Irrational Man

By Woody Allen
Kant said human reason is troubled by questions that it cannot dismiss, but also cannot answer. Okay, so, what are we talking about here? Morality? Choice? The randomness of life? Aesthetics? Murder? I think Abe was crazy from the beginning. Was it from stress? Was it anger? Was he disgusted by what he saw as life's never-ending suffering? Or was he simply bored by the meaninglessness of day-to-day existence? He was so damn interesting. And different. And a good talker. And he could always cloud the issue with words. Where to begin? You know, the existentialists feel nothing happens until you hit absolute rock bottom. Well, let's say that when I went to teach at Braylin College, emotionally, I was at Zabriskie Point. Of course, my reputation, or should I say a reputation, preceded me. I hear Abe Lucas is gonna be joinin' the faculty this summer. Really? That should put some Viagra into the philosophy department. He's this really interesting guy, but he looks totally wasted. I kind of like the burned-out look, though. Oh, my God, me too. Well, yeah, and he has affairs with some of his students, I heard. - Really? - Yeah, like full... Yeah. Abe Lucas is teaching
my Ethical Strategies class
for summer session.
- Have you read any of his papers?
- Mmm-hmm.

He's very radical.
Very original.
You either love him or hate him, really.
Faye Cohen knows someone who knows him,
but she says, he had a serious depression
when his wife left him.
The story is,
she ran off with his best friend.
Really?
'Cause, actually,
what I heard through the rumor mill
was he had a breakdown
when his best friend was killed.
He was a TV crew guy in Iraq
and he got beheaded.
Isn't that gruesome if it's true?
Jesus, I haven't even met the guy yet,
and I'm already jealous.
Jealous?
I love that you're jealous.
That makes me feel desired.
Oh, God, you don't have to worry.
Everybody on campus desires you.
- Oh, come on.
- But I have you.
I don't know, suddenly the thought of you
coming under the spell
of some charismatic professor...
Oh, God, you don't have to worry.
I'm under your spell.
Good. Let's keep it that way.
- Yeah?
- Mmm-hmm.

Excuse me.
Uh, do you know where Jessup Hall is?
Yes, Jessup Hall is that building
over there, the red one.
Uh-huh, all right.
Thank you.
Doctor Reed?
- Oh.
- Professor Lucas.
- Professor Lucas, welcome to Braylin.
- Thank you.
- Are you okay?
- Yes.
- I'm sure you've had a long trip.
- Mmm-hmm. It was, yeah.
- Well, um...
- Thank you.

We've just concluded our spring semester, and summer's always very active at Braylin.
Uh-huh.
We're all very happy to have you here in the philosophy department.
Mmm, thank you.
This is it.
Now, the faculty housing is pretty much spread out, but, you know, everything you can get to. It's within walking distance of the campus. And you're really gonna like Newport. It's beautiful here, but it gets a little crowded in the summer. That can be a drag. It's a small house, but it's really comfortable. Um, right over here is the living room, and there's a little kitchen that way. And there's a little dining room right next to that. Upstairs... This way. Bathroom to the right. And this is the bedroom. It's small, but really comfortable. And there's an office over there. I think you'll really love the philosophy department, you know? It's in this old, beautiful part of the campus. And there's a more modern wing, that's got state-of-the-art stuff for science,
and computer technology,
if you're into that.
Oh, and if you want to go away,
we're just 45 minutes from Providence.
Thank you.
Do you want a drink?
Oh, no! God, no.
There's a little cocktail reception
to welcome you at 6:00.
You know, I have to tell you,
I loved your essay on situational ethics.
Oh, I'm glad you liked it.
It caused a little, uh, static
with the philosophy department at Adair.
- This is my husband, Paul.
- Hey, how you doin'?
- This is Abe Lucas, philosophy department.
- Good to meet you.
- Yeah.
- How you doin' on that?
I'd like another one, please.
- What is it?
- Vodka martini, extra olives.
- Anything for you?
- Sure, I'll have another.
- Uh, scotch?
- Mmm-hmm.
- Okay.
- Thank you.
I'm Rita Richards.
It's so good to have you here.
Hey, if you're ever bored
and you want someone to give you
the real lowdown of
who's fucking who at this college,
just let me know.
So, Kant would argue
that in a truly moral world,
there is absolutely no room for lying.
And even the smallest lie
destroys his precious
categorical imperative.
So, Kant would say,
if a killer came to your house,
looking to kill the man hiding upstairs
and asked where he was,
you'd be obliged to tell him.
In his perfect world,
you know, you couldn't lie.
Yeah, I can see the logic
that if you open the door,
even just a crack,
you accept a world where
lying is permitted.
Uh-huh.
Okay, then, then you'd say
if the Nazis came to your house,
hiding Anne Frank and her family,
and asked if anyone
was in the attic, you'd say,
"Ja, the Franks are upstairs."
I doubt it.
Because there's a difference between
a theoretical world of philosophy bullshit,
and real life, you know?
Real, nasty, ugly life
that includes greed,
and hate, and genocide.
Remember,
if you learn nothing else from me,
you should learn that much of philosophy
is verbal masturbation.
- Have you talked to him at all?
- Mmm.
You know, I asked him
if he wanted to eat with us.
- I like the guy, but he's in a world...
- He likes to eat alone.
Yeah, he's in a world all his own.
I think he likes to keep to himself a bit.
Uh, yeah, I guess so.
Yeah, so, let him be. Right?
- Could take some time.
- Right.
Okay, Kierkegaard.
Um...
You know, when making everyday decisions,
we have absolute freedom of choice.
All right?
You can do nothing, or anything.
And this feeling of freedom
creates a sense of dread.
A dizzy feeling.
Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom.
The students love you,
but, of course, you've raised
some eyebrows with the faculty.
- Do you ever get discouraged teaching?
- No.
You don't ever ask yourself
what the hell is it all about?
Mmm—mmm.
Another school, another batch of kids.
Sweet kids.
Mmm. Average kids.
Nice, but mostly mediocre.
They'll grow up to be those people
who shape the world with their ignorance
or misinformation, or passivity.
- Are you okay?
- Hmm?
- Are you okay?
- Yeah, yeah.
You want to come in?
This is where I live.
Paul's in Aspen at a symposium.
I've got great grass.
- Some other time.
- Are you sure?
Yeah.
Thanks. Thanks anyway.
I'll see you.
Tomorrow we're gonna discuss
phenomenology and Husserl.
So, be sure you do the reading, you know?
It can get a little complicated.
All right?
Hi, you wanted to see me?
Yes, your paper was quite good.
- Really?
- Yes.
I read so many papers and,
usually the students are merely paraphrasing what they've read, but I found your thinking fresh and well-presented.
Oh, thank you.
I'm flattered.
I have to say, I was very influenced by your ideas on randomness and chance.
Well, the truth is, what I found most exciting was when you took issue with my ideas.
When you disagreed with me, your arguments were well-reasoned and original.
Am I blushing right now? That's a really big compliment.
Thank you.
Um, I did actually find some parts of your book a little hard to follow though, and I would love if you could explain some things to me.
Sure, can we get out of here, though, before I die of suffocation?
I found your view of existence too bleak for me.
It was like there were no redeeming joys or pleasures.
Okay.
Why are you taking philosophy? What do you want out of it? Because if your goal is to try and figure out what all this bullshit's about, forget it.
You write books, you write papers. You've done so much.
Well, let me tell you, when I look back at all that verbal posturing, my group thought we were going to be so special. I marched in every bullshit political demonstration. I spent six months in Darfur getting food to starving families,
I wind up with meningitis.
- Mmm.
- I was in Bangladesh.
Yeah, you know, you want to see a difference, to save the world.
But when you see what you're up against...
Do you like vintage single malt?
You drink?
You mean here?
- Yeah.
- Right now?
No, no, I couldn't.
There was no way I could have realized from that first conversation that a lot was very wrong with Abe.
He was so damn fascinating and vulnerable, and I must say, I found him attractive.
I guess it helped that he felt comfortable with me.
I drove a cab.
I was a handyman in a building.
I ran an elevator.
But I always read.
Always, always loved the Russian writers. Especially Dostoyevsky.
Dostoyevsky got it.
I've read all of it.
- Really?
- Mmm.
Oh, I had a great conversation with Abe Lucas the other day.
Uh-huh.
He said my paper was well-organized and original.
- All right.
- Right?
Yeah, I can see where this is goin'.
Oh, stop it, please.
He's just fascinating because he's brilliant, but he's a sufferer.
Perfect. Great, you always became attracted to the sufferers.
Right? That's how we first met.
He's a real sufferer, Roy.
You had shingles.
He was traumatized
when his best friend was killed in Iraq.
- He was a journalist, just horrifying.
- Didn't he get his head cut off?
His head cut off?
No, no, it was an explosion.
Oh.
God, it's amazing how people
embellish these stories.
You know, Abe actually says
that people just manufacture drama
so they can get through their lives
because they're so empty.
Can we just change the subject
of Abe Lucas, please?
You've been, like, singing
his praises for half an hour.
All right, well, then,
how about I sing yours?
- How's that?
I love you in that sweater.
Of course, you love me in this sweater.
You bought it for me.
Well, you look great in that shade of blue.
You really do.
You know Abe's mother committed suicide?
Abe again?
I mean, can you imagine?
He was 12.
She drank bleach!
It's so sad.
You know, Simone de Beauvoir pointed out,
and quite correctly,
that in a society shaped by men,
women are seen as relative beings
existing only in relationship to men.
- Hmm.
- You agree with that?
- I agree with that completely.
- Mmm-hmm.
I'm sure you've heard the rumors about you.
That you've had a lot of experience with women.
You mean slept with.
You find that fulfilling?
Many women and one-night stands?
I did at the time.
It had a certain frantic quality.
One day, it stopped being exciting.
I couldn't find distraction anymore in that usually reliable painkiller, the orgasm.
Why not?
I couldn't remember the reason for living.
And when I did, it wasn't convincing.
That sounds scary.
It's very scary when you run out of distractions.
Well, what if it wasn't a distraction?
What if you just decided to commit yourself to one person?
If I met someone now, I'm too far gone to appreciate her.
I have to go to my piano lesson.
What are you doing on Friday night?
Oh, I don't know.
Why?
I think you should come to a party.
- Uh...
- I do.
Roy and I will take you.
We can go and it'll... There'll be music and it'll be fun. There's a lot of students that like you. There really are.
And I think it's better than just wallowing in your room.
I don't think that's healthy.
You should think about it.
You want to come out?
- Yes?
- Hi.
I'm sorry for dropping in so suddenly but, I was shopping today at
the liquor store, and,
I came across these two very fine bottles
of single malt scotch,

and I got one for Paul and myself.
And I know how much

you love single malt scotch.
Oh, that was very thoughtful of you.

How much do I owe you?
Oh, God, no, I bought it for you.

Oh, thank you.
You could have waited to give it to me.

You didn't have to come in the rain.

I couldn't wait.
I was excited over it.

Will you have one with me?
I thought you'd never ask.

Um... Hmm.

What have you been doing?
I'm trying to finish this book
I started a long time ago.

- What's it about?
- About Heidegger and fascism.

Just what the world needs.
Another book about Heidegger and fascism.

How's it coming?
I'm blocked.

I can't write.

Why?
Oh, I...

I can't write 'cause I can't breathe.
What would get you breathing again?

I, you know...
The will to breathe.

- Hmm.
- Inspiration, you know?

You need a muse.
I have never needed a muse before.

I hope you're not gonna send me

back out into the rain
without sleeping with me.

I'm trying to write.

You're blocked.

I'm going to unblock you.

Or are you becoming infatuated with
that student you spend so much time with?
When the hurricane hit in New Orleans,
Abe went down there
and stayed for six weeks.
He said the problems
were completely overwhelming.
And the political red tape
and corruption was just a scandal.
He couldn't believe the amount
of stupidity and greed.
It was a scandal for George Bush.
Well, Abe was right there
in the thick of it,
trying to get something accomplished.
And meanwhile, his wife was
falling in love with his best friend.
- Uh-huh.
- Can you believe that?
Abe really, really loved his wife.
They met on a trip to Machu Picchu
to see the ruins.
They both experimented with mescaline.
He's actually tried every drug.
He hates them.
He's very conservative
in a kind of liberal way.
- It seems like he really opened up to you.
- Mmm-hmm.
Everyone says
he's not easy to get to know.
Well, I definitely have not found that.
Hey, can we just get off
the topic of Abe Lucas?
I mean, I must say,
I'm not thrilled
that you invited him out
with us tomorrow night
without asking me first.
Well, he needs some human contact, Roy.
Otherwise, he just sits
in his room and broods.
Yeah, but you can see
why I might be jealous, no?
That's silly.
Famous last words.
I'm sorry.
I know it must have been a disappointment, to say the least.
Have you tried any of the impotence drugs?
It's not physical.
And don't take it personally.
I haven't been able to perform in nearly a year.
Have you seen a shrink?
'Cause I know a good one for that problem.
I keep hoping it'll come back as mysteriously as it left.
I'm sorry I let you down.
No, I'm sorry.
I'm sure it's hell for you.
Thanks for the scotch.
What are you doing over here?
Are you having one of your morbid insights on the transient futility of human joy?
Is my face that grim?
I have never seen a de Kooning in a private house.
- I know, so my parents got it at auction.
- It's gorgeous.
They're just starting to collect.
They're buying so much.
They got a Kitaj and a Warhol at Sotheby's, like, last week.
No way!
I know, I know.
April, honestly,
are you afraid of getting robbed?
No, I mean the house has alarms, like, all over.
- Show them what your father keeps.
- No.
- Come on, show them...
- I'm not gonna show it to them.
Oh, my God. You do this, like, every time you come over here.
It's so weird.
We get it, the painting is fine, the painting is all right.
For the burglars.
Yes, there it is!
- Come on, give me it, give!
- Oh, my God.
- Is it loaded?
- This is my baby.
My baby? Oh, my God.
No, it's not loaded. It's totally...
I'm taking the bullets out.
Do you shoot this?
No, my dad takes it out
into the woods sometimes.
Where they play Russian Roulette.
What's Russian Roulette?
What's Russian Roulette?
- Just explain it.
- All right, fine.
Okay, so, you take a bullet.
Take a bullet
and you put it in the chamber.
- Don't demonstrate it...
- Well, I'm not gonna do it!
So, you... Then you spin it around, right?
And, um, you hold it up to your head.
- You squeeze the trigger.
- Okay...
And you have five, no, you have
five to one odds that nothing will happen.
But if you're unlucky...
- You're just kind of...
- Very unlucky.
Why?
And why do they do this,
just for money, or what?
No, it's like, it's, the stakes are
so much higher than money.
- It's not about money.
- For what? For what end?
You know, you get like a real high
when you pull the trigger and...
Danny, stop! Put that away.
Here, let me see this.
I don't like guns.
Just be careful.
Abe, put the gun down!
Oh, my God!
What the hell are you doing, Abe?
The odds were in my favor.
Do you think that's funny?
- But, I mean...
- Abe, put the gun down.
- Was it worth the risk?
- Well, not at five to one.
Here, fifty-fifty odds.
Abe!
Stop it, stop it!
Stop!
You want to kill yourself,
go to the chem lab, swallow cyanide.
Don't do it in front of us.
This is an existential lesson
better than in the textbooks.
You're drunk.
You're completely drunk.
Let's go home.
Come on, you drink too much.
Fifty-fifty odds is better
than most people get in life.
Word around is your philosophy professor's
got a bit of an alcohol problem.
Oh, boy, that's just one of his problems.
And, you know, it's really a shame,
because he's so self-destructive,
but he's so brilliant.
But can I tell you what I think?
And we're just the music department.
Yes.
He writes very well, very...
Lively.
But it's a triumph of style.
The substance just doesn't
stand up to scrutiny.
His ideas are romantic, but so flawed.
I just hope you're not starting to care
for him too much, in the wrong way.
Oh, God, no.
I love Roy.
Although it is interesting to be around
someone so complicated. 
I fear for him, I do. 
I, you know... 
Romantics think suicide is romantic. 
The truth was I was attracted to Abe. 
Despite, or was it because, 
he was a lost soul. 
There was something 
about his pain and sensitivity 
that tapped into my romantic fantasies. 
It was exciting going to museums 
and seeing movies with him. 
He was truly an original thinker. 
The problem was he had no zest for life, 
no joy, no clear reason for living, 
he said, which alarmed me. 
I wanted so much to help him. 
I've given up. 
It's all bullshit. 
You know, my bullshit book 
on Martin Heidegger 
is not gonna make 
a scintilla of difference to the world. 
Why do you say things like that? 
How do you know that? 
I set out to be an active world changer 
and wound up a passive intellectual 
who can't fuck. 
Well, Abe, maybe Rita Richards 
couldn't get your creative juices flowing, 
but did you think that maybe I could? 
Uh-uh, Jill. 
Don't. 
Don't what? 
Don't do this. 
Well, we spend a lot of time together, Abe. 
- You know, and I... 
- We're friends. 
I know it's... 
All right, well, I thought you could tell 
that I cared about you. 
I mean, it's pretty obvious to everyone. 
Including your boyfriend? 
I don't... I'm not ready to make
an exclusive commitment to him.

He's...

- I just have a lot of questions and...
- All right, Jill.

Maybe we're spending too much time together. Maybe I shouldn't monopolize your time.

Okay.

Why are you in such a bad mood?

Roy, I'm fine.

All right?

Can't I just be a little bit edgy every once in a while?

Well, have you thought any more about what I said?

What?

That after graduation, we go to London, we move in together and we do our postgrad work at Oxford, no?

It's a very big idea and I don't know.

I think it would be a great experience.

Jill, stop, stop.

Come on, you know I love you.

What's wrong?

I just can't talk about this right now, Roy.

I feel very achy.

Like maybe I'm coming down with something, or...

- Okay...
- I don't know, like a flu or...

All right.

Isn't it a lovely spot?

I love it.

I come here when I want to be alone. You're looking a little glum.

I'm sorry about this afternoon.

I thought maybe some time had passed, you know?

And you took the Cialis?

Against my better judgment.

Can I confess something?

When I heard you were coming here,

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I'd walk along these rocks,
and had fantasies that we'd meet
and something special would happen.
If you're unhappy,
why can't you just up and leave?
I...
I can't do it alone.
You know, I just can't.
I need somebody to leave with.
Jill had been right
in her appraisal of me.
I was teetering on the brink
of some kind of breakdown,
unable to deal with my feelings
of anger, frustration, futility.
They say that drowning
is a painless way to go.
Despair is what Kierkegaard called
the sickness unto death, Abe.
And you suffer from despair.
I'm well aware of what Kierkegaard thought.
But he was, in the end, a Christian.
How comforting that would be.
So, are you looking forward
to your piano recital tonight?
Did you settle on the Bach?
- We'll figure this out.
- I don't know.
This is wrong.
Are you aware of
what's going on at this table?
What?
It is a messed-up situation.
And my kids
feel like I'm not comin' back.
Aw, that's not true.
I know.
I don't know what to do.
I'm at my wit's end.
Who's the judge?
Uh, Spangler. Thomas Spangler.
How'd this guy ever wind up
in family court? It's just...
They're political appointees.
Some are okay, but a lot of 'em are just bums who are getting paid off. It's not right.

He awards the kids to Frank.

Frank doesn't even look after them.

- It's true...
- Frank doesn't even want them.

He doesn't care about his own kids.

I deliver them to him,

they don't want to go.

They're crying.

They're crying.

What does Frank do?

He sticks 'em in a corner of the garage he works at.

And they sit underground all day.

I mean, they should be outside, in the fresh air.

And now he's gonna switch custody to Frank?

- On what grounds?
- On no grounds.

Because he's friendly in some way with Frank's lawyer.

Switching custody would be a disaster.

It doesn't make sense.

I brought in the kids' teachers,
I brought in the kids' doctors.

It doesn't matter.

And you're sure he can't be recused?

We tried.

My lawyer tried and failed.

I can't keep payin' all these legal bills and the judge knows it.

So, every time I want something, he says, "Make a motion."

And we do, but he turns me down.

And it's costin' me everything I got.

- And I'm gonna lose my kids.
- Aw.

And you're sure he's cozy with Frank's lawyer?

Oh, God,
they look at each other, they smile.
I got a bad break,
drawn' this judge.
It's just so unfair.
I'm due in court in six weeks.
If he doesn't postpone it again,
which he does,
because he knows it helps Frank.
I can't get a decent night's sleep.
I wish I could take the kids
and move to Europe.
I mean, I actually thought of
taking them out of the country.
What, and hide for the rest of your life?
You'd be a fugitive.
I feel for you, Carol, I do.
And you're such a good mother.
I hope the judge gets cancer.
He won't get cancer.
Because wishing doesn't work.
If you want him dead,
you have to make it happen.
But you'd never be able to pull it off,
and even if you did,
you'd be a prime suspect.
On the other hand,
I could kill him for you, lady,
and no one in the world
would dream I did it.
I could rid you of this roach
and end all your suffering.
It was at this moment
that my life came together.
I could perform this blessing
for that poor woman
and no one would ever connect me to it.
I don't know any of the parties involved,
I have no motive,
and when I walk out of here,
I'll never lay eyes on
any of these people again.
All I need to know is the name.
Judge Thomas Spangler.
Are you okay?
Wow, God.
I got a little dizzy in there.
What, you're shaking.
- I guess, um...
- Are you all right?
An anxiety attack or something.
- I have medicine at home.
- Okay.
Yeah, I don't know why I feel so dizzy.
Everything about killing Judge Spangler turned me on.
The idea of helping this woman,
of taking action,
of ridding the world of the kind of vermin that makes the world an extra hell for all of us.
I was intrigued by the creative challenge of bringing off a perfect murder.
It was a high-stakes risk, but the risk made me feel alive.
- Sorry. Hey, you were great.
- Oh, thank you.
- Thank you for coming.
- Yeah, of course.
I've been thinking about that woman that we overheard all day. Have you?
- Yeah, me, too, yeah.
- It's amazing what happens to some people.
God, I don't blame her for wishing him dead.
I'd be rooting for him to have a heart attack, as awful as that sounds.
No. I mean, don't you think that there are some people that die and with their death, the world becomes a slightly better place instantly?
Mmm, I don't think it's quite as simple as that.
I mean, he could be a terrible judge, but a decent loving father.
- First off, he's not a father.
- How do you know?
I was so fascinated, I couldn't help but check him out on my computer.
My God, you remembered his name?
Even if he was a good family man, that's like those, you know,
Mafia bosses who do horrible things, and, what, we're supposed to cut them slack because they're wonderful to their wives and children?
You have to resist the temptation to overthink a very clear-cut issue.
You know, he's a rotten judge, not impartial as he's vowed to be, crushing a woman and her kids simply because he has the power to do it.
No one can stop him.
I mean...
It's not that ambiguous, even though it's ugly to say it.
He's a roach who'd be better stamped out.
The dizziness and anxiety had disappeared, and I accepted completely, in fact, embraced my freedom to choose action.
I was too excited to fall asleep.
My mind was racing with ideas, plans to kill Judge Spangler.
Thanks to a serendipitous encounter with an unknown woman, my life suddenly had a purpose.
When I finally did fall asleep, I slept the sleep of the just.
- Morning.
- Morning.
Oh, I know what I want.
I want the orange juice, French toast, hash browns and double bacon.
Hey, what happened to the usual black coffee?
Can I help it if I'm famished?
Well, bravo.
You want cinnamon on the French toast?
- Yes, I want cinnamon.
- Okay.
Hi.
Hi!
Good morning.
Whoa, you're full of energy this morning.
- Yeah.
- Yeah.
- I made a big decision last night.
- You did?
Mmm-hmm.
To take control of my own life.
Well, that's good.
What prompted this reawakening?
Did you have a religious epiphany?
I just decided it's time to stop whining
and to take matters into my own hands
and make something happen.
Well, that's good,
because, uh, to be honest,
some of us here were
kind of worried about you.
- Huh.
- You seemed at such a low point.
The trick is not to
examine things too closely.
Not to debate every issue,
but to go with your gut feeling.
You know, and choosing action, to do,
rather than to observe
and get lost in conventional cliches.
I think I follow. Philosophy is
not a strong suit, you know, so...
Yeah, I think I know
what your strong suit is...
I'm a little slow.
Oh, really?
I knew you'd love that lighthouse.
It's one of my favorite
places in the world.
Oh, it's so beautiful here.
I can't help thinking of
that phrase by Emily Dickinson,
"Inebriate of air."
To be drunk on air.
Not to have to rely on single malt scotch.
You know, you once said that you used to fool around with poetry. Mmm. Yeah, I destroyed all my poems in a fit of rage, when my funny, sweet friend, this guy I grew up with my whole life, stepped on a fucking land mine in Iraq. Oh, Jesus. But you know, maybe if you like, I could try writing again for you. I mean, I'm not very good, but you know, I might enjoy trying again for you. You know I'm in love with you. You think you are. What you are is in love with the romantic concept of being in love with your college professor. The correct road for you is with that terrific guy you're going with. Is that really what you think? I'll always be your friend. And even your poet laureate. That was fantastic. My God, what have you been eating for breakfast? Aw. I don't deserve all the credit. You are hot stuff, lady. What happened to the philosophy professor? Christ, you were like a caveman. For the first time in so long, I felt free. You know? Just a limitless freedom. Run away with me. Where? To Tahiti? Like Gauguin? To make love in the tropics? I want to leave Paul and move to Spain. - Yes? - Yeah. Why Spain? I always found Spain to be so romantic. Hmm.
Now, I have a bone to pick with you.

- Yes?

Yeah, have you been sleeping with that student Jill Pollard?
I've been sleeping with no one for a year, till tonight.
Not that I haven't tried, as you sadly know.

- You tried with the student?
- No, never.

We're only friends.

Well, because there's talk around the school.

Mmm, it's just talk.

People fill their lonely hours with gossip.

Now put it out of your mind.

My zest for life had returned and the driving force of this rebirth was my rock-solid determination to perform a service for a mother of two and rid the world of Judge Thomas Augustus Spangler.

He lived alone on a pretty street within walking distance to the courthouse.

One day a week, he played bridge with his cronies at the Pavilion Club.

He was a member and ate there pretty often.

Saturday mornings, he jogged at Lippitt Park.

He was not well-thought of as a judge and had been censured once or twice, but had never been reversed on appeal because he was smart and also one of the boys.

Why continental philosophy?

Because, you know, continental philosophy deals with problems much more exciting and, and personal than the analytic tradition.

You know, the existentialists were tryin' to find out not just what does something mean, but what does it mean for me?

I never thought I would get you
to go to an amusement park.
Where's Roy tonight?
Studying.
Well, I'm mellowing in my old age.
And now that we're here,
I'm determined to win you a prize.
There was no question
there was something lighter about Abe.
His spirits seemed up,
he seemed more focused,
more optimistic, more charming.
He said he was determined
to win me a prize.
And after one of his standard lectures
on the impact of luck and random chance,
he managed to pick the winning number
on his first spin.
I want to go with my first instinct.
There's my first hunch, 17.
Okey-dokey, here we go!
Round, and round, and round it goes.
And where will it stop?
Nobody knows.
And...
Wow!
Unbelievable.
- I won.
- You're a lucky man.
- How did you do that?
- Luck rules the universe.
Oh, you think so?
Correction, not luck, chance.
We're all at the mercy of chance.
All right, what, what do you want?
What prize do you want?
- Um, okay...
- Anything, anything you want!
Oh, uh, the flashlight, please.
- Flashlight?
- Yeah.
- A nice practical choice.
- Thank you.
- This isn't practical.
- That's not practical?
- No, it's cool...
- I mean, look at your other options.
You're saying that you picked a flashlight?
- I like the color...
- Come on.
I hate that you think I'm practical.
Whoa!
- Oh, God.
- I feel like I'm on mescaline again.
God, but, look.
Even in the distorting mirror,
you look good.
I hope you don't think
I'm some middle-class drone.
I might surprise you.
Yeah?
Hey.
No, it's a bad idea.
It's a bad idea.
What do you mean?
I think it's a little late for that.
You have a terrific boyfriend
and he's obviously crazy
about you and don't...
I know.
And I love Roy.
But it doesn't mean I'm ready
to commit to him and give up...
Listen to me, listen to me.
You don't want to get involved
with an extremist like me.
- Trust me.
- Why not?
I can be just as risk-taking as you.
All right.
We got carried away.
All right, let's just
forget the kiss, okay?
What if I can't?
Then I have to be the responsible one
and keep things from getting out of hand.
Come on, let's have fun.
I was sure Abe had feelings for me.
But maybe it was just that
he wasn't in love with me
the way I was with him.
I tried telling myself the reason
he wasn't letting anything go too far
was because a relationship
between a professor and a student
was against Braylin's rules,
but I knew in my heart, Abe was too
romantic to shy away from risks.
All I was sure of was
that as much as I cared for Roy,
and I really did,
I was swept off my feet by Abe Lucas.
The more he tried not to let
anything serious happen,
the more I wanted something to.
I was right in thinking
the killing would be an act of creativity.
It was artistically challenging
to plan how to do away with Spangler
and bring it off perfectly.
Weighing all the options,
I came to the conclusion
that the only practical way I could do it,
and hope to get away with it,
was to poison him.
Careful not to leave
any record on my computer,
I researched all the poisons
and it was clear why cyanide
had become the popular clich
of mystery writers and spies.
Cyanide would be quick and painless.
And while it would be impossible
to obtain any legally,
I knew where I might get some
without having to fill out any forms.
Every stage of the way was a risk
and I must admit, exhilarating.
Professor Lucas.
What are you doing here?
- Hi.
- Yeah, it's April?
- April, yeah.
Yeah. I'm doing research for a book I'm working on. Well, that's cool. Well, I'm glad to see you're wearing rubber gloves 'cause, you know, a lot of those poisons are actually pretty dangerous. Yes, I know. Actually, wait. While I have you here... Can I ask you a question on the paper I'm writing on Kant? Sure, sure, but can we talk as we walk? Yeah, so, it's due on Friday and basically, I just don't understand his moral principles. I don't understand. You've been in such a touchy mood. I'm fine, I just don't want to go to the concert. Yeah, but the only reason I got the tickets is because you said you wanted to go. Well, I'm sorry, Roy. I just had a change of heart. Go with a friend. Yeah, I will. But I was looking forward to going with you. Well, I just... I'm not up to it, all right? I think you're losin' interest in me because of Abe Lucas. Oh, God, Roy. We've had this conversation so many times. He's a friend. I think you'd be fine if he was more than a friend. Can we please not discuss... But you know it's so obvious. It's obvious. You know what? There's nothing going on. So, you're paranoid.
Okay. Okay.
Well, I'll just go to the concert with Mike.
Oh, you'll have fun.
Mike is sweet.
Yeah.
It was Judge Spangler's jogging routine that gave me the idea I was looking for. That is, once it became clear to me that it was a routine.
His weekend run, his morning newspaper, his park bench, his container of fresh-squeezed orange juice. The more I found out about him, I was convinced the world would be a better place without him.
- Here, happy birthday.
- Thank you.
Happy birthday!
Oh, thank you, oh.
Blow.
- Yay!
- All right.
Okay.
What is this gonna be?
Roy, this is exactly the sweater that I wanted, but I mentioned it months ago.
- I thought you forgot. Thank you.
- You look so pretty in it.
I love it.
So, where are you taking her for her birthday? We are going to the Colonial to see a new comedy over there. You know, I should actually get my things.
Okay.
- The political satire.
- Yeah.
I heard that was very good.
- We should go see that.
- Yeah, it's supposed to be great.
My parents and Roy
gave me a birthday cake
and some presents,
and they were all very sweet.
But I must admit...
I was hurt there was no
acknowledgment from Abe Lucas.
I got out of the park
and no one saw me.
I never saw Spangler drink the juice.
And while I tried to stay focused
at our weekend faculty meeting,
my mind was a million miles away.
The body of the jogger
who died of an apparent heart attack
in Lippitt Park today
was identified as Judge Thomas Spangler,
a Rhode Island state
dependent in domestic court.
The news took colleagues by surprise,
as the judge was said
to have been in good health,
and exercised regularly.
Judge Spangler was 61.
Next morning,
I rushed out to get the papers.
And there it was.
A great feeling of accomplishment
came over me.
I didn't write a vitriolic,
well-reasoned piece about judicial abuse
that would wind up just so much verbiage,
accomplishing nothing.
I took direct action and
eliminated a cancer.
The world was a finer place
by some infinitesimal percentage.
The woman would never know
she had a benefactor,
but now, at her court hearing,
there was every chance
she'd have a fair shot.
Yeah, of course, I read it.
It's just the most amazing thing.
I'm stunned.
What? No, no. We have nothing to feel guilty about. I mean, he was terrible. Hey, listen, what are you doin' later? Are you free? 'Cause I think we should have dinner. Just the two of us. Yeah, we'll have a wicked celebration.

7:
- Thank you.
- You're welcome.
I love that you order for me.
- Cheers.
- Cheers.
God, I, you know, I feel great tonight. Relaxed and happy.
Well, it, it's supposed to be a celebration, right? Although I think it is a little macabre to suggest celebrating someone's death. You know, life's ironic, isn't it? One day a person has a morass of complicated, unsolvable problems, you know, the world seems black, and her troubles seem overwhelming, and then, in the batting of an eye, the dark clouds part and she can enjoy a decent life again.
- It's just, it's astounding.
- Hmm.
Sometimes, just a little thing. Like a sudden heart attack.
- Or, you know, hitting the lottery.
- Right, hmm.
I'm actually celebrating for the second time in three days.
Second time?
My birthday was the day before yesterday. Mmm.
No, I know.
I knew that you knew.
I made sure that you knew.
I was actually a little upset that you
didn't call to wish me a happy birthday.
Aw, Jill. You know, I wanted to.
I even got you a present
and then I thought, you know,
I don't want you to get the wrong idea.
What wrong idea, that you like me?
Well, you know that I like you.
I just...
I don't want you to have fantasies.
Why not?
Because you can do better than me.
Oh, God. Really, Abe?
Don't you think I can decide that?
All right. Here.
Happy birthday.
Oh, my God.
Is this my present?
Yeah, come on, it's nothing.
It's not nothing, Abe!
This is beautiful.
And it's Edna St. Vincent Millay.
You really are a romantic, aren't you?
I marked off the poems
I thought you'd like most, you'll see.
Mmm.
Well, what I know of hers,
I absolutely love.
What am I doin' sittin' here
opposite you over candlelight?
I said I wouldn't let this happen.
But it has happened.
Hey, come on.
We're celebrating, right?
It's been a pretty good day.
You had a birthday.
I don't wanna eat,
I wanna go to your place.
Jill.
I want to.
- No.
- Yes.
It's my birthday.
I swore I wouldn't,
but I don't know what's come over me.
What's come over you
is that you're finally celebrating life...
Instead of romanticizing death
with your crazy Russian Roulette.
You have a boyfriend.
I'm not going to get in the way of that.
Roy and I aren't exclusive,
I told you that.
I don't believe you.
Roy would say different.
I don't wanna talk about it.
I loved making love with you.
Yes, it was very nice for me, too.
Oh, it was just very nice?
I feel like I've accomplished
something worthwhile.
Like my life has meaning.
Well, I'm very flattered
that you think making love to me
has given your life meaning.
My writing was flowing,
the creative juices unblocked.
I was happy and enjoying
a sense of well-being,
and I'd begun an affair with Jill,
something I'd been determined not to do,
and yet was carried along
on the sudden momentum
of the sheer joy of living.
The thought that I had once been
indifferent to existence
seemed preposterous.
How is everything?
I haven't seen you.
Yeah, really good, you know.
Everything's just been fallin' into place.
- Huh.
- You look great, as always.
I may have some free time next week,
if you wanna, you know...
Uh-huh.
Or am I encroaching on
your other love life?
Hey, give me a break.
Abe!
Hey, I tried to call you.
Did you see what happened?
Did you see the papers?
No, what?
Hi. Judge Spangler was murdered.
- What are you talking about?
- He was murdered.
I don't understand.
Wasn't it a heart attack?
Yeah, it was a heart attack,
but they did an autopsy,
and it wasn't cardiac arrest,
it was poison.
- Poison?
- Yeah. It was poison.
Somebody poisoned his juice.
- You've got to be kidding.
- I know.
Well, what made them do an autopsy?
Well, don't they always do an autopsy?
I think that they suspected that
it wasn't a heart attack right away,
and they just thought it was poison
and so they did the autopsy.
Who's Judge Spangler?
- He's a judge...
- This judge.
That we had overheard
someone talking about in a diner.
- This crazy story that some...
- Oh, yeah?
I don't have time for a crazy story
right now, but I will see you soon.
- Okay.
- I mean, can you believe that?
- No.
- Isn't it awful?
You know, he must've had a lot of enemies.
Well, God, I'm sure,
but we were celebrating.
I know, but you know,
I still can't say I'm sorry.
Well, who do you think it was?
Do you think it was the woman?
- I don't know...
- Or, one of her friends or something?
Well, what, what did the police say?
I'm Abe Lucas and I've murdered.
I've had many experiences
and now a unique one.
I've taken a human life.
Not in battle or self-defense,
but I made a choice I believed in
and I saw it through.
I feel like an authentic human being.
Today we're gonna discuss
existential choice.
That life has the meaning
you choose to give it.
And we'll examine
Jean-Paul Sartre's wonderful insight,
"Hell is other people."
Abe seemed
to have had a breakthrough.
It was as if whatever had been stifling
his deepest feelings became unblocked.
Police still have no clues
in the murder of Judge Thomas Spangler,
who was poisoned in Lippitt Park weeks ago.
At a press conference,
investigators told reporters
all leads have been followed up,
but so far there are no
persons of interest.
They said that speculation
that the poison had been intended
for someone other than Judge Spangler,
was just speculation and unlikely.
You're wearing a new perfume.
I love that you notice those things.
I've become very attuned
to the sensual joys of life.
Sights and sounds,
the taste of food and wine.
What?
What are you thinking?
Today for one very funny moment,
I thought it would be ironic if you had killed Judge Spangler.
Uh-huh, and how did I perform that little miracle?
I don't know, I don't know.
I mean, you couldn't and you wouldn't.
- It's got to be hard to kill somebody.
- Mmm.
Especially to poison a stranger.
Yeah, I mean, if I had to eliminate someone, I think I'd...
I don't know, use a gun or run him over.
I mean, cyanide's a whole other deal.
Was it cyanide?
The papers didn't say that.
I always assume anyone poisoned, is poisoned by cyanide.
Oh, that's funny.
I always assume arsenic for some reason.
- Yeah?
- Yeah.
Old movies or something.
It had to be someone that knew him.
I mean, someone would have to be close enough to him to drop poison in his coffee.
Or I guess it was juice, wasn't it?
I enjoyed the whole conversation.
It was like sitting at a tense poker table, holding a full house, and chatting innocently...
Confident I had the winning hand, but getting a thrill out of the chance I could be beaten with a straight flush or four of a kind.
I had a big argument with Roy today.
I don't like to hear that.
I told him that I wanted to be honest with him.
And, that I still had real feelings for him.
But I also have feelings for you.
I must say, you were special from that very first day.
You are very lucky.
I am very lucky.
Mmm.
So, what do you wanna talk about?
Um...
Look, I'm not gonna see you anymore.
I can't operate under these conditions.
I'm not just gonna wait around while
you play out your affair with Abe Lucas.
Yeah, I understand.
That's not fair to you.
Yeah, I'm just gonna move on.
Whatever happens, happens.
- Are you seeing somebody else?
- No.
But, obviously, you are, so,
I'm not gonna hold on from trying.
That wouldn't be fair.
It's too bad.
We had a good thing goin'.
Hey, it's my fault, Roy.
I'm just really not ready
to commit to one person.
Yeah.
Dinner was delicious.
And this pie...
- It's so nice of you to have me over.
- Well, we're happy to.
Particularly since Jill
always speaks so highly of you.
Have you two been following
the Judge Spangler murder?
Have we? We have a special
attachment to Judge Spangler.
'Cause we overheard
some people talking about him,
and what a rotten judge he was,
and we kind of rooted for him
to have a coronary or get run over.
I've jogged in that park with Sally Kelly.
You know, when I first heard about it,
I thought someone poisoned him
at breakfast, and it kicked in
when he was in the park.
But, you know, when I read it was cyanide in his drink, my theory unraveled.
You know, you were right, Abe. It was cyanide.
- Mmm-hmm.
- You said that very early on, didn't you?
That's what they said it was.
Yeah, well, like I said, I always think cyanide.
Cyanide's the clich because it's so quick and fatal.
Arsenic takes time and is very painful.
None of the herbicides are quick and dispositive.
I don't know anything about poisons.
I don't, either, just what I read.
Who'd wanna kill a judge?
Only everybody, every person he ever ruled against.
But I think they looked into everybody that knew him.
Including that woman that we heard, and they were all ruled out.
That's why they think it might be a sick prank, or intended for someone else.
But it was quick-acting poison, so they would have to drop it in the cup right there in the park.
- Well, that makes sense.
- Mmm-hmm.
But not an easy thing to do, with a total stranger, in broad daylight, in a public place.
Unless he was there with someone he knew, and trusted.
- A friend.
- A weekend. A weekend.
A weekend early in the morning, not a lot of people around.
Had to be someone he knew.
But I think they questioned everyone that knew him.
- They said it was a regular orange juice?
- Mmm-hmm.
And he bought an orange juice
there every weekend
and he'd read the paper after jogging.
Well, then if it was routine,
somebody could've come around
and just dropped the poison in his cup.
- Someone...
- You know, he wouldn't be on a park bench
reading the newspaper, unless he was alone.
That rules out a friend.
How do we know it was a man?
Maybe it was a woman.
Oh, that's a good point.
Maybe he turned his back.
Someone appears out of the blue,
and drops something in his drink?
Well, aren't those take-out juices
covered with a straw?
Or someone could have gone to Pascal's
and gotten a juice,
and put the poison in it
and switched it with the judge's.
Hmm.
I'm sure the police have
run through every theory.
Okay, let's say the judge is
sitting in the park with his orange juice,
and, and along comes someone with
an exact matching cup full of poison...
- Who comes along?
- And...
- Well...
- Someone who wants to kill the judge.
Whoever it was,
would have to get the judge
to look away long enough
to make the switch.
- I mean, they'd be taking a huge risk...
- But think...
They would sit down next to the judge,
and the guy doesn't even have to know him,
he just is sitting there,
and the judge is drinking his juice, you know, and he sets it down next to him, and this person is just...
The judge opens up his paper, and he turns and he's covered up for just long enough.
Well, if he didn't know the judge, why would he wanna go to all that trouble to kill him? Yeah, he'd have to be familiar with the judge's routine, the details. But that would be easy.
You could just stalk the judge for a week and you would...
I mean, it sounds like this was his Saturday morning ritual.
I like it.
What Jill says makes sense. It's a well-thought out concept.
The judge reads the paper, blocks his eye line, a quick switch.
You know, if someone sits next to you on a bench, you often turn away.
I'm sure the police are way ahead of us on all this.
Mmm.
The murder of Spangler remained a hot tabloid issue.
Abe often talked about it and what a blessing it was for that woman, now that the judge was gone.
I didn't give any special thought to it, until one day, when I ran into Ellie Tanner, a friend, that I sometimes went horseback riding with.
No, no, it's fine.
- Okay.
- He just, um...
- Basically, we had this long conversation.
- Right.
And he said that he felt like I wasn't being fair to him.
And he was right. I wasn't.
But I didn't know what to do anymore.
You would love Abe.
He is so interesting.
You know Rita Richards?
Oh, yes, are you gonna tell me
that she had an affair with him?
Because who on the faculty
has not slept with Rita Richards?
No, she has this hilarious theory
about Abe Lucas.
Oh, God, here we go.
She thinks he would be a good suspect
in that case of the murdered judge.
You know, the guy who's
all over the papers?
Oh, please.
- She's kidding.
- I mean, she's half-kidding.
Oh, come on.
How did she come to
that bizarre conclusion?
I don't even remember.
We were at her husband's barbecue.
And she starts yelling about
how Abe had argued
that the judge deserved to die.
And then something about...
I don't know, the aesthetics
of committing a perfect crime.
- Whatever, she's crazy.
- Oh, she's crazy!
She's nuts.
Hey, we should go
horseback riding again, soon.
- Oh, yeah, sure.
- That was fun.
Naturally, I didn't believe
there was any substance
to Rita Richards' so-called theory,
and yet, for some reason, it bothered me.
Here, two poems I wrote for you.
- You didn't.
- I did.
Oh, my God.
No, don't read them now.
I'm too embarrassed.
If you hate them, throw 'em away.
If they move you, they're yours.
That's very sweet.
Hey, is something wrong?
- No.
- No?
You seem a tiny bit off.
No, I'm just moved.
Without even reading them,
I'm just moved by the gesture
of you writing these.
Aw, clever student.
Are you sure you're okay?
I'm just looking at you.
It seemed absurd to me
that I could entertain even
the slightest doubt about Abe.
And then a week later,
I got a chance to hear
Rita Richards' theory firsthand.
I ran into her in a local bar
where she had been
sitting alone and drinking,
and was a little drunk and talkative.
- Hi.
- How are you, Miss Pollard?
- Great.
- Hi, Kim. How's it goin'?
Uh, can I catch up to you?
- Hello.
- I was just thinking about you.
I was just thinking about
you too, actually.
- You were?
- Yes.
- How are you?
- I'm fine.
I'm good.
I ran into Ellie Tanner actually.
And she said that
you had a theory about Abe.
Oh! Oh, yeah, well,
it's what's called a crackpot theory.
But it's not totally off the wall.
Well, I love a crackpot theory.
- Yeah, you promise you won't tell?
- You have my word.
You wanna hear it?
Sit down.
You've been following that judge
who got poisoned in the papers?
- Spangler? Judge Spangler.
- Spangler.
- Spangler, right.
- Yes.
Well, they don't know who did it.
My theory is, uh...
Abe Lucas of our philosophy department.
Our mutual crush.
Well, you...
That's, that's very, very intriguing.
Well, it's crazy, but it's not, you know?
Well, why do you think Abe?
- Well, once or twice, when I was alone...
- Could I have a white wine, please?
Let's just say in, like, a moment
of post-passionate intimacy...
- No, I understand...
- We'd talk, yeah.
- You don't have to get too graphic...
- And we both said that
we had experienced many things in life.
But one thing that he
had never experienced,
but wondered was
what it would be like to actually kill.
- To kill?
- Yes.
Well, that sounds like random,
silly, Abe talk.
I mean, you know how he gets
when he's had a few.
- Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm.
- He's dramatic.
Oh, that's exactly
what I thought, too, you know?
It's just Abe being Abe.
But then my husband
saw him leaving the campus,
very early the morning
that the judge was poisoned.
Like very early, like 6:30.
I mean, have you ever known Abe

to get up at 6:
He barely makes it to class on time.
Okay, then your theory is
that he gets up at 6:30,
and he goes to Lippitt Park,
and he goes up to a total stranger,
and he drops poison
in the juice of a total stranger.
I mean, he didn't even know the judge.
He couldn't get that close, and then,
if he knew the judge, he wouldn't...
I mean, he just wouldn't do it.
He's radical, but he's not nuts.
Let me give you the final tidbit.
A few weeks ago, I lost my lab key.
Now I never lose anything,
but that key was missing from my bag,
and it opens all the doors
to all the lab rooms
that have all those
dangerous chemicals and poisons.
All right, well...
You sure have really got
that theory down, don't you?
- Like I said...
- I'll think about it.
I'll weigh it out.
There was no question
I was rattled by Rita's outrageous theory.
I knew Abe had had a very angry reaction
to the judge's unfair treatment
of that poor woman.
And what was he doing out at 6:30
on a Saturday morning?
My thoughts were very
mixed-up and troubled.
And more devastating revelations were to come.
But for the moment, I lapsed into complete denial, and told myself this was too absurd to even contemplate.
I must not get carried away with my overactive imagination.
And yet, a dark cloud had crossed the Moon.
- Hey.
- Abe.
What's on your mind? What are you thinkin'?
Nothing.
I was actually, I was thinking that I used to come here and jog. You know, I'll jog with you if you want. I'd love to get back into shape.
No, you'd have to get up very early. I run early and you're a night person. Yeah, well, that's why I quit last year. That and no will to extend my life, but now...
Rita Richards' husband actually told me that he saw you leaving the campus really early, at like 6:30 or something, on a Saturday morning.

- 6:
- Yeah.
Oh, yeah, that was the morning Judge Spangler died. Yeah, I had to go to Providence for an MRI.
- Oh, really?
- Mmm-hmm.
- You didn't say anything.
- Well, I didn't want to alarm anyone. It was a little benign thing, but the doctor wanted me to check it out. He didn't think it was anything horrible.
- I'm glad it was nothing.
- Yeah.
- Mmm.
- Don't worry.
- I'm relieved.
- Mmm.

It was hard for me
to keep my mind on school work.
I had this growing sense of anxiety.
And realizing I always had
a tendency to overdramatize,
I tried to keep my fantasies in check.
And still, walking home,
I passed Abe's house,
and knowing he would be
busy teaching all afternoon,
I couldn't resist doing a crazy thing.
Once I was inside Abe's house,
I felt I was betraying him.
And I felt guilty and stupid.
I couldn't imagine what I expected to find.
And yet on his desk
was a copy of Crime and Punishment,
with margin notes
that had Judge Spangler's name
and a quote of Hannah Arendt's.
Oh, are you kidding?
Jill!
- Hey!
- Oh, hi.
Oh, you look so pretty.
I love your hair today.
Oh, God, thank you.
- It's a mess.
- Nuh-uh.
Um, how's your paper coming?
Good, actually, thanks to Abe Lucas.
I ran into him in the chem lab,
and he gave me this
whole list of people to read
to understand those confusing points
that I was talking about, so...
- He was in the chem lab?
- Yeah.
He was there after hours.
I really startled him. I felt so bad.
What was he doing in the lab after hours?
I don't know.
I think he's researching on a book,
or something that he's writing about,
like, poison or chemistry,
or one of those things, so...
But in the lab, all that poison
and toxic stuff is locked away.
Yeah, but he had a key.
Hey, why are you actin' so strangely? Huh?
What's so important we gotta go over it...
You killed Spangler.
- What?
- Didn't you?
- What are you talking about?
- Didn't you?
You got cyanide from the chem lab, and you
slipped it into his juice in the park.
You went to Lippitt Park,
you didn't get an MRI.
- Listen to yourself. Jill, it's me.
- Is that true?
- Don't...
- Are you nuts?
Don't tap dance with me, Abe!
I saw in your book.
I saw that you wrote,
"Spangler, the banality of evil."
You must've decided that
he deserved to die.
And so you stole Rita's keys,
and April saw you.
- Hey, listen, come here.
- No.
Come here.
I made the choice to help that woman.
You had it right the other night.
I always said you had a
first-rate intelligence.
In the park?
On the bench?
The covering up, the...
Jesus, I felt that, Abe! I felt that!
I always taught you to
trust your instincts.
Not everything can be grasped by the intellect.
If it feels right, it often is.
This was the meaningful act I was searching for.
You can't just take it upon yourself to take someone's life.
Well, I thought it was a very reasonable thing to do.
She hoped he'd get cancer!
But what the hell is hoping?
Hoping is bullshit.
You see, you have to act.
You can't believe it was moral, what you did.
- You don't think that it was moral?
- Of course I do.
I consider myself a moral man who's lived a moral life, who came to the aid of a woman suffering a great injustice.
- So, what, are you gonna go to prison?
- No, the police are not thinking of me. You gonna go to prison for the rest of your life?
And they never will, because I'm a total stranger to everybody, with no motive. This will be just another unsolved crime.
Do you know that Rita Richards has a theory that you did it?
Yes, I know, she told me.
We had a big laugh over it.
How could you do it, Abe?
Is the world a better place without this rotten judge?
- Oh, my God, Jesus, Abe!
- No, I ask you.
- Is the world a better place...
- No, this is...
- Without Judge Spangler?
- I am so crushed, Abe!
I'm completely lost.
What do I do?
What do you mean?
Meaning what?
Meaning that I care about you
so much and I can't...
I can't go on seeing you anymore.
Oh...

Are you thinking of turning me in?
Yes, I'm thinking of turning you in.
Of course I am.
- Jill...
- But I can't do that.
I can't bring myself to do it.
You, you... This is...
This is crazy, Abe!
I'm asking you to put
our everyday assumptions aside,
and trust your experience of life.
In order to really see the world,
we must break with
our familiar acceptance of it.
The second I decided to take this action,
my world changed.
You saw it.
I suddenly found a reason to live.
I could make love,
I could experience feelings for you,
because to do this deed for this woman
gave my life meaning.
You have to leave, Abe.
You gotta go.
I can't see you ever again.
I won't say anything.
I won't say anything.
But I...
I believe that you think you did
something morally worthwhile.
- I did!
- I do believe that. No, but I...
- But you can't, you can't justify it!
- Shh!
You can't justify it
with all this bullshit.
With all this bullshit,
French postwar rationalizing.
This doesn't...
This is murder.
This is murder.
It opens the door to more murder, Abe.
Okay, okay, okay, okay...
I don't have the intellect
to refute these arguments.
I can't argue with you.
But you taught me to go with my instinct,
and I don't have to think about this.
I feel that this is no good.
This is murder.
Good job today.
The next few weeks
were the hardest of my life.
I loved Abe and truly believed
his misguided intention
was to do a heroic thing.
I argued his position
in my head over and over.
And at times I weakened
and felt he was an original thinker,
who couldn't be judged
by middle-class rules.
You seem so down lately.
Did something happen with Abe?
He's leaving the school.
I guess it's just as well.
How are you taking it?
Not great.
I'm sure Roy will be thrilled to hear that.
You know, it's so funny.
I used to think of Roy as wonderful,
but just very uninspired, compared to Abe.
And now I'm starting to think that
I've really been more
suited for Roy all along.
I guess I'm not as cutting edge
as I imagined myself.
Is it true?
I heard that Abe is moving on.
Yes.
- Yeah, that's true.
- I'm going to miss him.
I guess he found Braylin a little tame
for his restless temperament.
He's thinking of moving to Europe.
Can I tell you something?
Sure.
I wish he'd go to Spain
and take me with him.
Hmm.
You know, he said that
you two had a pretty big laugh
over your theory that
he was the Lippitt Park killer.
We did have a good laugh over it.
And yet,
if it turned out to be that he did it,
you know, I'd be surprised,
but not stunned.
Not flabbergasted.
I'd still let him take me to Spain.
I played out
my last few weeks at Braylin
and made plans to go off
to Europe to teach.
I still felt justified in what I'd done.
I felt that I'd experienced
something unique and deeper,
from all my social
protests or charity work.
I'd helped a family and hurt no one,
but he who deserved it.
A man who took advantage
of his power to hurt others.
I knew Jill would never betray me.
But then things took on a new twist.
Well, there goes my theory.
I guess I'll never work for the FBI.
What does it say?
"Police are certain
they have the person"
"who poisoned Judge Thomas Spangler,"
"the family court judge
who was murdered in Lippitt Park."
"The alleged killer, Albert Podesta,
a medical laboratory worker,"
"had access to the same kind of cyanide
that was used in the murder."
"Podesta, who denies
he had anything to do with it,"
"had testified before
Spangler two years ago,"
"and had been enraged with the judge for
his ruling in a case against his brother."
"If convicted,
Podesta faces life imprisonment."
What do you plan to do about this?
I don't know.
You don't know?
Oh, surely, you're not gonna let an
innocent man take the rap for you, Abe.
I've been up and back over this
since I heard the news.
"Up and back"?
What does that mean?
It means that I tried to bring off
the perfect crime,
and apparently, I succeeded all too well.
Okay, well, what about all your talk
about moral high ground?
Look, I need to think this out, all right?
What is there to think about?
An innocent man
is about to have his life ruined.
Okay, I'll give myself up.
Is that what you want?
Isn't that what you want?
I mean, all this talk, talk, talk,
about doing the right thing,
and what's best, and...
Okay, if they don't see
that they're making a mistake
and let him go in a few days,
then I'll just...
I'll fuckin', I'll turn myself in!
I haven't been able to
live with myself as it is!
And this is a...
We're talking about an innocent man
that's gonna be prosecuted for this!
I know, I agree! Let me just see
if my luck holds out, and they come to realize that they made a mistake, you know? Because I mean... Look at me! - I'm not gonna fuckin' make it! - I know, I understand. I get... You have to do it by Monday, though, Abe. You got to do it by Monday, or else I'm gonna have to do it. - I'm gonna have to do it. - You stop that. - You don't have to do anything, all right? - Abe... Just give me till Monday, please? Look at me, please? Just give me till Monday? Okay? I promise. - First thing in the morning on Monday. - Okay, okay. You have to do it, Abe, or I will do it. I will do it. You don't have to do anything, I promise. God damn it, Abe. But I had no intention of giving myself up. A few months ago, my life meant nothing to me. I got no enjoyment out of it, no pleasure. I'd have been fine if that little game of Russian Roulette ended it. But since I planned and executed the elimination of Judge Spangler, my life had taken a new turn. I understood why people loved life and saw it as something joyous to experience. I did get pleasure out of living. I didn't want to commit suicide, or spend my remaining days behind bars. I wanted to live, to teach, to write, to travel, to make love. That night, I went to bed with Rita, and even entertained the thought of takin' her with me to Europe.
I would leave Paul in a minute.
Are you serious?
About Europe, really?
What if I was?
I couldn't believe it.
That's, um...
It would be a dream.
And start over in Rome or Spain or...
London?
The police had their suspect.
Rita Richards, who was never really serious about suspecting me, would see it was another man and that her crackpot theory was crackpot. The morality of letting someone take the rap troubled me greatly, but paled against the hardwiring of my natural will to survive. Europe with Rita was beginning to have an exciting ring to it. Her passion for love and lust was contagious.
Only one thing stood in the way. I had a few days before Jill would insist I clear the wrongfully accused man. Was there a way to keep her from talking? I guess she was right when she said that one murder opens the door to more. Jill, I never stopped caring about you. It was you who wasn't sure how you felt. I was so stupid, Roy. I was so stupid, I'm...
If you say you never want to see me again, I'll honestly say, I deserve it. But what happened to make you change your mind? I don't want to talk about Abe. I'll never understand him. That's fine. I never wanted to talk about him the whole time, anyway. God, you're too understanding. You should be angrier with me. Jill, I'm so in love with you, but I just...
I just feel like there's something that you're keeping from me.
I'll tell you on Monday.
Okay.
- All right?
- Okay.
On Monday, you'll know everything, I promise.
Okay.
I never believed we'd actually break up.
I'm sad to say, but the time has come.
And we need to talk about arrangements.
This is a big step for me.
You've known all along
I've wanted to live abroad.
Yes, yes, but...
- I want you to reconsider.
- Please.
- Please.
- No.
Let's just talk about the details, okay?
Her death would have
to look like an accident.
And I ran through all the ones she might have and it hit me.
My brief time running an elevator during my college days might now pay off.
Funny how often your best ideas come under pressure of a deadline.
It was perfect.
Saturday was her piano lesson.
Most of the offices were closed. There was very little action in the building.
I couldn't make it look like the elevator had been tampered with, but I knew enough
how to make it seem broken.
Hi.
- What are you doing here?
- Hi.
- Hi.
- I just...
I wanted to talk to you before I go to the police.
All right, if it's about anything other than turning yourself in, 
- I don't want to talk about it, all right? 
- No, no... 
I see no other way. I just... 
I want to apologize
for all the trouble I've caused.
I mean, I just... I can't believe this.
Oh, God. Oh, Abe.
Oh, it's a nightmare, I know.
I don't see any other way
than just telling them the whole story.
What? That I murdered a judge?
I know. I'm going to stand behind you.
- I will, as a friend.
- No, it won't matter, you know?
It's premeditated murder.
I mean, I don't...
They'll put me away for life.
No, maybe they won't.
Hey, maybe with a good lawyer.
- We don't know.
- Come on, who are we kidding?
You know, I just, I can't...
With the passage of time,
the awful vividness
of what I had experienced,
gradually, very gradually,
grew less and less traumatic.
It helped having a boyfriend
who was so loving and supportive.
Every now and then,
I reflected on the whole episode.
And with hindsight, gained some
perspective about life and love,
and who I was.
I even experienced,
for one terrifying moment,
the closeness of death.
The whole thing had been quite a lesson.
A painful lesson.
The kind Abe used to say
you can't get from any textbook.