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SCRIPT

Excerpt from Uncle Eddie's Guide to Art Appreciation for reading

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ACT 1
Scene 1

MUSIC

(2:30) : Djivan Gasparyan, Cut#1 Menag Jampport EM / Yes Kez Tessa.

SCREEN - VIDEO DRIVING TO CEMETARY

Fades up from black. Projected on a white screen installed on the wall off to the side of the table on the stage. Footage of driving to the cemetery from Wishart in slight slow motion.

ACT 2
Scene 1

SCREEN - TEXT ARGUMENTS AGAINST ART

This art is an eyesore...a waste of tax payers' money...what a slap in the face...seeing this ruined my day... this exhibition is obscene...a crop of dandelions would have been nicer...a lot of junk...it's sick and has no point to it...it's stupid...is this a joke?...my tax dollars to show off your deviant fantasies!...these pictures should be destroyed...this is sick!...What kindergarten group did this garbage...this is a joke and so is the artist...

UNCLE EDDIE

- really drunk
- mumbling
- supports

(Anger surprise. Gestures with bottle toward screen)

himself as
moves

-angry
aggressive
drunken ranting

-softening for
jokes and asides
but always back
to angry

What the hell? What the hell is that anyway?

(Facing audience. As if repeating a question that has been asked to him)

What-the-hell is that?

Don't ask me. I ain't no high folultin' art type. Some kind of a bull shit joke?

Donnie put it up there. My nephew.

I'd tell him to get it the hell down, but now he's there in Montreal. Left here just like his mother.

(Takes another swig of beer. Silence. Looks down. Bangs hand on table hard.)

(Angry) Ya know, she's a damn liar. I know, she took those cufflinks out of my dresser at the old house. Said she didn't but I know she's a damn liar.

(Addresses audience, more calmly but as if he's giving an order)
Someone go down to the hotel and get me another 2-4.

(Angry again) I saw them. Her kids were playing with them in the car. She wants them because they were Dads and thinks she can just waltz in there and take them. To hell with that. She's a damn liar.

If she comes back here I'm gonna get my shotgun and kill her. Just like I should've done to my ex-wife. Kill her.

I got a damn letter from her this week. Haven't heard nothing for 15 years, don't see my boys grow up, and she wants money. I don't give a damn if it's for the kids' university.

Who the hell does she think she is? (Looks at the audience) Did you put her up to this? (Looks away) Was probably my damn holier-than-thou sister that told her to try get money out of me. Donnie's mom. To hell that I'll send her one god damn penny. I never did, and won't now.

(Takes a drink. Looks at the audience, more calmly)

Hey, you know that? "Marriage" isn't a word. (pause) No. It's a sentence. (laughs, takes another drink) A SENTENCE. Better off in jail. It's hell and got me to drinking.

(Takes another drink)

(Angry) I'm over at Auntie's place last night. I got over late. I needed something to drink. I know she has. I knock and the lights go on. She says, "Come in and have what to eat."

She gives me a mickey. But with just this much in the bottom.
(Shows that there was only a little bit at the bottom of the bottle).
Says, that's all she's got.

"Bull shit," I says. "Bull shit." She says she's got nothing, and "Eat, Eddy". I says, "you'll give a drink to Stella Stella, or Sister Ollie, or Sister Peter, but you won't give one to your nephew Eddie. What the hell is that?!!" I looked around but she had it hid really good. "Give me a drink," I says. But she keeps saying no. I said, "Then 'f' you!" I got the hell out of there. (Takes another drink, coughs)

(Leans back, addresses the audience) Did I tell you when I was on the bus coming back from Brandon? (laughs to himself) When I was a young guy! Yea, I'd been having some drinks with a couple o' them local girls. I'd gotten in a fist fight too with a couple of them city boys.

I gets on the bus to come back. And I sits next to a priest. The only seat left. None of us wants to sit with him. But I has to.

So, I'm lookin' pretty shabby. You know! (laughs)

Then I says to the priest, "Say, father, I was wonderin', what's it that causes the arthritis?" So, the priest goes, "Oh, my son, it's caused by going with cheap women, too much o' that wicked alcohol and cigarettes."

So I says, (shouts) "Well, I'll be damned."

So, the priest feels bad, and says, "I'm very sorry, my son. How long you had arthritis?" So, I says, "Not me that has it, father. I was just reading that the pope does!" (begins laughing as he's telling the punch line)

It's the *pope* that has the arthritis (laughs).

(looking over shoulder to the art work. Takes a drink)

Won't see me in the church. They are full of bull shit. WHAT!?!?
(indignant) The priest there steals Alexandru's wife. Right here in

town. Got the hell out, that weasel! He knew what we'd do to him. He quits the church and runs off with her and his kids! Ukrainian Catholic? Bullshit. I says to mom, to hell those damn bastards can do anything. Sure as there's hell, ya won't see me going in that place.

(Pause, takes a drink)

ACT 2

Scene 2

SCREEN - TEXT PARADOX

Word "paradox" fades up appearing on the screen as if it was in a picture frame, the word appears on the screen in various way, spelled out letter by letter, small-to-big, etc. In loop for duration of scene.

paradox

UNCLE EDDIE

- continue
angry
aggressive
drunken ranting

(looks back at screen)

How the hell? Can one *word* be art?! It's BULL SHIT.

(takes a drink from his bottle)

The sister's kid put that up here in the kitchen here. Donnie. He came to town one day with his artist friends. Looked like a bunch of damn freaks. One girl, from the art school there in Regina, her head shaved bald! LIKE A PIG!

I says, "Don't bring that lezzie the hell around here again until she's got some hair on her goddamn head!"

They have a computer back there, behind the wall. (points)

Makes all this stuff go up. (indicates screen)

I don't turn it off. DON'T HAVE A DAMN CLUE HOW YOU

TURN IT BACK ON AGAIN.

(Looks back at the screen)

What the *hell*?

Donnie used ta' take me to the damn museum there in Regina, when I go in to see the doctor. For the "ART." Just won't take "no". And by Jesus I feel stupid in there. Even all washed up and in my suit. Drags me in there anyway.

The shit I see there. Don't get me started.

(Silence)

(Looks at the screen on the wall) What the "f"?

Par-a-dox?

How the hell's anyone supposed to know these words! What the fuck do those damn artists do all day? Read the damn dictionary?

Do you want to know what I think!?! They don't give one shit, 'bout anyone. Don't give a shit about me or anyone. Just put anything up there! It's just nothing.

(Looks back at the audience, still drunk)

Get me another beer, there damn it! Common, have something to drink. (shouts and holds up his beer bottle) *DEBORSHAK!*

ACT 3

Scene 1

MUSIC

(1:40) Julian Kytasty, *The Chumak Flute*, CUT#4, Black Sea Winds

SCREEN - VIDEO GARDEN

Fades up from black, plays for the duration of song. Fade down to black.

UNCLE EDDIE

-sober

-feels better
about himself

-warm,
friendly,
causal, but
dominating

-speaks loudly
to off camera
visitor

Look at the size of these *rogálky*.

Get me that cardboard box over there. The one with the cucumbers.
We'll put the potatoes in it too.

I'm just going to dig up one or two hills of them now. Let the rest get
big.

(pause)

Hey, I tell you what there! My neighbour Raymond was over and he
was askin' me, "Eddie, do you know what a *par-a-dox* is?"

I said, "Yea I do, alright Ray."

I says, "You, just go out there behind the barn, to that slough. You'll
see one for yourself. Just flew over the house and landed there in the
water with another one. Take my shot gun, get them both and I'll
cook 'em for dinner."

He says, "What the hell Eddie?" I says, "A pair 'o ducks. Get it, Ray?
A paradox, a pair 'o ducks!" We laughed real good. A pair of ducks
right there in the slough! (laughs) Ha.

That's a good one.

(proud) Look at these *rogálky*.

Boy, I had *some* crop last year. New potatoes like these already in
June, June 27th! No one else had until July.

Got about 250 pounds. Ate'em till late May the next year. Gave about
half of them away to people around her to eat.

(pause) You get that box there and we'll go in and make us some
lunch. COME.

ACT 3

Scene 2

SCREEN - TEXT: COMPLIMENTS

*It's nice...it has shaken us out of our complacency...great work...it's exciting to see this...thought provoking...very intriguing and well done...thanks for the opportunity to see this show...very thoughtful...cool...wonderful...very beautiful and interesting...very unique...a great show...congratulations...nice, nice, nice...f***ing good work...different, but very interesting...very poignant...I enjoy your fabulous artwork...keep up the groovy work...*

UNCLE EDDIE

-feels better
about himself

-more relaxed

-speaks to off
camera visitor

Let's get in a game while them potatoes cook. What do you say, Crib or Hola? (coughs) We'll play Crib. Here's the board.

I'll get that chicken out, later. There's *pyrohý*, and *hólubtsi* there. Just cooked last night. They're in the fridge. But later. Let the potatoes cook and we'll play.

(puts down cards)

The doc. in Wynyard gave me that joke. *Paradox*. That's a good one. (points and laughs)

He's a black man you know! Not many out this way. Came here from Africa. No Damn Canadian doctor wants ta come to these small towns. So they gotta bring in these guys.

But he's been here for years, just like one of us now. Comes from a farming family. In Su-dan, I think he said.

Say's he damn lucky to be here. I'm damn lucky he's here. Them city doctors in Regina don't give one shit about me anymore. Gave up.

(pause)

(Looks to his off camera friend)

Do you want a beer? I'm not. Go get one for yourself. I'll get you one. I'm good with coffee.

(more confessional, lower voice)

But this guy in Wynyard he treats me good. Says, I gotta quit the drink or I'm a dead man. He dried me up there about three months back. Had one hell of a time. Changed my blood three times. And I was seein' things. Ghosts and things. Scared the shit right out of me. But I came through.

Doc says I'm a dead man if I take another drink.

(takes a sip of coffee)

(lots of energy) That chicken's something. You're gonna taste it. What I do is rub it with onion before I cook the chicken. Makes it come out nice and brown. You should try that, next time you're cooking. Just cut the onion and rub it in, with some garlic.

(drags cribbage board over close to him)

(looks to off camera friend) You gonna watch out there. I'm gonna skunk ya. I'm playin' crib every morning now that I don't go to the pub no more.

ACT 3

Scene 2

SCREEN - CRIBBAGE GAME

Two full games of cribbage recorded from MSN Game zone play.

UNCLE EDDIE

-Lots of hand
expressions

-more rhythmic

I'll tell you, I miss going to the pub. Those were good times. Talking farming and talking the politics. I'm okay with my coffee, but the boys just don't like to see me off the bottle.

(Sits back. Settles in to tell a story)

I remember I'm down there at the pub with the boys. This is a while back. Weather's bad so we can't work. It's raining. And it's just before lunch, we're getting pretty loaded.

Well, Martin was there and he was telling us about what he's seen on the news. And he's petty damn pissed off.

He's seen this woman on television in some big art museum place there overseas. She's an artist. Her art, it's not a painting. No, just a messed up bed in this big gallery.

Really! He saw that on television. Said she slept there one night and left it in the museum: this mattress, her clothes and underwear on the floor and whisky bottles. A big mess. Martin's really pissed off.

He says, "Looks like my god damn bedroom in the morning."
(laughs)

"Yea," I say, "But there ain't no ladies underwear anywhere near your bed there Martin. But she got it right with them liquor bottles!" (Laughs)

So, Gordon's there, an' he says, "Hey Martin, maybe your boy's gonna get a million bucks some day for one of his paintings."

(aside) He's serious too. Cuz, his kid's real good at art! Never seen a kid work so damn hard at something. And wins all the art things around town here. Martin's boy.

(lean forward) Martin says, "To hell! He'll get a *real* job."

Then, old man Kowalski says, "What, is that kid of yours a faggot?"

(lean back) So Gordon says, "Yea, Martin and don't let him get a hold of any of your dirty underwear! We're gonna see them on the news there with your kid in a couple of years on television."
(Laughs).

Martin's so damn mad, he gets in his pick-up and drives home to the farm.

(pause)

Next thing ya know, he comes back in the pub, with a bunch of his kid's art. And we say, "What the hell?"

And what does he do? He tears up every last one of them right there, stuffs them in the garbage can. Swears he's gonna hit the kid if he ever picks up a pencil again.

And there were some damn good drawings in there too! Ruined them all.

Well, that got us goin' real good.

I says, "Marin you're full of shit." I says, "Hell, we farmers and them artists...we're just the same in a hell of a lot of ways."

Everyone's looking at me like I just said the pope ain't Catholic!

So I says, "What the hell does the government or anyone care about us farmers or them artists anyhow? Not one bit! Don't give a damn. We got no clout out there in Ottawa."

No one wants to pay good money for what they make, or what we grow.

You want money? Don't be a farmer. Don't be an artist. Get a job in the government or be a lawyer, or a dentist. Those buggers got it made. If there's money around it's in their pockets.

Ya know. I thought about that: there's always some one out there trying to keep our prices down, or make a buck off our backs.

How about that Monsanto! There's a gang of ass holes.

Just ask mister Percy Schmeiser there from Bruno Saskatchewan, stood up for us farmers.

I signed up yesterday for his GE-free zone, but he lost that patent lawsuit to Monstantos, there in 2004. Don't care about us farmers! Same damn thing for them artists, ya know.

The US market and European market, they set everything up in *their* favour. Can't compete with them. We'll never get a level playing field.

Then Martin, he says, "Ain't no farmer gets a million bucks for doing nothing."

So I says, "You don't know nothing. I see my nephew Donnie and his artist friends. They got less than me. Get all their clothes...EVERYTHING, used, or even out of the GARBAGE!"

Once, back when I visited Regina, Donnie took me home, living in this place smaller than a chicken coop! And smelled just as bad."

Sure, what they do's weird. But, if you look around, ya' know weird things happening all the time, and all over the damn place. Not just with artists!

But there's always someone wanting to put you down. The way you are, what you do, where you come from.

(leans forward, finger in the air) So I says to Martin, "Yea, them artists got a hell of a lot less than some farmers round here." (points into the audience)

(aside) And I'm talkin' about Martin.

I tell him he's full of shit. I says, "You got near half a million in equipment. Maybe more." He'd bought that when the wheat prices hit that high.

He's got a big operation, big machines, but don't work more than 5 months in a year. Sits on his ass all winter. Down in Arizona. Got his condominium there.

(pause, coughs)

Martin don't like that, eh? Jumps up. Spills a lot of good beer. Says, "What's the point of all that art shit?"

He starts giving shit to my nephew, "The government forks out our tax money to Donnie, so he can stand there in the field all day taking pictures of barley growing!"

Says, that's a damn stupid waste of money!

So I says, "And what the hell ain't a waste of money?" 35 million to bail out that Bombardier, see that on the news 'bout every damn year. Or \$10,000 to the Prime Minister's wife. For what? Redecorate the place in Ottawa! Yea, and those damn Liberals filling their friends' pockets with money. All them politicians do it. Don't fool yourself, don't matter what party they're for! Corporations make millions and the government gives them millions in tax breaks.

Then I says, "Hey Martin, when those grain prices were down, didn't you get that aid package from the government?" That's when he bought himself this big gas barbeque. I laughed at him.

What the hell isn't a waste of money?!

(takes a drink of coffee)

Then Martin's feelin' like a royal ass. His old lady comes in the pub. She'd heard about him ruining all their kid's pictures. (amused)

She's yellin' at him like there's no tomorrow.

(more serious) Martin's old lady almost kicked him out for that. Yea, Martin was so full of shit, 'cuz his kid ended up going to university in art with my nephew. (Laughs)

Hey. Ya want another beer?

(Looks over his shoulder at the screen.)

Geeze, I got you skunked again. My sister says, "No one plays crib like her brother Eddie."

Check them potatoes. Should be ready. I'll put cream and green onions on them and dill. There's those *pyrohý*, and *hólubtsi*, we'll warm those up too. And fry some onions. And boy we'll eat.

Act 4

Scene 1

MUSIC: *Zavjazalom Sobi Ochi / If I Only Had Eyes*

(1:51) Zeelia, Cut#11 on Willow Bridge.

SCREEN - VIDEO: WHEAT BLOWING IN WIND

Fade up from black, images of wheat moving in wind.

Act 4

Scene 2

SCREEN - TEXT: THE ART WORLD LIMITS WHAT ART CAN BE

Text fades in very slowly and sits on screen.

UNCLE EDDIE

-same as
previous

-depressed

-in pain but
hides it

-voice bitter

Resentful

-slowed down
delivery

(coughs violently, emphysema cough.)

(Mumbles. Frail)

The doctor can go to hell. They're all out to get me. He don't give a shit about me.

(Pour shot)

(Take prescription drugs out of a dispenser

(Wash them down with shot)

(coughs)

He can go to hell!

(short pause)

Just like my wife, took everything. I come home from work in the field, ready to wash up and eat *lonch*. House is empty. Everything gone.

Took away my own kids, t'Fort Q'appelle, then t'Calgary. Left me with nothing. Didn't see them grow up. 30 years! Haven't seen my own god damn flesh and blood.

(takes bottle in feeble hand)

To hell with her!

(Coughs, and takes another shot.)

She made it so my children never want to see me again.

WHAT?! Last time I seen them. I went there. To Fort Q'appelle. Took them out of school. WHAT!? Who the hell's going to tell me when I can see my own kids! To have an ice-cream there in town. I order what I know they like. But the little one's crying and crying. (concerned, hurt) Bawling her damn eyes out.

So I settle her a bit (pause, emotional) then she asks me, "Are you a ghost?"

Wants them to think I am gone for good.

(pause) Then the police come. Say "kidnapping".

(Pour a shot and coughs. Don't drink)

To hell with them!

That English bastard she left with. Should have beat him when I had the chance.

They was always out to get us. *Bo hunks!* Stupid garlic-stinking good-for-nothing Ukrainian boys. She thought she married below herself. Thought she was better. If you weren't English you were shit. To hell with that!

(Turns to the audience) You're all from Quebec. You don't know *shit* about our people out west. Think our kids are all English, like we come from the damn Queen of England. Ha! Speaks English *is* English. No we are not. (slams down his hand.)

And we suffered of it too. You got your French and your English. But, when we was kids in school, we can't speak Ukrainian. Not Polish. No! Not Romanian. No! Hell, not Chinese. No!

Not what ever, just English. They'd throw you out. Did the same damn thing to the Indians; worse. Said it was better that way. For who? To hell with them. To hell with you!

(coughs)

We're just the stupid garlic-stinking good-for-nothing Ukrainians. That's why. Well to hell with you!

Dad, he tried to make it different. Had a special Ukrainian class after school. So we learn to read and write our language. He knew a lot, had Ukrainian books, got the *Ukrainian Gazette*. But to hell with him!

(takes shot)

He just got the hell out. I was a small boy, but tough. I stood up to protect Mom...I put up a damn good fight too when he'd push her around.

We were glad to see him go.

Left us with nothing. Took the machinery. Horses too, the wagons. Everything! Had to start again with NOTHING.

(coughs)

He had the balls to want me to leave with him too. (as if it is out of the question) What? Leave mom?

He says, "Come with me, I'll send ya to university to be a lawyer." Thought I should be a lawyer. Had the money too and I was good in

school. But I said go to hell! Good for nothing.

I stayed with Mom. To hell with him!

(coughs violently)

(Pours a shot. Don't drink)

You probably don't even know this. But to hell with you, it's true.
In the First War.

Ya know what *internment* is? Took farmers from around here. Took them away. To Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, B.C...

Why? Because they were *Ukrainisky*. Said WE were the enemy.
That was during the First War.

There was even a camp in Brandon, Manitoba there. Just over the border. Had ONE THOUSAND Ukrainians in jail, on the exhibition grounds. Two years they's prisoners there. Nothing to do, or working hard labour.

One Ukrainian guy, Grapko was his name, that guy was shot dead for trying to get the hell out of there. To hell with them! Made us garlic eaters fell like shit.

I bet you don't even know that.

They arrest two of my Uncles from Raymore, sent them to Alberta, Castle Mountain and Banff. Prisoners of war? It's the god damn truth. Like with the Japanese. Worked them to the bone. They built the park there. Banff park. They almost died there.

My uncles, never got over it. Didn't ever want to talk about it.

(Takes bottle)

One of them, he went damn crazy.

(pours drink)

Died up there in the mental hospital in Yorkton. The other one, Uncle Alexandru, went back to the old country and the commies killed him there!

(coughs)

(sad, frail) You don't know that either do you!? The Ruskies, they wanted to get rid of the Ukrainians too. Killed Uncle Alexandru and his family back there in the old country. Not just him either.

That was 1933. You don't know this.

Some say, six million dead. Farmers: women, men, children. Dead. Stalin there. Want's everyone to be a Russian. Starved the Ukrainians. Put guns to their heads. Took the food they grew. Sold it for money to the rest of the world. They knew it too. Knew the Ukrainians were starving. But ate it anyway. Did nothing. No one cares about the *bo hunks!*

(wind down)

(takes shot glass in hand)

In one winter and one spring, millions died. Eight months, nothing to eat. And the suffering. Piles of dead bodies. Watch your family die. Lots of stories, so desperate.

(takes shot)

Some, would eat the dead people. People they'd loved. So desperate. Uncle Alexandru, his wife, she was a good woman. Four kids. All gone.

(Heavy sigh. Relieved to have said all these things. Takes a rest. Coughs.)

(kinder, less bitter) You don't know all that.

(pause)

But I'll tell you what there, no one can know everything these days. There's too much to know. And all these things, they are sad.

(coughs violently)

Act 4

Scene 3

SCREEN - IMAGES UKRAINIAN INTERNMENT AND FORCED FAMINE

Images of internment camps and of Ukrainian forced famine genocide and commemorative plaques

UNCLE EDDIE

-very weak
-dreamily
-As if
hallucinating

Y'know, I wish the nephew would have given me a nice painting to put there. Maybe one of my 1958 Ford tractor. Still runs nice. I till all the *Babchia* gardens around here with it, get them ready for planting.

A nice painting, when it was new. Silver and red.

(Coughs)

I'm gonna call Donnie. He has to come back. Has to take me in to the hospital. I'm not feelin' too good there.

Act 4

Scene 4

SCREEN - VIDEO: TRACTOR

Fade up from black. Impressionistic moving shots of silver and red ford tractor.

END