

LANE appears.

LANE

There is a guy out there, Kaiser or Cayser or Cosine something like that, who says that we never landed on the moon, - by "we" I mean NASA, that NASA never landed a man on the moon. Neil Armstrong and the Apollo Missions and "One small step for man" and Alan Shepard hitting that golf ball for miles and miles and miles - that never happened; it was all a hoax perpetrated on the American people by the US government and the diabolical National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Why, a discerning listener might ask? Well of course there's all the pressure Russia was putting on the US during the cold war so NASA needed to do something impressive to match all the cool yin-yang the Soviets were achieving - As if *they* were on such a bee-line for the moon. So Kaiser-Cayser-Cosine says that all that moon-landing shit was filmed in a movie studio and he can prove it by showing how the shadows in the pictures are all wrong and how the moon-dust should have been distributed differently by the rockets on the lunar module and blah blah blah blah blah blah. The amazing thing is not that this loony-toons Kaiser is out there expostulating. The amazing thing is not even that FOX gave Kozy/Kissing/Cushy an hour-long TV special on which to expostulate. The amazing thing - the real miracle here - is that a recent Gallop poll says that six percent of Americans believe the moon landings were faked. Six percent! That's seventeen million morons. These are probably the same evolutionary bungles who call USA Today a newspaper. "I think therefore I need a pie-chart."

LANE disappears. RACHEL appears.

RACHEL

"Indra's Net".

(slower, more deliberately.)

"Indra's Net". A hymn from the Rig Veda, the book of Mantra. OK. The Rig Veda contains the oldest form of all the Sanskrit Mantras. Mantras. Mantras. Many great scholars and Yogis think that it was written more than 6,000 years ago. Wow. That's a lot. "Indra's Net." OK. OK, here it is:

"There is an endless net of threads throughout the universe. The horizontal threads are in space; the vertical threads are in time.

At every crossing of the threads there is an individual,
And every individual is a crystal bead.

The great light of Absolute Being illuminates and penetrates every crystal bead.

And also, every crystal bead reflects not only the light from every other crystal in the net,
But also every reflection of every reflection throughout the universe."

Every reflection of every reflection throughout the universe.

(big pause)

(MORE)

RACHEL (cont'd)

Wow.

(another big pause)

Isn't that great? God. It makes everything, I don't know, like, easier somehow. Damn. And the bad stuff not as bad. You know?

RACHEL disappears. Darkness.
 Soundscape: a door slams one floor down. Someone ascends a staircase and trips on the top stair. He hisses "Shit!". He clomps down a hallway, getting closer. A door buzzer. A pause, then the buzzer again. Then the buzzer yet again, more insistent, several times. LANE speaks from just outside the door.

LANE

Rachel? Rachel? It's me. I'm locked out. Wake up, Rachel, I'm locked out and I can't see. I think there's been a blackout or something. C'mon Rachel, wake up, babe. I'm not kidding around out here. I'm locked out, I can't see anything, and I banged the shit out of my knee on that last step. Fucking super. You'd think "fixing the fucking step" would be up there on the skills list with "repair boiler" and "get tipped at Christmas". I mean does someone have to actually *die* to get the fucking step fixed? Jesus. C'mon Rachel, bunny, lambikins, sweetness, love of my life. Seriously. Open up. I'm locked out, I can't see, and I'm hurt, for god's sake. I'm *dying*! Rachel!

(beat)

Who's that? Is somebody there? I swear to god, I know Tae Bo and I'll use it if I have to. Agghhhhhh! Get off me! Get off me!

The cacophony of falling bodies, the sound of a key in the lock, and the door opens, still in darkness. A light is switched on. An apartment: Rachel and Lane's apartment. Cluttered with stacks of boxes, unopened cases of wine, the assorted furniture of two lives joined in midstream, newly moved in together. RACHEL stands next to the light, doubled over with laughter. LANE is crumpled on the floor in the doorway.

LANE (cont'd)

Nice. No, I mean it. Nice work.

(RACHEL is really laughing.)

I'm serious. I have to hand it to you. You're a real sadist, you know that?

(RACHEL can't control herself.)

(MORE)

LANE (cont'd)

I mean I'm out there in complete and utter nihilistic blackness and I'm hurt, and you can't say, "Look out Lane, it's Rachel, I'm right here behind you."? Jesus. You could very easily have had a myocardial infarction on your hands. Mine, to be precise.

RACHEL

Just say "heart attack" like people.

(hysterical, can't breathe)

Oh my god, Lane. Wow. You were great. Tae Bo! That's fantastic!

LANE

(getting up)

The Marquis de Rachel.

RACHEL

(still tickled)

You were like a really good radio show, you know, where you like close your eyes and everything takes place right there in your imagination? I didn't want it to end, but then I just couldn't resist.

LANE

Scaring the shit out of me. What do you know about radio shows? You were born like ten years ago. And *really* good radio shows... Jesus.

RACHEL

You're so cute.

LANE

Did you torture cats when you were growing up? Strangle puppies, anything like that?

RACHEL

I bought you a present.

LANE

I'm serious.

RACHEL

Yeah, I know. Look, do you want your present or not?

LANE

I want some ice for my knee is what I want. And a drink.

RACHEL

You're so like sucking the fun right out of this, babe.

LANE

So?

RACHEL

So don't. Close your eyes.

LANE

So you can jump me, right?

RACHEL

(teasing)

Later.

(not getting a reaction)

Look, I'm sorry I freaked you out. I rescue you and this is your best stab at gratitude? Needs work, babe. Now shut up and close your eyes. Put out your hand.

(RACHEL unwraps a small bundle of tissue paper and puts something in LANE'S hand.)

There.

(beat)

Open your eyes, stupid.

LANE

Gosh, I've been hoping for one of these.

RACHEL

Do you know what it is?

LANE

It's a rock. First an ambush, now a rock. This is my night.

RACHEL

It's an amethyst.

LANE

Ah. A rock with a name.

RACHEL

Don't be a jerk. It's a crystal. Crystals are an important source of energy. Every crystal has its own special powers. Amethyst promotes healing and inspiration. I was thinking, you know, for your writing. Aaliyah says amethyst is the perfect stone for one trying to free oneself from addictive personalities. You're always saying you have an addictive personality.

LANE

For one trying to... free... one... In other words, if you're addicted to your addictive... Look I like my addictive personality. I consider it a positive attribute.

RACHEL

(reading from a piece of paper)

"Amethyst is a stone of contentment and spirituality."

LANE

I am content. You just can't believe how content I am.

RACHEL

It's a present, Lane. Look, I just want you to, like, carry it around with you for a few days and see if it doesn't make a difference, get you out of your rut.

LANE

Rut. Cars get in "ruts". I'm a writer; Writers get "blocked."

RACHEL

Past your block then.

LANE

I'm not blocked. OK, OK. Thank you for the... what do you call it?

RACHEL

Amethyst.

LANE

Amethyst.

(beat)

Did you buy this?

RACHEL

Yeah, baby, I bought it. There's this new store over on Third. Scorpio Rising.

LANE

Of course.

RACHEL

What?

LANE

Nothing.

(beat)

Is this new?

RACHEL

I just got it.

LANE

No, the whole crystal business.

RACHEL

Dude. Crystals are like ancient. Thousands and thousands of years old. Prehistoric even. Native Americans, Chinese, Indians, Egyptians - they all used crystals. There's a temple in Ireland that's older than the pyramids; it had this skylight made out of white quartz to connect it to the White Goddess.

LANE

White Goddess. No, I mean, is this crystal business a new thing with you?

RACHEL

No. Yes. Well, no, actually. Aaliyah says that I'm an old soul. She says she's merely a conduit to knowledge I've been carrying with me for centuries. Like crystals.

LANE

Aaliyah.

RACHEL

She works at Scorpio Rising. She's way cool. She's the one who guided me to the amethyst. From the vibrations. She said it practically jumped into her hand.

LANE

Not as fast as your money. Did Aaliyah guide you to any other purchases? A couple of books, maybe? Your own personal Sherpa?

RACHEL

A couple of books. Or three. Look, I know you think I need to be protected from like everything...

LANE

No. Just scams and con... women. And everything.

RACHEL

I'm telling you Aaliyah is the real deal.

(beat)

She says I have a gift.

(beat)

I thought you'd be pleased.

LANE

That's not what I meant. I'm pleased you have a gift. I am. And I really... like this. I only asked about the books... because I'm interested.

RACHEL

Cross your heart?

LANE

I don't particularly hope to die, but yeah.

(beat)

X marks the spot, cool?

(beat)

Kiss?

(they kiss)

How much?

RACHEL

None of your beeswax, *asshole*. It's a *present*. Now put down your drink and come to bed.

LANE

None of your beeswax - you are an old soul.

(she pinches him - hard)

Ow!

RACHEL

You big baby.

RACHEL turns out the light; they go into the bedroom. LANE howls at the moon. Silence. The phone rings. And rings. And rings. Lights fade up. It is late morning, a few weeks later. Rachel and Lane have unpacked, settled in. A lot of empty wine bottles function as candle holders, bookends, shelf supports. RACHEL is sitting at a table, practicing with a tarot deck and making notes.

Coming!

The phone is buried in the stacks of books and old newspapers.

RACHEL (cont'd)

Hang on, hang on! We have so got to clean this place up. There you are, you sneaky asshole!

RACHEL picks up the phone.

RACHEL (cont'd)

Hello. Oh, hiiiiii! No, he's teaching a class. Yup. He's been teaching for a while now. Introductory Historical Linguistics. *Introductory Historical Linguistics*. I have no idea. I don't know, Amanda - you'll have to ask him. I'm guessing something to do with History or Linguistics, maybe Introductions, I don't know. Rachel. Rachel, his girlfriend. About a couple years, now, yeah. Yeah, we've met, Amanda. Several times. We did. I was at your house for a weekend last Christmas? Your dog took a dump in my suitcase? You threw a pot of Alfredo sauce at Lane? No, Amanda, it was me. I wouldn't remember if it wasn't, right? A memorable weekend, all around. Rachel - right. Hang on, Amanda, I hear him coming now. Your son. *Lane*.

LANE enters, carrying a battered, overstuffed briefcase, looking every bit the harried junior professor.

RACHEL mouths and indicates that Lane's mother is on the phone. LANE mouths and indicates that he doesn't want to talk.

RACHEL (cont'd)

Hang on. No, *on* - not up. He's right here. He can't wait to talk to you. 'Bye, now.

(teasingly cheerful, loudly)

Lane, it's your mother. She'd like to chat.

LANE

Hi, Amanda. Your son. Lane. Yes, the one and only. Well, it *is* me; maybe I'm coming down with a cold or something. Actually, Amanda, I was replaced by an alien who looks just like me but sounds a little different; that's probably what you're hearing. No, believe me, I'm not being smart. I don't know - May? End of the term, maybe? Teaching. Yeah, for a while now. Historical Linguistics, the evolution of language, how language changes over time. Talking to you, I realize it must change more rapidly than I'd thought possible. You're going to win me the Pulitzer Prize, Amanda. I don't know, Linguistics seemed like an easy, fast way to make a shitload of money. What, money? Oh, shitload. Sorry, I promise I'll never say "money" again. "Shitload," I mean.

He mouths "shitload" to RACHEL.

LANE (cont'd)

That was Rachel. Rachel, my girlfriend? You've met her. Several times now. Remember when Banjo took a dump in her suitcase last Christmas? That was fun. She, uh, well, she's kind of scoping out a bunch of different opportunities...

RACHEL points to her notes.

LANE (cont'd)

She writes for a magazine. Playboy. Kidding, kidding. Look, Amanda, I've got to go, I have some kids who need me to mess with their heads. Teaching. For a while now - not now, Amanda. Gotta go. Love you. Love you. Going now.

LANE hangs up.

LANE (cont'd)

She's getting worse. Man, I need a drink.

RACHEL

At least you *have* a mother. Don't you have another class at three?

LANE

Two drinks, then.

So: it wasn't a blackout. The super turned off the power at the main. And forgot to tell anybody. Fuckwad.

RACHEL

Aaliyah asked me to write an article about tarot decks for the magazine.

LANE

I think we should hold back this month's rent in protest. Non-violent dissent. Power to the people.

RACHEL

You're so good with language and all, I just wondered if you could kind of take a look at it.

LANE

I had this kid today who had never heard of Chomsky. How can you be a philology major and not know one of the greatest voices in linguistic theory? Noam Fucking Chomsky! Jesus Christ. How hard is this shit? Idiots.

RACHEL

I want to make sure that I don't, you know, say anything like stupid or anything.

LANE

What?

RACHEL

Aaliyah asked me to write an article about tarot decks for the magazine.

LANE

What magazine?

RACHEL

Hello? Natural Alternatives in Healing and Multi-Dimensional Living. I'd like your opinion.

LANE

Catchy title.

RACHEL

I'd like your opinion of my *article*. Jeez-o-pete, Lane, you're so literal.

LANE

I have a class to teach in eight hours, I have chapter two to deliver to my publisher by the end of the week, I have my mother, who I think must be getting Alzheimer's or something, and I have to make something up to confess to my therapist on Tuesday. I am a tad under the gun, Rachel.

RACHEL

I have the magazine.

LANE

The magazine.

RACHEL

The magazine.

LANE

You have the magazine.

RACHEL

Yes, I have the magazine.

LANE

It's not a magazine, Rachel. It's a... it's a newsletter. No wait, it's a circular. Which pretty much describes the reasoning of the people who read it. Magazines have subscribers and advertisers and professional writers, and, oh yeah, income. Circulars on the other hand are Xeroxed and stacked in shoeboxes next to the cashier at the Dancing Pisces or the Flying Sagittarius or...

RACHEL

Scorpio Rising.

LANE

Scorpio Rising - right - along with a sign that says, "Take me - woo! - I'm free."

RACHEL

Oh, here we go. Back to the money.

LANE

What's wrong with money? Look around, lambikins. Paid for by? And it's not about money.

RACHEL

Lane, it's always about money.

LANE

This has nothing to do with money. This is about ideas, Rachel. About having them.

RACHEL

I have ideas.

LANE

This is about thinking and reasoning and cognition and logic and rational discourse. Do you know what Locke said about rational discourse, about the purpose of our existence?

RACHEL

Not *our* existence, Lane. Yours.

LANE

Locke said that the purpose of existence...

RACHEL

I don't care who Locke is or what he says about my existence.
I don't care who *Locke* is...

LANE

Was.

RACHEL

...I don't care who *Chomsky* is, I don't care who Darwin is or was or will be or any of it. You say you're talking about thinking and reasoning and whatever but all you ever do is bludgeon people over the head with quotations. There's all these philosophers and scientists and great authors rattling around up there, but what about Lane? Where is Lane? *What* is Lane? Do you ever have any ideas of your own? That don't come from dead people?

LANE

Dead... Dead. You know what the difference between us is?

RACHEL

You can't answer me, can you?

LANE

(ultra pedantic)

Do you know what the difference is between us?

RACHEL

I'm all ears.

LANE

Here it is, here is the difference between us: I *know* what I know. You only know what you believe.

RACHEL

Only.

LANE

All your crystals and aromatherapy and homeopathic remedies and para-psycho-psychometry...

RACHEL

Psychology.

LANE

...and all that happy hokum voodoo shit, none of which has ever been shown to have any demonstrable effect whatsoever. I have...

RACHEL

It makes me feel good.

LANE

...knowledge. Real knowledge. What?

RACHEL

Those things, all that happy hokum voodoo shit, makes me feel good.

LANE

Make. Those things *make* you feel good.

RACHEL

The real difference between us, Lane, is that you care about grammar and I care about people. It's reading versus living, and to *me*, living wins hands down. Yeah, I know what I believe and I believe in what makes me feel good.

LANE

Oh, that's great. And thus - religion was born...

RACHEL

I didn't say religion.

LANE

...Finally a religion that felons and drug-addicted rapists can really sink their teeth into. "I believe in what makes me feel good, creator of heaven and earth." So you must believe in coke and acid and heroin and crack and pedophilia...

RACHEL

Yeah, and booze. Because you're the love of my life. And what keeps you happy makes me happy.

LANE

I'm not the one who's hiding anything. And I'm not the one who's hiding *behind* anything. It's time to come in from the fantasy, Rachel.

RACHEL

Oh, that's good.

LANE

What?

RACHEL

I'm hiding? Perfect.

LANE

What?

RACHEL

What do you think all this is, Lane? All these books, all this research, all the note taking and memorizing and this "data, data, data"?

LANE

These data.

RACHEL

I was quoting. "Data, data, data" was functioning as a noun - singular. Oh look, I learned something. Your idea of an emotional connection is "I read an interesting article in the Times today." Taking in all the time, taking in, but never giving out. Nothing ever comes out. Even the way you read, hunched over with the book in front of your face. No, baby, in a hiding contest with you, I wouldn't stand a chance.

LANE

Now you're projecting.

RACHEL

I hate it when you analyze me. You know, I just realized that. It's a little epiphany: You analyze me like all the time. And I hate it. I may be on to a breakthrough: I hate you analyzing me.