

# NEXT

C. Scott Ananian  
cananian@mit.edu

Revision: 1.9

# NEXT

a play in six scenes  
for five actors

## *Characters*

JOE — male, American, twenty-something.

VLAD — male, Russian, two years older than Joe.

BETH — female, two years younger than Joe.

EMILY — female, three years younger than Joe.

GODDESS — female, ageless, divine. Mischievous.

## I. In the morning there is work.

*[The first 30 seconds of The Cure's "Doing the Unstuck" from their album Wish play as the lights fade up.]*

*[We are in a sea of cubicles, the modern-day office space. JOE and VLAD are employed by an internet startup. Their desks are on opposite walls, so that JOE and VLAD work back-to-back, with about three feet separating them. VLAD is Russian, and is wearing a white and blue striped collared shirt and khakis. He is sitting at his machine, staring at code. It is morning.]*

*[JOE enters, carrying a briefcase. He's wearing jeans and a black t-shirt.]*

VLAD: And how was the "date with a girl not your girlfriend"?

JOE: Great. *[He sits down and turns his monitor on.]*

VLAD: What do you mean, great?

JOE: It went fine. I had a lot of fun.

VLAD: Aren't those the clothes you were wearing when you left here last night?

JOE: Yes. But no.

VLAD: Uh-huh.

JOE: No, I'm short on clothes. I need to do laundry. *[VLAD nods sarcastically and turns back to his machine.]* And it's a different black t-shirt, if you must know. I've got more than one.

VLAD: Did you kiss her?

JOE: What is this?

VLAD: Well?

JOE: No.

VLAD: No, but you wanted to?

JOE: I swear, Vlad. I should call you—what's the guy's name who's host of Twenty Questions?

VLAD: Twenty Questions?

JOE: It's a game show, never mind. I don't know his name.

VLAD: You held her hand?

JOE: Yes. Yes, I did.

VLAD: Ah. *[Turns back to his monitor. Point, click.]*  
*[After a moment, JOE turns back, himself. Tries to concentrate on his screen.]*

VLAD: How long has it been since you and Beth. . .

JOE: A week. *[VLAD nods.]* Since we last spoke.

VLAD: *[Not looking at JOE.]* But you haven't broken up.

JOE: No. Not yet.

VLAD: Soon?

JOE: I don't know. Maybe we'll make up. I. . . *[He trails off. Shrugs. Turns back to work.]*  
*[They work for a moment in silence.]*  
Actually, the hardest thing is trying to figure out what to say to her.

VLAD: To who?

JOE: To, you know.

VLAD: Beth?

JOE: No.

VLAD: The other girl.

JOE: *[Grins.]* Yeah.

VLAD: Say what?

JOE: What?

VLAD: What do you need to say to her?

JOE: Oh, I don't know. *[VLAD starts to turn away.]* No, I mean. . . *[Takes a breath.]*  
I need to say thanks, you know. Thanks for a wonderful evening.

VLAD: So say it.

JOE: But...

VLAD: Ah.

JOE: What?

VLAD: "Now we have the truth."

JOE: Ok, I guess I want to say more than that.

VLAD: Thanks for the wonderful evening, I wish we'd kissed, too bad I've got a girlfriend.

JOE: Not that.

VLAD: Well?

JOE: Sure, that. But not that way.

VLAD: It's the truth. The truth is "thanks for the time, wish we'd *fucked, even if* I've got a girlfriend."

JOE: That's not what I meant at all.

*[Silence.]*

VLAD: Ok, ok, kissed not fucked. I forget you're... I don't know the English word.

JOE: I'm sure it's rude.

VLAD: It is. I'll ask, later.

JOE: Thanks.

*[A beat.]*

VLAD: That's it? I can work, now?

JOE: I still haven't figured out what to say to her.

VLAD: To Beth?

JOE: No. C'mon, Vlad.

VLAD: What do you need to say?

JOE: Haven't you done this dance? You want to drop a hint that you're interested without looking like a total loser if she's not.

VLAD: And she's not.

JOE: I think she is.

VLAD: You think.

JOE: OK, we're good friends, right? I'm not even sure I—it might be too weird.

VLAD: She's hot, right?

JOE: Well, yeah.

VLAD: Got the nice butt that Masha likes?

JOE: I don't know. I never could figure out what Mashie likes.

VLAD: *[Confidently.]* I can tell you.

JOE: You shared an office with her. You should know.

VLAD: *[Nods.]* Oh, yeah.

JOE: Hey, enough out of you. Masha's got a boyfriend. Back to work. Concentrate, boy.

VLAD: Ok, I'll tell you what to write.

JOE: You'll tell me what to write.

VLAD: Yes. I'll tell you.

JOE: I'm writing.

VLAD: Write: *[A pause.]* "Thank you for the wonderful evening."

JOE: *[Waits for the rest, but VLAD's turning back to his machine.]* That's it? That's what I should write?

VLAD: That's what you should write.

JOE: That lacks poetry, man. It's pointless.

VLAD: Ok, write: "Let's just be friends, too bad I've got a jealous girlfriend."

JOE: That's harsh.

VLAD: That's true.

JOE: Beth's not jealous. Or shouldn't be. I didn't do anything wrong.

*[Silence. VLAD is staring at his screen.]*

Well?

VLAD: We work, now.

JOE: *[Sigh.]* Yes, *sir*. *[A mock salute. He turns.]*





EMILY: *[Breaking to JOE.]* She's always there.

JOE: I know. The stare. . .

BETH: Affects you in your sleep—it should.

JOE: I haven't—

BETH: Yet. You would.

EMILY: And?

JOE: *[beat]* If I could?  
It's been seven months. All good things—

BETH: Are trampled in the dirt?

JOE: I need some time.

BETH: I hurt.

JOE: She'll be gone

EMILY: before you can blink.

BETH: So blink!

JOE: I can barely think.

BETH: Tell him you'll wait.

JOE: Not even wait, just—

EMILY: hesitate

JOE: —so I—

BETH: can find a proper ditch

EMILY: to throw you in.

BETH: Bitch.

EMILY: I promise nothing. Not today.

BETH: You'll leave him—

EMILY: someday

BETH: —blindly conjuring—?

JOE: bliss.

EMILY: You never know until you kiss.

BETH: Bah. I—

*[JOE interrupts. Breaks.]*

JOE: *[Earnest, to EMILY. Drawing near her.]* Would you, if I?

EMILY: Perchance. If you.

JOE: If the moonlight...

EMILY: Candlelight...

JOE: Lit up...

EMILY: Was dim enough.

JOE: If I...

EMILY: If you...

JOE: Leaned close...

EMILY: Surprised me...

JOE: *[A step back.]* What would you...

EMILY: Taste...

JOE: Smell...

BETH: Like? Like I did. When we first met.

JOE: Like you did. When we first met.

BETH: You can't live every day in love.

JOE: How quickly the flame fades.

BETH: We pantomime actions—

EMILY: A charade.

JOE: My hands, your headaches.

BETH: I love you. Still.

JOE: And I. Still.

BETH: Then why?

JOE: Because it's over. No fault of ours.

BETH: I can't believe. . .

JOE: You must.

EMILY: When I left John. . .

JOE: Or John left you. . .

EMILY: It's hard.

JOE: I know. I've heard.

BETH: Nothing left but déjà vu.

JOE: I'm the naïf. It's new.  
I've never left a lover.

EMILY: You'll learn.

BETH: It's true.  
*[Pointed.]* To leave the one you love.

JOE: Loved.

EMILY: Love.

JOE: Love. But. . .

EMILY: Old things have to end.

JOE: There's always time for ending.

BETH: Must this be it?

*[A phone rings. Sudden brightness as JOE wakes up. BETH and EMILY vanish. From a great distance we hear the answering machine click on, and, clearing, the short message: "Joe. (beep)." Then, clearly:]*

VLAD: Pussy.

JOE: *[To empty space, half-asleep.]* Vlad?

VLAD: That's what the word is. What you are. In Russian. Pussy.

*[He hangs up. Dial tone. Silence and blackout.]*

### III. Interrogation begins at daybreak.

*[JOE and EMILY. Late in the evening. Birds. They sit on a railway bridge over a river and talk.]*

EMILY: Men are evil.

JOE: Yes. They are.

*[silence]* Look at the ducks.

EMILY: The sun's setting.

JOE: It's the only time of day I like concrete.

EMILY: It glows.

JOE: Everything's on fire.

*[beat]*

EMILY: What if a train came?

JOE: We'd have to jump.

EMILY: It might be fun. I feel like jumping now. You think I would?

JOE: I think you should. Try new things.

EMILY: You don't really think I would, do you.

JOE: I think you would.

EMILY: I'd have to walk home wet.

JOE: The river's not terribly clean.

*[silence]*

EMILY: How much do you think you can tell about a guy from a hug?

JOE: A lot. A lot just from an arm on your shoulders.

A homeless guy once—

EMILY: My friend Sara says you can tell right away what a guy thinks about you.

JOE: Sometimes a hug is just a hug.

EMILY: When you came to pick me up—

JOE: Sometimes a hug is just a hug.

EMILY: Why are you saying that?

JOE: *[beat]* I dunno.

EMILY: Last week, when you and I haven't seen each other for ages—

JOE: We're not that transparent. Men aren't.

*[silence]*

EMILY: *[annoyed]* You've been really odd lately, you know?

JOE: Things aren't easy right now.

EMILY: What's that supposed to mean?

JOE: I'm trying hard to hold onto myself.

EMILY: You shouldn't be proud of being a loner.

JOE: I hold my own. You shouldn't depend so much on others.

EMILY: What's that supposed to mean?

JOE: On guys. Sometimes you talk so much of adventure, living more adventures, but you're sitting there just waiting for some guy to...

EMILY: I'm not!

JOE: Just go. Do it. Jump into the water.

EMILY: I can't believe you'd say that I don't...

JOE: I—

EMILY: That is so not true.

*[silence]*

EMILY: *[simultaneously]* It's getting late.

JOE: *[simultaneously]* Emily.

EMILY: What.

JOE: Would you...

*[beat]*

EMILY: What?

JOE: *[apologizing]* Ok, I'm a bastard.

Would you ever wait for a guy?

EMILY: Wait?

JOE: Look at the clouds.

*[they do]*

*[apology]* We wouldn't really have to jump, you know. If a train came.

EMILY: I'd want to jump.

JOE: Not everything's a yes/no question. Sometimes nothing forces you to choose.

*[a silence]*

So say you had a crush on some guy—or were just interested in him—but he had a girlfriend.

EMILY: I'd tell his girlfriend to scram.

JOE: No you wouldn't.

EMILY: Would I wait for them to break up?

JOE: Say you've got a crush on him, and suddenly he starts showing up everywhere. And you know how a girl can swallow a guy. Suddenly you start seeing a lot of him.

EMILY: That doesn't mean anything.

JOE: He tells you he's breaking up.

EMILY: Everyone has spats.

JOE: They're sending each other black roses and letters scented with turpentine.

EMILY: Why am I supposed to wait?

JOE: Do you leave a 30-day 'suggested tactfulness period'? Or start in on him at once?

EMILY: It depends.

JOE: What if he's not actually broken up yet. Would you give him a day, or would you fling off with some hunk you meet that evening?

EMILY: Depends on the hunk. And the guy.

JOE: Would you give him a week?

EMILY: I might. If.

JOE: A day?

EMILY: Probably.

JOE: What if he doesn't know you've got this crush.

EMILY: He'd know.

JOE: He's clueless. All men are.

EMILY: I don't think I'd break up someone else's relationship.

*[In the distance, a train begins to approach.]*

JOE: They're breaking up anyway. Would you fight for him?

EMILY: Phone up the girlfriend with death threats?

JOE: Force the situation. One way or another. Or do you pretend nothing's up and wait to pounce until the break-up's on the books and the rebound waiting-period's over. Do you steel yourself against the random hunks and cross your fingers waiting for the Man?

*[The noise of the train starts drowning out JOE's speech. As the train approaches, he yells louder and louder in an attempt to be heard. EMILY stares wide-eyed at the approaching train and the river, willing herself to jump.]*

What if the guy never was right with his girlfriend—or, he was right, once, but not at the beginning. If he got trapped into the relationship because they'd kissed and he said "I love you" without thinking, and that later he realized he really did love her, when he was away working on a play and calling her and she was always there for him and made him feel life was worth living—and then later, working on another show, he realizes that it was all a dream, that she wasn't like that, wasn't really there for him, would walk out on him, his dreams, his projects, if she felt like it; if they start fighting and never have



fun; if all he can think of is how to end it gently, how to make her break up with him because he's not sure he can break up with her?

And if, in the middle of all this he runs across a girl that he, too, has always been fascinated with, and lets himself wonder if it would have worked better with her, but is gun-shy and doesn't want to get trapped again, but is afraid she won't wait for him to make up his mind?

What, then? What happens then?

*[The train sounds its horn, a deafening noise. The train passes very close by, and departs. A moment of quiet.]*

What happens then.

*[EMILY slumps. She didn't jump.]*

EMILY: I'm sorry, Joe, I couldn't hear. What were you saying.

*[A second's silence.]*

JOE: Nothing. Nothing that matters.

EMILY: It's late.

*[Blackout.]*

*[The first two measures of Moxy Frivous' "Independence Day" from their album Thornhill play, as a bridge to the next scene.]*

#### IV. Not long before the loss.

[JOE and BETH, together, indoors. A chair.]

JOE: Beth, do you love me?

BETH: Yes.

JOE: That's what it comes down to, doesn't it.

[A silence.]

Why?

BETH: Because you're wonderful.

JOE: But why? Do realize how odd that makes you? Of all the people in the world, every single person I've ever come across in all my knowing years, you're the only person who I've ever, *ever* had say that to me.

BETH: Your family.

JOE: They don't mean it the way you do. They don't see me shirtless and think "handsome."

BETH: I love you.

JOE: But why? Why?! Why should you? I'm unreasonable, upsettable, ugly as hell, scrawny, skinny, I think too much, I don't say nearly enough, I'm a loner, I kiss wetly, I love ineptly. . . of all the women on God's green earth, there is consensus on only one thing: Joe Westland is not an attractive human being. He is not someone you'd look twice at. He is a nightmare in a bathing suit. He's not buff, not built, not cute, not rugged, not hot. He's another guy. Just some guy. *No one's* heart goes pitter-pat for Joe Westland. Except yours. Why?

BETH: Why are you doing this? I love you. You're strong, you're handsome. . .

JOE: And you're lucky because no one ever—*no one* is ever likely to take me from you. No one. You've hooked a fish no one wants; he's yours, all yours.

BETH: And what's wrong with that?

JOE: *I want women to love me! To fall for me. To die for me. To look twice at me, damn it!* I'm sick and tired of being *ignored!*

BETH: But *I* love you.

JOE: Why doesn't anyone else? What's wrong with them? What's wrong with *me*?

BETH: Please, love.

JOE: I'm bright. I'm sensitive. I'm a nice guy. *I write poetry.* Well, bad poetry. No, I'm not dangerous. Is that what they want? I can be dangerous. [*Throws a chair.*]

BETH: Stop it, Joe. I love you. What's wrong with that? *I love you.*

JOE: *You're eating me alive!* I'm losing my identity. *I am not you!*

BETH: Please, Joe, I don't understand. Why are you doing this?

JOE: I am a loner. That's who I am.

BETH: You're my boyfriend. I love you.

JOE: I'm becoming half a pair. That's not me. That's not who I am. *You're* not who I am. I am I. A hard worker. Productive. Bright. Maybe somewhat aloof. A night-stalker of quiet contemplation. Coffee-house me. In the corner booth, alone, scribbling madly. Woe. Scribbling woe.

BETH: And I'm not allowed to love that?

JOE: And for the past six months I've had nothing but trite happinesses to write about.

BETH: What's wrong...

JOE: ...not that I've had time to write...

BETH: ...with that?

JOE: You've filled my life. With you. Leaving none of me left. You're taking over my soul. Corrupting me, you say. Eating away my essence. Who I am. I am I. Not you.

BETH: Joe...

JOE: I love you. I long for you. You complete some primal circuit in my soul. A hand to hold, a partner in life. Instigation to my insanity. You provoke me. Excite me. Fill me. Listen to me. A ear to hear what I am, to see who I am, to mirror me so I can fucking see myself.

BETH: *[Pleading.]* My love.

JOE: I share my life with you. Everything good, I get twice when I'm with you. You're my Brecht companion. My meteor-watcher. Lighting-maker. Midnight-snacker.

*[BETH is in JOE's arms, crying.]*

I walk down the street with you in my hands, your hand in mine, and I feel complete. Happy. Everything doubled.

*[She reaches up to kiss him? JOE jerks away.]*

But it's not right. *[BETH starts to object, JOE puts a finger to her lips.]* Not quite right. A jarring note. I'm losing myself. Losing my soul.

That twisted knot at the center of our unhappiness. Driving us apart when we're closest together. I cannot lose it. It is who I am, what I dream for, for whom I strive. It is *me*.

I sing songs to my god, and am happy. You sit there silent. Frowning, upset.

I run my hands through my hair, writing, creating—or, heck, destroying—castles in my mind. Bits, bytes, ether, dust, corkscrews, theories, lunatics, greek, greek, more greek. You call and want only that I should come to you.

I can't! I can not. I am who I am, what I do, what I think, what I write. You can't take that from me. You can't make me you.

I love you, but this can't go on. It can't. It just can't.

Why doesn't anyone else, *anyone, in the whole fucking world*, love me?

BETH: I . . . *[She stops.]*

*[Silence.]*

*[A terrible crash and everything goes black.]*

## V. The goddess.

*[A wind. The GODDESS appears.]*

GODDESS: What's done is dated.  
Stamped, sealed, stagnated.  
Dark deeds fenestrated,  
secret motives communicated,  
tiny doings disproportionated.  
Holy saints excommunicated,  
criminals falsely vindicated:  
history has prevaricated.  
  
To recapitulate:  
the past is predeterminate.  
Perfect, immutable, immaculate.  
Inaccurate, inadequate, inanimate.  
Each osculation, ovulation, oscillation  
    forever to perpetuate.  
deoxygenate, deteriorate, sure, but  
    continue.  
Impossible to abrogate.  
  
Let me be blunt:  
    you can't change the past.

*[Snaps. Black.]*

*[Abruptly, back to reality. JOE and EMILY sit on a bed. BETH stands behind, although not in the scene. A scratchy phonograph plays a waltz.]*

JOE: I love you.

EMILY: *[Pauses. Laughs.]*

*[Blackout. The phonograph skips back. Lights up. JOE and EMILY have not moved.]*

EMILY: I love you.

JOE: Um. *[Gets up.]*

*[Blackout. The phonograph continues. Lights up. JOE and BETH sitting. EMILY standing behind.]*

BETH: Sit down.

JOE: I . . .

BETH: Come here.

JOE: I . . .

BETH: Closer.

*[JOE nervously kisses BETH on her cheek. BETH wipes it off.]*

JOE: I . . .

BETH: Wet.

JOE: I . . .

BETH: Do you have a Diet Coke?

JOE: I . . .

BETH: I'm thirsty.

JOE: I . . .

BETH: Well?

*[Beat. JOE gets up. Blackout. Phonograph skips back. Repeat.]*

BETH: I . . .

JOE: Stand up.

BETH: I . . .

JOE: *[Steps back.]* Come here.

BETH: I . . .

JOE: I'm not coming nearer. *[Steps back.]*

BETH: I . . .

JOE: Don't kiss me.

BETH: I . . .

*[Blackout. Lights up.]*

JOE: I love you.

BETH: I love you.

JOE: This can't go on.

BETH: I know.

*[They kiss passionately. Blackout. Lights up.]*

JOE: It's over.

BETH: Again?

*[Blackout. Phonograph skips back. Lights up.]*

BETH: It's over.

JOE: Is it?

*[Blackout. JOE and EMILY, BETH behind. Lights up.]*

JOE: It's over.

EMILY: Oh. *[Turns away to hide her smile.]*

*[Blackout. Phonograph skips back. Lights up.]*

EMILY: Is it over?

JOE: *[Deep breath.]* Yes. *[Turns away, in pain.]*

*[Blackout. Phonograph skips back. Lights up.]*

EMILY: It's over.

JOE: It's over.

*[They kiss passionately.]*

*[Blackout. Phonograph skips back. Lights up.]*

EMILY: It's over.

JOE: It's over.

*[Beat.]*

EMILY: I think you need to go now.

JOE: *[Simultaneously.]* I need to get going.

*[Crash, black. The phonograph is silent. Colors. The GODDESS.]*

GODDESS: The time for decision draws nigh  
the bloodmoon crowns  
the magician's rabbit crows.

Under roughbark treed  
we hop the silly spangle  
and kiss the prince

BETH: Tears water marigolds  
which sprout laughing  
and give us their heads  
to eat.

EMILY: The monkey's moment comes  
In our trance we watch  
organ-grinder's boxes  
for change.

GODDESS: Gold green orange uniforms  
with sky-colored tassels  
they tread the marigolds  
into the ground.

BETH: We await

EMILY:           await

BETH:           await  
the choice.

GODDESS: The tree is blood-painted

EMILY: The magician's monkeys flee

BETH: The storm approaches

EMILY: The wind blows



BETH: gummibears

EMILY: in our hair.

BETH: We paint sugar on bark  
to hide the deed.

EMILY: and lick sweet deception  
off others' noses.

GODDESS: The world spins without control  
sending the moon reeling.

EMILY: We grasp marigold stems

BETH: and hold tight on.

GODDESS: It comes.  
Dance the silly spangle  
and kiss the prince you find.  
The world is tipsy-turvy  
and the moment's drawing nigh.  
*[The GODDESS snaps.]*  
*[JOE is alone on stage. It is dark. A beat.]*

JOE: I—  
*[A beat. The GODDESS snaps, and reappears in a pool of light. JOE remains  
staring straight ahead; does not react to her.]*

GODDESS: Choose, boy, choose.

JOE: I—

GODDESS: What's so hard, boy? Look.  
*[The goddess snaps. BETH appears in a pool of light, staring forward.]*

BETH: *[Monotone.]* Love without identity.  
*[Another snap; EMILY appears in another pool of light.]*

EMILY: *[Monotone.]* Identity without love.

GODDESS: Choose.

EMILY: *[Dully.]* Choose.

BETH: *[Dully.]* Choose.

JOE: ...

GODDESS: You didn't expect to win, did you? With a goddess?

JOE: ...

GODDESS: It doesn't matter. *[Snaps.]*

*[Blackout. The GODDESS laughs.]*

## VI. A return.

*[Lights up very slowly. The end title theme from the MGM film “Force of Evil” (1948) plays as JOE walks out, alone. Black and white, noir. Red lights flashing in the distance.]*

JOE: *[To BETH.]* On Thursday, July 8, two minutes before midnight, I walked into Beth’s room. The lights were off and Beth was in bed. With a friend of mine. She was giggling; I turned around and walked out. She never knew I had been.

*[To EMILY.]* On Thursday, July 8, one hour and 47 minutes previous, I walked into Emily’s building to invite her to a showing of Federico Fellini’s “I Vitteloni.” She asked me to leave. Later, in way of explanation, she said she was annoyed. She has not spoken to me since.

*[Out.]* On Thursday, July 8, and into early Friday, July 9, I petitioned the goddess of love and loves for understanding. She sent my roommate to me, with a request. I left my room so my roommate and his out-of-town friend could use my bed.

Laying on the carpet floor of my office, at 1:07am Friday July 9, I decided that Beth could fuck herself. Three and one half seconds later I realized the poor choice of words. Fuck her. At 1:09am I knew that I wanted nothing more than to be the man in her bed.

By 1:12am most of the portable items in my office had been rearranged with vigor. Six and a quarter minutes later, notepad in hand, I endeavored to enumerate the items that would need replacement.

Five months and fourteen days later, I slept with a girl I brought home from a party. I thought only of Beth in the dark. I do not say my thoughts were kind.

Five months and sixteen days after walking in on Beth and the guy who had taught me a secret handshake involving wiggling the ring finger, the girl from the party...

*[The GODDESS, as the girl from the party, walks up to JOE and leans on him seductively.]*

...referred to me as her boyfriend.

*[The GODDESS kisses JOE deeply, dominating him. He loses his legs and sits. The GODDESS breaks from him:]*

GODDESS: Do you love me yet, boyfriend?

*[She runs her hands over him as she walks away. Laughing. A beat. JOE straightens his clothes.]*

JOE: Four months after that. . .

*[VLAD walks on stage, putting on his jacket, preparing to leave the office for the day. Perhaps the lights shift slightly to echo what they were at the top.]*

VLAD: *[To JOE:]* And how was the “date with a girl not your girlfriend”? *[VLAD remains looking at JOE.]*

JOE: *[Out to the audience, still.]* The date was with Beth’s hallmate.

*[Colors come up revealing the goddess as she laughs quietly. A moment of stillness as VLAD looks at JOE; JOE looks at us. The GODDESS looks at JOE. She laughs again as the lights fade.]*

*[BLACKOUT.]*

*[Ideas for end-of-show music: “You Can’t Be Too Careful” or “Hate Letter” from Moxy Früvous’ Thornhill; “Alison” by Elvis Costello on My Aim Is True; “Goodnight Ladies” by Lou Reed on Transformer. Probably best would be a version of “Hate Letter” sung by a female vocalist.]*