

~ THE ROAD ~

THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY

EPISODE TWO: PRAGUE

By

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and

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FADE IN:

EXT. OUT OF FOCUS SHOT - MORNING

MILAN KUNDERA stands out in front of the airport terminal. He looks straight into the camera and recites the following:

MILAN KUNDERA

(Speaks in Czech with  
subtitles in English)

The first time I had sex, I was 15.  
That's right 15. I am now 65. That  
means a sex life of 50 years  
duration. Assuming that I have made  
love on the average of twice a  
week...a very modest estimate. That  
means 100 times a year or 5,000  
times so far.

(Pauses)

If an orgasm last five seconds, I  
have 25,000 seconds of orgasms to  
my credit. Which comes to a total  
of six hours, 56 minutes...Not bad,  
eh?

CUT TO:

OPENING CREDITS

Music written by Czech composer Janacek plays in the background.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ATATURK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Ataturk International Airport is a large international airport, with two terminals, one domestic and one international.

A mixture of old and new, the airport is nondescript despite its exotic locale. A random scattering of shops and business establishments are its make-up -- a 24-hour money exchange office, a few ATMs, fast food joints, several travel agencies, rental car companies and a post office.

CUT TO:

TRUE LOVE walks through the terminal, followed by MR. E. They slowly make their way toward the gate. TRUE LOVE hands two tickets to the clerk. The clerk inspects the tickets as TRUE LOVE nods his head, indicating that MR. E is with him.

They check in and walk down the gangway leading to the plane that will take them to Prague.

MR. E

(V.O.)

What is Prague? Who is Prague? What is any city, but a collective gathering of tribes, infrastructures, governments, religions, and consciousness. A place where the chosen ones lead the anonymous. Where the hunger artist mingles with the man on the flying trapeze. A place where everybody's in such a hurry that life is everywhere but in front of them.

SCENES OF MR. E WALKING SLOWLY, WHILE THE REST OF THE WORLD IS RUSHING AND HURRYING AROUND HIM.

They enter the plane and quickly locate their first-class seats.

MR. E

(V.O.)

It's strange how most men pursue pleasure with such breathless haste that they hurry past it.

As TRUE LOVE and MR. E settle into their seats, an attractive female FLIGHT ATTENDANT approaches. She is unaware of the tension brewing between TRUE LOVE and MR. E.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Good morning gentlemen. Would you like something to drink?

TRUE LOVE

Water, please.

MR. E wearily lifts his head to answer.

MR. E

(Groggily)

I'll have a water also. And do you have a couple of aspirin?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'll see what I can do, sir.

MR. E

Thanks.

MR. E sinks into his seat as his eyes partially close...

MR. E

(V.O.)

All men are beasts, fighting to  
break way from the instincts that  
compels them to chaos and damage.  
It gets tricky in the murky waters  
of undefined romance.

(Pauses)

I abhor that humans can cause each  
other so much harm.

As MR. E slips into a deep sleep, the plane takes off and  
begins its flight to Prague.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DREAM SEQUENCE

MR. E walks through an ivory gate. He sees ex-lovers,  
journalists and ex-managers. It is a sea of people from his  
life.

The scene is Felliniesque with clowns, satyricons and  
sideshow folk. In the distance, MR. E sees his mother and  
goes to embrace her, but he can't because she is merely a  
shadow.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN

(Speaking Spanish with  
English subtitles)

Everything near becomes distant,  
therefore artists must believe that  
whatever happens to them is an  
instrument. Everything has been  
given for an end. Humiliations,  
embarrassments, misfortunes, and  
discord.

The UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN morphs into SUZANNE, whose image  
blurs, fractures and finally fades.

MR. E

(V.O.)

I met her at the in-between, the precarious place between reality and dream, the transient timeless landscape of heart and soul, wandering astray, sown frightening paths of darkness that lead nowhere, then immediately before the end, panic and amazement.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. PRAGUE-RUZYNI AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

MR. E walks slowly through the airport, passes by KUNDERA who is sitting on a bench. SUZANNE and JUDE CAIN, a former confidante of MR. E's and music critic turned paparazzi, stand nearby and watch MR. E as he walks by.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT LOADING ZONE - CONTINUOUS

MR. E walks out the door and spots TRUE LOVE waiting for a car.

TRUE LOVE

(Points to the car)

The car's over --

MR. E

-- How's the girl?

TRUE LOVE

(Smug)

Her name's Dilek.

MR. E

Yes, I know.

TRUE LOVE

(Eyes widen)

Do you?

MR. E

Yes True Love, I do.

(Pauses)

Why all the hostility?

TRUE LOVE

I get a little hostile when people attempt suicide.

(MORE)

TRUE LOVE (cont'd)  
Especially when certain aging  
troubadour-playboy- Don-Juan-  
Casanova-types manipulate them for  
their own gain.

MR. E  
I see.

TRUE LOVE  
What do you see?

MR. E  
(Winces)  
Well, I thought I saw Suzanne.

TRUE LOVE  
In case you've forgotten, Suzanne  
is gone.

MR. E  
(Irritated)  
Listen you son of a bitch, I know  
Suzanne is gone. So do me a favor  
and cut the shit and tell me how  
Dilek is.

TRUE LOVE muses and collects his thoughts.

TRUE LOVE  
The doctors don't know yet. She's  
semi-comatose. She's lost a lot of  
blood. And they say she keeps  
uttering this strange saying.

MR. E  
What saying?

TRUE LOVE  
Hold on, I wrote it down.  
(Pulls out a piece of  
paper and reads)  
Satan oscillate my metallic  
sonatas.

MR. E  
It's a palindrome.

TRUE LOVE  
A what?

MR. E  
A palindrome. A word or group of  
words that is the same forward or  
backwards.

TRUE LOVE

What is that supposed to mean?

MR. E

Shortly before her suicide, my mother wrote a collection of poems about the myth of Orpheus. The story goes that Orpheus was overcome by grief due the untimely demise of his beloved bride Eurydice. He set out to charm the king of the underworld to resurrect her.

(Pauses)

Orpheus was a masterful musician who played a song on his lyre called "Satan oscillate my metallic sonatas," a linguistic palindrome that captivated the king. Descending into the bowels of Hades, the king brought Eurydice back from the tortures of the damned with one stipulation: That Orpheus not look back at her until they were under the light of the sun. As Eurydice followed him, he heard something and turned his head. What he saw was pain, horror and the death of love. Orpheus lost Eurydice forever.

(Pauses)

I believe my mother used Orpheus' song as a kind of mantra to try and bring back my father. Unfortunately, I think it cast some kind of metaphysical spell on her.

TRUE LOVE

And you told this to Dilek?

MR. E

Apparently so.

TRUE LOVE

What do you mean, apparently so?

MR. E

(Takes a deep breath)

The night's a little blurry. As I recall, I consumed quite a few libations.

TRUE LOVE

(With aversion)

Why is it that you feel compelled  
to drink so much?

MR. E

Well, sometimes I drink to  
remember, sometimes I drink to  
forget, and sometimes I drink to  
suffer twice as much.

TRUE LOVE

(Shakes his head and eases  
up)

You've always had a way with words.  
I guess that's why they call you  
the poet.

MR. E

No. My father was the poet. I'm  
just a shadow, a little lost  
Dorothy trying to find my way back  
to Kansas...

TRUE LOVE

I wouldn't under value yourself, my  
friend. However, there is a  
universal law: a cause and effect,  
and action, reaction.

MR. E

I appreciate the sentiment. I guess  
I do tend to subvert those  
universal laws a bit much.

(Pauses)

Let me know when you hear anything  
about Dilek.

TRUE LOVE

(Nods)

I will.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A DARK STAGE

Two MR. E marionettes appear on the stage. One is dressed in  
black, one is dressed in white. Each brandishes a saber.  
Suddenly, they engage in a sword fight.

The one in white stabs the one in black through the heart.  
The one in black falls to the ground. After a moment, the one  
in black gets up and starts snapping his fingers.

The one in white joins in as a band of marionette gargoyles surround the two and begin playing a song of MR E's.

An eclectic cast of puppets enter the stage and start dancing to the music. It's a regular marionette a-go-go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AIRPORT LOADING ZONE - CONTINUOUS

A limousine pulls up. TRUE LOVE and MR. E get in. The limo wheels around a curve and cruises through the city of Prague.

"Sunday Morning" by Velvet Underground weaves across a stream of cityscapes and scenes of life in Prague. They pass through a vibrant maze of Gothic and baroque spires, art-nouveau facades and cubist structures.

MR. E

(V.O.)

There are no unilateral agreements when it comes to sexuality. I'd like to hunt those prototypes and shoot them down. Along with all those prophets of cliché, free will and providence.

(Pauses)

Is this another dream or is it a conscious aberration? It seems everything blurs and straddles like the music of dissonance and anarchy.

(Pauses)

In the end, all my songs are just lies covering deep truths. Charades and hallucinations resounding through starless air, beginning to weep strange languages.

The limousine continues over an arched stone bridge and stops.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL SEVEN DAYS - CONTINUOUS

The limousine pulls up in front of the Hotel Seven Days, near Wenceslav Square. The door is opened and MR. E and TRUE LOVE step out.

MR. E POV:

MR. E and TRUE LOVE are greeted by a miner who tips a hat fitted with a head lamp, followed by a thin man juggling three broken bottles. A sumo wrestler attends to the luggage.

CUT TO:

INT. CATHEDRAL

C.U. of a clock. It begins to melt.

SMASH CUT TO:

A painting of Salvador Dali's "Persistence of Memory."

SMASH CUT TO:

An apparition of Russian leader Vladimir Lenin appears on the keys of a piano.

Random notes play atonal scales.

SMASH CUT TO:

A midget in a tuxedo with a cane and a top hat.

MIDGET #1

(Dances a little soft shoe)

Conflict, we need some conflict, gawl darn it, dagnabit. We need to break the fourth wall. We need drama, tragedy, Shakespeare. A little bit of razzle, a little bit of dazzle.

(Pauses)

We need some showbiz, baby.

He breaks into uncontrollable laughter and spins wildly on his back.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The lobby is hopelessly decadent, done up in a sort of neo-renaissance style.

The BELLHOPS (formerly the miner, juggler and sumo wrestler) are dressed in their normal attire. They walk along with TRUE LOVE toward the front desk.

MR. E is standing nearby. He gazes down, sees a beetle crawl across his shoes, looks up and smiles.

In the middle of the lobby, a strange-looking, moon-dog man plays an odd, homemade instrument.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN DULCE, NEW MEXICO AND BOULDER,  
COLORADO - DAY

FLASHBACK

Random shots of MR. E exchanging musical ideas with Tuvan throat singers.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO

INTERVIEWER

What was your time in Dulce, New Mexico like?

MR. E

It was an eclectic blend of wanderers, mystics and mad men. I was also fortunate enough to meet up with a group of Tuvan throat singers.

INTERVIEWER

Tuvan throat singers?

MR. E

Yeah, they're from Tuva, in outer Mongolia. These singers were like shamans. Their music reaches such a deep place, I can't begin to describe it.

INTERVIEWER

What else did you experience in Dulce?

MR. E

I had an interesting encounter with a local conspiracy theorist. He claimed Dulce had a bio-genetics lab where weird experiments were being conducted.

INTERVIEWER

(Chuckles)

Well, what did you make of that?

MR. E

Well, I did see some horrifically looking creatures milling about, especially late at night. Of course, that could have been the peyote.

MR. E and the INTERVIEWER share a laugh.

INTERVIEWER

On a different note, tell me about the new record...

CUT TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO

The HOLY PRIMITIVE are recording a new record, their seventh.

SHADOW MARTIN paces back and forth in front of the console. He's in an agitated state and brandishing a Colt .45 pistol.

MR. E

Shadow, are you going to whack somebody or are we gonna make some music?

SHADOW stops in his tracks and smiles. He leans over the board, sniffs up a line of coke, and speaks into the talk-back microphone.

SHADOW

I know a few son of a bitches I'd like to whack. Let's try it again and dig deep. Let's do one for the victims, the victims of times apostrophe.

The HOLY PRIMITIVE fall into a song -- a meditative, psychedelic, ambient jam.

Random shots of various band members, MR. E, and others in attendance.

SHADOW's head is moving over, under, sideways, and down, in rhythm with the music. He takes a shot from a large bottle of brandy and snorts another line of coke as he continues to groove.

The song ends. SHADOW presses a talkback button on the recording console.

SHADOW  
Now, that's what I'm talking about.  
Come on in and let's have a listen.

The band members lay down their instruments and make their way into the control room.

SHADOW  
A little something something for a  
couple of kitty cats?

SHADOW steps aside and his trusty assistant MOJO, a mixed Asian man with a red, white and blue mohawk, walks forward with a gold tray. On the tray are lines of coke, filled shot glasses, and a sundry of pills and tablets. MOJO smiles, his large gold tooth glows brightly.

MAX STORM becomes anxious and insists on indulging first. He snorts a large line of coke. He bends his head back.

MAX  
Indian!

MR. E takes three shots in succession.

LADY STRANGE and ALISTAIR pick through the pile of pills and make their selections.

SWISS KRIS squats in the corner, waiting for the playback.

The ENGINEER flicks a switch on the playback remote and the song plays through again. Everyone listens intently.

As the song ends, the band seems pleased.

SHADOW  
Hey Lady Strange, how 'bout an  
overdub on the gamelan.

LADY STRANGE  
That sounds good.

SHADOW  
What do you think, E?

MR. E  
I think you're the devil, Shadow.

MAX  
Yeah Shadow, you're the devil.

ALISTAIR  
Bloody Saint Lucifer in the flesh.

SWISS KRIS puts his head down.

LADY STRANGE enters the studio, squats lotus style on a Persian rug, and sits before the gamelan.

A shot of the control room from the studio.

ENGINEER  
We're ready any time you are.

LADY STRANGE makes a few adjustments.

LADY STRANGE  
I'm ready.

Back to the control room.

ENGINEER  
We're rolling.

LADY STRANGE plays a repeating figure that is hypnotic and spiritual.

The band is in the control room, communing, feeling each bell as it rings into the soul.

The session continues. The band watches on as MR. E conducts a host of guest musicians lay down different colors and textures to their masterpiece. This is the HOLY PRIMITIVE's last recording session.

END OF FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

MR. E spots DJANGO, an old friend, walking with a woman across the lobby. DJANGO is a guitar player from Belgium. He's a gypsy and virtuoso. MR. E is intrigued as DJANGO approaches. Again, SUZANNE and JUDE CAIN are omnipresent and watching MR. E.

DJANGO  
Hello my friend.

MR. E  
Good to see you, Django.

DJANGO  
And you as well.

MR. E  
How long have you been here?

DJANGO  
The enigma of my arrival has yet to  
be determined.

The woman steps out from the shadows.

DJANGO  
I'd like you to meet a friend of  
mine. Bjork, Mr E. -- Mr. E, Bjork.

BJORK smiles and extends her hand.

BJORK  
Happy to make your acquaintance,  
Mr. E.

MR. E accepts her hand and bows.

MR. E  
(in Icelandic)  
The pleasure is all mine.  
(V.O.)  
There are chance meetings with  
strangers that interest us from the  
very first moment, even before a  
word is spoken.  
(To BJORK)  
Shall we meet for drinks in, say...  
(Looks at his watch)  
...an hour...

BJORK  
That would be nice.

DJANGO  
See you then.

MR. E and DJANGO grin.

"Elephant Woman" by Blonde Redhead plays as the camera pans  
across a painting of smiley face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - LATER

MR. E swipes his key card and opens the door to his room.

CUT TO:

INT. MR. E'S SUITE - CONTINUOUS

The suite is dark and filled with classic "Villa Borghese" style furnishings for a grand and stately appearance.

HORUS GRAETTINGER, FATHER MERTON, and GODOT occupy various seats in the living room.

HORUS GRAETTINGER  
Sacrificial lambs, my friend,  
Sacrificial lambs.

FATHER MERTON  
What good is a man if he gains the  
whole world, only to lose his soul.

GODOT is dressed as judge (black robe, white wig, gavel in his hand).

GODOT  
Freud was freaky. Jung was yummy.  
And you're all very bad boys!

GODOT begins weeping uncontrollably.

FADE TO:

EXT. A SCENE OF A SETTING SUN

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

DJANGO, BJORK and MR. E sit in a dark, corner booth.

MR. E  
What brings you to Prague?

BJORK  
Kafka.

MR. E  
Kafka?

BJORK  
*The Holy Hush of Ancient Sacrifice.*  
 It's a concept piece I'm working  
 on, inspired by Kafka and his  
 skewed angle of human nature.

MR. E  
 Sounds intriguing.

BJORK  
 Yes, I think you'd like it.

MR. E  
 I've always found Kafka slippery,  
 but illuminating.

BJORK  
 He is a bit bewildering.

MR. E  
 (Smiles)  
 A dedicated, abstract, curio  
 collector.

BJORK, DJANGO and MR. E make a toast to Kafka.

MR. E  
 Say Django, are you still seeing  
 that Transylvanian beauty?

DJANGO  
 I wish I could say yes, but I can't  
 say no.

MR. E  
 Django, my friend, What you need is  
 another drink.  
 (Pauses)  
 In fact, we all need another drink.

BJORK  
 What brings you to Prague.

MR. E  
 Just another sideshow on the never-  
 ending tour.

Bob Dylan's "Just Like Tom Thumbs Blues," performed by Nina Simone, fades in as the camera pulls back, taking in an assortment of odd characters in and around the bar.

The camera swings over to the dance floor where MR. E and BJORK dance slowly.

BJORK  
Nina Simone singing Dylan in Prague  
-- how poetic.

MR. E  
Did you ever meet Dr. Simone?

BJORK  
Unfortunately not. How 'bout you?

MR. E  
I spoke with her on the phone once.  
We were going to meet in Paris, but  
the fates intervened.

BJORK  
Sorry to hear that.

MR. E  
I had written a song for her. From  
what I recall, it was a dark,  
haunting lullaby based on the  
tragedy of Medea.

BJORK  
That sounds very cerebral.

MR. E  
Well, you have to dig deep for Nina  
Simone.

(Glances curiously at  
BJORK)  
How would you like to explore this  
big beautiful beast of a city with  
me tomorrow?

BJORK  
I would enjoy that very much.

MR. E  
How about 10:00?

BJORK  
10:00 is perfect.

BJORK lays her head on MR. E's shoulder. As they continue to  
dance, the camera pulls back.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. BLACK ROOM

This is the Dark Theater of Memory and Anguish. MR. E's face is illuminated by a white light. He looks directly into the camera and begins to speak.

MR. E

There is but one truly, serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest -- whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories comes afterwards.

(Pauses)

It is probably true that even those we think we know remain forever unknown to us. That old state of soul in which the void becomes eloquent.

(Pauses)

Terror and confusion, conspiring and contradicting, and then...death. All around me...death.

(Pauses)

I know why she did it. I just can't accept it...

A spooky and haunting version of John Lennon's "Mother" fades in.

CUT TO:

INT. A LABYRINTH OF DARK ROOMS

FLASHBACK

EDWARD ESTLIN, aged 7, rushes from room to room -- a room of dolls, a room of books, a room of maps, a room with Jesus, Muhammad and Moses -- frantically searching for his mother, SYLVIA.

He finds her in a white room with black curtains, covered in blood, a knife driven into her heart. EDWARD goes numb.

The music abruptly ends.

END OF FLASHBACK

FADE TO BLACK

INT. A PRAGUE TAVERN

A very drunk MR. E sits alone, nursing a drink, and listening to a beautiful blonde Czech girl with pigtails, playing a pump organ and singing the Beatles' "Yesterday." MR. E begins to weep.

CUT TO:

TRUE LOVE enters and puts his right arm around MR. E, consoling him.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

MR. E and TRUE LOVE enter. The camera follows them as they pass JUDE CAIN. JUDE sits silently, watching MR. E and TRUE LOVE. They, however, do not see him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AN OMINOUS WHITE ROOM - DAY

Shot in Super 8 at an angle, JUDE CAIN wears sunglasses, puffs on a cigarette and plays pinball.

JUDE

Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities. Yeah, that's E. Those days in Greenwich when we fueled and frolicked, from the bar rooms to the book houses for hours, days and weeks. It was intellectual intoxication, cosmic chaos with no survivors.

INSERT GRAINY SHOTS

a young MR. E and JUDE drink, talk, laugh and cavort with various women in and around Greenwich Village bars, clubs, lofts and coffee houses.

JUDE

We used to talk about a lot of heavy shit...Latin and the Stupidities, we were.

(MORE)

JUDE (cont'd)  
 Voltaire's defiance and  
 disobedience to France. And what  
 happened to his body parts after he  
 died. E told me he wanted to hijack  
 his heart and see what it was made  
 of. The guy was cracked.

INSERT VOLTAIRE'S PORTRAIT, AN AMATEURISH DRAWING OF A MAN  
 SAWING OFF A PERSON'S ARM, PUMPING HEARTS AND A CRACKED HEAD.

JUDE hits the side of the pinball machine and removes the  
 cigarette from his mouth for a breath of fresh air.

JUDE  
 We would argue incessantly about  
 Francis Bacon and Shakespeare. The  
 only difference between Shakespeare  
 and Bacon is that Bacon writes an  
 essay and calls it his own, while  
 Shakespeare writes the same essay  
 and puts it into the mouth of  
 Ulysses or Polonius. William  
 Shakespeare was a necessary  
 ingredient in the grand scheme of  
 Bacon's philosophical experiment. I  
 still think they're one and the  
 same...too many coincidences. They  
 ran with the same circle, but were  
 never in the same room. E never  
 bought it. He wanted to protect the  
 Bard from the stigma of Lord  
 Bacon's supposed corruption.

JUDE laughs.

INSERT SHAKESPEARE'S AND BACON'S PORTRAIT.

INSERT PILES OF BOOKS AND VARIOUS DOCUMENTS WITH  
 SHAKESPEARE'S AND BACON'S NAMES, SHUFFLE IN THE WIND BEFORE  
 ERUPTING INTO FLAMES.

JUDE  
 We bulled through Madame  
 Blavatsky's "The Secret Doctrine"  
 and Albert Pikes' "Morals and  
 Dogma" and juxtaposed them with  
 Nietzsche's "Superman," the  
 illuminated ones beyond good and  
 evil. He was possessed by  
 Nietzsche.

INSERT NIETZSCHE'S PORTRAIT, A PICTURE OF SUPERMAN, AND VARIOUS EXPRESSIONISTIC AND QUASI-EXPRESSIONISTIC PAINTINGS BY EDVARD MUNCH AND OTHERS.

JUDE aggressively slaps the flipper on the pinball machine.

JUDE

After I wrote "The Mystery of Mr. E," things got complicated.

INSERT C.U. COVER OF MAGAZINE WITH LARGE CAPTION: "THE MYSTERY OF MR. E".

JUDE

We rode the juggernaut of fame and fortune. But some time around his 27th birthday, he got dark, real dark.

INSERT GRAINY SHOTS OF GROUPIES SCREAMING.

MR. E walks into a theater, while JUDE takes notes on the sidelines.

JUDE

He started talking about how Robert Johnson, Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison all crashed and burned at 27.

SEQUENTIALLY INSERT HEADSTONES OF ROBERT JOHNSON, BRIAN JONES, JIMI HENDRIX, JANIS JOPLIN AND JIM MORRISON.

JUDE

He examined the mystical properties of the number 27. Two and seven are nine. Nine comprises three threes. Three represents the holy trinity, a triad, a primordial triangle from which all figures derive.

INSERT FLYING NUMBER TWOS AND SEVENS, TUMBLING THROUGH SPACE, FOLLOWED BY NINES AND THREES, FOLLOWED BY NUMBER WHEELS, CHARTS, GRAPHS, SCOREBOARDS, OTHER IMAGES OF NUMBERS, AND SHOTS OF GAMBLERS IN CASINOS, HORSE RACES, COCK FIGHTS, RUSSIAN ROULETTE, AND OTHER BETTING ENVIRONMENTS.

JUDE

Christ in the tomb, Jonah in the Whale, the Three Treasures of Tibet -- all absorbed over time -- past, present, and future.

INSERT IMAGES OF CHRIST IN THE TOMB, JONAH IN THE WHALE, THE THREE TREASURES OF TIBET.

JUDE slaps the flipper on the pinball machine.

JUDE  
Then along came Suzanne.

INSERT PAINTING OF SUZANNE CATCHING FIRE.

JUDE hits the flipper hard and the pinball machine registers a tilt.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRAGUE - DAY

The camera follows MR. E and BJORK as they take in the Castle, the Slovia (a famous cafe), the astronomical clock and a variety of Kafka-related sights and landmarks.

It is the bonding of two artistic minds.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

JUDE sits idly by as he watches MR. E and BJORK stroll through the hotel. They do not see him.

MR. E and BJORK step into an elevator.

JUDE continues to sit motionless. He pulls out his cell phone, flips it open, and makes a call.

JUDE  
Yeah, he's here. I just saw him  
with Bjork.  
(Pauses and listens)  
No, they didn't see me.  
(Pauses and listens)  
I don't know. But you know I'll  
find out.

CUT TO:

INT. BJORK'S SUITE - CONTINUOUS

The suite is aflutter in bohemian afghans and tapestries.

BJORK and MR. E are enraptured in a hot-house of creation, exchanging musical ideas and enjoying each other's company.

BJORK sits behind a harmonium, while MR. E sits nearby, an acoustic guitar in hand.

BJORK  
Why do you think love is so dangerous?

MR. E  
Because it is filled with too many ego trips and hysteria. But mostly I see it like Schoenberg dipped into a vat of simmering Jacques Brel.

BJORK  
A twelve-tone abstraction, primal, mischievous and exalted.

MR. E  
(Smiles)  
Precisely.

BJORK plays a short musical passage on the harmonium.

BJORK  
I've always been in awe of the magical powers of music and its mystical properties.

MR. E  
In antiquity, people thought it could heal sickness, purify the mind and work miracles.

BJORK  
Like David curing Saul's madness by playing the harp.

MR. E  
Now we use it to sell cars and lingerie.

BJORK  
Pythagoras and Euripides would be aghast.

MR. E and BJORK smile and laugh.

MR. E  
What's the music like in Iceland?

BJORK

The voice is paramount. It's the most direct communal embodiment of where I come from. All the rest are sprinkles and imagination.

MR. E

Have you ever come across Mahler?

BJORK

I'm very partial to the song of the earth.

MR. E

Me too.

MR. E begins to play dark, minor chords on his guitar. BJORK joins in on the harmonium. Together, they channel the spirit of Gustav Mahler. This song will eventually be entitled "Mahler," in his honor.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. MR. E'S SUITE - LATER

MR. E is in a semi-meditative frame of mind. A familiar voice disrupts his tranquil state.

MISTER PROUST

(In a French accent)

Hello Edward.

MR. E

Mister Proust?

MISTER PROUST

I'm here to take you back.

MR. E

Back where?

MISTER PROUST

Your first trip to Jerusalem.

FADE IN:

EXT. JERUSALEM - SUNSET

FLASHBACK

The orange horizon descends as MR. E walks along desolation row.

MR. E

(V.O.)

I've had enough. Twenty-seven years and still no resolution. Twenty-seven years and still no answers. Twenty-seven years is enough. It was enough for my mother, so it's enough for me.

(Pauses)

Jerusalem. They call this the city of peace, the center of the universe. A place where Christians, Jews and Muslims congregate, worship, bicker and blow each other to kingdom come. I couldn't think of a better place to end it all.

MR. E continues walking and sees an old church. He enters and his eyes are drawn to a beautiful, young woman playing the cello with a group of Arab and Jewish musicians.

The woman has dark, mysterious eyes. She plays with an apocalyptic reverence -- spiritual, but full of fire. She is in a world of her own. It is SUZANNE.

MR. E sits on a nearby pew and listens intently. Tears slowly roll down his cheek. He is moved, touched to the marrow.

CUT TO:

SUZANNE plays Rimbaud's piano in the alps. She sings "The Man With The Child In His Eyes," a song composed by Kate Bush.

END OF FLASHBACK

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE

MR. E is being interviewed.

INTERVIEWER

So, who's Suzanne?

MR. E

She's a mystery, my muse.

INTERVIEWER

Where's she from?

MR. E

The holy land.

A crowd of female ONLOOKERS gather around, poking their heads into the camera eye.

ONLOOKERS  
Mr. E! Mr. E! You're so great!

ONLOOKER #1  
I love you Mr. E!

ONLOOKER #2  
Mr. E, will you marry me?

MR. E chuckles and walks to his dressing room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A DARK STAGE

A profile appears of a PRIEST holding a placard that reads:

From a House of Worship...

The PRIEST turns around and morphs into a SEDUCTIVE HARLOT, who turns over the placard. It reads:

...To a Den of Inequity

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AN ORNATE CATHEDRAL

MR. E is on his knees, praying.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A BROTHEL

MR. E surveys a line of young prostitutes and makes his selection. He takes the girl's hand and they walk off camera.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MR. E'S HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

MR. E is sitting on the toilet, a man and his refuge, purging the waste.

MR. E  
(V.O.)  
Public toilets, the dirge of  
humanity. One of the heinous  
activities of being on the road.  
(MORE)

MR. E (cont'd)  
 Like the time I was in Mexico with  
 a severe case of Montezuma's  
 revenge.

CUT TO:

INT. MEXICAN LAVATORY

FLASHBACK

MR. E is sitting in a low-cut bathroom stall, his head is in public view. A DRUNK MAN enters and begins speaking to a visibly ill MR. E.

DRUNK MAN  
 (With a Mexican accent)  
 Hello, Mr. E. My name is Pablo. I'm  
 the Interior Minister of Sanitation  
 and Honorary Consul to Tasmania. I  
 like your music very much.

MR. E  
 (Distressed)  
 Uh...could you excuse me. I'll be  
 out momentarily.

DRUNK MAN  
 So sorry, I just wanted to let you  
 know that I saw you on the  
 telemundo and it was muy bueno.

MR. E  
 Thanks, but really...

DRUNK MAN  
 I used to play music when I was  
 younger.

MR. E  
 (Distraught)  
 Great.  
 (V.O.)  
 What is this need to be noticed.  
 This hunger to be recognized by  
 those who are only trying to sing a  
 song, take a shit and be left  
 alone.

MR. E glances over at the toilet paper holder and notices that it's empty. He grimaces.

END OF FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

INT. MR. E'S HOTEL SUITE

Sitting on the toilet, MR. E reaches over and tears off a section of toilet paper.

MR. E  
Ah, the wonders of two-ply toilet paper.

He takes care of business, pulls up his pants, and flushes. He walks over to the sink and washes his hands. He looks into the mirror and sees the burning picture of SUZANNE.

At that very moment, there's a knock at the door.

SMASH CUT TO:

C.U. OF THE DOOR

The phone rings.

SMASH CUT TO:

C.U. OF THE PHONE

The smoke alarm goes off.

SMASH CUT TO:

C.U. OF THE SMOKE ALARM

CUT TO:

MR. E runs to open the door. It's a room service ATTENDANT, who pushes in a cart of food. He pauses, looks around and rushes over shut off the smoke alarm.

MR. E walks over and picks up the ringing phone.

MR. E  
Hello.  
(Pauses)  
Hey True Love, let me call you back.  
(Pauses)  
Yeah, everything's ok.

The ATTENDANT opens a window, in an attempt to air out the smoke-filled room.

MR. E  
Thanks.

MR. E tips the ATTENDANT, who turns and exits.

MR. E walks over to the cart and inspects the food -- a salad, cut fruit and a piece of fish. He goes over to his travel bag and withdraws a packet of vitamins, which he sets on a tray, next to his meal.

MR. E returns to where the phone is and calls TRUE LOVE.

MR. E

Hey True Love.

(Pauses)

Just another smoke detector running amok.

(Pauses)

Yeah, I know I don't smoke. One bad habit I've luckily avoided.

(Pauses)

I guess it's my task to create mysterious difficulties where ever I go.

(Pauses)

Yeah, I'll see you in an hour.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUE LOVE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TRUE LOVE returns the phone to its cradle.

The phone rings.

TRUE LOVE answers.

TRUE LOVE

Yes, this is True Love.

(Pauses)

I'm well, thank you.

(Pauses)

He's here in Prague?

(Pauses)

Rats!

(Pauses)

Thanks for the heads up.

TRUE LOVE hangs up the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - CONTINUOUS

JUDE CAIN sits at the bar, drinking and smoking.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKSTAGE AREA OF DVORAK HALL

A limousine pulls in and MR. E emerges. As he is led into the venue, MR. E passes by a roped off area from where a MAN WITH A CZECH ACCENT yells out.

MAN WITH A CZECH ACCENT  
Hey Mr. E! Remember me? I was the  
one who gave you the lock of Emily  
Bronte's hair.

MR. E turns toward him and smiles.

MR. E  
Oh yeah. Thanks again, man.

MR. E turns back to an USHER and smiles.

MR. E  
A lock of Emily Bronte's hair?  
Fucking-A! Just when I thought I'd  
heard everything.

The USHER doesn't respond and continues escorting MR. E into the building.

From out of nowhere, an OLDER WOMAN DRESSED IN BLACK approaches MR. E.

MR. E POV:

OLDER WOMAN DRESSED IN BLACK  
I met you at a party in London  
during your "Intimate Chaos" tour.  
You sang me a song called "Lullaby  
For Astronauts." You said it was  
our song.

MR. E  
(Befuddled)  
The "Intimate Chaos" tour is a bit  
fuzzy. But you look as lovely as  
ever.

MR. E kisses the OLDER WOMAN DRESSED IN BLACK on the cheek. He looks over her shoulder and sees VACLAV HAVEL in the distance. They make eye contact and move toward one another.

VACLAV

(Extends his hand)

What a pleasure to meet you Mr. E.  
You and Lou Reed are the ones who  
channel through the confusion and  
absurdity with such magnificent  
aplomb.

MR. E

(Shakes his hand)

The pleasure is all mine Mr. Havel.  
I have admired you greatly from  
afar. Your contributions and loaded  
words of encouragement have cut a  
wide swath in the pursuit of  
artistic expression.

VACLAV

Mr. E you humble me. How are you  
enjoying Prague so far?

MR. E

The music here is sublime,  
particularly the Plastic People Of  
The Universe.

VACLAV

(Chuckles)

Oh yes, acid rock's pride of the  
Czech Republic. We all love them.

MR. E

Please send them my regards.

VACLAV

I will. Have a great show. I'm  
really looking forward to hearing  
your music.

MR. E

Thank you Mr. President.

MR. E disappears into Dvorak Hall.

CUT TO:

INT. DVORAK HALL - CONTINUOUS

MR. E and BJORK are on stage. They go into a song of MR E's  
called "Tolstoy In Prague." This is followed by BJORK's "Army  
Of Me." They conclude with a joint composition entitled, "I  
Loved You When."

They are accompanied by a string quartet, duduk and a percussionist. It's an exalted performance and the audience is captivated.

They bow and walk off the stage.

The camera follows MR. E and BJORK.

MR. E

(V.O.)

My work isn't an occupation, it's a verdict. It's an observation, a protest of the natural order. Some nights, the work can transcend through an elegant, divine connection.

(Pauses)

Bjork is like a prophet. She puts the world in order.

MR. E turns to BJORK.

MR. E

You are immaculate.

BJORK

(Smiles)

As are you.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MR. E and BJORK are milling about the dressing room. MR. E opens a bottle of champagne. They toast and drink.

TRUE LOVE enters.

TRUE LOVE

Brilliant! A night of a thousand epiphanies.

MR. E

Thanks. That's heavy praise.

BJORK

(To MR. E)

Where are you off to next?

MR. E

Budapest.

BJORK  
The land of Bartok and Houdini.

MR. E  
Yes. It's been quite a while since  
I've been to Hungary.

STAGEHAND #1 peaks in.

STAGEHAND #1  
Great job. There are some people  
here who want to say 'hello.'

TRUE LOVE  
We'll be right out.

MR. E  
(Mockingly)  
Yeah...we'll be right out.  
(TO BJORK)  
Will you be joining us later?

BJORK  
Thank you, but no. I'll be getting  
back to work.

MR. E  
Well then it was a pleasure and an  
honor.

MR. E nods to TRUE LOVE.

TRUE LOVE approaches, carrying a velvet covered object. He sets it on a table. BJORK is intrigued. MR. E reaches over and unveils a music box.

BJORK smiles and examines it intently. She lifts the lid of the music box and it begins to play.

BJORK  
Mahler's "Song Of The Earth." What  
a thoughtful gesture. Thank you so  
much.

MR. E  
You're quite welcome.

MR. E and BJORK hug and say their good-byes.

CUT TO:

INT. AN ANONYMOUS ROOM

MR. E walks into a cadre of anonymous faces. They are asking questions and making comments. More often than not, it's the same line:

"You're great."

"You're this...you're that."

"Bravo...fantastic...incredible..."

MR. E is showered with a litany of hyperboles.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A SMALL SOHO COFFEEHOUSE - NIGHT

FLASHBACK

MR. E and SWISS KRIS have just finished playing a short and intimate set. MR. E sits alone in a corner booth, madly scribbling away in a notebook and sipping a cheap bottle of whiskey sheathed in a paper bag.

He looks up and sees COLONEL SALT, an obese and wily character with salt and pepper hair and a handlebar mustache, stylishly clad in a vanilla-white zoot suit -- a cross between Colonel Sanders and Foghorn Leghorn in the flesh.

COLONEL SALT

Fan-fucking-tastic, my boy.

MR. E

Greek tragedy knows no bounds. Just ask Aristotle.

COLONEL SALT

You mean Aristophones.

MR. E

Hardly. Aristophones was merely an unsavory crackpot who provided comic relief.

COLONEL SALT

Indeed, The Babylonians was the Dr. Strangelove of its day.

MR. E

(Smiles)

It pissed Cleon off something fierce.

COLONEL SALT

(Grins)

Aristophanes could have been a Spartan if he hadn't been so damn virtuous.

(Pauses)

Permit me to introduce myself.

(Extends hand)

The name's Conrad Bronzewell, but most folks call me Salt...Colonel Salt.

MR. E

(Ignores Colonel Salt's hand and salutes)

A military man, huh? What branch?

COLONEL SALT

Life.

MR. E

(Confused)

I see.

(Pauses)

I'm Edward.

COLONEL SALT

I'm well acquainted with who you are. We actually met several years ago.

MR. E

We did?

COLONEL SALT

Somewhere near Rome, Georgia. A carnival. I was the Master of Ceremonies for Tallulah the Goat-Faced Girl. And you were looking for the Balm of Gilead.

(Pauses)

We had a lengthy conversation about nudie bars and mandolins.

MR. E laughs.

MR. E

(Mulling)

Tallulah the Goat-Faced Girl. The Balm of Gilead. Nudie bars and mandolins.

(Knowingly)

Oh yeah.

COLONEL SALT

So, now it seems to me that we are  
in a realignment of the fates.

MR. E

What in the hell are you talking  
about?

COLONEL SALT

I'm talking about this.

COLONEL SALT places a magazine before MR. E. Tattered and dog-eared, it's opened to an article entitled, "The Mystery of Mr. E" by JUDE CAIN.

MR. E

(Nonchalantly notices the  
headline)

I suspect Jude mixed in a little  
too much mescaline with his tequila  
the night he wrote that. It's full  
of...shall we say...hackneyed  
hyperbole?

COLONEL SALT

Ah, but the message is loud and  
clear. And hyperbole is what the  
crowd wants.

MR. E

(Smiles)

I see.

(With temerity)

And who in the hell are you Colonel  
Salt?

COLONEL SALT

Your future.

MR. E

What are you proposing?

COLONEL SALT

(Smiles)

Let's just say I have ways of  
getting your music to the people  
who make it all happen.

COLONEL SALT pulls out a cigar, bites off the tip, and spits  
it across the room.

COLONEL SALT

I'm not going to indulge you in bullshit and subtext. I truly felt the malenky little hairs on my neck standing endwise when you belted out that last number. A metaphysical minefield yes, but it really tugged at the old harp strings, you dig?

MR. E

Dig?

COLONEL SALT

Dig indeed. Dig in your toes for the thrill ride of the century. We get the message out, and the spoils are ours.

MR. E

Ours?

COLONEL SALT

I'm just looking to make a little Mr. E, so you can make a lot.

MR. E

(Ponders)

Hmmm.

COLONEL SALT

(Lights the cigar, takes a puff and exhales)

If you want to explore your options a bit further, meet me at the Cat In The Hat in a couple of H.R.s.

COLONEL SALT turns on his heel and sashays away.

MR. E watches in bemusement, smiles to himself and takes a long draw off the whiskey bottle. He returns to his notebook full of odds and sods and makes a few notations.

END OF FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

EXT. LIMOUSINE - LATER THAT NIGHT

MR. E and TRUE LOVE are in the backseat of a limo, driving through Prague.

MR. E

So, what do you think of Prague?

TRUE LOVE

It's like a Japanese scroll made of Teflon -- wobbling, but never falling as it explodes into the hurly-burly of the modern age.

MR. E

Kafka said it was a city without memory. A city about forgetting. A city of dark revelation. Maybe that's what inspired Havel. I remember seeing his play, "The Memorandum" in New York and thinking this person's not from around here.

(Pauses)

Have you heard anything about Dilek?

TRUE LOVE

The word is that she'll be fine.

MR. E

Good.

TRUE LOVE

I'm sorry about the other day.

MR. E

No need to be sorry my friend. Sometimes to absolve sin, confrontation is necessary.

The limousine continues driving through Prague. Random shots of the city lights mixed in with various landmarks -- the Vltava river, the Rudolfinum, Charles Bridge, the National Theatre, Vysehrad.

MR. E

(V.O.)

The real history of mankind is the record of a magnificent struggle for enlightenment.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRAGUE TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

The car stops in front of the club and the door is opened. TRUE LOVE steps out and is immediately greeted by the MANAGER, who anxiously shakes his hand.

MANAGER

Welcome.

MR. E follows. The club looks vaguely familiar to him.

MANAGER

(To MR. E)

Welcome to the Hot House. Please come in and enjoy yourself.

MR. E and TRUE LOVE enter the tavern. They walk through a dark corridor, taking it all in. A hook-nosed man approaches.

HOOK-NOSED MAN

Very much enjoyed your stuff with the Holy Primitive.

MR. E

Thanks.

HOOK-NOSED MAN

What happened to them?

MR. E

I'm sure they're somewhere...some place...doing something...

MR. E taps the MANAGER on the shoulder.

MR. E

Where's the girl from last night?

MANAGER

Last night? What girl?

MR. E

The blonde with pigtails singing "Yesterday."

MANAGER

(Confused)

I have no idea what you're talking about.

DJANGO and another classic musician, MINGUS, approach. They speak in hushed tones with MR. E.

MR. E, MINGUS and DJANGO are on stage, engaging in a late-night jam session.

It is tribal, droning and full of surprises. The small crowd is enraptured. The musicians consume libations and carry on with their musical conversation.

During the jam, a beautiful, young Czech girl named ANGELICA comes into view, seductively eyeing MR. E.

The band finishes, they shake hands, hug, embrace and go their own way.

MR. E walks hand-in-hand with ANGELICA out of the club. He passes a wall of photographs and notices a picture of the blonde girl with pigtails, the one who was singing "Yesterday." The picture is signed: *With Love, Sylvia Sexton* (Mr. E's mother)

FADE TO:

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

MR. E, ANGELICA and TRUE LOVE emerge from the limousine. An extremely intoxicated MR. E walks up to a plant and hugs it. ANGELICA and TRUE LOVE watch in bewilderment.

MR. E

I love this fuckin' plant. This plant is full of love. All you need is love, baby. You must never turn your back on love.

(Eyes ANGELICA)

Right little mama?

ANGELICA laughs.

ANGELICA

Right big daddy.

MR. E

(Grabs ANGELICA's hand,  
and turns to TRUE LOVE)

Good night, Bodhisattva.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

MR. E and ANGELICA walk to the elevator.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. MR. E'S SUITE - EARLY MORNING

A groggy MR. E arises from his slumber, kissing a sleeping ANGELICA gently on her cheek.

A newspaper is pushed under the suite's door.

MR. E walks over and looks down at the headline:

AGING TROUBADOUR MR. E ENGAGED IN SORDID LOVE AFFAIR WITH THOM YORKE'S UNDER-AGED SISTER

He notices the sub-header:

DRIVES ONE YOUNG GIRL TO THE BRINK OF SUICIDE WHILE ROMANCING POP DIVA BJORK IN PRAGUE

He reaches down and grabs the paper.

He walks over to the dresser, looks at the mirror and sees a reflection of a ghostly JUDE CAIN.

JUDE CAIN  
Bene qui latuit, bene vixit.  
(Latin: "One who has lived  
well has lived  
unnoticed")

In a fit of rage, MR. E rams his fist into the mirror.

FADE TO BLACK