

Many Questions

by Mitch Stone

The character is a Lithuanian woman named Marie Popevis, who emigrated to the U.S. with her husband Joe during the late 1910s. She could be any age, since she is relating a story which happened long before she herself died. She speaks very basic English with a distinct Slavic accent. This is a true story, which occurred in 1923. Marie asks members of the audience:

Did you kill my Joe?

You, did you kill my Joe?

No, that's all right. I ask everyone this question. I have always been asking this question. I always get same answer.

Why I do this, I don't know. Some questions, you never get answer. This much I do know.

I ask Joe, when he says we go from Lithuania to America, why Joe? He says Marie, because in America we have chance to live. After revolution, no more in Russia.

Iowa. Where is this place Iowa? Joe says he don't know but he got cousin in this Iowa, give him job as carpenter. But I worry, what is right thing to do?

I go to church and I ask priest. Priest says, you are wife, you listen to husband. All right, so we go Iowa.

I tell you, Iowa not Lithuania. More cows, not so many people.

We live there, it's okay. Then Joe says, Marie we go California. This place, I heard of. Still, I want to know -- why Joe? I have brother in Long Beach, he says. Get me better job, make more money, have better life. What kind of life if we never settle down, I ask?

I worry -- is this right thing to do?

We got no church in Iowa, so I ask God. Get same answer as priest in Lithuania. So we go.

Long Beach not Lithuania either. More people, not so many cows.

Then Joe says, I go away for weekend. Where you go, I ask. Santa Paula, he says. Why I ask. Deer hunting he says. With who, I ask. With friends, he says.

I know, I nag him a little, but even good wife deserves answers, yes?

By now I get -- what you say -- wised up. I don't ask priest. I don't ask God. I ask psychic lady on Cherry Avenue.

Psychic lady lights candles. Looks at palm. Turns over cards with strange pictures on them. Says if Joe goes on trip, he will never come back.

I tell Joe. He says Marie, you are very silly woman if you believe in psychic lady.

No, I don't tell him what priest and God say to me before. I say, I follow you to Iowa. I follow you to Long Beach. If you go Santa Paula, I go Santa Paula. With children.

We drive car to Sulphur Springs, make camp. After lunch, Joe says I go out hunting now. I ask, you find deer in middle of day? Joe says he gets early start, be back late, don't worry. So you think, maybe husband want to be away from wife and children?

Eat dinner, put children to bed. Joe still not come back yet. I can not sleep.

Before midnight I hear gunshots. I honk horn of car, but hear nothing in reply. I ask other men in camp to search for Joe, but they say no, it's too dark. Don't worry, he will be back.

In morning, Sheriff's men finds Joe on hillside, leaned against tree, bullet through neck. His gun, not even fired. His body dragged there from another place.

It took ten men to carry my Joe down mountain. It took more to hold me when they brought his body to camp. This is fate, I cried! This is fate!

The Sheriff's men say Joe shot by another hunter. An accident. But they never found out who, so how do they know? What is destiny, and how can we alter what will be?

So I ask, who knew right? The priest? God? The psychic on Cherry Avenue?

For over sixty years I lived after losing my Joe. All the time asking myself these questions.

No answers. Still no answers.