

**PRELUDE**

*Blackness.*

["Hi, this is Klara. I'm not in, so leave a message!"  
(beep)  
Klara, it's your mom. Hi sweetie, I know you're busy, I know you're leaving the country soon, but give me a call. We haven't heard from you in a while. What is it you're doing in Africa again? Learning how to play the drums or something? We can never keep track. Anyway we miss you. Your dad sends his love. Love you honey. Bye-bye.]

**SCENE ONE**

KLARA: Hello?

*(BEAT.)*

Hello?

KLARA: Hi.

*(BEAT.)*

HI.

*(BEAT.)*

KLARA: Hello. *(Pause.)* Hi. Hi. Hello. *(Pause.)* Hello.

*(BEAT.)*

Hello...?

**SEGUE**

[(beep)  
Klara this is Sonya from Dr. Thompson's office. We have your plane tickets here at the office you can pick them up Wednesday on your way to the airport. Don't forget your passport good-night and good luck on your trip.]

**SCENE TWO**

*KLARA, JOHN and MATT and desks. Pause.*

KLARA: Nobody's saying anything!  
I want to say something.  
But, of course, who ever wants to listen.

*(The others glance at her.)*

Hi there! How are you?

*They mumble, murmur fine or something.  
She sighs. Back to what they were doing.*

My name is Klara. With a K. It's strange, I know . . .

*(She trails off.)*

*(Time passes.)*

*(She climbs onto a desk/chair.)*

I'm real! And I'm right here!

*(MATT leaves.)*

*(JOHN stares.)*

Sorry. Got a bit excited. I apologize. I'm sorry.

JOHN: . . . Okay

KLARA: I'm Klara.

JOHN: Baker.

KLARA: Hi Baker. *(Pause.)* It's nice, isn't it?

*(Indicates by pointing to JOHN and back at herself very quickly.)*

JOHN: That was the best . . .

*(Can't find a word, indicates with a hand.)*

. . . I've seen in weeks.

KLARA: Really. Hey . . . cool.

JOHN: Yeah. Cool. *(Pause.)*

*(Back to ignoring.)*

KLARA: Baker?

JOHN: Yeah?

KLARA: Nothing. *(Pause.)*

JOHN: What are you working on?

KLARA: Nothing. Really. A play or something. I don't know. It's weird.

JOHN: Oh. Okay.

KLARA: I'm sorry. It's not weird. It just takes time to explain.

JOHN: I see. It's okay.

KLARA: Well . . . are you busy? *(Pause.)*

JOHN: Kind of, yeah.

KLARA: Right. What are you working on?

JOHN: It's nothing. Sort of a thesis kind of . . . *(Gesture.)*

KLARA: Like a dissertation.

JOHN: Yeah. I guess. Technically.

KLARA: That's really cool.

JOHN: Oh, it's boring.

KLARA: No, I bet it's great.

JOHN: I hate it.

KLARA: Then why do you do it?

JOHN: I . . . uh . . . well, Klara, I should get back to . . .

KLARA: Oh. Okay. Sorry.

JOHN: Got a lotta work.

**SEGUE**

[(beep)]

Klaaaaraaa...it's Shayna hi look I don't have long but are you still in town on Friday? I'm having a little soirée, hope you can make it, we missed you last time!! Come have some cocktails 'n unwind. I think you need it. Call me back. Smooches. Buh-bye.]

**SCENE THREE**

MATT: For countless centuries, human security had been lodged in the local community. In the modern era, this security has been usurped, on the one hand by the birth of the nation-state, on the other by the emergence and institution of a newly privatized and uniquely isolated modern life-style.

There's no need to bore you with the philosophical history of the self. Suffice to say, the notion of the self is luxury and a fairly newfangled one at that. It took humanity quite awhile to figure out that each of us has a separate and distinct consciousness. And, it took us a little bit after that to dive headfirst into our obsession with that individual consciousness. All for one and one for all was the prevailing theory of safety and productivity up until the time of the enclosure movement. The well-being of the community and the expression of the common will took precedence over the needs of the individual.

JOHN: You plant the crops while I catch a fish while you build a new hut while you care for the offspring until they're old enough to harvest.

MATT: Concordance fueled work, faith, folkways, the future, and identity. For that reason, personal achievement was barely recognized as an end in itself. Rather, a person's status was measured in terms of his or her contribution to the commonweal.

JOHN: But, sometime in the middle ages, the "civilized" folks in the more "civilized" countries had become self-sufficient enough to pay a little attention to the cultivation of their family and to gather their personal rewards.

MATT: I no longer need you to care for my crops. That what John Harvester down the road does.

JOHN: I no longer need you to catch the fish for me, that's what John Fishmonger does.

MATT: I'm not going to eat with you anymore, my family is rich! We've got a table of our own, and a fire of our own, and

we'll eat our fresh fish sticks in the seclusion of our own home, thank you very much.

JOHN: The segregation of children and their families from the larger community buttressed other forces that were transforming Western civilization from a communal to a private way of life. The increasing interiorization of social life drew more attention away from the community and onto the individual.

MATT: The chair made its debut around 1490. Before that time, people sat on wooden benches, which lined the walls of the great communal halls. The closest antecedent to a chair was the ceremonial throne, a simple seat reserved for princes and kings, who, by dint of their sovereign status, most closely approximated the autonomy of divine authority. It wasn't until the height of the Renaissance that uniform sets of chairs came into vogue for the first time, reflecting the new elevated status of the individual.

JOHN: The idea of constructing a piece of furniture to accommodate the individual human anatomy was revolutionary. If, in the new scheme of things, each man was to be truly an island unto himself, then the chair offered a visible expression of the new sensibility. Here was a constant reminder of the separation between people. The chair reinforced the idea of the autonomous individual, secure in his private space, isolated from the responsibilities and obligations of the larger community.

MATT: Still, it would take two centuries for the fashion to spread beyond the palaces and wealthy bourgeois homes and become standard issue for the common people of Europe. Many people simply preferred the social experience of sitting together on benches, cushions, and floors. Today, of course, we feel as if our space is being violated if someone brushes up against us in a hallway or shares an armrest on a plane - or at the theater.

JOHN: Mirrors were first manufactured in large numbers around the mid-1500s. Small mirrors often accompanied the new printed books of Gutenberg and other craftsmen. Hand and pocket mirrors were also used as adornment in dress. Social historian Morris Berman reminds us of the unique nature of this innovation. In medieval days, says Berman, excessive preoccupation with personal appearance was unusual. People "were not terribly concerned with how they appeared in the view of others." The individual had not yet been separated from the community. People lacked a sense of personal definition. The increasing isolation of the individual from the collective went hand in hand with the self-reflection and self-interest, both of which found adequate expression in countless hours before the reflection mirror.

MATT: The quiet trinity of privacy, individual self-interest, and personal autonomy captured the spirit of the new bourgeoisie. As the modern family became the breeding

ground as well as the refuge for the new sensibilities, it began to hold society at a distance, to push it back beyond a steadily extending zone of private life.

JOHN: The word *I* began to show up with greater regularity in literature by the early sixteenth century. *Self* became a new all-embracing prefix, with words like *self-love*, *self-knowledge*, and *self-pity* entering the popular lexicon. In literature, the autobiographical form made its debut. Self-portraits came into fashion, and everywhere there was a new fascination, near obsession, with the individual. Self-reflection and introspection became pastimes, and the incipient field of psychology made its first tentative stirrings in the mid-nineteenth century.

MATT: This new sense of personal detachment and isolation spawned a novel architectural phenomenon in the late nineteenth century - the suburb. The new suburban living arrangement systematically removed the home, in both time and space, from the work life of the community. The suburb has come to epitomize the notion of privacy: families secluded behind fences and separated from the outside world by a surrounding expanse of lawn, the contemporary counterpart of the medieval moat.

JOHN: The suburban house proved to be the ideal architectural match for the modern family. Like its occupants, it was detached, autonomous, and isolated from the external environment. "The new idea was no longer to be part of a close community, but to have a self-contained unit, a private wonderland walled off from the rest of the world." By this time, engineers had taken over the design of chairs from the craftsmen and upholsterers, creating mechanized recliners that moved and pivoted in synchronization with the movement of the occupant. The La-Z-Boy recliner became a symbol of the post-World War II era, a visible sign of the autonomous, secure middle-class male.

MATT: Medieval communal living offered the security of the whole. The constant support and social interaction of an assembled mass with one purpose in mind - the survival of the whole. The suburbs offered a far different kind of security, one ensconced in isolation, in varying degrees of separation from strangers and neighbors.

JOHN: The sense of isolation became ever more pronounced with the elimination of the front porch and the invention of air conditioning and television, which drew everyone further indoors and further away from the community. There are few places as desolate and lonely as a suburban street on a hot afternoon.

MATT: Thanks to the enclosure and privatization of open space, the well-to-do middle class found themselves isolated from their neighbors by a "crabgrass frontier" and further isolated in their homes from other family members, each of whom had staked claims on their own living space. The

average working couple now spends a total of four minutes each day in "meaningful conversation." Parents spend less than thirty seconds each day in "meaningful conversation" with their children.

JOHN: New technologies, personal computers, cable television, portable telephones, the omniscient and omnipresent internet, allow for a further withdrawal from the commonweal. It is now quite possible to live an entire life - segregated, in a gated community, with high walls and closed doors, comfortable in a cushioned leather chair, remote control in one hand the other on your keyboard, face lit by the monitor screen - safe, undisturbed, well-distracted . . . alone.

**SCENE FOUR**

*KLARA on the phone.*

KLARA: Shayna, it's Klara. Sorry I missed you, but yeah, I fly out first thing tomorrow. No cocktails for me. Maybe next time. I'm back in a month, so see ya then. Bye.

*She dials another number.*

Mom, Dad, hi, it's me. I know you're at work right now, I just wanted to say goodbye before I left. And I'm not learning to play the drums, I'm just studying how other people play them. You know, music, culture, that degree I've been getting, remember? Some culture, I know, some degree, I don't know how I can be studying culture when I can't even get a real person on the phone anymore...Anyway, I'll umm...I dunno, I'll send you a telegraph from the safari or something. Or look for a postcard in the mail. I, umm..yeah I love you too. Bye.

*The phone rings. The answering machine picks up, we hear the message again. Klara runs in to pick up the phone just as the recording begins:*

[Klara, it's Stefan.]

*Klara recoils instinctively. She doesn't pick up. She listens.*

[How are ya? It's been a while, huh? Yeah...a long time. Anyway, I was just...I dunno, I was thinking of you and I thought I'd call and see how you were. Didn't even know if this was your number anymore. I mean, what has it been, like five years? Anyway, I hope you're doing OK. Are you still studying, what was that, ethno-musicology? *(laughs)* I still can't remember exactly what that means. I'm doing great, I'm in Chicago now, I'm engaged, I hope you can meet her someday...Anyway. Um. Give me a call sometime. Or don't. You know, whatever you wanna do. My number, it's probably on your caller ID but my number if you ever wanna call is

(847) 555-7392. So...take care of yourself, kiddo. See ya around. Call me. Bye.]

**SCENE FIVE**

*KLARA and BRIAN sitting in chairs. KLARA works out.*

KLARA: Sure is nice today, huh?  
BRIAN: Mmm-hmm.  
KLARA: I mean, to be this warm so late in the year.  
BRIAN: Yup.  
KLARA: I wonder if it's related to that whole 'global warming' thing we hear so much about.  
BRIAN: Hmmm.  
KLARA: Well, regardless, I think it's lovely.

*(BEAT.) KLARA opens the magazine as if to read. Glances at BRIAN.*

Good book?  
BRIAN: It's OK.  
KLARA: Just OK?  
BRIAN: Yeah.  
KLARA: Don't you just hate it when you get like halfway through a book and you find yourself cruising along and then you're sort of... overtaken by this awareness that the book is just OK, but that at this point you've already invested the time to get this far, so you might as well continue, but you really just want to put the damn thing down and then you start realizing that you're really annoyed at the author for wasting not only the time you've already spent but the time you still have to spend to finish?  
BRIAN: Uh-huh.  
KLARA: Me too. I hate that. I really do.

*(BEAT.)*

I'm glad I came home.

*(BEAT.)*

It's so rare that we get to spend a whole afternoon together.  
BRIAN: Mmm-hmm.  
KLARA: Nice to have some quality time, just you and me.  
BRIAN: Yep.  
KLARA: I mean, don't get me wrong I love Mom and Dad, but sometimes... y'know?  
BRIAN: Mmm-hmm.

*(TWO BEATS.)*

KLARA: So are you still seeing that girl from work...what's her name...Jenny?  
BRIAN: Klara.  
KLARA: What?  
BRIAN: Must we?

KLARA: I just thought---  
BRIAN: You can't just pop in unannounced from halfway across the country and expect us to drop everything and fill you in on the day-to-day events so you can go tell your friends that you had such a pleasant visit and that the family is just great.  
KLARA: That's not what I---  
BRIAN: Oh, your genuinely interested? You'd like to hear all about how shitty things have been?  
KLARA: Look, I don't---  
BRIAN: Please.  
KLARA: Jeez. Sorry.

(BEAT.)

I just thought... we don't get to see each other very often and I thought...  
BRIAN: K, I love you, but, please, I just want to sit here and read my book, OK?  
KLARA: OK.

*KLARA opens her magazine. She begins to read.*

KLARA: Brian?  
BRIAN: Hmmmm?  
KLARA: I miss you.  
BRIAN: Hmmmm.

### SCENE SIX

MATT: April is the cruelest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.

KLARA: Solitude is the profoundest fact of the human condition.  
Man is the only being who knows he is alone.

JOHN: Life's an awfully lonesome affair. You come into the world alone and you go out of the world alone yet it seems to me you are more alone while living than even going and coming.

MATT: We might live when we're all alone . . . when nobody's watching . . . Man's loneliness is but his fear of life . . the messy architecture of the self

JOHN: There are days when solitude is a heady wine that intoxicates you with freedom, others when it is a bitter tonic, and still others when it is a poison that makes you beat your head against the wall.

KLARA: Like an Alzheimer's patient who knows she's ill, each day I assert the will to remain active, normal, and determined, even as the shadows encroaching from the depths of my moods threaten my efforts to confront each day by day. Every

apology and every defense seems to dissolve in the sugar water of contemporary culture, and before long it becomes difficult indeed to get out of bed in the morning.

JOHN: I sleep from noon to dinnertime, work half the night, then split the rest between raising pigeons and walking - alone, of course - on the beach, the meaning of life lost in the wind. Michelangelo said, "I have no friends of any sort and I don't want any."

MATT: The sense of loneliness and pointlessness and loss that social atomization may produce - it's already enough to label it a disease. We feel our loneliness to be painful and yearn to escape from behind the wall of our individual identities to a condition in which we can be more unified with the world outside of ourselves.

KLARA: Even harder to admit is how depressed I was. As the social stigma of depression dwindles, the aesthetic stigma increases. It's not just that depression has become fashionable to the point banality. It's the sense that we live in a reductively binary culture: you're either healthy or you're sick, you either function or you don't. And if that flattening of the field of possibilities is precisely what's depressing you, you're inclined to resist participating in the flattening by calling yourself depressed.

JOHN: There are places and moments in which one is so completely alone that one sees the world entire. You decide that it's the world that's sick, and that the resistance of refusing to function in such a world is healthy. You embrace what clinicians call "depressive realism." It's what the chorus in *Oedipus Rex* sings: "Alas, ye generations of men, how mere a shadow do I count your life! Where, where is the mortal who wins more of happiness than just the seeming, and, after the semblance, a falling away?" You are, after all, just a protoplasm, and some day you'll be dead.

MATT: The invitation to leave your depression behind, whether through medication or therapy or effort of will, seems like an invitation to turn your back on all your dark insights into the corruption and infantilism and self-delusion of the brave new McWorld. Instead of saying *I am depressed*, you want to say *I am right!* To dare to live alone is the rarest courage; since there are many who had rather meet their bitterest enemy in the field, than their own hearts in their closet.

KLARA: Most people like to think of themselves as part of a "mob." Inclusiveness is king. Sometimes it seems they would rather have *anyone* around than no one. Da Vinci wrote, "In company, only half of you will belong to yourself." There is an inside and an outside, and the artist is outside. Standing next to so many strangers in this lonely crowd, I feel completely shut down. I feel rejected.

- MATT: There is convincing evidence that the search for solitude is not a luxury but a biological need. Just as humans possess a herding instinct that keeps us close to others most of the time, we also have a conflicting drive to seek out solitude. If the distance between ourselves and others becomes too great, we experience isolation and alienation, yet if the proximity to others becomes too close, we feel smothered and trapped.
- JOHN: To spare oneself from grief at all cost can be achieved only at the price of total detachment, which excludes the ability to experience happiness. Alone is alone, but not alive. For an impenetrable shield, stand inside yourself.
- KLARA: Eventually it dawned on me that the despair I felt was less the result of my world-view than of my isolation. My high hopes keep me alone. Depression presents itself as realism regarding the rottenness of the world in general and the rottenness of your life in particular. But this realism is merely a mask for depression's actual essence, which is an overwhelming estrangement from humanity. The more persuaded you are of your unique access to the rottenness, the more afraid you become of engaging with the world; and the less you engage with the world, the more perfidiously happy-faced the rest of humanity seems for continuing to engage with it.
- MATT: How could I *not* feel estranged? My nature had been waiting for me all along, and now it welcomed me. All of a sudden I became aware of how very hungry I was to construct and inhabit and imagined world. The hunger felt like a loneliness of which I'd been dying. How could I have thought that I needed to cure myself in order to fit into the "real" world? I didn't need curing, and the world didn't either; the only thing that did need curing was my understanding of my place in it. Without that understanding - without a sense of *belonging* to the world - it was impossible to thrive, even in a imagined one.
- JOHN: If from society we learn to live,  
'Tis solitude should teach us how to die.
- KLARA: Is it like this  
In death's other kingdom  
Waking alone  
At the hour when we are trembling with tenderness  
Lips that would kiss  
Form prayers to broken stone

**SCENE SEVEN**

*Klara on the phone.*

- KLARA: Shayna. It's Klara. Hey, are you having any parties anytime soon? I miss you. I miss...people. I'm growing quite fond of

your voicemail, though. It's always there for me, you know? Anyway, I, uh...yeah, give me a call sometime. I hope you're well. Bye-bye.

*Beat. Klara thinks. She picks up the phone and dials again.*

Hi Mom. It's Klara. Ummm...I'd love to talk to you tonight. I'll be home . . . So, call me . . . hopefully we can connect. Bye.

*She puts down the phone, starts to walk away...then turns back, pulls a crumpled piece of paper out of her pocket, and dials again.*

Stefan. It's Klara. I, uhh...it was good to hear from you, I'm glad you're doing well...anyway, I, uhh...I guess I try you later. See you around. Bye.

#### SCENE EIGHT

JOHN: Give me a golden pen, and let me lean  
On heap'd up flowers, in regions clear, and far;  
Bring me a tablet whiter than a star,  
Or hand of hymning angel, when 'tis seen  
The silver strings of heavenly harp atween:  
And let there glide by many a pearly car,  
Pink robes, and wavy hair, and diamond jar,  
And half discovered wings, and glances keen.  
The while let music wander round my ears,  
And as it reaches each delicious ending,  
Let me write down a line of glorious tone,  
And full of many wonders of the spheres:  
For what a height my spirit is contending!  
'Tis not content so soon to be alone.

#### SEGUE

[Dr. Thompson, this is Klara calling to confirm my attendance at the symposium on Thursday. I'm thrilled you've invited me to participate, I know I'm young for a doctoral candidate, so I'm honored, I just hope my work isn't too . . . offbeat . . . I've gotten some flack in the department for my emphasis on pop culture, not everyone considers it as valid as the international research, so . . . (sigh) . . . anyway, yes, see you first thing tomorrow. Goodbye.]

#### SCENE NINE

*KLARA at a podium with a microphone.*

KLARA: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We're happy that you could join us for this year's University symposium on Arts, Culture, and Music.

My topic today is the social and personal implications of the song "Downtown Lights" as performed by pop singer Annie Lennox. Lennox is perhaps best known for her work with the 80's band The Eurythmics - for example "Sweet Dreams" and "Here Comes the Rain Again," though her later solo work is more indicative of the struggle and isolation facing all women, all artists, perhaps all people. In this study I will show how Ms. Lennox utilizes her music as a traditional communicative tool, while paradoxically expressing all of the major socio-personal problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in this seminal struggle with solitude released in the year 1995.

If we would like to study the relationship between music and solitude, we can go back to times that defy history. I recently had the opportunity to study the tribal drum languages of Eastern Africa, where different tribal regions have for thousands of years communicated with one another via call-and-response drum patterns over large distances of land. They use music to communicate: to warn of inclement weather and threatening neighbors, or sometimes just to gossip. They span the distances and fill the void, using music to remedy their isolation.

The lyrics of "Downtown Lights" are ambient, the real message written between the lines. As if speaking to a distant lover, she sings: "Sometimes I walk away/ When all I really wanna do/ Is love and hold you right,/ There is just one thing I can say./ Nobody loves you this way/ It's alright,/ Can't you see the downtown lights?"

Why Do We Walk Away? Why do we choose solitude over companionship? We are, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, creating a culture that thrives on fear, loneliness, and abandonment. And we don't know the solution, so instead we walk away, and/or embrace *passive entertainment*: events that give the veneer of companionship but that keep us safely at an arm's length from one another. Take first dates, for example, which more often than not involve a movie, so that real conversation is sufficiently avoided. Entire social gatherings of *watching* are created: the watching of football, rock concerts, reality shows, *Will and Grace*, and the list goes on. We watch without ever really seeing each other. We surround ourselves with people and we don't say a word. We're surrounded by emptiness, looking for ways to span our distances, to fill the voids. We lack drums. And we yearn for something to come along that will break our skin open and reveal some real part of ourselves.

*She's starting to improvise.*

We move to metropolises and become just one more in a lonely crowd, the city of strangers. We surround ourselves with empty streetlights and sidewalks, and we surround ourselves with . . . with things like the phosphorescent

neon glow that happens when all the lights downtown cast an orange reddish hue against a cover of clouds on any particular midwestern evening.

Especially when we've had our hearts broken, or broken them ourselves, we are prone to doing all of this.

*She pauses, returns to her papers.*

"How do I know you feel it," Lennox croons in the song, over and over again. "How do I know you feel it." Is this not the same question that we each struggle with daily? How can we ever *truly know* what another person feels or experiences? Herein lies the root of our isolation, our solitude, our twenty-first century anxiety. 'Does chocolate taste the same to you as it does to me?' 'How do I know the shade of my blue sky looks the same as yours?' 'How can I ever be sure that you love me the way I love you?'

Maybe we should all carry our own drums around. One beat for "I like you, I think you're a nice person." Two beats—a heartbeat—for "I love you." Silence for—silence.

*She checks her papers.*

I'm sorry, I . . .

*She's really strayed from her point. She keeps going, keeps straying, 'winging' it.*

That's always *really* bothered me. That I can never get inside another person. Break their skin open and see what's inside. No, not the gross stuff, I'm not talking technically here, I mean, I just want to know what makes other people tick. There are no benchmarks for feeling, no foolproof ways of knowing what someone else really thinks. Or feels. There is no scientific equation. We base our interactions on mysteries and assumptions. We learn the code. "That person laughed at my joke, so they must think I'm funny." "Person X-Y-Z hung up on me, so whatever I just said must have pissed them off though I can't for the life of me imagine why." "So-and-so didn't kiss me back the way I wanted them to, so they must not love me any more."

*She returns to the papers. she is struggling.*

"In love we're all the same," Lennox sings. "We're walking down these empty streets . . ."

*Her mind wanders as she listens.*

She just sounds so . . . lonely.

*She pauses. She laughs*

I'm standing here in front of you reading all this crap about a culture of solitude but really, I'll be honest,

I'll break my own skin open a little bit - this is all just a cover for the fact that I'm in pain here. And I have no way of expressing it to you. Did anybody bring a drum? See, every time I hear this song I think about this guy I used to love and still do, his name is Stefan, I can see his face right in front of me like he's sitting right there in the front row. This was supposed to be a treatise on the disintegration of our modern society, but I'm a fraud, and I'm not going on, the song just makes me think about all the things I could have said but didn't, all the things I wanted to say to him, all the things I want to say to all the people in my life and never do. (*she smiles.*) One night. Stefan and I were walking along the edge of the park and he pointed and said how beautiful the skyline was from a distance. And I wanted more than anything at that moment to be inside of him inside his heart inside his soul and see myself there but . . . I couldn't break his skin.

*Pause. she remembers her audience, collects herself, continues.  
The music fades out.*

In conclusion.

The landscapes and the downtown skylines of the world have changed since the time of the first East African drum call, some have gotten bigger, some smaller...The landscapes have changed, but none more than the vast unrecordable landscapes inside ourselves. Between thought and expression lies a lifetime.

However - the songs *about* the landscapes tend to stay the same, relatively. If you listen close you can hear the same yearning, the same heartbeat, in all of them. Maybe there's just something crawling around inside our skins that make us sing them differently from time to time.

#### SCENE TEN

*KLARA, sitting alone in her room. The sound of a chat window opening. KEV, sitting apart. They type.*

KLARA: [Hi, Kev.]  
KEV: [Hi, K. Sup?]  
KLARA: [Ehhh. Nothing, really, I guess.]  
KEV: [Uh-oh. What's wrong?]  
KLARA: [Nothing . . . I don't know.]  
KEV: [What happened last night?]  
KLARA: [Same old, same old. Nothing really. I was going to go to this party with people from work, but I decided not to.]  
KEV: [And?]  
KLARA: [And nothing. I realized it would be the same old people doing the same old things and I just couldn't take it.]  
KEV: Oh, Jimmy - get away from there. Put that away!

KLARA: [Besides, aside from work, I don't really have anything in common / with them.]  
KEV: [Hold on one sec?]  
KLARA: [Sure.]

*KEV exits. The sound of a chat window opening. Lights up JOHN, who begins typing.*

JOHN: [Wanna chat?]  
KLARA: [Sure.]  
JOHN: [Age?Sex?Location?]  
KLARA: [24.Female.Arizona.]  
JOHN: [Cool. What gets you hot?]

*KLARA types quickly. Lights out on JOHN.*

COMPUTER: [You are now ignoring messages from NiceGuy69.]

*KEV returns.*

KEV: [Sorry about that. My son wanted me to play ball and wouldn't take no for an answer. Kids. Grin. Now you were saying . . .]  
KLARA: [Oh, no, don't let me keep you from time with your son.]  
KEV: [It's no big deal. Really. Now you were saying that you didn't really have anything in common with those people...]  
KLARA: [I just don't feel any real connection. I mean, they're nice and all, but . . . I don't know.]

*The sound of a chat window opening.*

JOHN: [Would you like to chat?]  
KLARA: [Ok. Age?Sex?Location?]  
KEV: [How much have you interacted with them / outside of work?]  
JOHN: [23.Female.South Carolina. U?]  
KLARA: [Not at all really.  
24.Female.Arizona. I'm / Klara.]  
KEV: [Then how do you know you have nothing in / common with them?]  
JOHN: [Allison. Nice to meet you.]  
KEV: Jimmy, I'm busy!  
KLARA: [Because I interact with them at work. They're all so... I don't know. I find it hard to put into words.  
Ditto. Nice to run into someone my own age. ]  
KEV: Dammit, Jimmy!  
KLARA: [Usually I just encounter a bunch of shallow guys who are only / interested in cybering. / ]  
KEV: [I'm sorry Klara, but my son just broke a window and I need to go deal with it. But I don't want to leave you if you're upset.]  
JOHN: [I know! Me too! Don't you just hate that?]  
KEV: Just don't touch it Jimmy!  
KLARA: [Don't worry about it. Go take care of your son. No problem.  
So much. / It's the worst.]  
KEV: [You're sure?]  
KLARA: [Yes. No worries.]

*KEV exits. Lights off his area. Lights up on JOHN.*

JOHN: [So what do you like to for fun, Klara?]

*KLARA begins typing but is interrupted by modem noise, then a dial tone.*

COMPUTER: [Your connection has been lost. Connection terminated. Do you want to reconnect?]

*KLARA exits. The light goes down on her area. JOHN shrugs and begins typing. Sound of a chat window opening.*

JOHN: [23.Female.South Carolina. Wanna chat?]

### SCENE ELEVEN

MATT: Ever since the first dit-dit-da-dit-daa-dit of the telegraph machine brought the coasts of America closer together, the people of the world have been slowly moving farther apart. The telephone, television, the internet. Everyday it seems there is less and less need to actually be in the room with a person on any given day. But looking into the face of another, seeing eye to eye and being close to touch, to shake hands, hug, and to walk side by side - these moments have real value that should not be dismissed or forgotten.

JOHN: To be happy in this world it is necessary to feel oneself not merely an isolated individual whose day will soon be over, but part of the stream of life slowing on from the first germ to the remote and unknown future; to feel part of the community.

MATT: When Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in the 1830s, it was the Americans' propensity for civic association that most impressed him as the key to their unprecedented ability to make democracy work. "Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition," he observed, "are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types--religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute. ... Nothing, in my view, deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America."

JOHN: Today we find that this uniquely American tendency of social connectedness in interpersonal, civic, and social life is eroding. Once we bowled in leagues, usually after work; but no longer. We have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbors, and social

structures, whether the PTA, church, recreation clubs, political parties, or bowling leagues.

MATT: Social scientists in several fields have recently suggested a common framework for understanding these phenomena, a framework that rests on the concept of social capital. By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital--tools and training that enhance individual productivity--"social capital" refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Our shrinking access to this "social capital" that is the reward of communal activity and community sharing is a serious threat to our civic and personal health.

JOHN: Strong social connections improve our lot by widening our awareness of the many ways in which our fates are linked. People who have active and trusting connections to others--whether family members, friends, or fellow bowlers---develop or maintain character traits that are good for the rest of society. Joiners become more tolerant, less cynical, and more empathetic to the misfortunes of others. When people lack connections to others, they are unable to test the veracity of their own views, whether in the give-and-take of casual conversation or in more formal deliberation. Without such an opportunity, people are more likely to be swayed by their worst impulses.

MATT: Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself.

JOHN: It isn't the oceans which cut us off from the world -- it's the American way of looking at things.

MATT: Community has always warred incessantly with individualism for preeminence in our political hagiology. Liberation from ossified community bonds is a recurrent and honored theme in our culture, from the Pilgrims' storied escape from religious convention in the seventeenth century to the lyric nineteenth-century paeans to individualism by Emerson in "Self-Reliance", Thoreau in "Civil Disobedience", and Whitman in "Song of Myself" to Sherwood Anderson's twentieth century celebration of the struggle against conformism by ordinary citizens in Winesburg, Ohio to the latest Clint Eastwood film.

JOHN: Our national myths often exaggerate the role of individual heroes and understate the importance of collective effort. Historian David Hackett Fischer's gripping account of opening night in the American Revolution, for example, reminds us that Paul Revere's alarm was successful only because of civic engagement in the Middlesex Villages. Towns without well-organized militia, no matter how patriotic their inhabitants, were AWOL from Lexington and

Concord. Nevertheless, the myth of rugged individualism continues to strike a powerful inner chord in the American psyche.

MATT: But in spite of its predisposition to individualism, the American character has shown remarkable resources of fellow-feeling and cooperation in moments of crisis. From the Plymouth Plantation on, the ideal of the commonweal has been a tacit although often suppressed myth in our culture. The growing sensitivity to human rights, hunger, and poverty in our own era suggests that the recognition of pain, brokenness, and social wounds may call forth some of our better qualities.

JOHN: Now more than ever, as Americans of all ages and all walks of life feel more and more disconnected from each other, as our collective and personal sense of isolation grows, perhaps we will find a sense of shared fate that will finally free us from our fetish for individualism and release the indigenous pragmatism and cooperation that are, as de Tocqueville observed, also part of our national character and myth. Perhaps the simple recognition that we all play a part in our ever-increasing solitude will awaken us, will help us generate new myths... and new communities.

MATT: In nature we never see anything isolated, but everything in connection with something else which is before it, beside it, under it, and over it.

#### SCENE TWELVE

KLARA: Have you ever watched raindrops hit the ground? Sidewalk pavement especially. When it's raining those really big drops that almost hurt if they hit you on the head. Well when they hit the ground, if you ever kneel down and watch it at eye level, it's the most amazing thing. Every single raindrop shatters into a thousand pieces and then it's like it disappears. And it's like this symphony for your eyes, or a kaleidoscope, thousands of raindrops hitting the ground at once and turning into a thousand more...

I hadn't been home in almost two years. I decided to go back for a visit. Which didn't go so well. Or...maybe it did.

Anyway. I was home for a week, and it was a week of routine, of normal things, as if I'd been there all along. It was weird. I told them about the trip, I told them about Stefan, how he's getting engaged, they asked when was I going to find someone, and I avoided the question as usual. You know, the normal stuff. But there had been no...moment. No progress, no...catharsis. No coming- to-terms.

It was time to leave for the airport and my things were packed. My mother was smoking outside under the porch. And it was raining, hard, those big drops. I came outside and

sat down next to her, and we sat there in silence on the porch stoop for a while, and it was the first comfortable silence we'd had in...years. (*smiles*)

And all of a sudden I realize we're both sitting the exact same way. Butts perched on the edge of the step, gawky knees sticking up to the sky, arms folded, right hand holding a cigarette up to the mouth, chin slightly raised as if the body were bracing itself for something. And I'm watching the raindrops and I'm thinking, *Jesus. Did I run hundreds of miles away from home just so I could turn into my mother anyway?*

And I can tell she's watching the raindrops too. And I can tell we're both smiling. And I can tell we both see the kaleidoscope, and we're both completely enraptured. It's... it's a moment. We're connected. We know.

"So you know," I begin. I clear my throat. I begin again. "So I guess I flew home and spent a whole week here so I could sit and watch the rain hit the cement with you for a few seconds. You know that, right?"

"Yes," she said softly. "I know." And she looked at me, and she smiled, and I was home in a way I'd never been before. I'm not sure, but I thought I heard a drum beat in the distance.

She and I both knew it was inevitable I'd leave someday. That mothers raise daughters in the hopes that the daughters will have something more, and then begrudge them when they get it. They say there are only two things you can give your children, roots and wings, so mothers raise daughters and give them both of those things, give them wings bigger than the ones they had, but then they get very confused and angry and don't understand when the daughters fly away.

But the world is smaller now, and we're a global community, right? And moving away isn't such a big deal anymore, right? I mean, my friends are scattered across the country. My best friend lives on the opposite side of the *continent*, for god's sake, but technology makes geography irrelevant. Email, cell phones, frequent flyer miles. Our virtual space is as real as our physical space now.

Geography is irrelevant.

Except. When it comes. To mothers and daughters. Friends forgive you or forget you, fathers *accept*, but mothers...they can't do either one no matter how hard they try, and they won't be fooled—virtual space just won't cut it.

And so there we are, three years and countless miles between us since I severed the cord, and I'm sitting just like her and I look just like her and I wonder if I'm thinking just like her. And I wonder why I left. I feel

scattered like raindrops sometimes, homeless, buoying along the ocean through virtual space...sometimes I regret that our world is so big. Why does it have to be so big? And why this obsessive-compulsive need to see all of it, to explore it, to dig into the earth, dive under the ocean map out the sky...There's something, some restlessness that drives some of us. Drives us to the edges of the continent, the edges of the earth, to the far side of the moon. Drives us away from a small town we call home to a big city we've never seen. To the middle of nowhere in the deserts of Africa. To the far side of the moon.

And so there I am, and I'm watching the raindrops with my mother and I'm thinking about balance. Equilibrium. There's a certain peace that comes with watching the raindrops shatter. Something about letting go. And I think maybe... that's why.

I left.

Why I left. Maybe... we have to shatter ourselves and disappear back into the sky where we came from. Maybe some of us have to leave and disappear and shatter ourselves to get whole again. To get home again. Maybe that's the journey. Maybe that's how we learn to talk again.

### SCENE THIRTEEN

*KLARA seated and alone.*

*JOE enters far SL, crosses slowly, waving hello to everyone around. He crosses paths with JIM*

JOE: Jim-jimmy-jim-jim! Big party at my place tonight. It's all happening. Everyone's coming, you gonna be there?

JIM: Oh. *(Pause.)* Sorry Joe. I rented videos. I got three. So I kind of have a lot to do tonight. I'm real sorry.

JOE: Hey, no problem. Whatever gets you through the night.

*JOE crosses paths with JOHN\*.*

JOE: Johnny! Big party. Tonight. Everyone's coming. You included. I won't take no for an answer.

JOHN\*: Um. *(Pause)* Sorry. I've got a lot of reading to do Joe. I went to the bookstore at lunch today. So. *(Pause.)* Yeah.

JOE: That's cool man. Do what you do.

*JOE enters KLARA's space.*

JOE: Hey pretty lady! Coming to my party tonight. I haven't seen you in the public eye lately. We Miss You.

KLARA: Oh. Well . . . I don't know. I'll think about it. I kind of had plans.

JOE: Well hey, don't let me get in your way.

KLARA: Thanx JOE. I will consider it.

*KLARA sits and ponders. Music. JOE enters, they dance. MATT enters, they dance.*

- MATT: In spite of the large population of this planet, men and women remain today the most inaccessible things on it.
- KLARA: The whole world is a personality cult.
- JOE: Then a few people arrived and there was sporadic conversation, a little awkward at times, because not everyone knew everyone. Then the room slowly filled and the talk came more easily and the faces shed some layers. Klara spoke with someone in a corner, half aware that the spirit of being friendly and funny and well-met was overtaking the place. When you're all alienated together, you're not really lonely, and isn't it one of those things you never consider but might find amazing if you did, how the details of contact, the eye movement and hand waves, smiles of recognition, the catch-up lives that propel the early dialogue - how this becomes an energy that moves among the guests like a circulating angel, inspiring stories, rumors, flirtations, and misconstrued remarks, basically the makings of human history, even though people don't drink the way they used to, so you can't say it's the gin that makes them happy and natural. It's mainly the encouragement of others.
- KLARA: The mob needs to be loved. It lives to be loved.
- JOE: Listen to us.  
Listen to me.  
Please, understand me.
- MATT: But when she did the other thing, the social thing, throwing her head back in a crowd and laughing, she looked like a stranger to me. Afterwards all she could talk about was people.
- KLARA: Jeff said Patti had a hickey when they went to Tim's with Julie.
- MATT: You may live a long while with some people, and be on friendly terms with them, and never once speak openly with them from your soul.
- KLARA: I thought, What am I doing here? As a rule, I avoid crowds. I am not an agoraphobe, but dislike crowds on principle. The inevitable if unwitting poke of strange elbows into breast and back. The potentiality - and it has been realized - of someone throwing up on my shoes. The premise, the presumption implicit in any crowd, from concert hall to kaffee klatsch to office party, that shared experiences are the only ones that count. The only experiences toward which everyone aspires, The only *real* ones. That anything worth doing is not worth doing alone.

JOE: Little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth. For a crowd is not company and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love.

MATT: We are solitary. We may delude ourselves and act as though this were not so.

JOE: Some of us *appear* to be in, but we are out.

MATT: We never touch but at points.

JOE: Each of us swims alone through a sea of social types. Talkers. Lunchers. Touchers.

MATT: Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing, only a signal shown, and a distant voice in the darkness; So on the ocean of life, we pass and speak one another, only a look and a voice, then darkness again and a silence.

JOE: ISN'T IT GREAT TO BE ALIVE!!!

*JOE collapses, passes out. JOHN\* falls asleep with his face in a book. Lights fade a bit.*

*An alarm sounds. lights up suddenly. JOHN\* stretches, and goes for a run. JOE jumps up.*

JOE: SATURDAY!!!

*JOE collapses again.*

*KLARA makes a call.*

KLARA: Hi Mom. Sorry I missed your call. I've been real busy. I went to a party last night. It was pretty cool. People from work mainly. Some boys. They're not really my type, though. Not smart enough. Anyway, I'll talk to you soon. I love you.

#### SCENE FOURTEEN

*KLARA by herself.*

KLARA: I am tired. But, I am true of heart. You are tired. You are true of heart.

Tomorrow is a long time. Today is an endless highway. And each life is an emergency.

What gets you through the day? What about you? More importantly, what gets you through the night? The evening.

I feel like I must need more to do. Maybe I need to get more involved with my family. I don't know. Make some new friends. Wouldn't you like to be a Pepper too?

Sometimes I go driving. To take the edge off, y'know. It's always raining, of course. I just go to the coffee shop or the video store. Just to get out and see the headlights and streetlamps. All the busy people on campus with all their friends. I try to find just the right song to make the whole thing bittersweet. Sometimes I stumble onto a tearjerker, something a little too sincere and then I'm faced with the real meaning of the moment. Alone. Again. Listen to my pain.

I must have been a lonely child. Until the age of twelve or thirteen, my most intense, happiest hours were spent tramping desolate fields, woods, and creek banks near my family's farmhouse in Millersport, New York. No one knew where I went. My father, working most of the day at Harrison's, a division of GM, and at other times preoccupied, would not have asked; if my mother asked, I might have answered in a way that would deflect curiosity. I was an articulate, verbal child. Yet I could not have explained what drew me to the abandoned houses, barns, silos, corncribs. A hike of miles through fields of spiky grass, across outcroppings of shale as steeply angled as stairs, was a lark if the reward was an empty house where I could hide out and be alone for a few hours. Young as I was, it seemed like the whole meaning of life was in those abandoned homes. Time stopped and I didn't think about anything.

People have been asking for a long time where we stand in the cosmos; wondering if it matters whether we take one course or another when we're gonna die in a few decades anyway. But stuff like that doesn't upset most people for too long, they can't conceive of nonexistence because for as long as they remember, they've existed. So, absurd as it really might be to believe it, we really think we're very important, regardless of how insignificant or short lived we are. After all, we're the only ones living in our heads and in our skins. In our heads, we're always alone.

This, I think is where language comes from. It comes from our desire to transcend our isolation and to have some sort of connection with one another. This is the why of "Why bother?".

When I say love, the sound comes out of my mouth, it hits the person's ear, and travels through the Byzantine conduit in their brain, through their memories of love, or lack of love, and they register what I'm saying and they say "yes" they understand. But how do I know they understand? Because words are inert, they're just symbols, they're dead, y'know. And, and, so much of what we perceive cannot be expressed, is unspeakable. And yet when we communicate with one another and we feel that we have connected and we think

that we're understood . . . I think we have a feeling of almost spiritual communion and that feeling might be transient, but I think it's what we live for.

I once went to Lamu, in Kenya. It's virtually deserted; there's only one hotel on the island and miles and miles of beach. I didn't intend to stay too long, the bulk of my trip was all over with, but just before I was supposed to leave there was the bombing in Mombasa, and then the election. During the election, everyone said, "No, don't leave, stay here for New Year's Eve and see the boat race on New Year's Day." That's when people from all the surrounding islands race their hand-made sailboats. It was worth staying for. About twenty sailboats sped off into the new years morning sun, the masts held by old rope and string, with about thirty people all hanging off here, there, and everywhere. The winners got so excited their whole boat tripped over as did most of the others at the finishing line. You don't get much more alive than that beach that morning.

The fact of the matter is that I'm a bit of a loner. I usually really like being alone. I know that and that makes a lot of it OK. But 3:15am rolls around and I'm still driving or I'm still sitting in this chair rattling my keys, and I wanna talk to someone. I wonder, "What would I do if something was really wrong." That's what depresses me. That's what makes me feel a little out of place in my skin sometimes. Yeah, that's pretty late and all. But.

And I have friends. People call me. I go out most nights. But every 7<sup>th</sup> Saturday or so, when someone's out of town, and I'm not in the middle of a great book . . .

Yeah, when things are going bad I try to rationalize them by thinking, "Oh, well, what'll it matter in a hundred years." In a hundred years maybe it won't matter, but the trouble is that in the next few hours or days or weeks it matters a lot.

I've known it was pretty futile for a long time to run after people who didn't have any use for me and vice versa. And it's humiliating to do it but I get so lonely sometimes I figure I have to. But, as time goes by I'm getting increasingly inured to loneliness. I mean, I can always read. I read all the time now. I'd much rather find out what Virginia Woolf or Chekhov or Flaubert has to say than most of the people I'm acquainted with. Whether a book'll be the same comfort to me if and when I get to be 65 and friendless that they are now, I don't know. I'm trying to do the best can, but I dunno. I dunno.

Solitude. Loneliness. You ever notice how some words that are meant to express actually invoke?

I read a Richard Florida study showing that the amount of free time Americans spent socializing with others dropped

from 8.2 hours per week in 1965 to 7.3 in 1995 - that's a shift of nearly 20 percent. Now, given the years in question - 65 to 95 - it's pretty clear what caused most of this change. It's fueled by TV, and videos, home computers, and, of course, the internet. Most people are pretty relentless in blaming our new technologies for the "disassembling of society." I wonder how many more books are printed now than in 1965.

But what are we supposed to do with the idea - the message in all this fretting - that a less sociable world is automatically a worse one? That free time spent socializing with others is automatically superior to time spent in other ways? When headlines say *Internet Users Spend More Time Alone* it is not just a comment but a wail, it's like a banshee heralding a death. But what if a certain girl next door spends her time on-line studying the life-cycle of luna moths while the other girl next door spends her social time sharing a crack pipe with her dear friends? Or even, say, sitting on the porch with Kate and Morgan talking about nothing for hours? Is socializing all that great? Riots are social events. Arguably, more damage is done and time wasted in the company of others than alone. So maybe I should just be grateful. I'm sure most people would rather I just shut up about this. They might start to feel lonely too. In America, we are taught from an early age not to talk about the things that really bother. It's too dangerous. We might upset someone. I don't know.

Doesn't this all just seem so shallow, though? I mean the world is so fucked up right now. People don't have food. People don't have homes and I'm sitting here whining about feeling lonely. I'm middle class and lonely. And it just seems so pointless to discuss when we're at war. And we are! When millions are jobless. I mean, who cares! Wah! Wah! Cry me a river. Why does this matter? So I don't have enough buddies! So what? Why all this artifice? Don't we have any real goals? I want to change the big things and sadly I'm starting to wonder if art can do it. I think the rest of the world thinks that artists are too selfish and self-indulgent. That we aren't really connected enough with the world to communicate. It's all Ivory towers and aesthetic accomplishments and no real meat. What happened to the meat? What are we doing here?

Isolation? Okay. Fine. Loneliness is a legitimate question. It's a good question. It's something that everyone struggles with. Right? It's universal. Our hearts crack open in the asking. How do we comprehend the human heart? How do we comprehend the mysteries of our parents, our lovers, our need for social interaction? What the hell is sociometrics and what does it have to do with me? How do we make sense of our appetites and longings, the fact of catastrophe, the abrupt disappearance, the inevitable ending? At our best we ask these basic questions. At its best art asks these questions. It asks them compulsively, again and again. Loneliness is a cold feeling, but it leads

us to desperate undertakings as often as any passion under heaven that afflicts our nature. Why? I want to know. I want to know. I want to know - Should I go to his party? Clearly it would do me a lot of good to get out and meet some people. Get away from my thoughts for awhile. Just get drunk with my co-workers. My office-mates. Yeah. Sure.

Which is lonelier - sitting alone in the house, thinking about artistic morality or standing by yourself in a crowd at a horrible party? Or, listening to some slightly drunk guy talk your ear off about who-the-hell-cares-what while you try to find a way to excuse yourself. The end of a boring night at home or coming home after an evening of complete social failure? I bet even popular people are lonely most of the time.

Of course, I am making a vast, unqualified assumption about the quality of the people at this party. They could be nice. They could be deep. Then again, if they're so deep, why are they out at this party instead of sitting at home studying their post-modern malaise?

Wow. You'd think I'd have done enough of this waffling in college. You'd think I'd be over it by now.

What time is it? Is the night over yet? I wonder if there's anything good on TV.

I'm kidding.

People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's it. I think what we're really seeking is an experience of being alive, of feeling our lives echoed in the eyes and hearts and the words of other people. So that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality. We want to actually feel the rapture of being alive, so that we'll know that there's some good in the world. That is worth fighting for. That is worth talking about. That is worth all of this. That is what it's finally about.

#### **EPILOGUE**

MATT: Imagine that human existence is defined by an Ache: the Ache of our not being, each of us, the center of the universe; of our desires forever outnumbering our means of satisfying them.

JOHN: You are a socially isolated individual who desperately wants to communicate with a substantive world that may or may not exist.

KLARA: It gets harder and harder to feel anything but alone.

MATT: We're all standing here stranded and trying to deny it.

KLARA: If our jobs are expendable, if the world runs fine without us, all of us, if we can indeed live our entire lives without leaving the chair in front of our computers, then why, why indeed should I get out of bed in the morning to confront the long, lonely day, what is there that can pull me into public space one more time. Is it books and movies and music and the stuff of art and leisure? Leisure from what. I have absolutely no need to be engaged in life? What can give me reason to be conscious to feel a blessed thing as the hours pass me by? I'll tell you. Other people. Hell is other people, but they're our salvation as well. The beauty of the world. The salt of the earth.

JOHN: For all of our twenty-first century technology, we are still a species of flesh and blood who revel in the physical act of touch, and in a tangible physical connection. Despite our penchant for cellular phones and internet chat rooms, we long still for the feel of another's flesh upon our own. We try, we fail, we succeed, we try again...

MATT: We are all of us calling and calling across the incalculable gulfs which separate us even from our nearest friends.

ALL: Listen to us.  
KLARA: Listen to me.  
JOHN: Please, understand me.

KLARA: We are still a young and lonely species. Our forward endeavors into space merely reflect, on a global level, the individual act of reaching out which happens on this planet every day. We have simply set our goals a bit higher, now.

MATT: In 1979 the Voyager I satellite was launched to photograph and record the outer reaches of our galaxy. It will eventually escape from the gravity of our sun and will drift into the unknown reaches of the cosmos. Attached to the satellite is a message from Earth containing sounds, words, and pictures: in short, a record of who we are and what we have done in our time here, sent in the hope of reaching out to whatever life might lie beyond.

JOHN: Carl Sagan aptly noted that this message was sent not so much for those who might one day receive it, but rather for we who sent the message in the first place: those of us here on this lonely planet who revel in the anticipation and hope of contact. In the anticipation and hope of connecting with something outside of ourselves.

KLARA: There is hope in the reaching, in the anticipation.

MATT: We try and we fail, and we try again.

JOHN:           And sometimes, just sometimes, we reach what it is that  
                  we're after.

KLARA:           Hello.

END 11/03 BFTG