- citation: National Geographic.

EVE OLDER holds up a National Geographic magazine, preferably an old
one.

EVE YOUNGER
It had something to do with where we grew up --

ADAM YOUNGER
Northern New Hampshire, through the notch, above
the White Mountains.

EVE YOUNGER
Our parents trekking north to escape lives of
urban constriction --

ADAM YOUNGER
Jobs, traffic -- the human density --

EVE YOUNGER
The embarrassment at being a wage slave in the
capitalist system --

EVE YOUNGER & ADAM YOUNGER
Hated it hated it hated it -- hated it --

ADAM OLDER and EVE OLDER make a simultaneous gesture -- devised by the
actors -- of condemnation and release.

ADAM YOUNGER
And thus to find climactic salvation --

EVE YOUNGER
In building a log house by hand --

ADAM OLDER holds up a Lincoln Log house.

ADAM YOUNGER
Raising as much of our food as possible --

EVE OLDER holds up a vegetable of some sort.

EVE YOUNGER
Finding water by dowsing -- yes, they did that --
and it worked!

ADAM OLDER holds up a "Y"-shaped tree branch.

ADAM YOUNGER
And fighting off the potato bugs and ministering
to the sick chickens --

EVE YOUNGER & ADAM YOUNGER
And sliding the two of us into the world --

ADAM OLDER and EVE OLDER stand and take the pose of Grant Wood's
famous painting of the farming couple, complete with pitchfork.

EVE YOUNGER
What they both wanted -- hungered for --

ADAM YOUNGER
Ached for --

EVE YOUNGER
Was a place and a life where, when they drilled
out their core samples --

ADAM YOUNGER
Those bands of clear and cloudy deposits from the
innards of their glaciers --

EVE YOUNGER
They could fully trace who they were.

ADAM YOUNGER
And like good icebergs we split off from them,
full of their history but under temperatures and
pressures of our own.

ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER shift their chairs to a different part of
the stage. Perhaps a change in the lights and some music.

During the following lines, ADAM OLDER and EVE OLDER build the pulley system referred to later on. Then ADAM OLDER sits in his chair. EVE OLDER stands next to him.

EVE YOUNGER

During a North Country winter, it wasn't hard to imagine ourselves as shaggy proto-humans --

ADAM YOUNGER

Draped in furs fronted by a mile-high cerulean wall of ice.

EVE YOUNGER

Anchored down --

ADAM YOUNGER

Hunkered away --

EVE YOUNGER

Every action calculated to defeat the threat of defeat --

ADAM YOUNGER

Reduce the margin of error --

ADAM YOUNGER & EVE YOUNGER look at each other and smile.

ADAM YOUNGER & EVE YOUNGER

A wonderful life --

EVE YOUNGER

-- even knowing now what we now know.

ADAM YOUNGER

Our parents had been skilled icebergs, showing their gleaming ten-percent above --

ADAM YOUNGER

While ninety-percent below hung tons of doubt and strata of regret.

EVE YOUNGER

As children our study of icebergs gave us words to understand what we had no words for --

ADAM YOUNGER

About the careless world of adults --

EVE YOUNGER

Rudenesses --

ADAM YOUNGER

-- and bruising --

EVE YOUNGER

-- that break through from the abrasive and
airless depths --

ADAM YOUNGER

From the layer upon layer of annual resentments
and misses.

ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER look at each other.

EVE YOUNGER

We have all of that.

ADAM YOUNGER

We are the children of our mother and father.

EVE YOUNGER

And as these things come to pass in life, one day
our father died.

ADAM YOUNGER

And we traveled back to the North Country, our
glacier home, to see what we could see.

EVE OLDER joins them. They embrace. They hold hands.

EVE OLDER

Welcome.

A moment of suspended silence.

EVE OLDER

Would you like to see --

ADAM YOUNGER

Of course.

EVE YOUNGER

Of course.

They all move to ADAM OLDER. When ADAM OLDER speaks, they do not hear
him.

EVE OLDER

He built this coffin with his own hands.

ADAM OLDER

What would you expect?

EVE YOUNGER

You expected something different?

ADAM YOUNGER

"No mortician will ever touch me."

EVE YOUNGER
Said more than once to more than many.

EVE OLDER
The county officials -- some are out there --

ADAM OLDER
They thought they'd tripped us up about a home
burial -- hah.

EVE OLDER
Not pleased about the home burial --

EVE YOUNGER
But you had done the homework.

EVE OLDER
Well, of course.

EVE YOUNGER
You always did the homework.

ADAM OLDER
We had the regulations in hand.

EVE OLDER
We knew the regulations better than they did.

ADAM OLDER
So why did we pay their salaries all those years?

EVE OLDER
But no hard feelings.

ADAM OLDER
Great satisfaction in winning the battle.

EVE OLDER
Some coffee and some cake -- they'll be gone
soon.

EVE YOUNGER and ADAM YOUNGER look at their father -- peer at him.

EVE YOUNGER
Weird.

ADAM OLDER
Why?

EVE YOUNGER
He's just -- dead.

ADAM OLDER
It took a while, but -- yes --

ADAM YOUNGER
Now into the apple orchard --

EVE YOUNGER
The grave dug already --

EVE OLDER
We have many friends.

ADAM YOUNGER
We saw it coming in -- all his electricity --

EVE YOUNGER
Going to get sucked up into the apples.

ADAM OLDER
Watch out for them apples next spring!

ADAM YOUNGER
He's dead.

EVE YOUNGER
Yes.

EVE OLDER
Yes.

ADAM OLDER
Finally.

They continue to look at him.

ADAM OLDER
You should keep things moving --

EVE OLDER
We need to move on.

ADAM YOUNGER
Yes.

ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER take ADAM OLDER by the hand and escort him downstage. They stop, let go, bow their heads, then move to either side of the pulley system. EVE OLDER stands to the back.

EVE OLDER
I will miss you -- but I am going to leave this place behind.

ADAM OLDER
Leave them the house.

EVE OLDER

If they'll take it -- I don't really care. I just can't stand the cold anymore.

ADAM OLDER

So you're giving up?

EVE OLDER

You know better than to take that tone with me.

ADAM OLDER

Never stopped me from taking it.

EVE OLDER

Never got you what you wanted.

ADAM OLDER

Why would "knowing better" ever make me change my ways?

EVE OLDER

Determined always [to] --

ADAM OLDER

Because I never let anyone tell me what to do.

EVE OLDER

Even if you needed the telling. Mule-headed -- especially at the end -- the cold I can't stand is not just the weather.

ADAM OLDER

The "between us" wasn't that bad.

ADAM YOUNGER sends EVE YOUNGER a letter by the pulley system. EVE YOUNGER reads.

EVE OLDER

We couldn't even talk to each other during the final stretch.

ADAM OLDER

It was a neat system we rigged up -- me upstairs, you plonked down at that ugly desk of yours --

EVE YOUNGER sends ADAM YOUNGER a letter by the pulley system. ADAM YOUNGER reads.

EVE OLDER

The velocity of spoken words --

ADAM OLDER

Sniper-dangerous, the spoken word sometimes -- we
knew too much about each other to keep our mouths
shut.

EVE OLDER

The layers of a long life together --

ADAM OLDER

The stratigraphy of secrets --

EVE OLDER

Trouble.

ADAM OLDER

And ammunition, high caliber.

ADAM YOUNGER sends EVE YOUNGER a letter by the pulley system. EVE
YOUNGER reads.

EVE OLDER

The letters were the best solution.

ADAM OLDER

Best defense. The rigging was ingenious!!

EVE YOUNGER sends ADAM YOUNGER a letter by the pulley system. ADAM
YOUNGER reads.

EVE OLDER

Setting it up gave you pleasure.

ADAM OLDER

My last act before the damned decline and wicked
fall.

EVE OLDER

Never so motivated as by creating the system
where you didn't have to talk to me.

ADAM YOUNGER sends EVE YOUNGER a letter by the pulley system. EVE
YOUNGER reads.

The next several letters are sent in quick succession, perhaps even
simultaneously, indicating a rise in the temperature of the exchanges.

ADAM OLDER

It blessed you, too.

EVE OLDER

True. The ice built up.

ADAM OLDER

The ice age ganged up again -- and as it did we wrote amazing things to each other.

EVE OLDER

Who knew anger had such intimacy to it?

ADAM OLDER

Vibrancy! Who knew that such a span of long love could cook up such resentments?

EVE OLDER

We were nothing but inventive in how to wound.

ADAM OLDER

We had such a deep supply of artillery. That last year -- it was the worst of them all.

EVE OLDER

And the best. But now I have to leave this cold behind. I do.

ADAM OLDER

Then you should get yourself going going gone.

ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER, bearing sheaves of letters, move downstage and join ADAM OLDER and EVE OLDER.

ADAM YOUNGER reads.

ADAM YOUNGER

"Eventually he got too weak to write. We would sit quietly, holding hands. Sometimes he would sleep and I would write to him, thought I never read it back to him. It was in one of his sleeps that he died. Actually, he woke long enough to look me full in the face, eyes as clear as January, and say 'No'."

ADAM YOUNGER moves to EVE YOUNGER. EVE YOUNGER reads.

EVE YOUNGER

"Life without you will be life without you. It's a stark fact I can't change. If I fear anything it will be to miss things about you so much that I will miss my own life. It's that fullness I don't want to stop feeling. You will not be around to share it with me, but I don't stop needing it simply because you die. There are other ways to get it, and I will. That is how I will keep you alive."

ADAM YOUNGER reads from the same letter.

ADAM YOUNGER

"Willfullness, stubbornness -- the things you accused me of, the things that attracted you in the beginning -- they will feed me until they feed me to the ground. We have had a full life, venom and love, venom because of love. It ends, I choose to believe, with love."

The four of them sit.

EVE YOUNGER

A near miss --

ADAM OLDER

Yes.

ADAM YOUNGER

Love sustained you both but with a grind --

ADAM YOUNGER & EVE YOUNGER

Glaciers!

EVE YOUNGER

Love, yeah, but --

EVE OLDER

But love spiky --

EVE YOUNGER

Exactly! Rough-edged, burred --

ADAM YOUNGER

Parasitic --

ADAM OLDER

That's harsh.

ADAM YOUNGER

All right, but then full of skirmish and triage, capable of great tenderness and gift, deep bruise and anger -- closer?

ADAM OLDER

It certainly wasn't what the greeting cards are about, not what that overused Corinthians text at weddings is about.

EVE OLDER

Sometimes -- often -- it was too much -- this abundant provocative love --

ADAM OLDER

Sometimes it sustained us against our will.

ADAM YOUNGER

Like an overlong guest.

EVE YOUNGER

An obnoxious relative who insisted on dragging out all the family photos.

EVE OLDER

We once said it was like the sickle cell, which sometimes made you ill but protected you against a worse disease.

EVE YOUNGER

A near miss.

A moment of suspended silence.

ADAM YOUNGER

It's said that Iceland rises inches each year, springing back from the retreated weight of the Ice Age.

EVE YOUNGER

When I used to go hiking I thought of each step as putting my own weight on the mountains, like the glacier that had chiseled its way there before. I was trying my best to make my own impression.

ADAM OLDER

The apples that autumn were full, ballooned with sweetness.

ADAM YOUNGER

The applesauce tasted fine in January.

EVE YOUNGER

In the spring, the last of the frozen apple pies succumbed. Then the recovering blossoms in the spring.

EVE OLDER

The years could be good.

* * * * *

Lights up on ADAM YOUNGER and EVE YOUNGER sitting at the table. They look, smile, hesitate, clearly ill-at-ease but trying to make the best of it. Let the hemming and hawing go on until it is almost irritating the audience, then sound the timer. Begin.

Blackout.