

*crosses down to the couch and sits, his feet up on the coffee table and the music fades out.*

ARTIE. *(looking from MICKEY to ARTIE)* So, how what?

MICKEY. I'm beat. What's his name, his agent, wasn't there. You see him?

ARTIE. *(With his coffee cup, he moves toward MICKEY.)* He's an asshole. He probably would have gone berserk to be at Phil's funeral. I was almost berserk.

MICKEY. So it was just as well he didn't come.

ARTIE. Fuck him. There's no excuse.

MICKEY. *(eating his orange)* Funerals aren't for everybody. As Phil demonstrated. Life wasn't for him.

ARTIE. *(sitting on the arm of the couch)* You think he meant it?

MICKEY. As much as he meant anything. How you doin'?

ARTIE. *(quite agitated)* I'm okay. Except I feel, though, somewhat like at any moment I could turn into a hysterical like, you know ... rabbit.

MICKEY. Yeah. What would that be like?

ARTIE. I think I'm gonna go home. *(moving away from MICKEY)* I think I'm gonna go home, Eddie. What time is it? I'm whipped.

MICKEY. Ten twenty ... two.

ARTIE. Ten? Ten? It feels like goddamn four in the morning. I feel like I been awake for years.

MICKEY. It's ten twenty-two.

ARTIE. It is, isn't it. My watch is stopped. What happened to my watch? I'm whipped. *(At the counter, he is*

*(hoping for EDDIE's attention.)* It takes it out of you, huh, Eddie, a day like this?

MICKEY. Death ... takes it out of you?

ARTIE. Yeah.

EDDIE. What you gonna do tomorrow?

ARTIE. I got a bunch of meetings. We got a development deal.

EDDIE. Yeah? *(moving to ARTIE)*

ARTIE. Set, too. On paper. Good terms; very good terms. Terms I'm totally overjoyed about.

*(There is an echo in this of their first scene: ARTIE is aggressive and positive here; he is not going to let EDDIE get at him again.)*

EDDIE. *(He gives ARTIE a hug.)* Come by, okay?

ARTIE. Sure. Late. *(starting for the door)*

EDDIE. Whatever.

ARTIE. Take care, you guys.

MICKEY. You, too, Artie. Fuck him, huh?

ARTIE. *(at the door, ARTIE hesitates)* The jerk off. *(he goes)*

BEGIN

MICKEY. *(MICKEY, cleaning up a little crosses with an ashtray to the wastecan, as EDDIE, with the mail moves down to the armchair to sit.)* How you doin' Edward?

EDDIE. *(putting on his glasses to read the mail)* I don't know. You?

MICKEY. *(dumping the ashtray)* Okay.

EDDIE. Oh, I'm okay. I mean, I'm okay. Is that what you're askin'?

MICKEY. Yeah.

EDDIE. Yeah, shit. I'm okay.

MICKEY. Good. (*As MICKEY climbs the stairs, EDDIE freezes staring at a letter.*)

EDDIE. Holy Jesus holy Christ, I got a letter. Phil. Phil.

MICKEY. What?

EDDIE. (*tearing open the letter*) Yeah!

MICKEY. What's it say? (*coming down to the landing rail to stare at EDDIE*)

EDDIE. What? WHAT? It's postmarked on the day—he mailed on the day. (*unfolding the letter*) "The guy who dies in an accident understands the nature of destiny. Phil."

MICKEY. What? (*as EDDIE comes running up to hand the letter to MICKEY*)

EDDIE. That's what it says.

MICKEY. "The guy who dies in an accident understands the nature of destiny"?

EDDIE. To die in—what the fuck? I mean, Mickey, what, what, what?

MICKEY. (*with a shrug*) It's a fucking fortune cookie. (*He hands the letter back to EDDIE and starts up the stairs.*)

EDDIE. I mean, if he killed himself, this is the note.

MICKEY. Whata you mean "if"?

EDDIE. I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt. (*Returning to the armchair to intently study the letter, as MICKEY turns back on the stairs.*)

MICKEY. Eddie, c'mon, you wanna look this thing in the eye. You don't do a hundred down that narrow crease in the high ground because you're anxious to get home. A hundred MPH down Mulholland on a star-filled night is not the way to longevity. The guy behaved often, and finally,

like some, you know, soulful jerk-off. Fuck him and forget him. What more can I say.

EDDIE. I'm gonna look up the words. (*running for the record player where he expects to find the dictionary*)

MICKEY. What?

EDDIE. On the thing here, I'm gonna see if the dictionary might help. (*but he can't find the dictionary*)

MICKEY. Look up the words? Are you out of your mind? Don't get involved in this thing. Don't waste your time.

EDDIE. But this is it—this is what he wanted to tell us. (*Running up the stairs past MICKEY, EDDIE waves the note and heads into his room.*)

MICKEY. (*on the stairs*) He had somethin' to say he could a give us a phone call; he could have stopped by; our door was open. He wants to get some information to me now, he's going to have to bridge the gap directly; he's going to have to make an appearance, difficult as it might be. (*EDDIE, with the dictionary, comes out of the bedroom as MICKEY seeks to block EDDIE's descent; he takes the dictionary from EDDIE's hands.*) Listen to me: Stay away from this shit. He's dead: He didn't want to discuss it before, I don't want to discuss it after.

EDDIE. (*taking the dictionary back*) But that's exactly what I'm talking about—that this is a clue. To something. Maybe why. (*He sits on the stairs to start looking up the words.*) I want to know why.

MICKEY. What why? There's no why in a disaster like this. You know, the earth moved. He was in the wrong place; this big hole opens up, what's he gonna do? (*He drops off the stairs, heading into the kitchen for something to eat.*)

EDDIE. Your attitude, Mickey—will you please examine your fucking attitude?

MICKEY. This is a dead end is all I'm saying. There's no traffic with this thing. You go in, you don't come out. The guy made a decision beyond communication.

EDDIE. *(waving the note through the rungs of the bannister at MICKEY)* He left a note.

MICKEY. *(snatching the note)* The note is tangential. It's part of his goof, you know, that he was a rational human being, when he wasn't. I want no part of this fucking beyond-the-grave extension of his jerk-off sensibility.

EDDIE. *(Having run down the dictionary he is after the note, but MICKEY disdainfully drops it on the counter.)* The note is what he wanted us to think.

MICKEY. *(pulling a package of apple juice from the refrigerator)* Bullshit.

EDDIE. *(smoothing the note out on the counter)* He left it. *(He sits on the S.L. stool with his dictionary and note on the counter.)*

MICKEY. To drive us nuts from long distance. Lemme see that—*(As MICKEY reaches for the note, EDDIE presses his hand down on the note, protectively.)* What is this?

EDDIE. I'm gonna look up the words.

MICKEY. It's a fucking fortune cookie. *(Sipping his juice through a straw, he sneaks up on the note, his back along the front of the counter.)* What's to look up? *(Leaning back, he can read it.)* "A guy who." That's him. *(turning the note with his finger)* "Dies." In case we didn't know, he gave us a demonstration. *(now he gently picks the note up)* "Accident" is to propel yourself into a brief

but unsustainable orbit, and then attempt to land in a tree on the side of a cliff-like incline. *(hopping up to sit on the counter)* "Understand" is what he had no part of. "Nature" is the tree, and "destiny" is, if you're him, you're an asshole.

EDDIE. *(leaving the note with MICKEY, EDDIE crosses down to the armchair to look at the envelope)* Look. Count the letters.

MICKEY. What?

EDDIE. *(He is working with the dictionary.)* Count the words and the letters, I want to know how many letters.

MICKEY. *(hopping down, moving toward EDDIE)* Eddie, this is dementia, here. You've flipped a circuit. Grief has put you out of order.

EDDIE. You never heard of an anagram?

MICKEY. Sure.

EDDIE. So maybe it's an anagram.

MICKEY. You think this is an anagram? *(Now he veers off toward the couch.)*

EDDIE. You don't have to have any faith in the fucking thought, but just as a favor, you know, participate, okay. Help me move it along. That's all I'm asking. *(as MICKEY sits)* And keep your sarcasm to yourself.

MICKEY. What sarcasm?

EDDIE. *(trying to concentrate on the dictionary)* Can you do that?

MICKEY. What sarcasm? I'm—you know—this is—What sarcasm? This is insulting.

EDDIE. You're getting sidetracked.

MICKEY. I'll do this goddamn lunacy. I'll count the letters here, but get one thing straight, all right? There's no sarcasm here. *(Throwing the note down on the coffee table, he storms to the kitchen to pour himself a drink.)* I've

indulged in nothing even remotely sarcastic here, and I want that understood because you have obviously not understood it. So I'll make allowances, but if I've been flip, it's to put some humor into what could be totally and utterly morbid—and there have been times in the goddamn history of mankind where a little humor won a person some affection for the effort, you know, not to go under; anybody can go under. *(Having poured a drink, he now is so agitated, he knocks it over.)* I mean, we're all goin' fucking under, so how about a little laugh along the way? So I'm flip. So what?

EDDIE. I don't feel like being flip, Mickey.

MICKEY. Right. But you wanna do an anagram on his death note, right?!

EDDIE. "Flip" IS "sarcastic," Mickey.

MICKEY. It is not. It's—"flip." On a whole other level, a whole other lower level and just lighter.

EDDIE. To me, it's "sarcastic."

MICKEY. But that's crazy! Sarcastic is "heavy." It's mean. Funny, sure, but mean. I do both, but this was flip.

EDDIE. You shoulda heard yourself.

MICKEY. *(crossing back behind EDDIE to the couch)* I did.

EDDIE. You shoulda listened closer.

MICKEY. *(Snatching the note up from the coffee table, he flops down with a pencil.)* You wanna get on with this.

EDDIE. *(rising with the dictionary, he paces thoughtfully about)* So I have "accident" here, and "destiny." "Accident: a happening that is not expected, foreseen or intended. Two, an unfortunate occurrence or mishap, sudden fall, collision, usually resulting in physical injury." Blah-blah, just repeats basically. And "destiny,"

we have, "The inevitable or necessary succession of events. What will necessarily happen to any person or thing." So ... *(With a sense of discovery, he moves toward MICKEY on the couch.)* ... if you die in a happening that is not expected, foreseen or intended, you understand the inevitable or necessary succession of events.

MICKEY. Fuck him.

EDDIE. It makes sense! *(triumphant, grabbing the note from MICKEY)*

MICKEY. It makes no sense.

EDDIE. I mean, we owe him to understand as best we can what he wanted. Nobody has to believe it. IT MAKES FUCKING SENSE.

MICKEY. *(emphatically)* Anyway, he did it on purpose so it was no goddamn accident. And if it was no accident, then his note is categorically, definitively irrelevant. *(And for both of them it seems, MICKEY has made the winning point. EDDIE, dejected, sits there, taking off his glasses.)*

EDDIE. But how did he get there? Exactly how did he get to that point where in his own mind he could do it on purpose? That's what—

MICKEY. It's not that big a deal—that's the fucking truth, you know, you make an adjustment, that's all—you shift your point of view a little and what was horrible looks okay. *(He gently takes the note from EDDIE.)* All the necessary information that might deter you gets locked away. *(with relish)* Little gremlins divert the good thoughts so you don't hear them. You just hear the bad thoughts, which at this point are convincing you they're a good idea.

~~*(Rising, his relish increasing, he loosens his tie, moving toward the kitchen, where he will get some Hagen-Daz ice cream from the refrigerator.) You get an idea, that's all*~~

**ENO**