

MURMURS AND INCANTATIONS

by

Dahn Hiuni

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806 Coronado Terrace, #14
Los Angeles, CA 90026
646.831.1232
dahnhuni@gmail.com
www.murmursplay.com
www.dahnhuni.com

CHARACTERS

BEN LEVITTS, A New York artist with creative block.
Early 60's.

LANE, his best friend. A saucy Southerner. Early 50's.

DOVID SCHULEVITZ, The ghost of Ben's grandfather. An
old world rabbi. Early 70's.

EVA GORZELAK, A Polish curator. Reserved and
dignified. Mid 60's.

ZBIGNIEW, A Polish gallery technician. Hunky but
sensitive. Early 30s.

MICHAEL, The ghost of Ben's lover. Early 30's.

HELEN, A New York socialite.

ROACH, A stoner art student. 20's.

OTHER CHARACTERS

Gallery Guests, Art Students, Airport Passenger

SETTING

New York City, Warsaw,
and the Polish Countryside.

TIME

Over Two Weeks in March, 2001.

SCENES

Prologue	A dream	
Scene 1	Chelsea Gallery	Evening
Scene 2	College Classroom	The Next Day
Scene 3	Ben's Apartment	That Evening
Scene 4	Departure Gate, JFK Airport	Morning, the Following Week
Scene 5	Warsaw Contemporary Art Center	The Next Morning
Interval	Ben's Hotel Room	Evening
Scene 6	A Bar in Warsaw	Later That Evening
Scene 7	Ben's Hotel Room	That Night
Scene 8	The Polish Countryside	Later That Night
Scene 9	The Art Center	Late Afternoon, the Next day
Scene 10	The Art Center	About an Hour Later
Scene 11	The Art Center	Early Next Morning
Scene 12	The Countryside Evening	Two Days Later

PROLOGUE

SCENE 6

(Later that evening. BEN and ZBIGNIEW are at a bar drinking beer. DOVID is the unobtrusive bartender. ZBIGNIEW, who is decked out in black leather, has had quite a bit more than Ben. ZBIGNIEW offers Ben a cigarette. BEN declines.)

ZBIGNIEW

You do not smoke?

BEN

I quit.

ZBIGNIEW

Hmm. Everyone I know smokes.

BEN

Yeah. It goes well with being a young artist. So Zbigniew, how come your English is so good?

ZBIGNIEW

Oh, is not good.

BEN

No, it's excellent.

ZBIGNIEW

Ah... from American movies. And my Brother. When we were young, we pretend to be Bonnie and Clyde. *Boom-boom-boom!*

(ZBIGNIEW shoots with his fingers in the air, and laughs.)

ZBIGNIEW (CONT'D)

I was Bonnie.

BEN

They're not the best American role models, you know.

ZBIGNIEW

I know. Oh, I love America.

BEN

You ever been?

ZBIGNIEW

No. It will be first time.

BEN

What school were you accepted to?

ZBIGNIEW

Person.

BEN

Parsons. That's a good place.

ZBIGNIEW

Oh, yes. I am ready. I want to go now! After I finish Parsons, I want to have big exhibition. At the MoMA! What do you think--is possible, yes?

(BEN chuckles)

ZBIGNIEW (CONT'D)

This is what I want, more than anything.

BEN

You know, Zbigniew, I have many students in New York, just like you--they wanna be art stars. It's not that easy. Even when you're born there.

ZBIGNIEW

I work very hard.

BEN

Things doesn't always work out the way you want 'em to. Maybe start by showing here.

ZBIGNIEW

It work for you, yes?

BEN

It worked out for me... for about ten minutes. And that was a long time ago.

(Pause.)

BEN (CONT'D)
So, where is it--where's your art?

ZBIGNIEW
My art?

BEN
Yes. You were gonna show me your art. Or was that just a line?

ZBIGNIEW
It was just line.

BEN
Ahhh! Zbigniew!!

(ZBIGNIEW smirks, takes a swig. A beat, then)

ZBIGNIEW
Ben, you are Jewish, yes?

BEN
Yes. I'm also Polish.

ZBIGNIEW
Your family is from Poland..

BEN
I'm from Poland. I was born not far from here.

ZBIGNIEW
This is how you know Eva.

BEN
We grew up together.

ZBIGNIEW
And your family left?

BEN
You could say that. Zbigniew, what year were you born in?

ZBIGNIEW
Seventy-one.

BEN

Seventy-one. There was a lot of craziness here before you were born.

ZBIGNIEW

I know. It is very hard to understand, for my generation. My parents always said Jewish people made Poland much better country.

BEN

Well. That's nice.

(ZBIGNIEW, now tipsy, looks dreamily at BEN.)

ZBIGNIEW

I love Jewish men.

(DOVID stops his bartending activities and stares at BEN.)

BEN

Really?

ZBIGNIEW

Yes. I think they are... very sexy.

BEN

I agree.

ZBIGNIEW

Do you think that... Polish men are... very sexy?

BEN

I think *you're* very sexy.

ZBIGNIEW

Yes...?

(ZBIGNIEW puts his hand on Ben's.)

BEN

Yeah. But, unfortunately, I'm old enough to be your... grandmother. So...

ZBIGNIEW

Oh... I always love Jewish men. *Older* Jewish men.

BEN

Older Jewish men? What, like Woody Allen?

ZBIGNIEW

No. More like... Leonard Cohen.

BEN

Leonard Cohen?! How the fuck do you know Leonard Cohen?

ZBIGNIEW

We have music stores here, Ben.

BEN

Listen, bubbie. It's very flattering, but, I haven't been... *romantic* in a really long time, and I really wouldn't know what to do.

ZBIGNIEW

(Showing his inebriation)

You haven't made art in long time, you haven't had sex in long time. Is very bad! I show you...

BEN

No, Zbigniew. You're drunk. And plus, I'm not into the whole leather thing. I'm too old for bondage. *S&M in Polish...* it's too weird.

ZBIGNIEW

(Slurred speech)

You know what word you can find in my name—Zbigniew?

BEN

What?

ZBIGNIEW

Big.

BEN

Alright, that's enough. Come on, Bonnie. I'm taking you home.

(BEN goes to help ZBIGNIEW up from his chair and carries him off as he

stumbles. BEN gestures to DOVID not to say anything else.)

BEN

Oh Jesus. You're heavy.

ZBIGNIEW

I'm sorry Leonard... I'm sorry.