

THE BRIDGE

An Original Play
By PAUL- DAVID HALEM
Updated 09/28/2014

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August 16, 2010

Cast of Characters

Josh: Male actor in his early 30's

Ralphie: Male actor age 60 - 65

Joe: Male actor age 60 to 65

Sophie: Female actress age 60

Blond Woman: age 25 to 30

Debbie: Female actress age 25 to 30

Noah: Male age 30 (Sophie and Joe's Son)

Patricia: Female actress age 60 (Ralphie's wife)

Engineers: Can be played by actors who play Noah and Patricia

Survivor (Woman): Played by Blond Woman. Must appear as a different character

Survivor (Man): Can be played by Joe. Must appear as a different character.

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ACT I, SCENE 1

(Set is on a bridge over a rural river. A man of about 35 enters and begins to hang a noose from the structure. He then climbs up on the railing and puts the noose around his neck. He stands there for a moment and smiles. At that moment another man about 60 years old enters from the other side of the bridge and takes out a gun. He then points the gun to his own head).

JOSH

(With a noose around his neck) Excuse me. *(No reaction)* EXCUSE ME!

RALPHIE

(Looks up and notices the young man with the noose around his neck for the first time) What the..Where the hell did you come from?

JOSH

I was here first.

RALPHIE

That's nice. You'll be here last too. Now if you don't mind, I have some private thoughts I want to have before..*(He waves the gun).*

JOSH

Very nice. You can't even give a guy some privacy in his last few moments on this crappy E ride.

RALPHIE

E ride? Now that takes me back. *(He walks over to the railing and looks up at Josh)* You don't look old enough to remember E rides.

JOSH

Actually, I'm not. I remember hearing somewhere that Disney used to sell tickets to each individual ride, and that the really good rides like Pirates of the Caribbean needed E tickets.

RALPHIE

Well, I'm sorry to ruin your visit to the happiest place on earth. *(He waves the gun)* But I have plans of my own.

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JOSH

Listen, under normal circumstances I wouldn't complain, but I don't want to share this moment with anyone - let alone a total stranger.

RALPHIE

I can appreciate that. *(He extends his hand)* I'm Ralph Shaw. Most people call me Ralphie. Either way is fine with me.

JOSH

(Looks at Ralph's extended hand for a moment and then reaches down and shakes it). Hi. I'm Josh.

RALPHIE

Well, it's nice meeting you Josh. So now that we're not total strangers, how about telling me why you're about to hang yourself. I mean, at first glance, you seem to have a healthy and fairly good looking body. You're well spoken and quite possibly intelligent. So why are you *(He pantomimes hanging himself)?*

JOSH

It's a long story.

RALPHIE

You got a more pressing engagement? Come on. Aren't you even a little curious why I'm about to put a rather large bullet into my head?

JOSH

Well now that you mention it, I am a little curious. I mean what are the odds that two strangers would choose the same small bridge on the same night to end it all?

RALPHIE

Probably hundreds of millions to one. Quite possibly, it's never happened before. But then again, when you think about thousands of years of human existence and hundreds of millions of people who have been here I guess it could have happened once or twice before. On the other hand, meeting right here at this moment in time could be unique in the human experience. It's kinda like the lottery. Some people say that buying lottery tickets only goes to show how bad we teach math in school. But sometime, someone is going to hit the jackpot. DING DING DING! I guess we hit the jackpot! So with that incredible almost impossible possibility, why don't you de-noose yourself and come down a while?

JOSH

(Josh considers the offer. He then shrugs his shoulders and removes the noose. He jumps down next to Ralphie). Okay. I'm down. Would you please put the gun away. Guns make me nervous.

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RALPHIE

Seriously? You were about to hang yourself and you're nervous about guns? I would think that at a time like this nothing would make you nervous. However, in the spirit of mutual disarmament, I will put it away. *(He puts the gun in his back waistband)*. Does that make you feel less nervous?

JOSH

Yeah, it really does. You're right though. Why should I be nervous about getting shot? What difference would it make? Actually people would probably think better of me getting shot than hanging myself.

RALPHIE

Would you like me to shoot you? Don't get me wrong. I'm not a killer. But since you were about to do yourself in anyway. Well, I was just offering.

JOSH

That's nice of you to offer. I guess. Let me think about it. Anyway you were going to tell me why you are going to shoot yourself.

RALPHIE

Yeah, sure. Why not. Listen I'm a little tired of standing here. Why don't we sit down and enjoy the view? *(They both climb up on the railing and sit down facing out into the audience)*. So where to begin? Okay. How old do you think I look?

JOSH

I don't know. About 65 or so.

RALPHIE

Thanks. I'm 52. I've always looked old for my age. Never once got carded. I could pass for twenty one when I was sixteen. When you're young that can be an advantage. Not such a great thing when you're my age. I say this because I've been out of work for over a year. Now interviewers aren't allowed to ask you your age. They wouldn't want to be sued for age discrimination. So they just guess how old you are so they can discriminate without saying so. If you think it's hard getting hired in your fifties, just try looking like you're 65

JOSH

So you decided to kill yourself because you couldn't get a job.

RALPHIE

Hell no! Who gives a crap about getting a shitty job? *(He takes a deep breath)* I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get so upset. It's just that you did just what my wife always does. She assumes she know

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what I'm going to say and says it for me. Do you know what it's like never to be able to complete a thought or a goddamn sentence for that matter? It's like..

JOSH

(Excitedly snaps his fingers) You don't matter!

RALPHIE

(Ralphie stares at Josh for moment and then just shakes is head) Exactly. It's as if I'm so obvious and transparent that everyone already know what I'm thinking and going to say before I say it. *(He swings off the railing and begins to pace)* For Christ's sake I'm not an idiot. I have original thoughts. I should be given the respect to actually say them! When I talk with my wife, I can tell she's not really listening to what I'm saying. She's thinking what she's going to say next. Even though I haven't finished what..

JOSH

(Quickly jumping down from the railing) you were saying! *(Ralphie looks at Josh with resignation and shakes his head)* I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt you.

RALPHIE

It's okay kid. Everyone else does. Why shouldn't the last person I see on this earth rewrite my final thoughts? Any how, where was I?

JOSH

Your wife always completes your thoughts.

RALPHIE

Yeah. That's right. That, however, is not why I'm killing myself. It's just one of numerous annoyances that have gotten me to this point. This place in time. At least this is one final statement I will be able to perform without Patricia, that's my wife's name, saying it first. If Patricia were here right now she would begin to narrate. *(In his wife's voice)*. "Now he's going to shoot himself". It's not her fault. She can't help herself. She was the smartest kid in class and always had to answer the questions first. She never really learned to listen. So that is why I would really appreciate it if you wouldn't say anything when the time comes.

JOSH

I understand completely. I won't say a word. In fact, if I go first you won't have to worry about it. So you said there were other reasons why you're going to..

RALPHIE

(Thinking) You know you're right about going last. I think I will let you hang yourself first. After all what's the rush?

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JOSH

Well thank you. I appreciate that. It's just when the time comes I would rather not have an audience. Maybe you could walk down the road a bit and wait a few minutes.

RALPHIE

Yeah I guess I could do that. Anyway, to get back to the point. You asked me why I'm here other than my wife annoying me. After all if every guy whose wife annoyed him killed himself you couldn't walk with all the bodies in the street. And looking too old to get a job is pretty trivial for such an important decision. *(He looks up at the sky)* I'm here because of all that. Countless stars and planets. In comparison I am so inconsequential. If I had actually done something that would be different. You know if I had invented something. Or possibly made a difference in other people's lives. The fact is no one will really miss me or for that matter notice that I'm gone.

JOSH

Wow! I know exactly how you feel. What's the point of sticking around? I'm just taking up space.

RALPHIE

Every morning I go outside and bring in the morning paper. Now some people read the headlines first. I know some guys who go straight to the Sports Pages. Me - I always check the Obituaries first. *(Josh begins to speak and Ralphie holds up his hand to stop him)* No it's not to see if I'm in there. It's not even to see if someone I know has died. It is to read the obituaries of someone who has died who was worth writing about. You know most people get a few sentences, but a couple of people each day get a whole story about them. They've done something that has made a difference. I always assumed that when the time came I'd be one of them. Now that I'm closer to the end than the beginning I've come to accept I'm only going to get a couple of lines. My whole existence is going to come down to he was married, worked his whole life at some crappy job, and will leave behind a handful of relatives who didn't really like him.

JOSH

God you're depressing.

RALPHIE

You're a young guy who is about to hang himself and you think I'm depressing. Kind of ironic don't you think? So let me ask you a question if you don't mind?

JOSH

Sure. Ask away.

RALPHIE

What's your rush? I mean you probably have decades left to actually accomplish something. You could meet a wonderful woman. Have a great marriage. Stumble upon the cure for cancer. You have possibilities. So I ask you again. What's your rush? I don't mean to get too personal here, but aren't you just copping out?

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JOSH

I can see how you might look at it that way. Nothing personal. I just don't want to wind up like you. I don't want someone finishing my thoughts. I want to finish everything on my own. Right now. Right here. On my own terms. Can you understand that?

RALPHIE

Yeah sure. I really shouldn't have got mad at my wife. After all we've been together forever. Of course, she knows what I'm thinking. She's heard it all before. Maybe I'm just too sensitive. You wouldn't think it to look at me, but I'm a very sensitive person. I actually cry at the movies. If a young woman is dying in an movie and she has children I'm a water works. I try to hide it, but my wife she knows I'm bawling away. It seems as I get older I get more emotional. I don't think that's unusual. I've read as a man gets older his testosterone levels goes down and his estrogen levels go up. We're all going to turn into crying little girls. You won't, of course, because you're exiting while your cajones are still at full capacity. Doesn't that seem like a waste? I mean you're in your sexual prime.

JOSH

Actually, sexual prime for a man is 18. I'm 34.

RALPHIE

Okay 34. You still have plenty of gas in the tank. On the other hand I need a little pharmaceutical assistance.

JOSH

Isn't that information a little personal to share with a stranger?

RALPHIE

Are you planning on leaving a note and telling everyone?

JOSH

No of course not. It's just that I've never been comfortable talking about sex.

RALPHIE

Are you kidding? So what do you talk about with your buddies?

JOSH

I don't really have any friends. You said no one will notice that you're gone. That's true for me too. I don't have any friends. No one will come to my funeral.

RALPHIE

What about family?

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JOSH

I don't have any.

RALPHIE

God you're depressing. You make me WANT to kill myself. *(They both look at each other a moment and then laugh)* Seriously. You don't have even one person you would go have a cup of coffee?

JOSH

Seriously, I don't even have one person to have a cup coffee. There is no one in my life who would care if I live or die.

RALPHIE

(Excited) I care! Damn it Josh I care if you live or die!

JOSH

That's very nice I guess, but you don't even know me. Why should you care if I live or die?

RALPHIE

That's the whole point. Life is serendipitous. You know what that means?

JOSH

I've heard the word, but I couldn't give you a definition.

RALPHIE

It means life is a series of happenstance. Sometimes those happenstance are fortunate or serendipitous. It's really a great word! Fate put us on this bridge tonight. I thought it was to end my pointless existence. But what if it was to give your life meaning? Maybe that is what I need to be special. Maybe I don't have to do something with my life. Maybe I just have to stop you from ending yours.

JOSH

I see what you're saying, but I really don't want your help.

RALPHIE

I know that's the beauty of it all. You don't have a choice. You said you're killing yourself, because there is no one in your life who cares about you. Now there is! Now you have me.

JOSH

Okay. Let's explore your theory. When you kill yourself then I won't have you anymore.

RALPHIE

Exactly! You'd be saving my life too! And to take this to the next level if you don't let me save you then you'd be killing me. Can you live that?

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JOSH

Shit.

RALPHIE

Precisely

JOSH

Okay. So what do we do now? I mean if we're not going to kill ourselves what are we going to do?

RALPHIE

(Thinks a moment) We make a pact. A sacred agreement. If you don't keep the pact the other one is free to go ahead and hang or shoot themselves. If either one of us breaks the pact they become responsible for...

JOSH

This is crazy! All I wanted was to quietly choose to kill myself. Now, you, a perfect stranger has put me into a moral rubix cube. I don't want to play. I just want you to go away and leave me alone.

RALPHIE

I can't do that. I care about you Josh. I just won't go away.

JOSH

(Frustrated and also resigned) Okay. So what is the pact?

RALPHIE

The pact is thirty days. We both agree to put off our demise for thirty days. During that time we do whatever we want, but we also make an honest effort to make things better. Then in thirty days we meet here at the same time.

JOSH

Then what?

RALPHIE

I don't know. I honestly don't know. We'll both know in thirty days. *(He sticks out his hand)*. Do we have a deal?

JOSH

This really sucks. *(He reluctantly shakes his hand)*

Fade Out

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ACT I, SCENE II

(Later that night a couple in their sixties enters onto the bridge from S.L. The woman is blindfolded and the man is gently leading her to S.C.)

SOPHIE

(Still blindfolded) Where are we? It feels like I'm walking on old wood.

JOE

Just a moment more. *(He takes a cake out of his bag and puts in on the railing)* Okay. You can take off the blindfold and open your eyes. *(She removes the blindfold and looks around for a moment trying to figure out where she is)* Happy Anniversary Sophie!

SOPHIE

(She smiles at him) So you didn't forget. I was beginning to wonder. *(Looking around)* My God, is this the bridge?

JOE

The one and only. This is where I popped the question.

SOPHIE

By the way, I've been meaning to ask you something for forty years. Did I actually say yes?

JOE

No. You were so excited you ran right home to tell your Mom. Now I think I've been pretty patient, but how about an answer?

SOPHIE

Could you repeat the question?

JOE

(He takes a handkerchief out of his pocket and places it on the ground between them) I came prepared. *(He gets down on one knee)* But you might have to help me get up. Sophie would you please do me the honor of being my wife? Before you answer, I promise to be true and always be your best friend.

SOPHIE

(She helps him up) Since there is no one to run home to, I guess I have to answer the question. *(They kiss and she looks around)*. I can't believe this old bridge is still standing. Is it safe?

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JOE

Probably not. Wouldn't it be ironic if we were on the same bridge I proposed on just as it collapsed? Not that I'm looking for such a dramatic ending. But what would be the odds on something like that happening? To start and end your life together on the exact same spot. Really kind of poetic when you think about it.

SOPHIE

That's the difference between us. Falling into a cold river and getting hit on the head by a falling bridge is not my idea of poetic.

JOE

(He strolls around looking at the bridge and the sky) That's why we've made it for forty years. I see the possibilities and you see the problems. We make a good team. We kind of keep each other on an even keel. On the other hand, if there is one thing I would wish for you is that you were happier. You always seem to worry so much. Everyday for forty years I've listened to another worry. I wish you could just relax and let things take their course. You can't control everything. Sometimes you just have to go with flow.

SOPHIE

(Getting angry) Okay. Mr Cool. So you take things in stride. Maybe you should worry a little more. You always seem to shrug things off and go to sleep. It drives me crazy that you can turn over and be sound asleep in two minutes..It's like you just turn off a switch. Maybe if you worried a little more we wouldn't be celebrating our 40th Anniversary alone on a deserted bridge.

JOE

(Taken aback) Wow! Where did that come from? I thought you would find this romantic. Excuse me for being sentimental

SOPHIE

(Shaking her head) You just don't get it. You never have. You think if you do something nice it makes up for the bad things. Life is not easy. I'm not that easy.

JOE

That's for sure.

SOPHIE

What's for sure?

JOE

You're not easy. In fact, you are the least easy person I know. Over the years, friends have asked me how I've stayed married to you all this time? You know what I tell them? I tell them I'm a friggin saint!

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SOPHIE

Saint Joe? I don't think so! A real saint would worry a little. A real saint would be able to communicate. A real saint would be able to talk to his own son!

JOE

(/Shocked) You know damn well I didn't stop talking to Noah. He stopped talking to me. In fact, he stopped talking to both of us. If I did something to drive him away, I don't know what it was. He would never talk to me and tell me! We did everything we could for him and he walked away. I still don't know why. Do you?

SOPHIE

Maybe he thought you were too cool.

JOE

Fuck you!

SOPHIE

Fuck you too!

JOE

(They stare at each other for a moment. Joe then goes over and cuts a piece of cake) Want a piece.

SOPHIE

You want to eat? Sure. Why not? *(She walks over and takes a slice of cake from him).*

JOE

Wait a minute I forgot something. *(He reaches into his bag and takes out a bottle of champagne and two glasses. He puts the glasses on the railing and pours the champagne. He then hands one to Sophie)* So I guess we should have a toast or something.

SOPHIE

Or something.

JOE

Sophie I'm sorry. I know things were far from perfect. But it wasn't all bad. We had some good times too.

SOPHIE

And bad times too.

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JOE

(Exasperated) Okay and bad times too! But just for once, can't you see the glass as half full? For Christ's sake we've survived forty years. We've slept in the same bed. Forty years we ate dinner together. Thirty five years we even had sex.

SOPHIE

Very cute. Just remember saints are celibate.

JOE

Fair enough. Okay, so how about a toast? Remember I used to kid that when we got to forty, there's an option to renew. Do you want to put up with this formersaint for a while longer? *(She doesn't answer)* Well?

SOPHIE

I'm thinking.

JOE

Come on Sophie. Stop kidding around.

SOPHIE

I'm not kidding around. I'm thinking forty years is a long time. Maybe it's long enough.

JOE

Are you serious?

SOPHIE

I've never been more serious in my life. For forty years I've been Mrs Joe Price. Maybe I would like to be just Sophie Price. Or Ms Price. I think I like that. Ms Price has a nice ring to it.

JOE

You'll be Ms Price eventually. You're a lot tougher than me. I'm sure you'll be burying me soon enough.

SOPHIE

Nice way to talk on our anniversary!

JOE

What are you talking about? You just said you wanted to dump me.

SOPHIE

I didn't say I wanted you dead!

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JOE

Well that's better I guess. You do know that without you I am dead.

SOPHIE

That's nice. You really know how to turn a phrase. Next I suppose I'll be taking last requests.

JOE

Requests? Like a last meal?

SOPHIE

No. Like where would you like to spend eternity?

JOE

Are you talking about where to plant me? Well lets see. As far as I'm concerned you can stand me in the corner. You know me - I can sleep standing up.

SOPHIE

How about I sprinkle you over this bridge?

JOE

(Thinks for a moment) You know that would be perfect!

SOPHIE

God! This has been a strange anniversary.

JOE

(He does a little soft shoe step) Just another day in paradise. *(She gives him a look)* Sorry I just can't resist a straight line.

SOPHIE

Okay so how long is this option for?

JOE

How about we stay together as long as this old bridge is standing.

SOPHIE

I don't know. It's a pretty old bridge. Then again we're no spring chickens *(She sticks out her hand to shake. He takes it and kisses it)*

Fade Out

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ACT 1, SCENE III

(One month later. Joe walks onto the bridge from SL. He appears to be lost in thought as he wanders to SC. He takes a deep breath and looks up to the sky to talk).

JOE

Hi God it's me. Joe. I know it's been awhile, but I figure you're busy, and I didn't want to bother you unless I had to. The fact is I can usually work out things on my own. Always figured the reason we have brains is to use them. Not that you're not important. I just think we should bother you for important things. Kind of like a last resort. Anyway I guess you could call this a last resort. I found out today from my Doctor that I'm not going to be around much longer. I asked him how long? He said he couldn't say for sure, but I shouldn't make any long term plans. Maybe that's better. If he had said a month or two I might go do something crazy. You know. I could rob a bank. So what if I got caught. I'd be dead before they could do anything to me. If I have a year, however, then I would probably plan it out more carefully. It's funny I always put things off. My whole life I always figured I had plenty of time to get around to everything. Which is why I'm standing here on this old bridge talking to you now. CAN YOU HEAR ME? Okay I'm sorry. I didn't mean to yell. It's just that I'm so pissed off. Why me? I'm not such a bad guy. I came out here tonight because I'm afraid. I never ever thought that I'd be afraid of dying, but now that it's close I'm really scared. I'm scared to death. *(He laughs at the thought)* Now there's a phrase! I read once that the Hmong Mountain People from Viet Nam if they dreamed of their own death they would die in their sleep. They would actually scare themselves to death. Anyway I don't have to do it to myself. It's already done. Sometime in the foreseeable future I'll be dead and buried. So this is why I'm here tonight as a last resort. WHAT THE HELL DO I DO NOW?

(A young blond woman enters from SR)

BLOND WOMAN

Well, you could stop yelling for a start.

JOE

(Surprised by her appearance) My God. Where did you come from?

BLOND WOMAN

(She points over her shoulder) Over there. I couldn't help but hear your...prayer?

JOE

You were listening to me praying? That's not very nice.

BLOND WOMAN

If you didn't want me to listen, you shouldn't be asking if I can hear.

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JOE

I wasn't asking you. *(He points up to the sky)* I was asking God.

BLOND WOMAN

Did you get an answer?

JOE

Come on! I know God doesn't actually answer. Does he?

BLOND WOMAN

Are you hearing voices? *(She walks over to the rail and looks out)* What makes you think I would have any answers? Maybe I'm just a person who happened along when you were really upset. Either way, I'm here for you now.

JOE

Well, that's nice of you. If you don't mind, I have a question for you...if you were hypothetically God that is. Is there something after death?

BLOND WOMAN

Wow, that's a good question. What do you think?

JOE

Are you going to answer my question?

BLOND WOMAN

Do you want something after this?

JOE

Are you really going to answer every question with a question?

BLOND WOMAN

Hmm. That's why there's antisemitism in the world. Jewish people do that all the time. It's very annoying isn't it?

JOE

Great! Another question. I thought you stopped to offer me some comfort. Even if you're just a passing stranger, don't you feel any compassion?

BLOND WOMAN

Of course I do. If I didn't I wouldn't have stopped. Isn't everyone afraid of what comes next? You seem like a really nice guy, but you're probably not the first to feel it's too soon.

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JOE

It is too soon! I have stuff to do. There are people I need to...there are things I need to make right. I want to make sure I fix everything.

BLOND WOMAN

Well then, you better stop complaining and start doing. How much time do you think you need to fix everything?

JOE

I don't know. Maybe a year... or two. How much time are you offering?

BLOND WOMAN

Now you're answering questions with questions.

JOE

I didn't mean..It's just that I have so many doubts. Could I have done better? Would I do things differently if I could do it all over again?

BLOND WOMAN

I think everyone has doubts. Personally I find it easier to hide mine.

JOE

I've never been good at hiding things. Maybe that's something I should work on. I just don't want my wife to be upset.

BLOND WOMAN

Well, that's nice. I guess it's time to call it a night. Whatever happens I hope you truly enjoy the time you have left. *(She starts to leave)*

JOE

Could you at least tell me how much time you think I have left?

BLOND WOMAN

If I could would you really want to know?

JOE

Yes, I would want to know. How much time do you *think* I have left?

BLOND WOMAN

(She bends in and looks at him closely) None? *(Joe looks at her confused and then collapses to the ground)*

Fade out

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ACT I, SCENE IV

(Sophie enters from SL. Joe is lying on the bridge SC. The Young Woman from the last scene is no longer there. Sophie runs to Joe and kneels down beside him.)

SOPHIE

O My God! *(She leans over and listens to his heart).* Joe are you alright? *(She begins to push on his chest).* Come on! Don't you dare do this to me! Joe! Joe! *(She looks around and shouts)* Someone help me! Please help me. *(She begins to sob)* Joe don't leave me. I'm sorry I wasn't nicer to you. *(Joe begins to move and slowly rises to one elbow).*

JOE

Sophie why are you crying?

SOPHIE

Thank God. You're alive. *(She begins to hug him and then she hits him)* You scared the hell out of me!

JOE

Hey! That hurts. Why are you hitting me, and how did I get down here?

SOPHIE

I don't know. That's how I found you. Except I thought you were dead so I hit you when you weren't.

JOE

(Rubbing his arm) Well that makes sense. So you thought I was dead. Funny thing so did I. Sophie I think I just had a very spiritual experience.

SOPHIE

I'll give you spiritual experience. What the hell are you doing on the bridge. I came home and found your note that you were coming here to think. When you didn't come home I got worried and came to find you. When I saw you lying there I thought you were dead. Our whole life together flashed before my eyes.

JOE

Any sexy scenes?

SOPHIE

Don't you dare be a smart ass! I was really scared. *(She begins to cry again).*

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JOE

(Rising up and helping Sophie to her feet) I'm sorry Sophie. I didn't mean to scare you. Please honey. Don't cry. *(He becomes dizzy and reaches out and grabs the railing)* Whoa. I feel a little shaky on my feet.

SOPHIE

We should take you to the doctor. Did you pass out? Are you hurt?

JOE

I've already been to the doctor once today. I don't know if I passed out or just passed. Nothing seems to hurt. Sophie what do you imagine God looks like?

SOPHIE

You sure you didn't hit your head?

JOE

My head is fine. Now answer my question. What do you think God looks like?

SOPHIE

I don't know. An old man with blue eyes and a long flowing beard.

JOE

I wonder if Chinese people imagine he looks Chinese. At any rate I can now tell you what God looks like. Would you like to know?

SOPHIE

I guess? This is a very strange conversation even for us. What did you go to see the doctor about?

JOE

We'll talk about the doctor later. Right now I'm going to tell you something that no one else in the world knows. God is a young woman with blond hair and a real attitude.. She answers all of your questions with questions. In some ways she seems caring, but in other ways she doesn't seem to want to get too involved. Does that make sense?

SOPHIE

(She begins to look at his head) I don't see anything. Are you sure you didn't hit your head?

JOE

My head is fine. Sophie I think I died. What do you think of that?

SOPHIE

(She paces away from him) I think you better stop messing around. Are you saying I'm talking to a dead man?

21 **THE BRIDGE**

JOE

I honestly don't know. Maybe.

SOPHIE

When I hit you did it hurt?

JOE

Yeah.

SOPHIE

I don't think dead people feel pain.

JOE

(He takes a deep breath and smiles) That makes sense. So I guess I'm not dead yet. Sophie when you thought I was gone did you feel sad or relieved?

SOPHIE

What kind of stupid question is that? Of course I was sad. Didn't I agree to stay with you until this bridge falls down? Is it still standing?

JOE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you. It's just that I've been having strange thoughts lately. I'm just trying to understand life. See if I could have done things better. You know not saying some of the stupid things I've said. When I say those things it's not out of being mean. Sometimes I just can't help trying to be too cute.

SOPHIE

(She walks away from him) Yeah sometimes you can be real cute. Okay, Joe there are times you drive me crazy, but I would never wish you dead. How could you believe that I would be relieved? If you died, I don't know what I would do without you.

JOE

We've got to talk. *(He walks over and takes her hand)* I'm going to tell you something, and I'm not joking around. Today I went to see the doctor for the result of some tests.

SOPHIE

What tests? I didn't know about any tests.

JOE

I didn't want to worry you. I figured if everything turned out okay why make you worry unnecessarily?

SOPHIE

But now you think I have a reason to worry?

22 **THE BRIDGE**

JOE

I'm sorry honey, but this bridge is in better shape than I am

FADE

ACT I, SCENE V

(Josh enters from SL. He is with an attractive young woman in her late twenties).

JOSH

Okay Debbie this is the place. What do you think?

DEBBIE

(Looking around in a confused manner) Well it's a nice old bridge. I must say it is an interesting place to take someone on a first date. Exactly what is so special about it?

JOSH

This bridge. This very spot actually is where my entire life changed. A month ago I was standing *(He runs over to the railing)* I was standing on this railing with a noose around my neck.

DEBBIE

My God! You were going to hang yourself?

JOSH

I was going to end it all right here, but something amazing happened. A crazy guy saved my life.

DEBBIE

How did he do that?

JOSH

It's kind of a funny story. Do you want to hear it?

DEBBIE

Are you kidding? Usually my dates want to talk about Facebook and You Tube. This might be the most interesting first date I've ever had. Please tell me. I'm dying to know.

JOSH

Okay. Here goes. *(He walks over to the railing and climbs up)* I'm on this railing with a noose around my neck when this old strange guy comes onto the bridge holding this really big gun. I called over to him to get his attention. He sees me and is really surprised that someone else is here. Then he sees the noose and realizes what I'm about to do.

23 **THE BRIDGE**

DEBBIE

So he made you stop?

JOSH

No, not right away. At first he's pissed off that I'm here when he is ready to blow out his own brains.

DEBBIE

Holy crap! He was going to kill himself too? *(She crosses over to the railing)* This is incredible. You both showed up on this old bridge on the same night at the same time to kill yourselves?

JOSH

Exactly! What are the odds?

DEBBIE

So how did he stop you from killing yourself?

JOSH

(He comes down from the railing. They both lean on the railing and look out at the audience)
Actually we kind of stopped each other. Not at first you see. At first we just wanted the other to get lost so we could have some privacy.

DEBBIE

(Self involved) I can appreciate that. I hate when I go to a quiet place to read and other people show up. I mean all I want is a little quiet to read and they start talking. It's very annoying.

JOSH

(He looks at her quizzically for a moment) Yeah well I can see that would be annoying. Anyway. Neither of us is willing to get out of the way. Finally Ralph Shaw - we had introduced ourselves convinces me to take off the noose and come down and talk.

DEBBIE

What about the gun?

JOSH

I told him it made me nervous and he put it away.

DEBBIE

Funny a gun would make you nervous when you were about to..

24 **THE BRIDGE**

JOSH

I know. That's what Ralphie said too. For some reason hanging didn't seem as painful as getting shot.

DEBBIE

Oh I don't know about that. Hanging seems a pretty gruesome way to go. Personally I would take pills or start my car in a closed garage and then just go to sleep.

JOSH

Have you thought about killing yourself?

DEBBIE

Sure. Hasn't everyone? Of course just in the abstract. I've never really considered suicide. I've just thought about if I were to do it, how would I do it.

JOSH

So you think everyone thinks about suicide at some time or another?

DEBBIE

Oh absolutely.

JOSH

Interesting. Anyway Ralphie and me start to talk. (*He begins to pace around*) We each tell why we are going to end it. At some point, Ralphie decides I didn't have a good enough reason. He decides I'm going to become his mission in life. That he is not going to let me kill myself.

DEBBIE

How can he stop you?

JOSH

Here's the interesting part. He uses guilt. He says if I kill myself his life wouldn't have any purpose. I would, in fact, be responsible for his death.

DEBBIE

Sounds like something my Mother would do.

JOSH

So we made a pact. We agreed to give it thirty days. In thirty days we agreed to meet right here on this old bridge. We promised not to do ourselves in during the cooling off period. We also said we would try to change our lives in someway.

DEBBIE

So when is the thirty days up?

25 **THE BRIDGE**

JOSH

Yesterday

DEBBIE

Yesterday? Did you have your meeting?

JOSH

No. He didn't show up. At first I was pissed and then disappointed he had stood me up. The more I thought about it I just couldn't believe he wouldn't show up on purpose. Something must have happened. So I went home and googled him.

DEBBIE

Did you find him?

JOSH

Yeah I found him alright. But that's not the interesting part. There was a small obituary. He had killed himself right on this bridge.

DEBBIE

He came back that night and killed himself?

JOSH

No not that night. His obituary says he killed himself ten years ago.

DEBBIE

OH MY GOD! This is incredible. You're not making this up are you?

JOSH

If I had that good of an imagination I'd write a play.

DEBBIE

So what did you do then?

JOSH

At first I was just in shock. Was there some reason that I had been stopped from killing myself? I honestly couldn't think of any. *(He begins to walk around the bridge)* Then I thought maybe it's the bridge. Maybe this is some kind of special place. So I googled suicides on this very bridge. It seems this bridge has been around for a very long time. Twenty three people have killed themselves right here. The interesting part is Ralphie was the last.

DEBBIE

So you think he's some kind of ghost or spirit that stops new people from doing it here?

26 THE BRIDGE

JOSH

I don't know. All I can say is he stopped me. At any rate I decided right then and there to choose life. I promised myself that as long as this bridge is standing so am I.

DEBBIE

(Looking around the bridge) You know this is a very old bridge?

JOSH

It doesn't make any difference. Every day is extra. Sooo - with that in mind how about a second date?

DEBBIE

(She considers his question) Sure why not? *(Looks at the bridge)* I guess we have time.
(They exit S.L. hand in hand)

SLOW FADE OUT

ACT I, SCENE VI

(Two Engineers with hard hats and orange vests walk on the bridge from SR. They are examining the bridge and taking notes).

ENGINEER 1

Did you get the all the measurements? I would hate to get back to the office and realize we missed something.

ENGINEER 2

(Checking is worksheet) I'm sure we have everything we'll need to do the retrofit calculations. Kind of a waste of time though.

ENGINEER 1

How do you figure it's not worth our time to do the job right?

ENGINEER 2

Let's face it. No way the State is going to put in the needed money into this old bridge to do the required upgrades. It just cheaper to tear it down and build a new one.

ENGINEER 1

You might be right, but this bridge has a lot of history. People care about it. Not everything is about dollars and cents. *(Walking around the bridge)* I used to come out here with my Dad when I was about 10 years old. We would pack a lunch and fish in the river below. We'd sit on the bank in the shade of this bridge. He was always so busy trying to make ends meet that having him to myself for a few hours was special. We'd just sit on the bank with our poles in the water and talk. Mostly, I would talk and he would listen. He'd listen to all of my dreams. He never once

27 THE BRIDGE

discouraged me from trying anything I wanted to try. I can remember looking up at this bridge. It seemed so big and solid. I felt dwarfed in it's presence. In some ways, I imagined it was a living entity. Actually, I'm pretty sure it was because of this bridge I became an engineer. I always thought that if I could build something as strong as this bridge I could build anything.

ENGINEER 2

Well it's not strong anymore.

ENGINEER 1

You might be right. We'll go back to the office and do the numbers. I'm not ready to give up on the old girl yet.

SLOW FADE

ACT I, SCENE VII

(Sophie and Joe enter from SL. He is moving slower and using a cane)

SOPHIE

Joe, how are you doing? This isn't too much for you is it?

JOE

I'm fine. Just a little out of breath that's all. I feel like I'm walking uphill on flat ground.

SOPHIE

I don't know if this was a good idea. You look pale.

JOE

That's because I am pale. Anyway we're here. We made it! I feel like Edmund Hillary at the summit of Mt Everest.

SOPHIE

This from a man who wouldn't watch T.V. without a remote. Okay so we're here. What was so important that you had to get out of your sick bed and come out to this old bridge?

JOE

You know Sophie this bridge is like an old friend. We've had some lovely moments here. Not to mention a couple of fights that were real doozies. So you wanted to know why I had to come out here. I keep remembering my friend, Richard. He had been a strapping Iowa farm boy growing up. Then he got Aids. Near the end he came to see me to say goodbye. He had gone from 220 pounds to maybe 125. I almost didn't recognize him. The whole time we spoke I tried to keep it light. Like everything would turn out all right. Of course that was the last time I saw him. In the end we shook hands, but I never said goodbye. I'm here tonight on this bridge because I think it's important to say goodbye to old friends.

28 **THE BRIDGE**

SOPHIE

(Getting upset) You're going to make me cry. Damn you! Why do you have to talk like that? You're not going anywhere. Stop being so pessimistic. The doctor said...

JOE

The doctor says lots of things. We both know what's going to happen. It's time we make some plans. It's time we get ready to say goodbye. One of these days in the near future you are going to be alone.

SOPHIE

Maybe. But not today. Today I'm with you! So stop talking about dying or I'll kill you myself.

JOE

Okay slugger. You win. Let's talk about something else. I've been thinking about Noah lately.

SOPHIE

You got to be kidding. Your son doesn't think about you. Why waste your time thinking about him?

JOE

It's not a waste of time. I know he hasn't treated us right or even fair, but he's still our son. I watched him being born. I taught him how to play baseball. I can remember being in the back yard throwing him balls underhand so he could hit with his bat. He must have been around four years old. Anyway, he'd swing late, and miss the ball. The bat was a little too big for him to swing fast enough. I told him to choke up on the bat. He looked at me with all seriousness and he coughed on the bat. That boy took everything so literally. I remember sitting in the stands at his first tee ball baseball game. Remember that's when the little kids hit the ball off a tee instead of a pitcher throwing it. Anyway, Noah hit it and it dribbled through to the outfield. He ran to second base and stood on the bag with both of his arms raised in the air. He was so happy. I was so happy. *(He chokes up)* Sophie what the hell happened to our son?

SOPHIE

(She comes over and hugs him) I wish I knew. He just thinks we did some things or didn't do some things that ruined his life. I just don't know what. He won't tell me. Did he ever tell you anything?

JOE

Not a word. I've asked, but not a word. It's been four years since I've spoken to him. Maybe he just switched off. I get the feeling he just felt having a family was too much trouble. Families can be tough, but to just walk away. That I can't understand. He's my son, and I will always love him, but I'm not sure if I can ever trust him again.

29 **THE BRIDGE**

SOPHIE

Joe this can't be good for you.

JOE

I'm okay. I just needed to get some things in order. Remember our Fortieth Anniversary here? You asked me where I wanted to be planted.

SOPHIE

For Christ's sake Joe. I was only kidding.

JOE

I know that. You did, however, offer to sprinkle my ashes off of this bridge. I know that's probably not legal, but I want you to sneak out here at night and do it anyway.

SOPHIE

I will not! You will have a proper funeral. Our friends will come to say goodbye.

JOE

That's not a problem. Have a memorial service. Just skip the funeral part. Then the next night come out here. Please Sophie. That's what I want. I want to be here. I feel like I need to be here. Will you do this for me?

SOPHIE

(Upset) Okay. Whatever you want. When it happens. But that's not anytime soon. Is there anything else?

JOE

Yes. I want my son to come

BLACK OUT

End of Act I

30 **THE BRIDGE**

ACT II, SCENE I

(Lights up on the bridge at night. Ralphie and the Young Blond Woman are sitting on the railing facing out to the audience as they speak)

RALPHIE

I must say this is an interesting look for you. Never seen you as a blond before.

BLOND WOMAN

Blonds have more fun.

RALPHIE

Do they really?

BLOND WOMAN

Ab-so-lutely. So I see you saved another one. You're getting really good at this.

RALPHIE

Are you making fun of me?

BLOND WOMAN

Why would I make fun of you? Maybe I'm just being ironic. After all you did kill yourself.

RALPHIE

Would you answer one question for me? *(She nods)* I know you've never said if you're in charge, but I always assumed you were in complete control.

BLOND WOMAN

Complete control? An interesting concept.

RALPHIE

What does that mean?

BLOND WOMAN

Just because I've been around longer doesn't mean I know more than you. Why don't you ask me the question you really want to ask?

RALPHIE

Okay. Here goes. Does anything ever surprise you?

31 THE BRIDGE

BLOND WOMAN

All the time. Frankly, I was surprised you killed yourself. I really didn't expect that. I must say, however, you've been very creative since you've been here.

RALPHIE

Actually I like doing it. When I was alive I really didn't have much of an imagination, but on this bridge it seems to come so naturally. I watch people crossing this bridge everyday. Each lost in their own thoughts. Do you know how many wedding proposals have happened right on this bridge in the past ten years

BLOND WOMAN

(She thinks for a moment) Nine.

RALPHIE

Are you sure? I thought it was ten.

BLOND WOMAN

Yeah Ralphie I'm pretty sure.

RALPHIE

You know what I miss the most? I never get to see the end of the story. I would love to know how things turned out.

BLOND WOMAN

Ralphie I want to talk to you about your future.

RALPHIE

Mine? It never occurred to me that I have a future. I thought I would just continue to hang out here. You might think this is strange but I feel more safe here dead than any place else when I was alive.

BLOND WOMAN

I don't think that is so unusual. Life can be scary. The reason I bring this up is that this bridge is getting pretty old. Anyway I would think it's depressing dealing with people who want to kill themselves.

RALPHIE

You would think so, but I find it interesting. Kind of therapeutic. On this bridge I never feel inadequate. I'm never at a loss for words. In some way I feel like I'm making a meaningful contribution. Have any of the people I stopped done anything really good?

BLOND WOMAN

I think some of them turned out fine. They got on with their lives. On the other hand that woman CPA who had no luck with men eventually did jump out of her office window. I heard on the way down she changed her mind.

32 THE BRIDGE

RALPHIE

Kind of a cliché. I once heard that people who've jumped off bridges and survived the fall often wish they hadn't done it on the way down. I can't honestly remembering having any regrets.

WOMAN

Yeah Ralphie no one will ever accuse you of being a cliché.

FADE OUT

ACT II, SCENE II

(Josh enters from SL. He's excited as he looks around the bridge. Ralphie stands in a pool of light UR throughout the scene. Josh goes SC)

JOSH

Ralphie are you here? *(He looks around some more)*. Okay Ralphie I don't know if you can hear me. I found out that you're not alive anymore. Believe me that was a shocker. Felt like I was right in the middle of a Stephen King story. Anyway I wanted to come back and thank you for saving my life. You were right. I was giving up without really trying. I also wanted to fill you in on what I've been doing. I don't know if you keep track of people. If you watch over them. Kinda like a guardian angel. Just in case you don't do that I thought I'd come by and visit, and bring you up to date. First of all I quit that crappy job I had and found something more interesting. I've met some good people and I've started to see this really nice girl. In fact, I brought her here on our first date. I don't know if you saw us or heard our conversation, but I told her about you and how we met. I thought it would freak her out, but she found it fascinating. We've gone out now five times, and it seems to be working out. So things are going a lot better. There's just one thing. I can't stop thinking about you. Like I should do something for you. I just don't know what. It's like what do you get for the guy who has everything? What do you get for a dead guy? So I decided to run a personal ad in the paper and also post a notice in the Personals on Craig's List. I just said in the ad if a fellow named Ralphie saved your life then contact me, and I put down my phone number. I didn't know if anyone would actually, you know, respond. For all I knew I'm the only one. Here's what happened though. Six people called me up. They all said you had stopped them from killing them-selves on this bridge. Wow. Can you imagine that? Anyway we're all getting together at the Dublin Pub next Thursday to talk. We're going to decide if there is something we can do for you. Well that's all I have to say for right now. I'll come back and tell you how things went at the Ralphie's Survivors Club. That's what we're calling ourselves

(Josh exits SL. The pool of light on Ralphie fades to black)

33 THE BRIDGE

ACT II, SCENE III

(Joe in a wheelchair is being pushed SC by Sophie. He look very tired and has a blanket across his lap)

SOPHIE

So we're here. Again. Joe what's the point of coming out to this old bridge?

JOE

(Looking around) Isn't it amazing? Look at the lines.

SOPHIE

(Looks around the bridge) It's just an old bridge.

JOE

I know and the Mona Lisa is just a painting. Don't you see what I see? This bridge has a gracefulness. It's not like the new cement things they build today. It's not perfect. If you look closely you can see it's not even symmetrical. That's what I like about it. It's almost a living breathing being.. For I don't know how many years it has spanned this river. Countless numbers of people have crossed it. Most haven't bothered to look at it or even given it a second thought. Just a way to get from point A to point B. And yet, it has enabled them to connect their lives. I feel this bridge is my connection.

SOPHIE

Your connection to what?

JOE

To what I am and what I could have been. Maybe to what I will be.

SOPHIE

Pleese Joe. Are you going to start getting all mystic on me again? You didn't talk with God here. You didn't die here. Like the doctor said you had a shortage of blood flow to your brain and you fainted. It happens. Try not to make more of it than it is.

JOE

Okay, Sophie. That may all be true, but I've been thinking lately about the choices I've made. I think when all is said and done the things that happen are what you want to happen. Do you want to know what I want to happen next?

SOPHIE

Sure why not?

34 THE BRIDGE

JOE

I want everything to happen again. I want to relive my life the same way. I want to meet you, and fall in love all over again. I know most people would want to change things. Get rid of the bad stuff. I've thought about that, but in the end I decided I don't want to change a thing. I want my life to be like this bridge. I don't want it to be perfect. I want it to be asymmetrical. I just want to do it all over again. I want you to love me and be mad at me, and then love me again. That's what I hope happens next. So there. Call me crazy.

SOPHIE

Well that's obvious. Boy if I had the opportunity to get rid of the bad stuff it would be okay with me. (*Adjusting his lap blanket*) I must say since you've become sick you seem to be more calm. Why is that?

JOE

Oh that's easy. You stopped yelling at me.

SOPHIE

That's a nice thing to say. (*She turns away from him*)

JOE

Sophie, I didn't mean anything bad by it. It's just that you're a very passionate person. You never hold back. What did my Mother used to say about you? Oh yes, I remember. What's on her lung is on her tongue.

SOPHIE

You're Mother should talk!

JOE

That's the whole point. The reason you two never got along is you are both the same. Tough, strong, and loving women. And next there is a blond woman that's tougher than both of you.

SOPHIE

What blond woman?

JOE

Not important. So, Sophie I'm curious. Do you think you'll find someone else. After...

SOPHIE

Fuck you! (*Really upset*) What kind of a question is that? You think I'm desperate to find another man? You think I need more aggravation in my life? Forty years with you is plenty. Thank you very much!

35 THE BRIDGE

JOE

Thank you very much too. *(He laughs)* Boy. You're some pistol. I didn't mean to get you upset. I just wanted to tell you that if you got lonely and met someone else that would be okay with me. You shouldn't feel guilty or disloyal. I want you to be happy.

SOPHIE

I don't feel like being happy. So cut the crap! You know damn well I would never want to be with anyone except you. You are a self centered pompous ass, but you're my self centered pompous ass.

JOE

I love you too. *(He takes a flask out of his jacket)* Let's have a little toast.

SOPHIE

You know you're not suppose to drink with your medication.

JOE

I got a special dispensation from the doctor. He said at this point I should do whatever I like. I've been thinking about bungee jumping in a wheelchair lately. *(He hands her the flask)*.

SOPHIE

Okay. So what kind of a toast do you want?

JOE

(He smiles at her) To new beginnings and old mistakes.

SOPHIE

Shouldn't it be to old mistakes and new beginnings? Oh what the hell. *(She takes a drink from the flask and then hands it back to Joe. He screws the cap back on and puts it away)*. I thought you said you wanted a drink.

JOE

Later, Right now I just want to be here with you and talk.

SOPHIE

Joe we've been talking non stop for over forty years. What's left to say? You know I think I liked you better before you got sick. All this sensitivity bullshit is a bit much. Could you please be the same old bastard you've always been?

JOE

I'll try.

36 THE BRIDGE

SOPHIE

Try harder. I've been thinking about the last time we were here. You said you wanted me to invite Noah to spread your ashes off of this bridge. What makes you think he'd come? He hasn't called or come to anything else in years. He won't take my phone calls so when you got sick and were in the hospital I sent him an email. I didn't hear a word. What makes you think he'll come?

JOE

He'll come. He's like you. He always has to get the last word. I'm giving him a chance to have his final say. Just promise me one thing. Don't let him upset you. Let him get it out once and for all. I just want him to say why. That's all.

SOPHIE

Okay I'll invite him. He won't come anyway.

JOE

Maybe. Maybe not. We'll see. At least I want to give him the chance. Who knows? Maybe my going will be good for both of you.

SOPHIE

When you talk like that I could kill you myself. *(A pool light comes up. Standing in the light is the Young Blond Woman. She smiles at Joe and nods. Joe opens his mouth to say something and slumps in his chair)*

Joe!

FADE OUT

ACT II, SCENE IV

(Lights come up and Josh and Debbie are on the bridge. Josh is placing a large card on the railing. The actress who plays the Blond Woman can play the Young Woman and Joe can play the Car Driver. They should appear to be totally different characters).

DEBBIE

I don't understand why we're here. Why couldn't you tell me what happened at your Ralpie Survivors Club at my place?

JOSH

I know this might sound crazy, and I don't want to freak you out. I'm really not completely crazy. The situation is just crazy. Do you understand the difference?

DEBBIE

Of course I understand. You've been through a life altering event. You returned from the precipice.

37 **THE BRIDGE**

JOSH

Returned from the precipice. I like that. That's exactly it!

DEBBIE

So why couldn't you tell me what happened at the meeting on my nice cozy and warm sofa?

JOSH

(He looks around) I wanted Ralphie to hear too.

DEBBIE

(She looks around somewhat apprehensively). You think he's here?

JOSH

I don't know. But I do know he's not on your sofa. If there is a chance, I wanted him to have it. I wanted him to hear what the others had to say about him. I think he deserves that. After all, none of us would have been sipping beers and trading stories if it weren't for him.

DEBBIE

That makes sense. So I'm dying to know. What happened?

JOSH

First of all, everyone showed up. There were seven of us all together. At first all of us were a little self conscious about being there. I mean telling strangers how you almost killed yourself is not exactly an icebreaker. I decided to open things up and went first. You already know my story so I won't repeat it. They all listened quietly. At first I was afraid that they would all think I was a fruit cake. But when I started to talk about Ralphie they all began to nod their heads. It was as if they completely understood what I had gone through. Then one by one each told how Ralphie had stopped them from killing themselves.

DEBBIE

Did he do it the same way he stopped you?

JOSH

No. That's the interesting part. It was different each time. There was this woman .She told how this guy she had been dating for over two years had dumped her for someone else. He did it by text message. She was up on the railing about to jump off the bridge when Ralphie showed up. He shouted to her HELP. I NEED YOU! Then he collapsed.

SURVIVOR

(Light up on a woman by the railing and dims on Josh and Debbie) I was afraid that the sight of me about to jump had caused him to have a heart attack. I had no choice, but to climb down and see if he was okay. I ran over and lifted his head off the ground.. As I held him he began to come around. He looked at me and smiled. He asked me if I was an angel. He wanted to know if he had died. I told him he had shouted for help and then passed out. He then said, “Oh yes. I remember you were up on that railing.” He asked if I was going to jump off the bridge? At first I was embarrassed to admit it. He asked me why I would do such a thing. I explained about getting dumped. At that point he began to laugh really hard. As first I was pissed, but his laughter was so infectious I began to laugh too. Then we talked some more, and I realized I was about to kill myself over a complete jerk. That was six years ago. I’m now married with two kids. I named the boy Ralph. *(Fade out on Woman and up on Josh and Debbie).*

DEBBIE

Wow. That’s some story. What about the others?

JOSH

There was this guy in his fifties. He had gone through some tough times. He lost his job and couldn’t find another one. His family had to file for bankruptcy and his house was in foreclosure. This is a guy who had worked hard his entire life and the wheels had come off. He felt like he had completely failed his family, and that they would be better off without him. The only thing he had left of any value was his life insurance policy. *(Light up on Man and dims on Josh and Debbie).*

SURVIVOR

I figured I was worth more dead than alive. So I planned to end it all on this bridge.. My problem was I needed to make it look like an accident so my family would get the insurance. I pulled my car off the road and punctured the fuel line. When I figured a lot of the brake fluid had dripped out I started to speed onto the bridge. My plan was for the car to go out of control and it would break through the railing. Anyway I got into my car and began to race toward the bridge. I then see there is a guy standing in the middle of the bridge, and I’m going to run over him. I stood on the brakes with both feet. The car does a complete 180 degrees spin. Now I’m sweating and shaking. I can hardly catch my breath when this old guy walks up to the car and knocks on the window. I opened the window and this guy sticks his head through and begins to shout, “Are you fucking nuts?” I got out of the car. My knees are shaking so bad I can hardly stand up. This old guy then takes me by my arm and walks me over to the railing. The guy sees I’m really upset. He says he’s sorry for yelling at me, and tells me his name is Ralphie. We sat down and after a while I apologize for almost running him down. I then explained I didn’t want to hurt anyone else. Then this Ralphie guy asked me if I was trying to kill myself. I admitted I was. I then told Ralphie about all of my problems, and how my family would be better off without me. Then Ralphie begins to punch me! He kicks me and punches me over and over again. I curled into a fetal position to protect myself from this mad man. Ralphie then looks down on me and says, “Does that hurt?” Well that’s how your family will feel. You’re nothing but a selfish son of bitch! If you ever come to my bridge again I’ll kick the living crap out of you”. *(Fade out on Man and up on Josh and Debbie).*

39 THE BRIDGE

DEBBIE

Gee. I didn't expect Ralphie to act like that.

JOSH

Either did I. The fact is he was different with each one of us. Sometimes he was caring and nice. Other times he acted like a complete prick. In each case he did what he had to do to make it work. Anyway one by one we each told our Ralphie stories. They were all different, and yet the same. *(He adjusts the large card he placed on the railing)* I had each one of us sign it. It says, Dear Ralphie we think of you everyday. I hope you heard this. *(They walk off together SL)*

(Ralphie walks out from SR. He picks up the card and reads it. He then carefully puts it into his pocket. He leans on the railing and looks out)

RALPHIE

I had forgotten about the guy I beat up. Thought I'd try some tough love. Seemed to work. I never saw him again. I'm glad he just didn't find another place to do it.. I often wonder if that's what some of them do. As for the girl I remember her real well. She was sweet. So she named her kid Ralph. That's kinda nice. Wonder what she'll tell him when he asked who he's named for. Up until recently I've had no regrets. Lately though I've wondered how things would have turned out if I had stuck around. If I had met a Ralphie to make me change my mind. Maybe though this is the way it was suppose to be. We are all rushing to some place. Maybe this bridge is my final destination. *(He stares out looking down at the river when the Young Blond Woman enters from S R and just listens to him)*. I've been thinking about my Mom lately. She was so funny and smart. Never retired. Worked full time until she was seventy nine years old. I can still remember her hospital room. She had suffered a series of small strokes. By the time I got there she was no longer conscious. Her doctor said I could take my time and say goodbye, and then they would turn off the monitors. I held her hand and said goodbye. I was too late. She was already gone. I cried because I didn't get to say goodbye and tell her how much I loved her. (I've heard that people who have near death experiences see a white light and then they see their loved ones who had already passed. I never saw a light or my Mom. Just this bridge. Maybe that is my punishment.

BLOND WOMAN

No point in beating yourself up. *(She walks down to him at the railing)* What's done is done.

RALPHIE

You're spending a lot of time on this bridge lately. Slow news day?

BLOND WOMAN

No such thing. Congrats on the club.

40 **THE BRIDGE**

RALPHIE

Don't make fun of me. I'm kind of proud of it.

BLOND WOMAN

I'm proud of you Ralphie. You've been a nice surprise.

RALPHIE

I still don't understand how you can be surprised. You always seem to know everything.

BLOND WOMAN

What makes you think I know everything? Fact is sometimes shit really does just happen.

ACT II, SCENE V

(Sophie enters holding a urn from SL. She goes to DR and puts the urn on the railing)

SOPHIE

Okay Joe here we are once again. The memorial service went very nicely. Quite a good turn out actually. You would have been pleased. It was a long hard day. I'm still a bit shaky. Noah didn't show up. No surprise. People asked where he was. I was embarrassed I couldn't give them an answer. I kept my promise to you. I sent him an email and told him about tonight. He didn't reply. Didn't even acknowledge it. I'm sorry Joe. I know you were hoping that this would bring us together. *(A pool of light slowly comes up UR and Joe is standing in it)*. Anyway I wanted to tell you how much I miss you. Even though we fought a lot. I hate being left behind. I've been thinking of what I should do next. To be honest I don't have a clue. I guess I could travel, but I don't want to go without you. Maybe I could get involved in some groups. I just never liked groups. Committees and meetings just aren't my cup of tea. Oh well. I've got lots of time to figure it out. *(Noah enters from SL)*

NOAH

Hi Mom *(He looks around)* This must be the place.

SOPHIE

(Surprised) Noah. I can't believe you came. Nice of you to fit us your busy schedule. Sorry you couldn't make it to the funeral

NOAH

I thought this is the funeral.

SOPHIE

Don't be a smart ass! You know damn well what I mean.

41 **THE BRIDGE**

NOAH

(He walks to her) I'm sorry about Dad. I didn't really have any fight with him. You're the one I wanted to hurt.

SOPHIE

That's nice. You let your father who loved you go to his grave thinking he had done something terrible to you. You really are a piece of work. How did you turn out like this?

NOAH

You should know. You're the one that made me this way. You can take full credit.

SOPHIE

What a load of crap! What did I do to you that was so terrible? We gave you everything you ever wanted. We took you to museums and theaters, and ball games. We sent you to summer camp even when we couldn't afford to go on vacation ourselves. We paid for your college one hundred percent. What else do you think you deserved that we so heartlessly withheld?

NOAH

Don't we have to take care of Dad?

SOPHIE

Now you're worried about Dad? Don't worry about your father. He's in no rush.

NOAH

(Looks at his watch) Yeah but I am.

SOPHIE

Oh I'm sorry. How inconsiderate of me to waste your time.

NOAH

This probably wasn't a good idea. I shouldn't have come. There's no point in trying to talk to you. I don't know how Dad put up with you of these years.

SOPHIE

(She slaps him) Because he was a friggin saint! Don't you presume you know anything about your father and me. We weren't perfect, but for forty years we loved each other. In all that time we never intentionally did anything mean to one another. He might have been a little self centered, and I could be tough to live with, but we always were there for each other. We never just took off. **WE WERE THERE FOR EACH OTHER! SO DON'T YOU DARE TALK ABOUT OUR MARRIAGE!** *(She breathes hard for a moment)* Your father always loved me, and I will always love him.

42 THE BRIDGE

NOAH

(Rubbing his face) You can still hit pretty hard. Okay let's get this over with once and for all. Yeah you gave me lots of stuff. You just never gave me what I needed. I needed to be better. I just didn't fit in. Not in school. Not at home. Not anywhere. I just never felt like I belonged. It was your job as my mother to make that happen. I'm a thirty five year old man and I still don't have a clue how to be happy. I blame that on you. You never showed me how to be happy. The fact is I never saw you happy. Living with you was so depressing. I always felt it was my fault that you never smiled, or laughed. My childhood had everything except joy. Dad was always at work. He would leave early and come home late. He'd try to kid around and lighten things up, but it was just never enough. I needed you to make it right. To make me feel like I was wanted and not just a responsibility.

SOPHIE

(Sarcastic) Oh you poor baby. Mommy didn't teach you how to be happy. Give me a break! Life isn't about happiness. It's about survival. I taught you how to survive.

NOAH

Well you did a good job. I learned to survive without you. The fact is most days I don't think life is worth living. You don't have any ideas how many times I thought about ending it all. I even came out to this bridge once and thought about jumping off.

SOPHIE

(Surprised) Jumping off? So if you were that unhappy why didn't you?

NOAH

It so happens I met this really nice old guy. He took the time to talk to me. I explained how unhappy I was. How I felt I would never be happy. That life was just too hard. You know what he said then? He said if I really felt that way I should jump off this bridge. He didn't try to talk me out of it. I didn't expect that. He said if I was absolutely positive that there was no hope I should end it right here. He then asked me if I was one hundred percent positive. I couldn't honestly say I was one hundred percent positive. Then he suggested I should wait until I was. He said, "what's the rush?" "The bridge will be here tomorrow".

SOPHIE

So a perfect stranger gave you something your family who loves you couldn't?

NOAH

Yes. Ralphie gave me the hope that life had possibilities.

SOPHIE

Ralphie?

43 **THE BRIDGE**

NOAH

That was his name. I don't know where he came from. But that night on this bridge he was here for me. That's why when you said Dad wanted to end it here I had to come. It's the only reason I'm here. Call it weird, but I took it as a sign. Somehow I owed it to Ralphie to come. I don't expect you to understand.

SOPHIE

No you're wrong there. I do understand. It makes perfect sense. Your father had a feeling about this bridge. I never understood it. He felt that it was a special place. Maybe it is.

NOAH

I had no idea Dad felt that way.

SOPHIE

Actually did you know he proposed to me right here on this spot?

NOAH

You're kidding?

SOPHIE

No right here our lives together began. On our Fortieth Anniversary he brought me out here and proposed again.

NOAH

Why would he do that?

SOPHIE

He said I never gave him an answer the first time. Funny how things have a way of going in circles. Noah, I'm sorry I hit you. It's just been really hard lately. I'm also sorry I wasn't a better mother. I don't want you to think I didn't want you. That's not true. You were always wanted. I just wasn't good at showing my feelings. That doesn't mean they weren't there. You're right about one thing. I've never been a happy person. Today there's medication for that. Maybe I should try them. The fact is your father was an optimist. He could always find something to laugh about even in the toughest of times. He kept me going. I don't know what I'll do without him. *(She begins to cry. Noah comes closer to her. He starts to put his arm around her, but then changes his mind).*

NOAH

I guess it's time to say goodbye to Dad. *(Sophie opens the urn and pours it over the railing).*

SOPHIE

Goodbye my love. *(The light UR on Joe slowly fades out).* I suppose you don't have time for a cup of coffee with your mother?

44 **THE BRIDGE**

NOAH

I have time. I just don't want to. *(He exits SL leaving Sophie alone)*

FADE OUT

ACT II, SCENE V

(Lights up on Joe and Ralphie SC)

JOE

I'll be a son of gun. Did you see that?

RALPHIE

I see and hear everything on this bridge.

JOE

I don't mean any disrespect by this, but are you God?

RALPHIE

(Smiles) No. I'm not God. *(He sticks out his hand)* I'm Ralph. Most people call me Ralphie.

JOE

No shit. You're the Ralphie Noah was talking about?

RALPHIE

Must be. I think I remember him. Some make bigger impressions than others. I don't think he was the real thing. Got the impression he was thinking about ending it, but not really committed to the idea yet. Just to be safe I came and had a talk with him. From a stats point of view he was just a maybe and not an actual save.

JOE

Either way I appreciate you talking him out of it. I'm Joe. I'm Noah's father. Or at least I used to be his father. I don't know what I am anymore.

RALPHIE

You're still his father. Just because you're dead doesn't mean you get a free pass. Some people assume they can stop worrying about their kids after they kick the bucket. Afraid that's not true.

JOE

You mean I get to keep an eye on him?

RALPHIE

Sure you can look. You just can't touch.

45 **THE BRIDGE**

JOE

So Ralphie I assume we both have kicked the bucket. *(Walks around looking)* What exactly are we doing here? I mean I always liked this bridge, but is this where I'm supposed to be?

RALPHIE

If you're here then you're in the right place. Didn't I hear you tell your wife this is the place you wanted to spend eternity?

JOE

I guess so.

RALPHIE

Well then. *(He spreads his arms and smiles)* Welcome to eternity.

JOE

I really like this bridge. Don't get me wrong. It's just that it's a little quiet. Not a lot happening.

RALPHIE

Looks can be deceiving.

JOE

Okay. I'll take your word for it. So Ralphie what do you do for laughs around here?

RALPHIE

No one has ever asked me that before. What did you have in mind? I've always been a serious kind of guy. Never really a party animal. *(He thinks a moment)* Maybe it's time for a change. I'm kind of curious how things have changed.

JOE

How long have you been here?

RALPHIE

Just over ten years.

JOE

Ten years? Well quite a lot has happened in the last ten years. Mostly technological advances. Everyone has cell phones that have internet in the phones. T.V. has changed a lot. They have mostly reality T.V. now.

RALPHIE

What's that?

46 **THE BRIDGE**

JOE

Good question. Come to think of it, people haven't changed that much. We just have different stuff.

RALPHIE

So you want to go to town?

JOE

No not really. I think you're right to stay on the bridge. In someways your life has more reality than theirs and you're dead.

RALPHIE

As crazy as that sounds it kinda of makes sense. When I was living I spent most of my time worrying about stupid things.

JOE

What did you do for a living?

RALPHIE

Lots of stuff. I worked in stores mostly. I never really did anything that made a difference. I just survived and paid the bills. Sometimes I think the reason I ended it all was over pure boredom. In someways I didn't really start living until I was dead.

JOE

(A little shocked) So you killed yourself? Wow! I would never had done that. I hung on with both hands right to the end. The fact is I miss it already. Ralphie can I ask you a question?

RALPHIE

Sure.

JOE

I had an experience right here on this bridge. I met a young woman with blond hair. You're going think this is crazy, but I got the feeling that she was God.

RALPHIE

Interesting.

JOE

Interesting yes or interesting no.

RALPHIE

Both.

47 **THE BRIDGE**

JOE

It's probably a silly question.

RALPHIE

Probably.

JOE

Probably? Probably that she was God or probably that it was a silly question?

RALPHIE

Relax Joe. You're not going to become smarter now that your dead.

JOE

Sorry about asking stupid questions. It just never occurred to me that God is a woman. I mean I've always joked about God being a woman, but I never really thought it was true.

RALPHIE

Actually, I've never thought of it one way or the other. I do, however, wonder sometimes what it would have been like to have been a woman.

JOE

I must admit I've wondered that too.

RALPHIE

So you've thought of yourself as a woman?

JOE

Not consciously. I've had dreams when I've been a woman. My dreams are really vivid. At the time it never seemed strange.

RALPHIE

(Looks SL) Okay someone is coming.

JOE

Can they see and hear us?

RALPHIE

Sometimes. Just remember God gave you two ears and one mouth. First you have to learn to listen. Believe me when I say that is harder than it sounds. *(They both exit SR and Noah enters from SL and walks SC. The Blond Woman is now standing UR listening to him).*

48 **THE BRIDGE**

NOAH

Hi Pop. Don't know if you can hear me. I would like to think so. I did come for your...what do I call it? Your sprinkling I guess. Mom and I had it out. I've decided to just let it go. We're never going to see eye to eye. You know that old Ghandi saying, "An eye for eye leaves the whole world blind". The reason I came tonight was to apologize to you. I know it's too late now, but I feel bad that you thought I was mad at you. You weren't the perfect father, but I wasn't the perfect son either. I just wanted to tell you I regret not clearing the air before you died.

BLOND WOMAN

(Walking down to him) Excuse me. I couldn't help but over hearing what you were saying. It was really very nice. Especially the part about wishing you could have cleared the air. You sounded like you really meant that.

NOAH

Where the hell did you come from?

BLOND WOMAN

Back there.

NOAH

Well I was having a very private conversation.

BLOND WOMAN

I'm sorry. I thought you were talking to yourself.

NOAH

I guess it would look like that, but I was talking to my Dad.

BLOND WOMAN

(Looking around) I'm sorry I didn't see anyone else.

NOAH

He's not actually here.

BLOND WOMAN

You know there are people you can talk to about that.

NOAH

My father recently died. I didn't get to say goodbye. We had some problems, and he died before resolving them.

BLOND WOMAN

Oh I see. You're feeling guilty. Now guilt I understand. I've heard that guilt can move mountains.

49 **THE BRIDGE**

NOAH

Isn't that love? Love can move mountains.

BLOND WOMAN

That works too. *(She looks at her watch)* I've got to go. I'm sorry I interrupted your talk with your father. *(She starts to leave and then turns back)* By the way would you mind if I ask you a question? It's a hypothetical question.

NOAH

I guess. What's the question?

BLOND WOMAN

If you had the choice of having all the money you could ever spend or having let's say twenty minutes with your dad to resolve things which would you choose?

NOAH

(Without any hesitation) I'd take the money.

BLOND WOMAN

So you think having a chance to say goodbye to your father isn't worth the price? How about if you gave up the money he would still be alive?

NOAH

For how long?

BLONDWOMAN

Fair enough. Let's say for another two years.

NOAH

That's a tough question. I mean, of course, it would be nice for him to be alive..

BLOND WOMAN

But the money would be nicer. That's okay. You're just being honest. Not really very nice, but honest. I can respect that. As long as we're being honest I'm not really very surprised. *(She starts to walk away)*

NOAH

You might not be surprised, but I am. I always thought that I was a nice person. I guess I'm not that nice.

BLOND WOMAN

Funny how that works out.

50 **THE BRIDGE**

NOAH

You're a very skeptical person.

BLOND WOMAN

I wouldn't say skeptical. I just don't believe there are any right or wrong answers There are just answers. You didn't pass or fail. You just simply answered my questions. Does that make you feel better?

NOAH

Not really.

BLOND WOMAN

Well then maybe you are nicer than you thought after all. At least you feel remorse for not saving your father's life. Can you live with that?

NOAH

I guess I have to. *(She starts to leave)* What if I want to change my mind?

BLOND WOMAN

It was just a hypothetical question. *(She exits SL)*

(After the Young Woman exits Noah is upset and begins to pace around. He then climbs up on the railing. As he looks down at the river Ralphie appears SR)

RALPHIE

You again! Get the hell down from there! *(A very surprised Noah climbs down from the railing and Ralphie walks up to him)* Didn't we already deal with this crap?

NOAH

Ralphie is that you?

RALPHIE

Who else do you think would come out here and pull your sorry ass off this bridge not once but twice? Are you telling me you are now one hundred percent sure this is the right thing to do?

NOAH

Well maybe not one hundred percent. Maybe seventy percent.

RALPHIE

So is this the new math? Seventy percent is maybe one hundred percent. On the way down are you going to recalculate to make sure you got the math right? Unfriggenbelievable! Joe told me you're a smart kid. I think you're an idiot. A certifiable moron!

51 **THE BRIDGE**

NOAH

Joe? That's my father's name. You knew my father?

RALPHIE

Yeah. I know your father. Nice guy. A little too optimistic for my tastes, but all in all a good guy. You know we were just talking about you, and here you are about to end it. Talk about fate.. *(Paces around)* Sometimes I think life is all about timing. Good timing and bad timing. Doesn't seem to make any difference. If you're in the right or wrong place at a certain time something will happen. Sometimes it will be good. Sometimes it will be bad.

NOAH

How did you know my father?

RALPHIE

We hang out. *(Looking around)* He should be around here somewhere.

NOAH

My father is dead. He died four days ago.

RALPHIE

Your point being?

NOAH

(Becoming aware for the first time) Ralphie are you dead? Am I really talking to a ghost?

RALPHIE

I really don't like labels. Anyway some people are technically alive, but they've been dead for years.

NOAH

Oh My God! You are dead! *(He jumps around excitedly)*. A ghost just saved my life. Twice. Why would you do that? Am I destined to do something important? Is that why you intervened?

RALPHIE

I don't know what you're destined to do. I just know you're not going to do it on my bridge.

NOAH

Is my father okay?

52 **THE BRIDGE**

RALPHIE

He looks okay to me. He's a little antsy. Doesn't think this bridge has enough action. Although watching you not taking the opportunity to save his life might change his mind.

NOAH

You mean that offer from the blond woman was for real?

RALPHIE

Sounded real to me.

NOAH

Oh my God what have I just done? I could have saved my father's life and I didn't do it. How can I ever make this up to him?

RALPHIE

Funny you should ask. Next Thursday at 7 pm go to the Dublin Pub. Find a guy named Josh. Tell him Ralphie sent you. If you do that and stay the hell off my bridge your father will be okay with that.

NOAH

How do you know that?

RALPHIE

(Exasperated) Who do you think sent me out here? Again!

(Noah gives him a long look and nods. He then quickly exits SL. Ralphie starts to walk UR when a woman about sixty appears DL. She is obviously confused as she looks around. Ralphie stops and walks over to her). Holy shit! Patricia is that you?

PATRICIA

(Turns and sees him for the first time) Ralphie?

RALPHIE

This is incredible! I haven't seen you since I

PATRICIA

killed yourself. *(Looking at him)* You look good. In fact, you don't look a day older.

RALPHIE

Yeah. I guess I found the cure for aging. Sooo what brings you

53 **THE BRIDGE**

PATRICIA

here? I really don't know. I was driving along on the Old Frontage Road. The last thing I remember a big semi was coming right at me. Then I was here. Ralphie am I dead?

RALPHIE

Probably. So what have you

PATRICIA

been up to? This is very upsetting. I have plans. Appointments. People are expecting me. I'm booked on a cruise, and the deposit is non refundable. *(She looks at herself)* And would you look at this outfit. I don't even like it. I just threw it on this morning and hurried out. Do I have to wear this forever?

RALPHIE

(Goes to comfort her) Calm down It's not so bad being

PATRICIA

dead. Well you would know. How could you up and leave me like that? Was I such a terrible wife that you had to kill yourself?

RALPHIE

No you weren't a terrible wife. I just wasn't

PATRICIA

happy. But to kill yourself. There has to be more than being unhappy. Everyone is unhappy sometime. They don't go and jump off a bridge. There has to be more than being unhappy. Didn't you even consider how it would affect me?

RALPHIE

Patricia it was a long time ago. What's the point of bringing

PATRICIA

it up now? Well Ralphie I would have brought it up earlier if you weren't dead. The fact of the matter is I was confused and hurt and then just pissed off for ten years, three months, and two days. So if it's not too much trouble how about you tell me why. You didn't even leave a note! How could you kill yourself and not even say goodbye?

RALPHIE

To be honest I didn't think you would even read one. I assumed you would just decide why I had done it for me.

54 **THE BRIDGE**

PATRICIA

(Shocked) I don't know what to say to that. I can't even fathom such a statement. You assumed I would just know?

RALPHIE

Patricia you always knew everything I was about to say. You finished my every

PATRICIA

thought. My God! I did it again. I'm sorry Ralphie. I just can't seem to stop doing that. Is that why? Did you kill yourself because I was a rude jerk who kept interrupting you? Did I push you off of this bridge?

RALPHIE

Of course not! I made that decision on my own! It's that you've always been so much smarter than me. I assumed you would know why even if I didn't. Does that make sense?

PATRICIA

I don't know. I wasn't expecting that answer. Ralphie did you love me?

RALPHIE

I still love you.

PATRICIA

I love you too. I always loved you. *(She walks around and looks at the bridge)* So have you been here the whole time?

RALPHIE

Yes

PATRICIA

What have you been

RALPHIE

up to? *(The look at each other and smile)* I'm so glad you asked. I have so much to tell you!

(The Young Blond Woman appears in a light UR and smiles at Patricia).

PATRICIA

(Seeing the Young Woman she is drawn to her) I wish I could stay and listen. Maybe another time....another place. *(She exits with the Young Woman SR).*

RALPHIE

(Calling after her) Patricia don't go! I'm not ready for you to go!

FADE OUT

55 THE BRIDGE

ACT II, SCENE VI

(Sophie enters and goes DC and looks over the railing. She is holding a single flower. Josh is UR looking at his watch expecting someone)

SOPHIE

(Takes a deep breath and then begins to speak). Hi Joe. It's been a year today. Sometimes I wish I hadn't listened to you, and just buried you in a cemetery. It seems strange to come out here to this old bridge to visit you. *(She looks around)* Although in some ways it's nice. Noah did show up. You were right about that. He did get his final say. I haven't heard from him since. Don't think I ever will. He told me why he was mad, but I can't say I really understand. It's funny. He makes me look like an optimist. Can you believe that? Anyway at least he showed up. That's something. I want you to know that I miss you. I think about you all the time. Even though sometimes you pissed me off I still loved you with all my heart. I know I could be tough to be with all those years. I just couldn't help it. I was always so jealous of you. You never seemed sad. Oh you'd get angry, but it wouldn't last. You always just put it behind you, and moved on. God I wish I could have done that. I never put anything behind me.

JOSH

(He notices Sophie and goes over to her). Hi.

SOPHIE

(Looks at him distrustfully). Do I know you?

JOSH

No I don't think so. I just saw you standing here, and there was something about you. You looked so sad.

SOPHIE

I looked sad? How the hell is that any of your business?

JOSH

I'm sorry I didn't mean to upset you. It's just this bridge is a special place for me. It makes me feel like I should try to help if someone looks sad. I didn't mean anything by it.

SOPHIE

Interesting. This bridge is a special place for me too. Why is it special for you?

JOSH

You're going to think I'm nuts.

56 **THE BRIDGE**

SOPHIE

Too late..

JOSH

I guess I had that one coming. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt whatever you were doing. I'll just go over there. *(He turns and starts to walk away)*.

SOPHIE

Hold on a second. First tell me why this bridge is so special to you.

JOSH

Well it's kind of personal.

SOPHIE

(Looking around) So who am I going to tell. Come on. You brought it up. Let's have it.

JOSH

Well the fact is I once tried to kill myself on this bridge.

SOPHIE

No kidding? So I suppose you were going to jump off.

JOSH

(Uncomfortable) No. Actually I was going to hang myself right over there.

SOPHIE

Hang yourself? Who comes to a bridge to hang themselves? People come to a bridge to jump off. It would never occur to me to hang myself on a bridge. Seems kind of pointless. Maybe pointless is the wrong word. Frankly it just seems dumb..

JOSH

Has anyone ever told you that you're a very negative and disagreeable person?

SOPHIE

No. You're the first. *(He turns to leave)* Hey kid I'm sorry. As my late husband used to say when you're right you're right. I am a very negative person. He always said I was the glass is half empty kind of person. The fact is I'm here because this bridge is a special place for me too.

JOSH

Really? Since I told you.

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SOPHIE

Sure why not? Forty one years ago my husband proposed to me right here on this spot.

JOSH

That's nice.

SOPHIE

And then one year ago today he died right here.

JOSH

Wow!

SOPHIE

Yeah wow. Anyway his final request was that I bury him here. So even though I don't believe in cremation I honored his request. I put his ashes over this railing. Tonight is the first anniversary of his death so I came here tonight to visit.. If you don't mind I want to be alone a few minutes. *(Sophie moves over DR and is now in half light).*

DEBBIE

(Entering from SL. Josh goes to her and gives her a hug). Josh what's with this bridge again?

JOSH

Thanks for coming Debbie. I promise this is the last time I'll ask you to come here. It's just that I have something important to say, and this seemed like the right place to do it.

DEBBIE

It's okay Josh. I know how you feel about this place. After all you almost ended it right here.

JOSH

Exactly! That's why I want to start it here too. *(He takes out a ring box and get's down on one knee)* Debbie you make me feel like life with worth living. I wantto spend it with you and only you. Will you marry me? *(He opens the ring box and holds it up to her to take).*

DEBBIE

(Astounded) Josh this is really nice of you to ask me. I'm just surprised. I'm sorry, but I never could marry you.

JOSH

(Rising) Why not?

DEBBIE

This is really embarrassing. Josh I met someone else. In fact I met him at one of your Ralphie Meetings. We've been seeing each other for quite a while, and its gotten serious.

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JOSH

I thought we were serious. Hell we've been together for over a year. A year is serious isn't it?

DEBBIE

We haven't really been together. I mean we hang out. I like you as a friend. A really interesting friend. I've never thought of you as a boyfriend. We've never even slept together.

JOSH

I didn't want to pressure you.

DEBBIE

Josh I'm twenty seven years old. Did you think I was still a virgin? I just felt you weren't interested. I thought we were just friends. Now I feel terrible. I would never want to hurt you. It's just that your timing sucks. Listen I have to go. Take care of yourself. *(She quickly exits SL. Josh then walks DC and leans over the railing).*

SOPHIE

You're not going to hang yourself are you?

JOSH

It didn't occur to me to bring any rope. I just brought this. *(He opens the ring box and shows her the ring).*

SOPHIE

(Looking at the ring) Tiffany cut diamond. Very classic. You've got good taste. So since you're still holding it I assume she said no.

JOSH

Yes she said no. She said she thought we were just friends. She didn't think of me romantically.

SOPHIE

Ouch. I'm not going to try to cheer you up.

JOSH

Thanks. I appreciate that.

SOPHIE

I hate it when people try to cheer me up. Sometimes you have a right to feel sad. May I ask you a personal question?

JOSH

It depends on how personal.

59 **THE BRIDGE**

SOPHIE

When I ask you'll know.

JOSH

What the hell. Shoot away.

SOPHIE

You said that last year you were considering killing yourself. Are you still thinking about doing it?

JOSH

No.

SOPHIE

Good. Then you can buy a disagreeable old lady a cup of coffee.

JOSH

(He looks at her for moment thinking) Not so long ago I didn't have one person in the world who would want to have a cup of coffee with me. Yeah that would be nice. *(He offers her his arm and they walk off SL).*

FADE OUT

END