

Ivan Viripaev

UFO

a play

translated by Cazimir Liske

The play begins when the audience learns of the contents of the following letter:

Hello. My name is Ivan Viripaev. I'm the author of the play you're preparing to stage at your theater. I'm addressing this letter to the creative team: the director, actors, designer, and everyone who will be working on the play. I'd like to tell you how this play came to be. I think that's something you should know about. A few years ago I decided to make a film about people who have had encounters with UFOs. I began searching for such people on the internet, and as it turns out, the number of people who have had encounters with UFOs is quite high. In fact extremely high. Of course, the majority of these people are either not entirely sane, or they're frauds, or they just want to attract attention. Nonetheless, amidst a massive pile of pure nonsense I was able to find fourteen people who seemed to be perfectly normal. Of course, I made that conclusion after meeting them on the internet. But I decided to risk it. I asked for some money from a Russian oligarch I know, and he agreed to finance my travel expenses. The fourteen people I found lived in scattered corners of the Earth from Australia to the US. Nonetheless I was able to meet every one of them personally. I spent a few days with each of them and recorded our conversations on video. Of those fourteen people, four turned out to be not so normal after all. Although what's normal? -- also not a bad question. But I decided to leave only ten interviews and write a screenplay using the actual words of these real people with whom I had spoken. And I wrote that screenplay. And I started showing it to various producers. However, despite the fact that I had one-of-a-kind material, none of the producers were seriously interested in the project. In the end I started work on another film, and the

search for funds for this project was set aside for later. A few years have gone by since then and now I begin to see that I'll probably never be able to make this film. I think I've finally come to accept that. On the one hand, I understand the producers who fail to see a feature film in this material—after all, there's no “highly-developed storyline”. But on the other hand, it's true. This is absolutely unique material: first-hand accounts of people who have had contact with extraterrestrial civilization. That is, truly, unbelievably interesting information. Personally, I would be very interested as an audience member to see a film like that. But I could see that the film producers thought otherwise, and, probably, they know better than I. In any case, I'd hate for the material to go to waste, and therefore I've decided to propose it for theatrical use. Of course, I've greatly shortened and edited the interviews, because each conversation lasted several hours over several days—it would have been simply impossible to include all the material in one show. So I created an edited version. And I believe that I've managed to give these people a voice. And now I eagerly await the moment when the words on the page will be spoken from the stage. I don't know how you're going to show these people—if you'll physically portray them or just read the interviews out loud—you certainly know best. My mission is simply to prevent this valuable material from disappearing. And I hope that, while working on the play, the actors will have respect for the people whose stories they are telling—because it really doesn't matter whether these people actually met with aliens or if they just made it up. It doesn't matter. Because all that really matters is when a person living on planet Earth wants to share his most treasured thoughts about life with someone else. Have a good show. Ivan Viripaev.

Emily Wenser

Hi, I'm Emily. I live in Australia. Actually, no. Once again. Hi, I'm Emily Wenser. I live in Bathurst, Australia. I'm twenty-two years old, uh...What else? My parents are alive and well and I have a little brother named Cooper. Is that enough information? Yeah? Well then I'll get right to it? Ok. So basically. I had an encounter with extraterrestrials. With a UFO, I think it's called. It happened in a cafe. I was sitting in a cafe one morning. It was about nine o'clock, it was Sunday,

so the cafe was empty—just me and another kid, he was Arab. I used to see him there pretty often, in that cafe, probably because he studied here at the university. There's a uni here right near that cafe, and on a regular day the cafe is full of kids, all the tables are taken—but on a Sunday morning, not to mention at 10am, there was nobody there. Well, except this guy was there. I don't know, maybe he wasn't a student. I don't know him, but I had seen him a few times right there in that cafe. I study on the other side of town, but would come to that cafe on Sundays, because I go to yoga. Not far from there there's a yoga center, and I've been going there for almost two years. Actually I used to only go there on Sundays, because I was busy studying and doing other stuff during the week, so I didn't have time to go then. I would do yoga more often, like, at home. Anyway all that doesn't matter. Actually, it kind of matters. But what really matters is that all this reminded me of yoga. Later, when all this had already happened to me, when it was all over and I kind of came to, I suddenly realized that it all reminded me of yoga, only I don't know how to explain it. I was already thinking then of how to explain it, but I still don't know how. But really, it's all kind of like the feeling you get from yoga. Only the feeling from yoga is a million or maybe even a trillion times weaker. But the sensation is kind of similar. Whatever, all that doesn't matter either. I just don't know how to get to the point of it all. I don't know how to talk about it. It's actually a really intimate thing. And really personal. It would probably even be easier for me to tell you about the first time I had sex than tell you about this. Actually the first time I had sex was not that long ago, just a year ago. And it was all so shitty, stupid and uninteresting, I don't even want to think about it. Anyway, there I go off on a tangent again. So. So there I was sitting in that cafe on a Sunday. I was looking at something on the internet. At some news or something on Facebook, and suddenly...it happened to me in just an instant...I suddenly, like all of a sudden, it was as if someone had given me a shot. I don't even know how else to explain it, you know, it was like...like right inside you this thing opens up and warmth flows all over your body... I can't even explain it....it's just kinda hard to come up with the right words, I guess it's like shooting up with heroin, although I don't know, I've never tried heroin, but it's not like marijuana, cause I *have* tried marijuana, and that's not it. It's like a shot of something...all through your body...straight away...and, immediately, it made me realize something really important was happening to me. Or rather...I

suddenly realized that right then, at that very second, I felt—not thought, you see, not with my head, but like with all of me, in one second, so fast, instantly, I somehow realized that I was experiencing the most important moment of my life. That the very most important thing in my life—it was right here and right now! Phew! Give me some water.

Pause. Emily drinks water.

Phew! Sorry. So all this stuff started happening, I felt all this happening, and pretty quickly I began to understand the reason for all of it. Of course at first I freaked out, I was scared, I thought, I feel sick, I'm dying, although I actually felt really good, but precisely because I felt so good I also got spooked, I mean I had never felt so good in my life. And so at first I was scared and then I suddenly sort of calmed down, or maybe I didn't calm down, it was like I had been calmed down. I can't explain that either, but it was like I was made to feel for a second what it's like to be completely out of danger. That's it! I suddenly felt what it's like to be in complete safety. I realized that for the first time in my life I felt totally safe. And then I also realized that up to that moment, for my whole life, I had constantly felt some kind of danger. I understood that. You know what I mean? We don't even know that we are living with this constant sense of danger. We even sleep with that feeling. We just don't know it's there, because we have nothing to compare it with. But then here I was, in this state of total safety, and that's when I understood that my entire existence up to that moment had been very different. And even now. Right now I'm in a state of danger. But the most interesting thing is that even at home, when I'm alone, I'm in this state of danger, and even in my sleep. We live in this state of danger all the time. And that's why we're always so tense. And that's probably why junkies love heroin so much, because they're high, and they come to this state of safety. But the problem is that then that feeling passes, and your body asks you to repeat that feeling again and again. Because it's like this, you know, it's this total relaxation, and you don't have to be lying down, you can walk, run, you can do whatever you want, but you're out of danger, you're relaxed. And you're not high, your mind is absolutely sane and sober. I'd even say unbelievably sober. Super sober. Like, basically, I don't even know to explain it. When I look at my mom. She's 46. She's a

psychotherapist. She's always in this state of danger. She helps other people get out of that state, and she herself is in it all the time. I don't even get how you can even help other people relax if you yourself are tense. And everyone is tense all the time. I didn't used to notice that, but I've started to see it. I live in this state of danger, I'm in this state of danger right now and you're in a state of danger, everyone around us. Some more, some less. Those who are in more of a state of danger grab their guns and start killing people. That's how they defend themselves. They're in danger, after all. And they start increasing that danger all around them, more and more. And when this encounter happened to me, this contact, that's when I relaxed for the first time in my life, and suddenly got it. Though actually the feeling left me pretty quickly. By the evening there was nothing left of it. But I still had the memory of it. And I still had a desire to live that way. And now I know what I need to move toward. So that's what happened to me. Oh! Of course, I didn't tell you the most interesting part! So there was that guy with me in the cafe, the Arab kid. And when this all was beginning, and I was just coming into safety, I remembered that guy was there, and I wondered if I was the only one seeing all this, or if someone else had too. Was this all just happening to me or to other people as well? And I turned around, saw that kid there, and I could see that he was in the same place I was. That he could see it all, too, that he had also had contact. And so I was immediately convinced this wasn't some kind of head trip or something. Though I knew it wasn't a head trip, anyway. Because there was nothing you could mistake it with. It was the realest kind of contact there could be. And then I looked around and thought maybe other people had seen it, too? Maybe the waiter? But the waiter wasn't there. He was somewhere out in the back probably. We never order anything other than juice or coffee and then just sit there for a couple hours, so he left. Missed everything. Because then when the waiter came back, it was all over. So yeah. What did I want to tell you though, I can't remember. Oh, right! Of course. About this guy. I'm looking at him, and he's looking at me. And we both know that, like, we both know. And so then I say to him - You see all this, right? It's happening to you too, right? I don't know why I said that, I knew he saw it all, but I wanted some kind of confirmation or something. And so I asked him, and he looks at me and suddenly I see tears coming down his cheeks. And then he goes - I'm not allowed. I ask him - What do you mean, why not? And he says, - I'm a Muslim, I'm not

allowed. And he cries. I say, - come on, you're safe, and he looks at me and says, - Yes. And he cries. That was one of those moments of my life. It was one of those things you live for. I suddenly realized: he's a man, I'm a woman, we live on this planet. We live in this cosmos. We are friends. He's a Muslim, I'm an atheist, but we're both completely safe. But apparently he saw it a little differently than I did. I don't know where he is now or what he's doing. I never saw him again after that. Though I always go to that cafe now, because I started going to yoga three times a week, but I never see him there anymore. Probably he just doesn't want to see me and that's why he doesn't hang out at that cafe, or maybe he moved away, I don't know. Phew! I need to take a break, sorry.

Artyom Gusyev

Hey everybody, I'm Tyoma. Artyom Gusyev. I'm 35 years old. I was born in Russia, St. Pete, I mean Saint Petersburg, but, well, now I live here in Hong-Kong. I came to Hong-Kong to party. That was about ten years ago—came here just to party and hang out and I kind of got stuck. Some work popped up, friends, all that. Settled down or whatever. I'm actually a computer programmer, I develop and produce different computer games and all that virtual bullshit that drives people out of their minds, especially kids. I like it, I like putting them together, fussing around with all the different programs. Some games I've worked on have gotten really popular, for example 'Special Ops: The Line' —if you've played it you know it. *"Get ready to enter a world where there's no such thing as 'equality,' and at every step you must decide who must live and who must die. Dubai has been erased from the face of the Earth by a horrific catastrophe. An unprecedented sandstorm has turned the once dazzling city to ruins. And now it's up to you, in the role of Martin Walker, Captain of the Delta Force Command, to venture into forgotten territory, find Colonel John Conrad and bring him home."* That was my project, well not just mine, of course, it was mine along with a bunch of my colleagues. Now I know that it's all a bunch of bullshit that sucks people's brains dry, but I used to not really give a damn. Somebody has to make all that crap, why not me? Well anyway, what am I bothering you with all this crap for, you're probably not interested, you probably want to get through with it and hear about

how I had my encounter. Right? And you probably think I'm nuts, right? There's this dude sitting here, thirty years old, staring at a computer day after day, probably on all kinds of drugs. By the way I don't do drugs. I smoke hash, of course, like anyone in their right mind. But drugs—I do not partake in. Well, almost. Every now and then, occasionally, when there's something going on, you know, friends on the weekend, but for the most part, no sir—nyet! So you see, I'm a normal guy, to the extent that's possible. I'm not a psycho. I mean, I don't think I am, anyway. Basically, I *believe* that I am not a psycho. So anyway—what happened...this is what happened. First of all, it happened here. Well not right here, where we're sitting right now, but out there, on the balcony. Only right now it's noisy out there, we're better off staying in here for now. There are tons of cars out there now, so I only open the balcony door at night, and during the day I sit here, I work and sleep here, I basically live here, as you can see. And at night I go out onto the balcony to get some fresh air. You know—confer with Mother Nature. So there I was, as always, I went out at night onto the balcony after work to get some fresh air, smoke, have a brew. And I'm sitting there, drinking beer—I hadn't smoked yet. That's really important—you have to remember that I had not yet smoked, otherwise you'll think I got high and all this was some kind of hallucinations or whatever. Of course what hallucinations could there possibly be from hash, obviously none. If you smoke, you know that, if you don't smoke, you think hash is the same thing as LSD. Hilarious, right? Like, people basically just throw it all in the same pile. Never tried it themselves, they don't know, but they have their little opinion and start spreading around all kinds of crap. Anyway, whatever, doesn't matter. The important thing is that I had not yet smoked. I'm just sitting there, having a beer. I'm sitting there, drinking beer, relaxing after a day at work. And then, it begins. At first it's just this edginess or something. I don't know what's happening, but it feels like something is happening. I don't know what happened. Nothing has happened, but I feel that something has happened. My hands start straight-up shaking. This edgy feeling suddenly grabs me, it was like—I don't know what, there's nothing I can even compare it to. I'd never felt that edgy before, even when I went through customs at the airport with a gram of cocaine in my pocket. But here I'm literally shaking all over. And most importantly I can't figure out why. And suddenly—all at once, all of a sudden, it happens. And I see it. I see it, with my own eyes. And I don't just see it, I feel it. And I

don't just feel it, it is happening to me. I am partaking in it. It has involved me in it, it has taken me in. I'm right at the center of it all. Or not even that—I'm not at the center of it, it is at the center of me. And it starts pressing down on me from all directions. And I yell. I mean, I screamed out loud, as loud as I could. And suddenly, after that scream, inside of me there was this incredible, some kind of inexplicable, infinite quiet. I have never, ever, not before or after, I have never ever heard, if you can even say that, I have never seen or heard quiet like that. It was such a quiet quiet, it was this quiet like—I don't even know how to say it. I mean how can you talk about quiet? It was so quiet, that there was nothing else but quiet. I mean, there were sounds. Sounds from the street, and music coming out of other people's windows, there were sounds, I wasn't in a vacuum, there were sounds, but I was inside quiet. It was like I was in the center of that quiet. And I felt so good. I have never, ever, not from any drugs, not drunk or high from anything, I have never felt that good. It was so quiet. It was absolute, true, complete quiet. And in that quiet, I felt so, so good. Because it was like I was that quiet. It was like everything inside me just went silent, you know? And I realized right then that our problem is that we are constantly making noise. We make a lot of noise. We talk, we argue, we think, we have all these thoughts in our head, and there's always this noise, we are in the midst of this noise all the time. And we are never, ever surrounded by quiet. We don't even know what quiet is. We have never heard quiet. We don't know it's there. But it's there. And I realized that we have left the quiet. You know they say man evolved from monkeys—but I know that man evolved out of quiet. Everything in the world comes from that quiet—quiet is the foundation of everything. And that quiet is in everything, it is found in everything, it's in you—only we can't get through to it because of this constant noise. But the quiet is there. I know that now, I've heard it. I was in that quiet for about ten minutes. And for the first time in my life, I relaxed. Man, did I relax! You can't even imagine how I relaxed. I relaxed enough to last me the rest of my life. I still haven't gotten tired, even though that was over two years ago. And I'm still not tired. And now I think that if every day we put ourselves in that quiet even for just a minute, the world would be a different place. Everything would be different, for real. In fact I meditate now every morning, I sit there for twenty minutes or so and I listen to the quiet. Only I don't hear the same quiet I heard then. I've got too much noise inside me. But of those twenty minutes,

sometimes I manage to get a few seconds in that quiet—it's not the same quiet I heard then, but pretty close. And those few seconds of quiet give me energy to last me the whole day. So there's my little experience. Of course, nobody believes me, obviously. When I tell people I had contact with an extraterrestrial civilization, well you can guess what they think of me—and when I go on to tell them about the quiet, then they just start laughing. Where'd you get that hash from, they say, let me get some of that! I mean, of course, how could you believe a story like that. And I don't need to prove anything to anybody. I just live my life. Practically nothing has changed in my life at all. Well, I did kinda change my job, I don't develop games anymore, I work on websites now. You know, I build different sites, and all the rest of that crap on the internet. What else...well and I stopped smoking hash, 'cause it makes too much noise in your head. And since then my hearing has gotten much better—it's not like I can hear everything, but I can hear noise. And there's noise everywhere. And there's especially a lot of noise in marijuana and alcohol. Though I haven't quit drinking beer. Gotta make a little noise sometimes. But smoking—I don't smoke anymore, that stuff is too noisy for me. So, there ya go, that's my story. Oh hey, come on, let's head out on the balcony, it's quieter out there now, we can hang out there, let's go.

Nick Scott

Hi. I'm Nick Scott. I'm twenty-seven years old. I live in Detroit, in the US. I work as a postal carrier for the US Postal Service. I deliver packages to offices and houses. And I'm in a rock group. That's actually my main work. I'm a musician, I play in a group called Blue Helicopter Flying Up. We play this music, something like surf rock, only not pure surf, something in the middle between beach music and Radiohead. As our bassist Dave says—our music is for people who like *alright*... If you want, later, I can put a track on for you. But right now, you want me to get to the point, right? Get to the gripping story about how I met aliens. Right? You see what a mess I'm in, right? If someone told me they'd met creatures from outer space, what would I think? To be honest, I wouldn't think about it, I wouldn't even allow myself to think about something like that. It's obviously either BS or a plea for attention, or loneliness or lust, hell,

anything at all, except not aliens, because there is no such thing, of course, as aliens. That's precisely what I have always thought. That's what any normal person should think. So I totally understand what you probably think of me. But now, I, of course, see all this in a totally different way. I see it as a chance, a chance that you only get once in your life, that is, if at all—not everybody gets a chance like that, in fact to be honest, almost nobody does. But I, who knows why or how, I got just such a chance. I saw it. I encountered it—and this encounter changed my life completely. And whether you believe me or not that's up to you. This is what happened. It was Tuesday. I had a package delivery to make on the very edge of town. After having delivered the package, and since my work day was over I decided to head to the nearest forest and hug a tree. Now you probably think I'm a total idiot, right? But let me explain. My uncle taught me this. When you're tired and you have no strength, or when you're sick, or whenever you're kind of sad, or depressed, or lonely, or you just need energy for something really important, you go up to a tree you feel is right for you and you hug it with your whole body. Just embrace that tree, like a girl, only even harder. Entwine yourself around that trunk like you're a vine. And when you've wrapped yourself up around it, then you have to ask the tree. In your mind, you address the tree and ask it for strength. Only you really have to prepare yourself for this and concentrate very, very hard, you really have to focus, only without tensing up, of course. Just hug it like this and say give me strength, or give me health, heal me, or teach me. Only you have to understand that the tree isn't any kind of wizard, it's not a wish-granter--the tree just gives you its energy, or rather the energy of the universe. So, when you ask, then you have to wait a little while for the energy to pass from the tree into you. I've been doing it for many years, since I was practically a child, and it always helps. A tree is a living organism that can share its strength with you. That's not just something I believe in, I've proven it on myself hundreds of times. And this particular day, once again, I went into the forest, got out of the car, walked from the car into the forest a couple hundred yards or so. I chose a tree, I hugged it, I started asking it for strength...I'm standing there wrapped around the tree and suddenly...suddenly I felt someone standing behind me. And naturally I want to look behind me and see who's there, but I can't. My body feels like it's paralyzed. My legs, arms, my head, neck, everything feels like it's plaster, I can't budge. It's like I'm stuck to this tree, just standing there.

And I can feel that someone is definitely standing behind me, and that they're very close. And I got really scared. I just got so scared, like never before. Even now I'm thinking—maybe the fear paralyzed me, maybe it was fear that froze me like that? But really it doesn't matter. So I'm standing there, scared to death, and I realize that this is the end, it's over, this is it. And then—all of a sudden—light. I'm in this light. And the light starts to be everywhere, there's more and more of it and it's everywhere. And it's this weird light, and I'm so scared I close my eyes, but suddenly I see that this light is inside me, too. I open my eyes—light—I close my eyes and that same light is inside me. And suddenly that fear—it's gone. I even got startled because the fear was gone. I had this thought, that if I've stopped being afraid, my end really has come. But no end came, instead there came this strange feeling. This feeling of unbelievable simplicity. Everything got so simple, as simple as it could possibly be. The whole world is so simple. And it's very, very real. Now we live in this really complicated world, everything for us here is really complicated, everything. Even a trip around town in your car, it's complicated, so much stress, so many obstacles along the way. But as it turns out, it's all very, very simple. As it turns out, all the complexity of the world is in our heads, and if we get rid of it, everything will be extremely simple. And I suddenly found myself in that simplicity. I looked at my whole life and all my problems and they seemed so laughable to me—I even started laughing. I stood there in the forest hugging a tree and laughed. I laughed, because everything turns out to be so simple. There is no complexity. Or rather, there is, it has come back again. Right now, talking to you, this is complicated. But I know that it's not true complexity, that there's actually nothing complicated at all, I'm the one making it complicated, I'm the author of any and all complexity. I mean we basically create all the complexity because we exist inside of it. Well let me explain to you exactly what I mean by 'we exist inside of it.' Whatever, it doesn't matter. So all of a sudden I find myself in this total simplicity. Everything became very simple. My whole life, my music, my work, my relationship with my girlfriend, with my family. All my problems, they all became so simple, even the most complicated problems—they all became simple. To give an example, my parents gave me some money for my birthday, so I could buy a guitar. A lot of money—five thousand dollars, so I could buy a nice guitar. And so, I took the money and went to Miami to hang out on the ocean with my girlfriend—you know? And I didn't confess anything

to them, of course, I told them I bought a guitar. And I worried about this all the time. And right at that moment I remembered all this and saw, very clearly, that there's no problem. That I need to just tell my parents the whole truth. And that it's all very simple. And at that moment it felt to me like such a natural, such a simple thing. Always tell people only the truth—that's so simple. Be open—it's so simple. It is, it's so simple. Only not any more, of course, because then when I told my parents about the guitar, when I told them I didn't buy it, I got all complicated about it, and my parents didn't take it very simply either. And our relationship has been strained ever since. In other words it wasn't so simple. And I started thinking—why? Why wasn't it simple? After all I had already clearly seen that everything is simple. That the world has no complexity. So why so complicated? And then I got it. Because it's like I think of myself as the most important or something. I feel like I am at the center of the world. Like everything revolves around me. We all consider ourselves the best and most important. And we think that's normal, that that's how people are, they think they're special and love themselves more than others. So when this whole thing happened to me, I suddenly found myself in this world where there was no me—there was only the world. Where I was just a part of the whole world. Where I was the universe, I was all events that unfold. I don't know how to explain this to you either. The complexity is just because I think I'm separate from the world, and all events that happen, happen, like, with me. And there by that tree, I suddenly felt that I and the events of my life are all one thing, that I am all those events. I felt then that I am this whole world, that there is no such thing as some separate me—there is only the world, and all the problems in the world and all the joy of this world is me. And therefore there's no one to blame, and nothing to be afraid of. And everything is very, very simple. You know, someone else's conflict is always easier to resolve than your own. Because we aren't involved in that conflict. I stood there and I just felt all of this. I felt all this simplicity. And I felt like laughing. I felt like laughing, because we have complicated everything, because we have complicated everything ourselves, and we ourselves have become hostages of this complexity. And we are all living in this complicated world, in this complicated life, and we have no idea that in fact everything is very simple. There is no complexity. So there you go. I know that that all sounds absurd or whatever,

but it's hard for me to find words to tell about it. Here let me put on some of my group's music for you, that's a better idea—now there's something simple for you. Come on.

Hilde Jensen

Hi. I'm Hilde Jensen, from Norway. I live in a city called **Skien**. I'm twenty-eight years old. I work for a tour agency. There's nothing interesting I can tell you about my job. I sit in front of a computer and help clients set up vacation tours to this or that country. Usually it's to Egypt or Israel, or Thailand. So there's nothing interesting to say about my job.

A better idea would be if I revealed to you the secret of the universe. Do you know the secret of the universe? Did you watch the movie "Avatar"? Okay, they talk about it in that movie. But I didn't really like it. It didn't really grab me. It was too—how can I put it—too dull. Too lackluster, it was like they didn't have enough money for the special effects. I guess it's just impossible to recreate on the screen. Or at least for now, anyway. 3D won't do the trick here. Because that was still just a three-dimensional world, whereas the world is actually much broader and deeper. And what happened to me is that I saw it, with my own eyes—I mean those were real colors, that was the real world. And you know, I—when it was all over, when everything had happened—I started looking for some kind of confirmation that it had happened, everywhere. Like—how can I explain it—I fell into this world, this world that I had never before, and never since, that I have never seen anywhere. Except it was our world—the world that we live in, only we don't see all of it. That's the world I ended up in. Only I can't explain it to you. I'm telling you, it was like in "Avatar", only a million times brighter and deeper, broader, grander, more voluminous. And you know, about a month after that encounter happened, I tried LSD—I wanted to find out on purpose if it had the same effect. And it didn't. LSD doesn't do it. LSD is just a rip-off, it's an imitation, it's like the same thing as, okay, you know, there's flying an airplane, and then there's the imitation of flying an airplane on a computer simulator—I think that's a good comparison. But one thing is true everywhere—on LSD and in the movie "Avatar" and I even read it in some books lately, there's one thing that

everybody says. Here it is. When all this stuff happened to me, at first I was of course terrified, I mean I was totally terrified that they would kidnap me. You know, that they're gonna kidnap me from my planet and then they're going to do different experiments on me, somewhere at the opposite end of the universe. Sounds funny now, but that's exactly what I was thinking. When I was taken into that space and I realized that I could do absolutely nothing about it—couldn't scream, couldn't run, nothing—I was, of course, freaked out. But then suddenly, in just a second, my fear disappeared. And I know why, why it disappeared. Or, I mean—I don't know how to explain it—it was like my “me” disappeared. I mean I experienced everything, I could see everything, I remember it all, but it was like not me, Hilde, it was like it was just an image of me. Yeah, I know, it all sounds totally inconceivable and unpersuasive. But—I don't know how to explain it to you—but right now, I'm looking at you, and I feel that it's me, Hilde, looking at you. But there, it was like it wasn't me looking, it was like the looking was looking, or something. I mean, like, there wasn't anybody looking, there was just the looking. There wasn't anybody to see, there was only the seeing. That is “me” equals seeing. “Me” equals looking. “Me” equals perception. There is no one doing the perceiving, there is only perception. There is no one observing, there is only observation. When I told my boyfriend about all this he said, “well, sounds like you had some really good drugs. I don't think anybody has even come up with drugs like that yet, that is totally far out.” I get it, it all sounds like a bunch of junky jargon, of course. But I'm telling you I tried LSD on purpose and it's not the same thing. Yeah, and the most important thing I realized, the thing that shocked me to the core and changed my attitude to everything, is that I saw that everything is connected to everything. Yeah, here I go again, shifting into druggie talk! But it's the truth. Everything is connected to everything. All objects and all living organisms, we aren't all separate from each other, on the contrary we are all connected with one another by these ducts, by like these multicolored cords. Everyone is connected to everyone by these many-colored cords, only they're not cords or wires, of course, they're like these ducts of energy. On LSD it's the same thing, but in reality it's deeper than that. In reality the world is made up of like these different energies. And those energies are connected with each other. That's why everything that a person does will have an effect on everyone else. And when I carry out an action, it's a collective action for the entire world. We

just can't see that right now, and we live as though we're all separate, while in fact we're all connected. Literally connected, physically connected. Connected with like these energetic threads. They talk about that in "Avatar" too, but I saw it with my own eyes. And the entire universe is connected like that. The entire universe is one whole thing. And that's why we're responsible not just for our own lives, but for the entire world around us. Or, rather. When we are responsible for our lives, we are then automatically responsible for the entire world and for the entire universe. I am responsible for the universe—sounds pretty awesome. It sounds like I'm on mushrooms. But I'm not on mushrooms. I, by the way, have tried mushrooms. And that's all in the same general direction, of course. But I'm not interested in them. Because I realized another important thing—that as it turns out you don't have to always see the whole world picture, all that electronic business. That whole vision doesn't give you anything new. All you have to do is learn how to live and feel that you are part of the world, and not a separate entity. But usually when we live, we don't see our veins, we don't see the blood running through them, we don't see our heart, but we know it's all there. And with this other reality it's the same thing. We have to know that it's there and that we're all one organism, and that everything we do reflects on everyone else and on the entire world. That's what we have to understand. We have to learn how to feel that. But how do you learn how to do that, how to live that way? I don't know. You need contact, of course. Contact with all of this stuff. But LSD and mushrooms—that's not it, not the right contact. You need real contact. Contact in your heart. Anyway. I don't know what else to say. I'm still a little lost in all this stuff, you know. I still have to untangle all this somehow, in my head, and in my heart. I've still got more questions than answers. So maybe we should end there for now. Besides I'd rather people don't think I'm some kind of nutso. Talking to aliens. "We're all connected by energetic threads"— obviously only a psycho or druggie would say that, who else? So let's take a break. Maybe till next time. Bye-bye.

Robert Evans

Hello, I'm Robert Evans. I'm forty-three years old. I'm the director of the School of New Business Technologies at Loughborough. Loughborough is a little university town not far from London. Our school is quite small, and we've been in operation only a couple of years, though our programs are already quite popular. We teach people to become business coaches. So, the folks who go on to teach business people how to run their businesses properly. Actually I've been doing this just for the last couple years. In fact I switched to this job right after this time in my life when I...er, how can I put it...um...well when I had this encounter... Well, basically, when I saw it. You know, it's not easy talking about all this because—well, because here you are speaking to a grown person who says he's had contact with aliens, well, you have to agree, it sounds, to put it lightly, abnormal. As a matter of fact before the encounter I couldn't bear to even hear about UFOs or anything related to them. For me that all fell into the complete and utter nonsense category. My life was far, far away from anything to do with UFOs, the supernatural world, and all the rest of that esoteric stuff. And I don't like it any more now. When people tell me about aliens, about humanoids with skinny heads, I don't believe any of it. I'm a businessman. Until this all came about I worked for Nokia, here in Great Britain. I started out as a generic sales manager, and eventually worked my way up to become a top manager of the company. I know how to sell a product. And so, two years ago, when all this happened, this contact, my life changed completely. Now I'm just a business coach. I teach people how to run a business successfully. What do I mean by "successfully"? Well to begin with, let me tell you what happened. This was two years ago. I was at my country-home, near Birmingham. My wife and I bought this house as a place to retire to. It's right in the forest, a really quiet place. It's very beautiful there. Very few people around. A couple houses near ours, and another six in the general vicinity. And woods. It's a totally secluded area, just a brilliant spot. And there I was by myself at the house—my wife was in London. Our son is studying over in the States. And so, there I was, alone. And I was sitting there late at night on the patio, smoking a cigar. I like to sit there after sunset on the patio and have my cigar. So I'm sitting there, and suddenly I felt it—What is that? Wha—? You know what I felt at first? I felt as though I were little, as though I were a child. And the first thing I did—I started crying. I started crying—because I felt something I had forgotten a long time ago. It was that sense of the world, that view of the

world, the point of view of a child, that gaze I had long since lost. It's this gaze, well you know, every one of us has had it at some point, it's this attitude toward the world, as though everything here is new, like this whole world is alive, and it's all so unfamiliar, this world, it's when you look at the world and know nothing about it, and at the same time, at the very same time, you know something very, very important, maybe the most important thing there is to know. That's the most fascinating part—that we live as though we know everything about this world. We have this approach to life as though we know everything. When in fact we don't know the very most important thing. And in my childhood—I remember—I had this feeling that I knew something very important, perhaps the most important thing there was, but I couldn't name it—actually I didn't think that I knew anything. On the contrary, I thought I knew nothing about the world. And that “not knowing” about the world was in fact my knowing. Do you know what I mean? Unknowing is in fact knowledge. And we lose it, when we grow up. We lose that unknowing. We acquire this stance toward life, our own opinions of everything. We acquire experience. But what experience? Experience of what? Our entire experience is directed at how to survive in this cruel world. In order to survive, you have to do this, and not do that—that's our experience. And we know everything. We teach our children how to live, with the stance of people who know everything. And this is our problem. And as I sat there on the patio and all this started happening to me, the first thing I felt is that I once again knew nothing. And I started to cry. It was such a strange sensation—here I am, a grown man, I'm forty-one years old, I have a grown son. And I'm sitting here and I once again know nothing. And I wept. It was such a strange feeling. And I realized that I don't want to say goodbye to all this knowledge that I've gathered over the course of my life. I felt like a child whose favorite toys are being taken away from him. I didn't want to say goodbye to it, to all this experience. I didn't want to say goodbye to this principle—that I know everything. I was totally convinced that if I lost my life-principle, I would lose myself. And I was so afraid to part ways with that. But I couldn't do anything to stop it—it all started to leave me. And the further and further I entered into this thing, this contact, the more I lost everything I had acquired over the course of my life. And at some moment I reached this point at which I knew absolutely nothing. I didn't even know who I was. I didn't know who “me” was. I knew that I “was”, that I existed. That I was here, that here

he is, “I”. But who is “I”? I didn’t know. And you want to know the most incredible thing that happened? I suddenly realized that in order to be you, you do not need any information about you. I realized that all information about me is simply unnecessary. That I’m Robert Evans, I’m forty-one, I’m a manager at Nokia, all that information, as it turns out, is unnecessary—because in the end I am still me. In order to be you, you have to just be you and nothing else. You don’t have to be Robert. You don’t have to be a manager. You have to be you. And you don’t have to think about it. Why think about who you are, if no matter what, you are you? I of course can’t explain all of this to you right now, it’s just about impossible. It’s just this state when you are you. We aren’t aware of that right now, because we lose ourselves. And I could see all this so clearly then, it just blew my mind. And I started crying, and then laughing. I cried and I laughed all at once. Because on the one hand I realized how much of my life was dispensable nonsense, and on the other hand I felt so sorry for all of us, that we live in such an illusion. We believe we’re these businessmen or taxi-drivers or designers or whoever else, anyone but ourselves. And there for the first time in my life, at forty-one years of age, I felt I was myself. And that feeling lasted for awhile—and then something else happened. I can’t talk about it. Because it’s quite personal. I’ll tell you only that it was the closest contact I had with this thing. I can’t really tell you about it, is that okay? Well, and then I lost consciousness. Blacked out. Because when I came to I was lying on the ground, it was early morning—I mean I had been lying there all night. Well and everything had disappeared, of course. And the saddest part is that that feeling of not knowing—it had disappeared too. I once again knew everything. I was once again grown-up Robert Evans, the top-manager from Nokia. Although actually something had changed. My attitude toward work had changed. I think my attitude toward life changed as a whole, I just felt that most acutely in my work. But that’s another story. I’m sorry—can we take a break? And then we’ll continue. Although really I haven’t got much more to say. Though I could also tell you about the flying saucer and the humanoids with skinny heads if you want. But after the break, okay? Like twenty-five minutes, okay?

Jennifer Davies

Hello, I'm Jennifer Davies from New York. I'm twenty-five years old, I work in a music store in the Trump Towers on Fifth and 56th. It's actually really hard to get a job in a place like that and in a store like that. Especially for me. Because from when I was 16 to when I was 23, I was pure trash. I was fucking wack. I mean I was a straight-up cunt. I'm not saying that I'm like Mother Theresa now or anything, but three years ago when people would say hi to me I'd say "suck it." You know, someone walks up and says, "Hey, what's up" and I turn around and say "suck it." And I couldn't give two shits what this or that person might think of me. Actually I don't much care what people think now either, but I don't say "suck it" to people anymore, because I realized that's some immature bullshit. I mean I realized the main problem in this world is that everyone around us is so damn immature. You take even art—for the most part that's all a bunch of whining, a bunch of bitchin' and moanin'. A bunch of bitching about homosexuality, about how the world is shit, about how nobody understands me, and all the rest of that immature bullshit. One person cries, and hundreds of others around him feed off his tears, and they start crying about their lives, too. And they all baby their egos, talk about how unhappy they are and about how awful the world is around them, and how they can't live here, and about the psychological trauma they suffer from, and how their parents oppressed them, and how stupid society is around them, nobody feels anything, and how government and bankers are of course to blame for all this, and capitalism is really bad, and all the rest of that immature kindergarten horse-shit. Why immature? Because all of that has absolutely no relation to reality, to what's really happening. What's really happening? What's really happening is that you, or rather I, it's that I am not some kind of special thingy that the entire world revolves around like I'm the center of the world. It's not like that, not at all. Rather, I am the manifestation of the world that I want to see, the world I want to live in. All this, everything I have, everything I'm unhappy with, everything that depresses me and irritates me—all of that is me. Because the world I see around me—that is me. The kind of person I am is the kind of world I live in. There is no unfairness, there is only my attitude to the world. There is only my connection with this world, my contact with this world. You know, scientists recently proved that the rainbow that we're all so inspired by doesn't actually exist in nature. Animals don't see rainbows, because rainbows don't exist. And only people see rainbows—they appear only in

the crystal eyeballs of humans, and nowhere else. And that's not some kind of esoteric bullshit, this is a paper published by NASA scientists. And there's a whole lot of other interesting stuff in that NASA paper, I'll send you the link and you can read it yourself. Why am I telling you this—I'm telling you this because you want to know how I was abducted by aliens, right? And what they did to me, isn't that right? I mean, that's what you really want to know. Well, I'll tell you right now what they did to me. I was walking along on a Sunday—actually it was already Monday, it was somewhere between Sunday night and Monday morning. I was walking along in the middle of the night—actually, strangely enough, I wasn't drunk and I wasn't high on coke, which was a rarity for me in those days. I'm walking down the street, on my way home. And suddenly I was abducted by aliens. I saw this un-fucking-believable flying saucer come flying down, it hovered over my head for awhile and this narrow tube-like stream of bright light came beaming out, and they sucked me up through that beam like a vacuum cleaner. I mean shit that's a pretty awesome story, right? I'll get back to it a little later. But right now I want to talk about what I realized during my conversation with the aliens. That I am me. That I am this situation. That I am a situation that arises for hundreds of different reasons. Take us—why are we sitting here talking about this right now? For a thousand different reasons that came together: to begin with, you were born, and I was born, and then you went to school and decided to become a film director, and a whole bunch of other reasons, the fate of your parents, my parents, and all these thousands of different reasons are what have brought us here to this particular point. And here we are talking to one another. We are those thousands of reasons. We are just reasons, you see what I mean? Reasons that have come together to this singular, possible outcome. The reality of you and me sitting here right now—that's the only possible outcome. That's what I realized. I don't know if I'm explaining this all clearly, but what is happening here right now is the only possible thing that could happen to us, it's the only possible outcome. There was and there is no other option. And don't think about how life would've ended up if everything had been different. There's no answer. Because it couldn't have ended up any other way, there is only this, there is only things the way they are now. And if things were different, things would not be as they are now. And talking about it is totally pointless. And the main thing is that rather than whining about how this or that thing in our

lives is unsatisfactory, about how things could be different, instead of all that pointless whining, what we should do is suck it up and go straight to the heart of the problem—you should accept everything that is happening to you. Accept it with an open heart. Because everything that is happening to you—that is you. That is the world. The world and you are the same thing. “We” are the world. And rather than resisting all that and crying about how crappy everything is, we should instead accept all of that, as the only possible outcome. We have to see that this is the only possible outcome—there is and will be no other. Here you are, here I am. And here we are talking—that’s the only possible outcome. There aren’t any others. But we’re looking for it—we’re looking for a different outcome. We’re looking for it, and it’s not there—but we keep looking, we suffer from not being able to find it. Instead of accepting the outcome we have—the only one, the real one. That’s it, that’s what I figured out. And one other thing. You wanna know how to change the world? You know, we always want to change the world, right? And there, right then as this was happening to me, I saw how the world changes. It changes by itself, by some kind of greater design, that we don’t understand. It changes by this force that we are unable to fully know. But all we can do is to be one with that force. And if you are together with that creational force, then you create with it. And if you work against that creational force, then you are resisting, your entire life is a resistance to that force. Resistance against the universe. But you can’t hold the universe back—it’s going to develop and grow either way, and then your life will be lived in constant stress and tension, because your whole life you’ll be in a boat sailing upstream. And that’s what you’ll spend all your energy on. And that’s what you’ll use all your talent on. And your whole life will be spent on resistance. That—that is what I realized. And then—and then the next thing that happened is that back inside the spaceship I was surrounded by tall skinny-headed humanoids. And one of them had this big bright flashlight thing lodged in his head and he reached out toward me with some kind of gadget in his hands and the gadget suddenly started speaking English to me. The gadget said, “We’re aliens from some far-the-fuck-away galaxy. We flew here to get your people’s brains back in order, and you, Jennifer, are going to help us—we have chosen you for this extra-valuable top-fucking-priority super-mission.” So that’s it, that’s my stupid little story. Pretty rad, huh? I mean if you ask me that is some unbelievably radical shit.

Matthew O'Farrell

Hello there, my name is Matthew O'Farrell, I'm 61. I'm from Northern Ireland, from Kilkeel. A little port town. Nothing remarkable to say about it, really. Life here is pretty boring, most of the young people here always move away to Belfast or Dublin, or sometimes London. Me, I've lived here over thirty years, so about half my life, and I guess I do alright here. I like the town, I like the people who live here, my neighbors—though quite a lot of them have rather unpleasant personalities, though I guess I'm no angel either. So we all live here swimming around in our own little fishpond, and one way or another, life here just kind of goes on by. I was thirty years old once, and now I'm already sixty-one. And I think another twenty years or so more and there won't be any Matthew O'Farrell on this planet. You want to know why I started a Facebook page? Because of my daughter. My daughter Hannah lives in Paris now, she's in politics. Or to be more precise she is in ecology—and to be even more precise she is part of a protest movement. She organizes protests and fights for ecology. Pickets, demonstrations, oppositional events, that kind of thing. And she's got a pretty thrilling life, and she carries on a pretty active life on that Facebook page of hers as well, and got me hooked on it too. To be perfectly frank with you I'm not all that interested in Facebook, there's not much interesting news you can find in there really, I just go on there from time to time to find out what that daughter of mine is up to. All of her activities are described in detail on her page. I don't actually get into the details much, because I don't understand much of what they're talking about, but nonetheless I can see that she's alive, healthy, full of energy, and staying out of jail. And that's enough for me, just seeing my daughter right there before my eyes, so to speak. And that's really all I need that Facebook for. But now, thanks to that Facebook and what I wrote on there about my encounter with an extraterrestrial life form, I've become famous, the real superstar of our bloody town, for Christ's sake. The papers even came to see me, tried to talk me into giving an interview, but I refused, and then they wrote such nasty stuff about me that my wife cried for three days, I could hardly calm her down. So I'm not too glad I wrote about all that, because now of course the neighbors think I'm bonkers and my wife is constantly after me

about it, says I've poisoned us in our old age with this little confession of mine. Even thought about moving away from here. But in the end decided not to—after all, a whole lifetime here—where would we go? And the neighbors, they'll laugh about it for awhile, laugh and forget it. And after all, it got you to come here from such a far-away country—of all places, that's where they know about me, way out in Russia! Quite a powerful thing that Facebook, isn't it? Well and I know quite a bit about you. About that Putin of yours, oppressing democracy, about that lad Khodorkovsky, that Putin's keeping locked up in prison. Anyhow, that's all a bunch of empty nonsense. Let's get back to business, as they say. So why did I write this thing on Facebook? Certainly not so that everybody could point their finger at me and laugh at the village idiot. I wrote it because of one very important thing that I had wanted to share with other people. You see, when this all happened to me—this encounter or what have you—there were a whole lot of things that became clear to me then, about life, about the universe, about myself. And all of those things were either very personal or sort of obtuse, and I can't quite explain them even to myself, but one thing I noticed absolutely floored me. And that thing, that little bit of knowledge, is what I decided to share. And I shared it on my page there in Facebook. At first I had no desire to say anything about UFOs or that I'd had contact with them or that I'd learned this from them, I didn't want to talk about that—what difference does it make where I learned it from. That's not the point. But then I thought—well, that's not right, after all they gifted this to me, it wasn't mine, I didn't know it, and suddenly they gave me this gift, now I know this, and I thought I had no right to give myself credit for it. You see what I mean, what I was thinking? I just had no right to call that knowledge my own. I'm nobody. I've lived sixty years and knew nothing at all about life until this thing happened to me. And so the words I wrote on Facebook—they don't belong to me. And therefore I couldn't not indicate where I'd learned them from. And so, woe be the day, that's what I did. Now I'm the village idiot. Well, so be it. The important thing is I did it. My wife says —couldn't you have written it under a pen-name, who would've ever checked, half the people on Facebook are using someone else's name? But that turned out to be impossible for me. Because the thing I was writing about, the thing I discovered, that I shared with other people on Facebook—I think it's something so important that I had to leave my signature at the bottom, you see? It's important—I wrote it down, I

answer for those words. And see, you read it, you found me, and now you see a real human being before you. I exist, I wrote that. I received that knowledge, it was gifted to me, and now I, Matthew O'Farrell, can confirm that for you. And I am so thankful to them for that gift, for teaching me. Because that's exactly what I realized, about all of us. I realized that all of us here in this civilization of ours, we're incapable of thankfulness. I mean—we're very polite. We say thank you when someone gives us something or when someone passes a plate of bread at the table. But we do not know how to be truly thankful. I'm going to try and explain to you what I mean. Of course, you've already read about this on my Facebook page, that's exactly what I was writing about, about thankfulness. But I'll try and explain it to you again now briefly. This is what I learned. I learned that nothing in this whole world belongs to us—I mean that everything we have, it was all sort of given to us, it was given to us as a gift. Don't ask who gave it to us, because I don't know. Not aliens. Because they're just like us and they were given everything just as we were. Anyway it doesn't matter who gave it to us. What matters is that my parents gave me life, and I must be thankful to them for that gift. Life gave me my body, my lungs, my eyes to see with, my ears to hear with. Nature gave me air to breathe. But none of that is mine, you see? See, that's where our main problem is. It's in the fact that we live like we're the hosts of our lives, but we're here as guests—all of this is not our creation. We didn't make these trees, we didn't make this sky, the oceans that we now contaminate with oil. We did not make the trees that we now cut down. And man treats himself with such importance. Your boss or the president see themselves as so significant. And even regular folks like us—like me, I'm a bus driver, and sometimes I can't understand where I get so much self-importance from. I started noticing this only recently, I go around and I look at the passengers like I'm so important, although the bus isn't mine, and the tickets I sell aren't mine either, but when I sell them I show those people that I am so important! We think everything here is ours. When in fact we just live here on this earth and use all this stuff. And we should be thankful for that opportunity. We should feel thankfulness every second of our lives. We should live experiencing that thankfulness all the time. Because all this stuff around us—it's not ours. But we control it, we have received it as a gift and for that we must be thankful. We must be thankful to our parents and teachers. We must be thankful to each other, thankful for the chance to live, for the chance

to learn. For the chance to love and be loved. And I'm not talking about being polite, you understand. Thankfulness is not politeness, thankfulness is a point of view, it is a perspective on life. Thankfulness is when you feel the energy of the universe within you, you feel that you are a part of the universe and you are thankful for that. And you are thankful for everything. And you know why we have wars, why we have Auschwitz, why we have violence and nightmares? It's all because humankind does not feel thankfulness, because that Hitler thought he was life's host—he thought this world was his personal possession, that it belonged to him. He did not know what it is to be thankful to the world for living in it. And now I'll tell you one more thing, perhaps a cruel thing—I didn't write about this on Facebook, to keep tempers down, since different people might understand this in different ways. But I'll go ahead and tell you. Do you know why those poor children suffered in German concentration camps? They suffered at the fault of their parents and their ancestors, who had forgotten about thankfulness. Children always bear the cross of their forbearers, that's a rule. These days we don't know about thankfulness and we live only for ourselves, and tomorrow our children will reap that harvest, they will bear responsibility for that. And so when we blame Hitler for everything, we're not entirely correct to do so, because we are to blame for everything, our civilization, with its ineptitude for thankfulness, with its ignorance of thankfulness, existing only for itself. And you see you have to understand, I'm not talking about morality here. And I realized all this as I was having this encounter, they explained it to me. They gave me this knowledge. And now I know that to be thankful does not mean to be nice. Thankfulness is not a moral concept.

Thankfulness is an energy that we can use to live. If a person lives by the energy of thankfulness his entire life unfolds differently from a person who lives by the energy of self-importance.

That's what I realized. That's the most important thing I found out. But how about if we end it there for today—my wife is on her way here, and she doesn't usually like it when I tell people about this, she worries about me and feels sorry for me. We could meet again tomorrow around this time, I can tell you what I wrote there on Facebook, about the aliens themselves. That'll probably be more interesting for you than all this philosophical stuff of mine. So then—until tomorrow? Alright, see you tomorrow.

Dieter Lange

Hello, my name is Dieter Lange. I'm forty-eight. These last two years I've lived and worked in Cologne. I run the Mitsubishi office in Cologne. Before that I worked at the regional Mitsubishi headquarters in Berlin, and then two years ago they promoted me to local office director and transferred me here to Cologne. You know before I decided to talk about this publicly, I wanted to get permission from my boss in Berlin. Because these stories about aliens could, of course, cost me my career. So I invited my boss to lunch and I told him everything, everything that happened to me. I was really worried about how he might react. I had just had my second child and I really needed this job. But I couldn't just keep all this hidden inside. I mean, you have to agree, meeting with other beings from outer-space is not an everyday thing. But of course on the other hand I completely understand how we all react to people who say they have seen aliens. And by that time I was already a senior manager of sales in Berlin. And so I decided that the first person to know about it should be my boss. And I invited him to lunch and told him everything. You know what happened? He believed me. Well, I don't know if he believed that what I saw was real, but he definitely didn't think I was crazy. And, well, that's the most important thing. In the end, what does it matter if I saw aliens or not, the main thing is that my life changed for the better. Anyway, my boss somehow sensed that I was okay. And you know the thing that especially struck him was when I told him about belief in God. Because one of the things I discovered was my belief in God. See, I kind of understood why so many people on this planet don't believe in God. And by the way I didn't believe in God either, before this. And it's not even that I didn't believe, I just didn't believe in the God that we're offered by different religions, including Christianity. And you know what I saw, what the problem is? The problem is that we think belief in God comes to us through some idea. I mean, we have this Christian idea of God, we have, I don't know, the Muslim idea of God, and we take those ideas and study them and try to believe in them, or argue with them. Either we study some theory, or try to come up with our own idea. And see I realized that belief in God, at its roots, has nothing in common with ideas. At its roots belief in God is contact with God. A person can't believe in something he doesn't know. And therefore in order to believe in God you first have to feel God,

to feel that it's definitely Him. And to begin with it's not some concrete, specific God, let me say again it's not an idea, not a religion, not a concept, to begin with it's just a feeling. It's just this state in life where you suddenly, truly, completely feel that God exists. And again, don't get me wrong. This feeling of God isn't any kind of theory. It's not like I feel God, Jesus, or Allah or Buddha or the Big Bang. The feeling of God is when a person suddenly finds out—not with his mind, but with his whole being—when he finds out that life is this kind of creative process—that life is creating. That the basis of life lies in this creative process, and it doesn't matter if the author of that process is God or chaos or whatever. And it's impossible to look for truth by using your mind. At first you have to just feel that the world is this creation, and that we are part of that creation, and that our life here is creativity within that creation. And belief in God, life with God, begins from the moment when you come into contact with this creation. When your heart suddenly starts to feel contact with that creation. And, of course, with the creator. Because the creation and the creator are always one and the same. Therefore to begin with it doesn't matter whether we believe in the creator or not. To begin with, that doesn't matter. To begin with, all that matters is that intersection, that point of contact. And you don't need to think about whether God exists or not. Because God is, God is like when you touch something truly significant. There, I think I found the words to describe what God is. God is when you touch, with your entire being, for the first time, you touch something truly significant. I mean something that when you touch it turns out to be the entire meaning of your existence. You can't explain it with words. God is contact. That's what it is. God doesn't exist to be nice, to be a nice person, to be humane. God does not exist to implement humanitarian ideas throughout the world. Or for the evolution of society. God is when your life comes into contact with the creative energy of the universe, of the cosmos. God is your creative life within this creation. And so the biggest mistake we make is our arguing about God. It's when someone says "Well then why did God create the devil?" or "But why does evil exist?" or "But then why are priests pedophiles?" or "What's the big deal, Christ hung there for a few hours and so what, what's the big deal?" or any of the other philosophical arguments about God. It's all pointless until you feel that God actually exists. You won't get any answers to any of those questions until you feel what the world with God is like. And only then, when we feel that God exists, that for us it's not

some theory, that it's actually a kind of reality, only then can we begin arguing on the theme of religion. First God, and then speculation on God. So yeah, something like that. So all of that is what I dumped out on my boss. You can imagine what that looked like. Some subordinate comes up to you and first says that he had an encounter with aliens, and then also lets you know that through his encounter with aliens he came to know that God exists. Sounds like a perfectly good comedy. So that's what I told him. He listened to me carefully, didn't interrupt at all, and then there was this pause, and he looked at me kind of strangely, as if he himself had had an encounter with aliens long ago, and then he asked me, "Dieter, what about people who have never met aliens before? Like me? I don't believe in God, and I don't feel any contact with God. And it's unlikely that any aliens are going to come flying my way. I mean I don't seem like the kind of person that aliens would come and visit." Something like that. And that question of his, to be honest, has left me kind of stuck in a corner. I didn't know what to answer. To be honest I don't know what would've become of me if I hadn't had that contact with the cosmos, that's what I call it now—"contact with the cosmos." See, if that hadn't happened to me, could I understand these things I'm telling you right now? I really don't know. Probably not. On the other hand, though, now I know that if you want to get something in life, you have to ask for it, and if you ask for it in earnest, there's a big chance you'll receive it. You have to ask. Want to feel God? Ask Him. And I said that to my boss, too. And then he looked at me, looked at me like an old man looks at a little boy, sort of smiled ironically and said, "Dieter, I can't ask God for anything, because I believe that there is no God." And with that, our conversation ended.

Joanna Harris

Hi, I'm Joanna Harris, from Springfield, Illinois. I'm 34 years old. I'm a housewife. My husband works in the restaurant business, I stay at home and look after our three kids. Six years ago I was working for a fund that helped economically disadvantaged children. We were working in Peru. And once during a business trip to Peru I ended up in a sparsely populated region, not far from Pucallpa. We were overseeing the construction of schools there. Someone from Philadelphia had donated some private funds toward the construction of schools for poor

children in Peru. And he approached our organization to help him supervise the construction process, since very often allocated funds just disappear, or it turns out that for some reason they aren't enough for the job. And so, I and a couple of my male colleagues were working on the construction of this school. And one day we were invited to partake in a shamanistic ritual. There are a lot of shamans in that area of Peru. My colleagues accepted the invitation, and I did not. Because I'm Christian—I'm a Catholic, my mom is French and a Catholic, so I was baptized back when I was little. And then anyway I don't really like all that mystical esoteric business, all that shamanistic stuff, it all seems kind of satanical to me. But my colleagues were very interested and ended up going to this shamanistic ritual, they sailed there on little boats down the Ucayali river. Because all this was supposed to happen in a little indian village. And I decided to go along with them, even though I wouldn't be taking part in the ritual, I wanted to go to the selva—that's what they call the jungle there, the selva—and I wanted to sit by the fire and listen to their songs, because Peruvian women sing very beautifully. We were on the territory of the Shipibo tribe—that's an ancient indian tribe, the Shipibo. And so we all went down the river on these boats and stopped in a little village right on the banks of the Ucayali. Everyone went into a big, round house to carry out the ritual, and I stayed there on the riverbank, alone. I sat there right on the bank. It was so, so beautiful. I remember, I sat there smoking a cigarette and watched the river. The sky was full of stars, such bright stars, like spotlights. And I was just surrounded by this magical atmosphere. The whole forest was lit up by this even moonlight. The river shimmered and zig-zagged like a snake. And there in the house, where the ritual was going on, the women began singing. And they sang so beautifully, and aside from the fact that they sang beautifully, their singing was so deep, so penetrating, they sang as if they were singing about the most important, most sacred thing in the world. And about something so familiar. That song somehow seemed to remind me of something that I had known for a long time, but had forgotten. And it felt like it was my mother singing to me. Although I can't remember my mother ever singing to me. But I suddenly felt like a child. As if my mother, who has been gone for a long time, as if she were singing this song right now, just for me. And you know I suddenly, I don't even know how to explain this feeling, I was suddenly very, very sad. But I didn't feel bad, not at all, on the one hand I suddenly felt very, very good,

perhaps it was the first time in my life I felt so good, and on the other hand I was suddenly very sad. Very, very sad. And it was such a powerful sadness, but a very, very luminous sadness, a sadness full of light. I started crying. I couldn't imagine it was possible to feel such a bright and beautiful sadness. And suddenly I understood with perfect clarity that I wanted to go home. I can't convey to you what happened to me at that moment, when I realized I wanted to go home. My whole body, my soul, all of me, suddenly wanted to go home. But not to Springfield. Not to my husband. Home. And and that moment I became perfectly aware that I have a home, and that my home is not somewhere in the US, it's not even a specific place on the earth, it's somewhere out there, somewhere way out there in someplace where I can't even tell you where. And I was just drawn so hard, drawn to my true home. And suddenly it was like I woke up, and instantly understood that I was going somewhere. That I am actually going somewhere. But for some reason I had forgotten that and got held up somewhere along the way. And I was just so stunned by this discovery. I suddenly realized that because I had forgotten I was going somewhere, because of that, I had stopped. I had gotten lost. And right there, it was like I had found myself again. Like I had come to, you know? It was this situation, it was as if my mother had sent me to the store to buy bread, and on the way back I had met my girlfriends, and forgotten that I had to bring the bread home, I got sidetracked, you know? And so, I'm sitting there on the riverbank and I suddenly remember that it's time for me to go home. That I have to go. I clearly saw that the purpose of life is not just to live, to have a family, to go to work, to help poor children in Peru—the purpose of life is to go back home. I saw that life is a path. And there and then, for the first time in my life I understood what is meant by the word "path." I understood that I had discovered a path. That I had been sleeping, that I had awoken, and found a path, and now I had to go home. And I sat there, and I cried. I cried from beauty, from despair, from the fact I had been living on the earth for twenty-eight years and had not an inkling in my mind that in fact I had to go home. I had had no path, I had lost it. And right there, at that moment, I had found it again. I received a path. And a path is—you know, it's not some philosophical concept, it's not a construct, not religion, a path is, it's like your physical, or rather I should say it's your metaphysical connection with the place you must return to. I don't know what kind of place that is, that I don't know, but right then I very clearly felt that there is a place

I must return to, and that place is my home. And that until I return to that place, I will be moving along my path. And that most importantly you must never forget that you are on the path home. My God, how terrifying it is not knowing that you are on that path. Just to live, and have no real purpose or meaning in life, because there is only one true meaning in life, and it is the path. And it's so naive to just believe that after death we go to heaven, or we are reincarnated, or that we disappear, just to live and believe in some theory, just to believe and stand in one place, not moving anywhere. Because heaven or death or whatever are all just concepts. But the path is when you clearly understand that you are going home. I don't know what my home looks like. I am a Christian and I believe that my home is God, my home is Jesus. But then, sitting there on the bank of that Peruvian river, I realized that God, Jesus, truth, heaven-- they're all just words, they don't mean that you're on the path, and when I came to, I saw that the path is like--you know it's like this narrow trail that guides you all the way through the cold cosmos. The path is a physical feeling, as if something is pulling you, as if you had a rope tied to you and you were being pulled along by that rope like a sheep. The path is not an idea, it's a condition. It's the condition of eternal discomfort in this world, because you understand that everything around you is just temporary, that you're going to leave it all, that it all has nothing to do with you, because you're going on further. There's nothing for you to do here, your home is in another place, you must go on. The path is this condition in life in which you remember, all the time, that you must go on. I am happy to see you all, but I must go on. I am happy to live with you, to celebrate birthdays with you, to travel together to the sea, but I have to go on. All this is not mine, I'm not from here, I'm just passing through. The path is: "I'm sorry, I have to carry on." I have to get into my boat and sail on. The path is like a little river that you sail down in your little boat. And all around you there is so much you can't explain, there is so much fear, so much aggression—but I have to sail on further, without stopping anywhere, otherwise there's a risk that I will again forget that I must go home. And today what I fear most of all in life is that I will once again fall into that state when I don't know my path. That's the greatest tragedy that can become of us. And I sat there on the bank of that river, I listened to the songs of those Peruvian women and in my heart—right there in my heart, my path revealed itself. And right away I wanted to get to its end, I wanted to go home, I

understood that that feeling of longing for my true home, longing for the place I must come to—that is the feeling that will remind me of my path. To hold your path you must feel that longing in your heart, constant longing for the place that sooner or later you must come to. Somewhere out there is my true home, and the path is my longing for that home, it is the thread that connects me to my home. In my hand I hold one end of the thread, and the other end disappears into the darkness, into the unknown, because the only thing that I was born into this world to do is to return to my home. So...there it is. That's what happened to me. As for aliens, I'm afraid I misunderstood, I thought you were interested in hearing about the most important moment in a person's life, that's why I agreed to meet with you. My husband said I absolutely had to tell you the story about when I was in Peru, because when it happened it had a really strong effect on him, too. So now I've told you. I've never met any aliens. Of course not, I'm a Christian, I don't believe in aliens. To be honest I don't really have time to be meeting up with aliens. I've got three kids. So I'm truly sorry if I failed to meet your expectations—best of luck to you. I have to go, it was very nice to meet you. Goodbye.

Viktor Rizengevich

Hello. My name is Viktor Rizengevich. I'm on the board of directors of the Russian oil company AMT Systems. I'm thirty-six years old. Besides working in the oil industry I also own a few publishing companies; I'm also a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and a professor in the economics and law departments at Moscow State University. Anyway, none of that is really important. So let's get straight to the point. A few years ago, the film director Vanya Viripaev approached me with an idea for a movie he wanted to make about people who had had encounters with aliens. He had found fourteen people from different countries around the world from Australia to the US who were prepared to tell about their experiences communicating with extraterrestrial life. Naturally, Vanya had approached me to ask for money to make the film. I thought it was an interesting idea and I was ready to finance it. And the budget for the movie was pretty small—one and a half, two million dollars, something like that. Anyway I agreed to give him the money—or rather not just give him the money, but invest in

the film. Although in the Russian film business we refer to investments like that as “Bye-bye dollars.” Because even if the movie goes on to win at the Cannes Film Festival or something like that it will never make that money back in distribution. What’s more, I don’t just not make any money, I don’t even get back what I spent in the first place. So investments like that are mostly make-believe. But I was prepared to hand over the money for the sake of what I thought was an interesting idea. People—not crazy people, but entirely sane people—people talking about how they had communicated with UFOs. I don’t know, I thought it sounded interesting. And I told Vanya, “Sure.” But you see here’s the thing: The thing is that it soon became clear that in reality these people didn’t exist, that Vanya had just dreamt them up himself. He had written all these monologues himself. Well, and you can imagine—that’s a totally different story. I mean that has absolutely no bearing on reality. And so I said to him, I said Vanya—listen, sorry, but you’re proposing a totally different project here, these people don’t exist. I say to him, I don’t understand what the film is about then, if these are just interviews with people that you invented yourself—? And you know what he said to me? He said—what difference does it make whether these people were real or not? The main thing isn’t whether this or that event actually historically occurred—the main thing is the meaning that event carries, and the effect it has on whoever is perceiving it. That was his answer. And I remember that at the time that answer left no impression on me whatsoever. But then I started thinking about it. And I started to apply that argument of his to various well-known historical and mythological facts. For example—what difference does it make whether Jesus Christ walked on water or not, when the main value of that story is the profound meaning that lies under it? Or, what difference does it make how Jesus fed several thousand people with five loaves of bread and seven fish, if it was a magic trick or if it was just a metaphor—what difference does it make? The principal value of the story is in what happens to us when we hear it. That is reality. There’s no other reality aside from our perception, and there can’t be. Because we can never know whether Jesus walked on water or not, or whether Mother Mary gave birth through carnal conception or conception from the Holy Spirit. It’s unprovable, and that means all we have is what we’re hearing about—and there’s no point in subjecting it all to doubt based on so-called “real-time temporal logic” because real-time temporal logic does not exist. The main value in all these events is not their

historical validity, it is the energy that arises when we come into contact with this or that story. And so then I thought—well, how profound and fulfilling could contemporary art be if the people who create it understood everything I'm saying right now? And believe me, I'm telling you this not of my own will, but at the will of the author. Because after all I, too, am not a real person, I'm just a character in a play. There is no Russian oligarch named Viktor Rizengevich, that's a made up name, and the AMT Systems oil company doesn't exist either—not in Russia, not anywhere, except in this play, that you're sitting here watching. And I, as a person, do not exist anywhere, except in this play. Before you is a character—and I'm speaking to you not with my own words, but with the words of the author. However the words of the author are indeed my words—because without the author I wouldn't exist. I am a character and my reality is this play, in which I am a character. Of course, we also have the actor, who right now at this very second is performing this role. We also have the actor—you hear his voice. Not Viktor Rizengevich's voice, who in fact does not exist. On the other hand the actor isn't speaking his own words either, he's not speaking from himself, he is also fulfilling the will of the author, so the actor isn't actually entirely himself right now either. The actor is trying to convince the audience that he's this guy Viktor Rizengevich, a character in a play by Ivan Viripaev called "UFO". The actor is also bending to the will of the author. Or rather, the actor is executing the will of the director, who in turn is executing the will of the author. So all of us here are executing the will of the author. However the author himself—since we've gotten in so deep—the author himself is also now a character in this play—because if I am the character of a play, talking about my contact with the author, that means the author is also part of the creative trajectory of the play, which means he is also a character in the play just as I am. But then even the audience, who is right now watching this show, the audience is also participating directly in what's happening, after all what's happening right now would be impossible if there was no audience. So that means the audience is also a part of the artistic opus. Therefore, I am of the opinion that it really isn't worth our time trying to figure out what in this world is real and what isn't. The most important thing we have to understand is that reality exists. That there is one reality. And right now I'm going to show it to you. Right now I'm going to show you the one and only true reality in this whole story. And here it is.

Viktor Rizengevich is silent. He stands there, silent. Pause. The pause should be precisely as long as it needs to be.

CURTAIN