

GARY'S WALK

(Part II of "The Gary Plays.")

A PLAY

By

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DRAFT: 8/20/20

Final

SCENE

No set or props necessary.

GARY'S WALK is the second play of THE GARY PLAYS. Gary has recently lost his son, Dan, who was murdered by an unknown assassin in McArthur Park, near downtown Los Angeles.

CHARACTERS

GARY: An actor, middle-aged.

THE CHORUS: One man and one woman. They may play all the other characters (*MARCIA, GLORIA, JUANA, ANTONIO, VERNON, BOB*), depending on the casting, and are otherwise delineated by italics.

Aside from stage directions, Dialogue in parentheses are asides.

1.

Life is strange and life is strange.

I would say so, yes.

How there could be goodness, and yet horror. Filthy machines, and there's no meaning.

We'll have to reiterate that. Because that is the issue. Isn't that the issue?

Yes, it is. I would say so. Yes.

Whether there is meaning or there isn't any?

GARY: Well, what are you going to do? What choice do you have?

No, no. No choice.

The evil in the smoggy dark under the dusty trees.

GARY: I'll find him and I'll kill him.

Life's catastrophes. Dead bodies in boxes. Dead bodies in bags.

GARY: I'll find the killer of my boy. And then I'll kill him back.

This man is obviously disturbed.

The dead with their mouths open, gaping at endless nothing.

Lots of TV -- flickering screens in the cozy lamplight of home. As seen from the street by the homeless -- through living room windows,

Through living room windows.

By the homeless.

By our friend here. Name's Gary. Formerly an actor. We left him in the park as night was falling, yelling about a kid.

Kid on a bike.

2.

GARY: Scuzzbag!

ANTONIO: What's that?

GARY: Kid on a bike. You seen him?

ANTONIO: Kid on bike?

GARY: Kid on a bike. You seen him?

ANTONIO: I seen a kid.

GARY: What's his name?

ANTONIO: Which one?

GARY: Kid on a bike? A helmet. Black.

ANTONIO: Black kid?

GARY: No. Black helmet.

ANTONIO: It's dark out, Man.

GARY: Where'd he go?

ANTONIO: I don't know where.

GARY: You know him?

ANTONIO: I seen him.

GARY: You know him?

ANTONIO: He don't give a fuck. He like to smoke people. He got no feeling. He say what the fuck man, you gone, you nothing, fuck you motherfucker bang bang.

GARY: That's him. Where's he live?

ANTONIO: He lives in sewer.

GARY: Where?

ANTONIO: Under L.A. river. He don't even have like language.

GARY: He killed my boy. I lost my home.

ANTONIO: Fuck, Man.

GARY: If you see him, tell him.

ANTONIO: I won't see him.

GARY: Why not?

ANTONIO: He's gone from here, Gringo.

GARY: Where? Where 'd he go?

ANTONIO: I'll find out. I'll ask people.

GARY: Please.

ANTONIO: You lost your home?

GARY: You tell him.

ANTONIO: You lost it?

GARY: Tell him!

ANTONIO: I don't know him, I don't see him.

GARY: You tell him!

ANTONIO: That's fucking crazy, Man.

GARY: You said!

ANTONIO: What I say?

GARY: Lives in sewer!

ANTONIO: That kid, yeah.

GARY: Don't bullshit me!

ANTONIO: Kid on a bike?

GARY: Fuck you, okay?

ANTONIO: What?

GARY: Fuck you!

ANTONIO: *Monde usted?*

GARY: Fuck you!

ANTONIO: Hey! Come back here!

3.

And now he walks.

He fears a malfunctioning of his mind because he has no idea where he's going and it's dark, and the voices in his head are loud.

He is wearing a back-pack. And the back-pack is awkward because there is a box in the back-pack.

He's not sure if he can make it to the corner street light, so he can see where he is.

He's heading downtown, toward the river.

Why?

Why? He's hoping to be saved, en route.

I see.

From his murderous thoughts. From his loss. From himself. But the point is being there on the way. Who are you, on the way?

GARY: You're nothing, you're a piece of shit, you're mean and weak.

He hears himself say that.

GARY: You'd do anything. A stick through someone's gut. The sleaziest sex act, the slimiest lie –

So you see it's not revenge he wants.

What is it then?

It's payment.

I think it is revenge.

It's payment. Because he feels like he owes the whole world for his existence. So he wants to crawl on his knees and apologize.

And live on the streets.

And I really think it's the back-pack, as well. Because there's a demand there. There's a role to play, and something to do. With the pack. You know, carrying the damn thing. Taking a posture with it.

Right, he's so self-conscious with the pack, it's pathetic. Just carry the back-pack, Gary. But no, he has to carry the back-pack like somebody who is carrying a back-pack. Like somebody being watched. Like it's really interesting. Like there's a camera on him or he's the focus of attention.

It's a pretense. But for whom is he pretending? Is it God?

Yes, God. God is watching.

Because nothing in the world is watching him but himself.

As far as you know. Which is not far, is it? I mean, you don't know very far, do you?

No.

So.

So, what?

So you don't know. Ask him what's in the pack.

What's that in the pack? Gary?

GARY: That is a wooden box.

Tell them, what is in the box?

GARY: Those are ashes in the box.

The ashes of his dead son, am I right? The ashes of his son, whose name was Dan.

GARY: Daniel.

Daniel is in the box.

So. You're looking out through the senses. You're looking out through the eyes.

GARY: Yeah, I'm looking for the dumb motherfucker who killed my boy.

No, you're not. You're carrying his ashes to the sea.

GARY: I'm doing that, too.

Why?

GARY: I don't know why.

He saw it in a movie

So he thought it was a good idea.

It calls attention to himself.

GARY: I think that's what he wanted.

And maybe he'll stumble into the mug who killed him.

And maybe he won't.

It's a fantasy.

GARY: I have some thoughts about that.

He hears them all the time.

Energy, he thinks.

GARY: I'm energy. Electro-chemical. What I am.

He's said this before. He keeps saying the same thing. While he carries along the ashes of his son.

GARY: Energy. Electro-chemical. Energy. Electro-chemical-magnetical.

And the ashes?

GARY: And yet at the same time I can imagine: Here I am on the surface of the earth, and yet I can imagine the perspective from space, from which I am invisible. And the question is: are they linked? That is, is my sense of myself now, with Daniel's ashes, and the view from space -- are they connected? Between the earth as a whole, and I, -- is there a link?

As he moves on down the street. Toward the L.A. River.

4.

GLORIA: You're so insecure, you know. And like, you don't chat ever.

GARY: Gloria?

This is Gloria, Gary's first wife, Daniel's Mom, in the Valley, moments before.

GLORIA: I don't want to be concerned about it. Your insecurity?

GARY: Okay.

GLORIA: And now you're walking around like a homeless person.

GARY: Gloria?

GLORIA: You're not in your right mind, Gary.

GARY: I'm here for the ashes.

Danny Boy's ashes are on the mantel above the fireplace.

GLORIA: You're here for the ashes?

GARY: I said.

Gary is tongue-tied.

GLORIA: Say something more, Gary.

GARY: I was going to say.

GLORIA: What, Gary?

GARY: The ashes.

GLORIA: That's incomprehensible to me, Gary.

GARY: Sorry.

GLORIA: I'm remembering how it was with you. You never made any small talk. So, like, it was hard to talk. And I didn't want to live with an actor who, you know, acts like that?

GARY: Like what?

GLORIA: Who is so insecure? So you can't have people over?

GARY: I want Danny Boy. That's all.

Come on, Gary, say it loud, so she can hear what you're saying.

GARY: I WANT DANNY BOY.

GLORIA: You mean his ashes?

GARY: His ashes.

GLORIA: What for?

GARY: I'm going to scatter them into the sea.

GLORIA: In your dreams.

GARY: That's what he wanted.

GLORIA: How do you know?

GARY: What he said.

GLORIA: You were both probably high at the time.

GARY: I don't care.

GLORIA: Because you can't tell the difference. That's you, Gary, in a nutshell.

GARY: What does that mean?

GLORIA: Nut-shell.

GARY: Thanks a lot.

GLORIA: Along with the fear and the gloom all time, when you withdraw into the weed, or whatever, the booze, and the paranoia, because you're afraid? And then I think, "He's just high," but it's you, Gary, all the time. (Laughs)

GARY: Danny Boy.

GLORIA: What about him? And I know what you thinking now. You think I'm stupid. You think all women are the same. We're all nothing, stupid nothing.

GARY: Just nothing, Gloria. Not necessarily stupid. Like all humans.

GLORIA: Oh, forget it, Gary. That's all bullshit.

GARY: That's not what I think.

GLORIA: What do you think?

Talk, Gary. You're doing good.

GARY: We're disappointed, and then we die.

Good.

GLORIA: Great, Gary. That's so helpful.

GARY: I wanted to ask you, Gloria.

GLORIA: What, Gary?

Gary?

GLORIA: What? You sulk, and you feel sorry for yourself, and you think I'm stupid, and now you want my advice?

GARY: I don't think you're stupid.

GLORIA: You can think that if you want. Cool. As long as you're out of here in five minutes. Without the ashes.

Pause.

GLORIA: Because I want to live a normal life.

GARY: Which is vacant and banal.

Whoops.

GARY: I'm sorry I said that.

GLORIA: Never mind.

GARY: I'm sorry.

GLORIA: Five minutes, Gary.

GARY: I said I was sorry.

GLORIA: It's too late, Gary.

GARY: Okay, I'm going.

GLORIA: Bye, bye.

He's stuck on his spot.

GLORIA: You haven't moved, Gary.

GARY: I've come for Danny Boy.

Good, Gary. Loud and firm.

GARY: (Cont'd) We agreed, remember? I'm his Dad. I'm going to throw his ashes into the Pacific, like we said. Then I'm going to throw myself in after them.

The man is an idiot.

GLORIA: Don't be an idiot, Gary.

GARY: I'm going to walk them. I'm going to walk them to the Pacific.

GLORIA: The Pacific is a long way from here, Gary. Miles away.

GARY: That's what I'm going to do.

GLORIA: I'm not interested in walking to the Pacific.

GARY: I'll meet you there.

GLORIA: Where?

GARY: At Vernon's.

GLORIA: Why?

GARY: We'll do the ashes together. It's what Danny wanted.

GLORIA: I never knew what that boy wanted.

GARY: You're his mother.

GLORIA: Where you been sleeping lately?

GARY: Sleeping?

GLORIA: Yes. Where you been sleeping?

Silence.

GLORIA: Gary?

GARY: Under.

GLORIA: Under?

GARY: A freeway. The 4 0 5.

GLORIA: Jezz, Gary. I think it's better if you stay here. Or you could stay at Marcia's.

GARY: I can't stay at Marcia's.

GLORIA: Why not?

GARY: Because of Vernon. I would have to ask Vernon.

GLORIA: Which you should do, then. Ask Vernon.

GARY: Which I will do with the ashes, when I get there, to Vernon's, I'll ask him.

Silence.

GLORIA: No.

GARY: Because I have another reason.

GLORIA: What's the other reason?

GARY: Maybe he knows something.

GLORIA: About what?

GARY: What happened to Danny.

GLORIA: How would he know?

GARY: He was around. He has a camera.

GLORIA: It was an accident. Vernon doesn't know shit, and I won't let you take the ashes. With you. To the Pacific. Danny was hanging out in the druggy park with his girlfriend. It was an accident. Stupid. Stupid kid on a bike with a stupid gun.

GARY: It's what Dan wanted. His ashes in the Pacific. You probably don't remember.

GLORIA: I do remember.

Dad? If you find me O D'd like that, dead on a bed or in an alley, burn me. Don't bury the body, burn it up and throw it into the ocean.

GARY: (Taking the ashes) Will you come?

GLORIA: No.

There's one right there, the meaningful moment, the moment of going out the door, alone with the ashes, moments ago.

GLORIA: I don't hear from you, Gary, I'll call the police.

In Autumnal morning light.

5.

GARY: (I crossed the street and sat down in the park. I'm carrying my Danny Boy in the box. I thought, Jesus Christ, a little peace before Marcia comes. And then a girl approaches me.)

Her name is Juana.

JUANA: Hi.

GARY: Hello. (I was startled.)

JUANA: Can I ask you something?

GARY: Yes?

JUANA: Will you go to heaven or hell?

GARY: When you die?

JUANA: When you die. I'm talking about you.

GARY: Me?

JUANA: You.

GARY: I'm trying to be here now.

JUANA: No, I mean when you die.

GARY: I don't believe in that. (Her eyes were big and brown and strong.)

JUANA: What about the commandments? You believe in the commandments? You obey the commandments?

GARY: Do you?

JUANA: Because if God asked you today?

GARY: Why would he ask me?

JUANA: What would you say?

GARY: God talks to people?

JUANA: If he was judging you?

GARY: Me, personally?

JUANA: Hi, I'm Juana.

GARY: (She held out her hand. I liked her. I thought, I'm not lost, this has meaning. She was sexy in that unavailable way. She was sexy because she was unavailable. Tight. High energy. I took her hand. It was cold.)
Why'd you pick me?

JUANA: I like to ask people.

GARY: What do you ask?

JUANA: Are you a Christian?

GARY: No, I'm not.

JUANA: Do you believe in the commandments?

GARY: I believe they exist, yes.

JUANA: Do you obey the commandments?

GARY: I can't obey the commandments. Can you obey the commandments?

JUANA: Yes. Because I believe in eternal life.

GARY: You do?

JUANA: Yes.

The ashes, Gary, the ashes.

GARY: You see this here?

JUANA: What is that?

GARY: This is my dead son, Danny Boy. These are his ashes, right here.

JUANA: Oh!

GARY: This is my boy.

JUANA: No, those are his ashes.

GARY: (Pretty quick right there.)

JUANA: I'm sorry for your loss.

GARY: His name was Dan. He was shot in the park while he was talking to his girlfriend.

JUANA: I'm sorry, now he is with God.

GARY: (I couldn't quite hear that.) So where is he now? Where is Dan?

JUANA: He is with God.

Where is God?

GARY: So where is God?

JUANA: In eternity.

GARY: Eternal life must be in the present.

How could it be otherwise?

GARY: How could it be otherwise? It must be the present everlasting. I guess that makes sense. I don't know.

JUANA: You will be judged. Now and in the future.

GARY: Judged? (It's late. It's much too late for me. I'm going to hell in a hand-basket.)

JUANA: What are you doing with his ashes?

GARY: I'm going to throw them into the Pacific Ocean.

JUANA: Are you not a Christian?

GARY: No. I said before -- no.

JUANA: It doesn't matter -- he should be buried with Christian rites, if you are a Christian.

GARY: I told you, I'm not a Christian, and he had a funeral. He had a proper funeral.

JUANA: Do you want revenge?

GARY: Yes. Some kid on a bike.

JUANA: I work for the church. Grace Immaculate, right over there.

GARY: (I felt afraid suddenly.) Why me? Why did you pick me?

JUANA: I saw you.

GARY: Did you see me come into the park and sit down? With my box? With my dead boy? Did you watch me fall apart, and pull myself together?

JUANA: No.

GARY: Did you see me pretend to pull myself together?

JUANA: No, no. I did not. I saw you: Jesus is watching, and you will be judged.

GARY: Now?

JUANA: Now and when you die.

GARY: Right now? (This is serious. This girl is very much alive. I looked at her mouth, those wonderful teeth and red tongue, and lips, while I'm looking into those big brown eyes – no, gray, gray eyes, sad eyes, certain eyes, eyes untroubled by doubt -- I'm lost, lost, and my heart aches -- and then she touches my arm as if to say --)

JUANA: It's all right.

GARY: (The sky is gray and her eyes are gray. I fear for my personal honor. I am in the present. We are blocked from each other by her agenda, by the words, by my frailty, by the darkening sky.)

JUANA: Do you believe?

By her beliefs.

GARY: No, I do not.

JUANA: Will you go to Heaven or Hell?

To Hell.

JUANA: I'm talking about you. Do you obey the commandments?

GARY: I told you, No. Do you?

JUANA: Yes. I try. God willing, I try.

She has a list. She's going over her list.

JUANA: Because you will be judged on the Day of Judgment.

It 's getting cold.

JUANA: On that Day, on the Day of Judgment, will you go to Heaven or Hell?

GARY: I don't know, to be honest with you.

JUANA: Thank you very much.

You're welcome.

GARY: Uh, here comes a friend of mine.

My second ex-wife.

JUANA: I won't take anymore of your time. God be with you.

GARY: Thanks, I appreciate it.

JUANA: He can appear at any moment, Sir.

GARY: Thank you.

JUANA: So watch out for Him. *(Exits)*

Okay.

6.

(Enter MARCIA)

MARCIA: Hi.

Marcia, Gary's second wife and mother of his two daughters.

GARY: Aaah!

MARCIA: Come on, Gary.

GARY: You startled me.

MARCIA: You're faking it. Who was that?

GARY: That was Juana.

MARCIA: What did she want?

GARY: “Are you a Christian? Do you obey the commandments?” At first, I thought I had been chosen.

MARCIA: For what?

GARY: As a candidate for redemption.

MARCIA: No. It’s called witnessing. She has to do that.

GARY: At random?

MARCIA: Yes. For her church.

GARY: Oh. God. I thought –

MARCIA: You thought she chose you.

GARY: Yes, I did. I sat down on the bench here and she came right for me.

MARCIA: Because of your obvious spiritual attainments.

GARY: Yes.

MARCIA: When actually you looked like a mark.

GARY: Exactly.

MARCIA: I’m sorry to have to say that.

GARY: No, no.

MARCIA: An easy touch for her.

GARY: Which is what I am.

MARCIA: But don’t start now.

GARY: A mark on a bench.

MARCIA: Pitying yourself.

GARY: Harmless old geezer, go talk to him.

MARCIA: Gary.

GARY: You can obviously dominate him.

MARCIA: What time is it?

GARY: Sell him a soul.

MARCIA: Your students loved you and looked up to you.

GARY: She never heard a word I said.

MARCIA: You should teach. You should get back on your feet and teach again, Gary.

GARY: True, I should. How are my girls?

MARCIA: They're fine. They're at my mother's.

GARY: When can I see them?

MARCIA: When you get past all this, Gary, with Danny Boy. Can I look in your bag?

GARY: I'm not carrying anything.

MARCIA: I'll look anyway.

GARY: Look. (She examines the pack briefly.)

MARCIA: Is that him? In the box?

GARY: Yes.

MARCIA: Are you taking him to the ocean?

GARY: Yes, I'm taking him to the ocean, which is how he wanted it.

A silence as she doesn't sit down.

MARCIA: I guess they still don't know who did it.

GARY: No, they don't.

MARCIA: How are your eyes?

My eyes?

GARY: I can see out of my right eye.

MARCIA: What about your left eye?

GARY: I lost the health insurance.

MARCIA: Gary!

GARY: What?

MARCIA: It's your eyes!

GARY: I can see out of my right eye.

MARCIA: Get the other cataract removed!

GARY: It's not a cataract. It's macular degeneration.

MARCIA: Whatever it is!

GARY: I lost my health insurance.

MARCIA: Gary!

That's as far as he can go at the moment, socially speaking, alas.

MARCIA: Gary? Do you know where you're going?

GARY: I thought probably up around Vernon's place, if that's all right.

MARCIA: Vernon 's expecting you. He'll be looking for you. When will you get there?

GARY: I don't know.

MARCIA: That's no good, Gary.

GARY: I don't know how long it will take to walk there.

MARCIA: I'll be at my mother's with the girls.

MARCIA: What about Gloria?

GARY: She's coming later.

MARCIA: That's good. So, good luck with it.

Goodbye, Danny.

MARCIA: I'm sorry. That's all I can say.

GARY: Okay, good.

MARCIA: I'll see you later, Gary.

GARY: Okay. (She exits)

You didn't tell her how you were going to throw yourself into the ocean after the ashes, Gar'.

Missed an opportunity there. A little attention, a little pity.

GARY: Bye, Marcia, I'll see you at Vernon's!

Too late now.

7.

So. We started walking to the sea.

GARY: It was the teeth that reminded me, those good teeth, teeth that had been taken care of, good middle-class American teeth.

Reminded you of what, Gary?

GARY: I'm talking about Juana, the missionary, the evangelist. Because I don't have half my own bloody teeth. Why? Because I didn't brush my teeth.

Oh, no. Why is that Gary?

GARY: Because I didn't have no stinking toothbrush.

Poor Gary!

And you ate a lot of candy, am I right?

GARY: I ate a lot of candy.

That you stole.

GARY: That I stole.

This toothless motherfucker was a teacher of acting.

Really?

Oh, yes.

No kidding.

GARY: Definitely. I am a teacher of acting.

Then -- What is his objective? What is the through-line here?

He wants to find the killer of his son, am I right?

Yes. Kid on a bike with a gun.

Kid with no name and a gun.

And?

Basically, he also wants to pay. He wants to pay because he's ashamed of his weaknesses.

He wants to pay plenty and as fast as he can.

Because he is loathsome to himself.

This is a sickness of many alcoholics and drug addicts.

And he ate all that candy in his youth.

And never brushed his teeth.

And envied, and lusted.

And despaired.

And acts the way he does with the back-pack.

And feels sorry for himself.

So that's why he wants to kill this unknown kid.

Because he is revolted by human life, basically, in essence, for the most part, unfortunately, like he can't even stand any proximity to others.

So he walks the streets, a homeless beggar, with a box full of ashes, that are his dead son, Dan.

Hating mankind and himself.

Being himself a human being, having to eat and shit and eat shit and all of the rest of it, that you don't want to hear about, and who could blame you.

Because what is man but the destroyer of species?

And meanwhile we listen to massive war crimes committed for our personal protection.

And against us, against us.

Absolutely stupendous criminality or evil.

So, so, so.

Is it the human fucking condition?

Or what?

And then he will throw his boy's ashes into the wind.

No doubt.

But you must speak up, Gary.

It's on you. It's on you, my friend.

8.

GARY: Somebody tell me what to say. Somebody tell me what to do. Somebody tell me how to act.

I gave you every opportunity. But you could never get the behavior. It's the behavior. You don't pause when an action is required. And people have to understand your motivation.

GARY: So you have to have an objective.

But you go into trances. Your behavior 's not right. Right action. Right behavior. And thus the ability to speak. But speech has nothing to do with the camera, which is movement. Dialogue has nothing to do with the camera, which is the light and shadow of the world.

GARY: And the face, right?

That is how love is manifested, my friend, resting upon the face, lightly, like the touch of God, the light, as it shines through the camera. But not your face. Your face did not take the light, my friend.

Because light bounces off his eyes.

GARY: What is this thing with the camera? What is a camera? What happens with a camera?

Something happens with the light.

GARY: What? What happens?

An exposure.

GARY: Yes? And?

Well, there's a plate, and there's a coating on it, a chemical, light sensitive. A light – a sensitive chemical process occurs.

GARY: I feel frightened all of a sudden.

Take a breath.

Here is the L.A. river. Did you know? There are caves down there by the river.

Did you know?

You could live there. People do it. They live their days away in caves. You could meditate in your cave and destroy illusion forever. Like Milarepa. He turned green. Green man in a cave, formerly an actor.

GARY: This is fun. But I forgot something.

So there's some material to meditate on in your cave. The story of love, the story of light.

GARY: Why was I frightened? Thoughts of freezing darkness, of absence. No love, no light. That must be it.

Yes.

Endless, meaningless cold and dark. Although there is a sun. It is cold and dark. Outside the atmosphere. In space.

Yes.

GARY: That's what I'm saying. It has to fall on something, the light. It has no meaning unless it falls on something, corresponds to something, interacts with something.

What is it – a photo, what is a photo – it is a trace, a tracing of the light?

No, no.

Yes. A trace. Something that happened. In time. Yes.

GARY: Maybe there's a shot of my boy? At that moment? In the park? Who knows? Maybe Vernon has it? What do you think?

I don't think so.

Well, we don't know.

We were talking about the process, Gary, of photography.

GARY: Right. I was only thinking....

9.

Home Depot.

GARY: There it is.

Yes?

GARY: I wonder: Do I have a right to buy things here? Look at the wood, examine the grain? Find a screw? A hinge? A frame?

Shows a lot of self-esteem, Gar'.

GARY: I hear you.

Remember. You're an American. You're entitled.

GARY: Of course. People are concerned about their homes.

And you have no home. What sorrow!

And the cause? What was the cause? Was it self-destructiveness?

GARY: Yes. I think it was.

Self-sabotage?

GARY: I think so.

Like not being able to complete an application?

GARY: No, it wasn't that.

Or was it Fate?

GARY: I think it was Fate.

But you just said.

GARY: Because it was meant to be. It is not a question of psychology, of motive, of unconscious wishing, or not.

It is Tragic.

GARY: I said, Stay out of the way and let it come to you. It's already written. It is written. You don't need to re-write the text.

But I have to DO something.

GARY: That's not acting.

He wanted to get up behind her butt. Basically. While he talked about listening. He himself didn't hear anything. His head was like a chiming bell. It was his dick calling. The sky was darkening on the rooftops of West Hollywood, over the tired trees. Sickened birds sang from the branches. He smelled fumes in the air. He smoked and looked away. Try and remember this, he thought, it is your actual life. And then he fled down the stairs, knees weak, like a thief without the goods, exposed.

GARY: Now, I can never go back there again.

Self-pity. It feels like genuine sorrow.

You can't mess around with the students, Gary.

GARY: I realize that.

An armless man passes by under a street lamp. / What time is it? You got the time? / The man disappears down the ramp. He had two sticks for arms, a cigarette dangled from his lips.

GARY: Who was that?

That was nobody.

GARY: Who was that?

We'll never know his name, the fucking jerk.

He's a Veteran of the War.

GARY: It was the War.

He was your conscience, Gary.

GARY: Oh, shit. The mechanism, the mechanism. Of lying.

Evil lying!

Forget it. Move on.

GARY: But that's the question, isn't it? Isn't that the question?

Forget the war, Gary. Walk on.

10.

(The L.A. River)

GARY: Look. There's no water in the river.

What's that?

GARY: I say, there's no water in the river.

Sit down, Gary.

GARY: What?

Sit down. (GARY sits) Good.

GARY: Okay. What you want?

What's in the back-pack, Gary?

GARY: Why?

What's in the pack?

GARY: No, no.

This will help you to talk, to organize your thoughts. Okay?

What's in the pack, Gary?

GARY: Okay. Blanket.

Right.

GARY: Foam mattress.

Right. Foam mattress.

Water bottle.

GARY: Water bottle.

Socks.

GARY: Socks.

Go on, Gary.

GARY: Bags.

Right. What kind of bags, Gary?

GARY: Black. Plastic.

What else?

GARY: I'm going to kill somebody.

Anyone?

GARY: I don't know. Kid on a bike. Vernon?

Not Vernon.

GARY: Maybe. I'm going to kill somebody.

Demented, Gary.

GARY: And I blame her!

Who?

GARY: It was my knife!

Wife?

GARY: No! Knife! And now I have no protection! And I can't open things! Which is terrible! Because I have a hard time with that!

He's not allowed to carry knives, or weapons of any kind.

He can't deal with plastic. There is a plastic shield over everything you buy and he can't deal with it. He can't open things. His fingers are inept. He goes into a trance of frustration, staring at the product.

GARY: THEY TOOK MY FUCKING KNIFE.

Gary?

GARY: What? What?

He's annoyed.

What else is in the pack, Gary?

GARY: Ashes.

And what will you do with them? Will you distribute them?

GARY: Yes. Like I said.

Good.

GARY: And one more thing, thank you. *(Pause)* A camera. The most important thing of all.

Oh. Take a picture, Gary. Take a picture of the river.

GARY: I will. Thanks for the inventory. *(Snaps a photo.)*

It was for them, Gary.

They walk.

11.

Drugs, was it? Your boy, Daniel? Your pride and joy? He take drugs? Your son? Your bio-boy, your gene-o-flake, your product? Dan-oh—he take drugs? He like to chip off the ol' block, did he? He like the occasional? He do the dope, shoot the vein, pop the pill, Gar', the American Way?

GARY: Ah, shut up!

Is that why he died, Gar', on the old rack, the ol' junkie vale, Gar', the way of trash, the dope-fiend, Gar' – or did he drink?

GARY: He did not drink, I can tell you that.

Good, Gary.

GARY: He was not a drinker.

Good.

GARY: Not my Daniel.

Glad to hear it, Gary, because I'll tell you what.

GARY: What?

The boy was shot.

GARY: I know he was shot.

Shot down in his tracks while he was standing in the park talking to his girlfriend.

GARY: I know all that.

At random, Gary. A ride-by on a bike.

GARY: That's what they say.

But is it true?

I told you already -- I don't know that.

Then tell us your thoughts, Gary? Do you have thoughts?

GARY: I told you I was going to kill that kid. Now I don't know what to do. *(Weeps)* BUNCH OF SCUM-SUCKING ASSHOLES!

You should know Gary, because you're a junkie, you're an alcoholic, you're a dope fiend yourself, and now you're on the way to the shithouse, aren't you?

GARY: Yes, yes, yes. I'm headed straight for the shithouse.

Because what are we, after all, Gary? What are we?

GARY: I don't know about you, Pal.

Yes?

GARY: I don't know about you, but I am a Man. *(Weeps)*

Okay, good. Can I say something else now? Gary?

GARY: Go ahead.

People have feelings. It's easy to hurt their feelings. People are sensitive. And so am I. I'm sensitive, too. Even though you may not think so.

GARY: Hurry up, because I have to go now.

Where to, Gary? The shithouse? Are you on your way to the shithouse in a hurry?

GARY: Yes. I told you where I'm headed, which is the Pacific Ocean, and that's all I'm going to say about it.

Good. I was going to tell you why, Gar'.

GARY: Go ahead.

Because we are flakes of nothingness itself, Gary. And yet we get in the way. Do you see that?

GARY: Well, I don't know what you're talking about, actually.

And people are mean. You must see that. They are mean and they are noisy and they get in the way and they are everywhere you look, and that is why, Gary. On the road and in the alley, on the street and on the path, you got people in the way, little flakes of nothingness clogging up the system.

GARY: And? So?

So soon as childhood is over they start taking drugs and drinking.

GARY: Why? Why?

I just told you why, Gary. It's the human situation. Sit down. Rest. Look at the river.

GARY: No. Ain't nothin' in the river.

You could throw Danny's ashes into the river. There's a thought.

GARY: No, I don't think so.

Which will flow thereafter into the sea.

GARY: No.

Why not?

GARY: There is no water in the river.

12.

(Flashback)

GARY: Gloria?

GLORIA: Were you going to say something?

GARY: I was, yes.

GLORIA: What was it?

GARY: Man outside.

GLORIA: Where?

GARY: He was looking at me.

GLORIA: What Man?

GARY: You didn't see him?

GLORIA: No. Where?

GARY: He had no home, apparently.

GLORIA: You wonder how that happens. What it is inside a man.

GARY: I think I know. You start expecting the worst. Friends don't call. You start imagining things. Afraid of rejection. Stop talking to people. Lose your rights.

GLORIA: You let them take your rights away.

GARY: No one takes them away from you. You just lose them. They slip away, gradually. Slowly. You notice, but you can't do anything. You notice it, slipping away.

GLORIA: Yes. The antidote to that is Work. You need to work, Gary. It's work. Work gives you the right. To call your friends, say Hello.

GARY: People running around, they don't know what they're doing, chasing after relief, ecstasy, oblivion. You see them in cars. Guys. It's the young, mainly. The old are hid away, in rooms.

GLORIA: Guys. Where are the girls?

GARY: I don't know where the girls are. We're talking six o'clock in the morning here.

GLORIA: They're home. They're safe. They're warm. I'm glad. They'll wake up, they'll have coffee and toast. It's so nice.

GARY: Coffee. Toast.

GLORIA: It's so nice. I'm tired of fighting.

GARY: So am I, Gloria.

GLORIA: You see Danny, tell him to check in with his Mom. Come over for coffee.

13.

People who fall into destitution.

Yes?

Would you say they were deformed?

They're alcoholics, mainly, or schizophrenics. Because the government threw them out into the street.

I'm talking about Gary, actually. What would you say?

Deformed?

Yes, deformed by the competition!

Gary?

Men! I'm convinced of it. The competition, relentless, unforgiving, egoistic, deforming!

Gary too, eh?

Of course, Gary! Especially Gary!

I think it is insecurity.

They can't share a thought these guys, let alone a dollar! Can't leave it alone for a minute! Can't go to a meeting and come out intact! With all one's faculties! All one's self-respect! Because they have to compete! Every single minute!

GARY: Calm down, you're in front of strangers. I have been meaning to ask you, or somebody.

What?

GARY: Does film, i.e., cinema, give meaning? Is a movie reality?

What does that have to do with anything?

GARY: Because I always thought, you know, that truth was within, you know, that reality was reality and, you know.

What?

GARY: A movie was a movie.

And?

GARY: Now I'm not so sure. But this is a really big question, don't you think?

No, I don't.

GARY: Because maybe there's a real limit to experience itself and a movie gets you up there, you know, as a more meaningful experience in reality. What do you think?

I don't know.

I don't care. Does this have to do with Danny Boy?

GARY: And the alternative to that is...well...God. Redemption is not going to come from a movie, right? Salvation is not going to come from a movie. Not even *catharsis* can come from a movie, I don't think. What do you think?

I don't know.

I don't care. Does this have to do with video cameras? Or are you ranting?

GARY: Not *catharsis*. Maybe *pathos*. Because you have to experience living time. Don't you think? That is, awe, pity and terror. Don't you think? And so you need real actors there, suffering. Or at least that's what I always thought.

And now?

GARY: Now I don't know. Maybe a movie is the experience of light. We go in there and it's dark and the screen flickers and we're in the presence. People are more than people then, on the screen, and experience is more than experience. More meaningful.

He's ranting.

GARY: But now I'm not so sure.

What are you saying now?

GARY: I'm not so sure.

But what are you saying?

GARY: I don't know. There's an experience that's not a movie. But maybe somebody shot it. Maybe a movie, maybe a photo.

Who would that be?

GARY: Well, that's the question. It would have to be someone who was there, in the real world, wouldn't it?

(It would have to be, you idiot!)

GARY: Who else could it be?

Exactly. Who else could it be?

GARY: The thing is, I'm an actor, for example, and this is happening, this is really happening.

You think?

GARY: I'm terrified.

(Idiot.)

GARY: This is similar to when I realized. That I was going to sleep on the street this night.

This night?

GARY: This very night. So fuck off.

Good luck, Gary. I wish you well tonight.

GARY: Anyway, that's an exemplary moment right there. Of reality.

What happened with the movies? The cameras? The photos?

GARY: But I have my doubts. I have my doubts.

I think he's lost his mind.

14.

(Flashback. Danny and his girlfriend, in the park, before he was killed. Performed by GARY as DAN and the WOMAN CHORUS as his girlfriend.)

What should we do now?

DAN: You're so sexy I can't stand it.

Where should we go?

DAN: I'm not used to this.

Not the park?

DAN: Park's okay.

Scuzz. Car?

DAN: Car?

You see the red car?

DAN: No. L.A. I heard it's built on sand. A lot of sand. You can see it under the bushes. It's on the fault lines, which are the plates colliding. We got a river here.

I know we do.

DAN: We got quakes.

I think you're sweet. I think you're sugar.

DAN: Do you feel like this happened before?

I do, I feel that. Déjà vu. (Gunshot)

(Then he was shot. Gary's boy.)

DAN: Oh, my God.

You see the red car?

DAN: No.

Let's do it again.

DAN: Go.

What should we do now?

DAN: You're so sexy I can't stand it.

Where should we go?

DAN: I'm not used to this.

Not the park?

DAN: Park's okay.

Scuzz. You see the red car?

DAN: L.A. I heard it's built on sand. A lot of sand. You can see it under the bushes. It's on the fault lines, which are the plates colliding. We got a river here.

I know we do.

DAN: We got quakes.

Did you see the car? The red car?

DAN: No.

I think you're sweet. I think you're sugar.

DAN: Do you feel like this happened before?

I do, I feel that. (Gunshot)

(Then he was shot. Gary's boy.)

DAN: Oh, my God.

Did you see the red car?

DAN: No.

Let's do it again.

Go.

15.

Walking, walking

On we go toward Santa Monica and the sea.

GARY: I'm an American.

Congratulations.

GARY: I have rights.

You can vote?

GARY: Yes.

You have an address?

GARY: No.

Are you registered? With a name? With an address?

GARY: No.

Phone? You got a phone?

GARY: No, no.

No cell?

GARY: Not at the moment.

You're done.

GARY: You looked in my pack, remember?

Not in your pocket?

GARY: No. What now?

There's empty bottles. There's empty cans. There's cruising the floors of malls. Eyes down, shuffling along. Make a sign, stand at an exit. NEED MONEY FOR FOOD. Stand in halls, knock on doors. Check parking meters. Butts on sidewalk.

What else can he do?

He could volunteer. You could be a volunteer.

Drug counseling.

You could do drug counseling.

GARY: No.

Talk to teen-agers, talk to immigrants.

GARY: No way.

Share your experiences, provide some guidance.

Help the poor.

You could help the poor. Peel potatoes, peel the carrots. Dish out soup. Clean up the mess. Put away stuff.

DAN: What else?

You could inform the police.

Inform the police. Spy on the underclass. Who's stealing, who's dealing. Who's stalling, who's falling.

DAN: Who's shooting people in the park.

Anything else?

No.

DAN: Okay. That's it.

What should we do, then?

Walk.

GARY: Let's walk.

We're walking.

16.

(Flashback)

GARY: So, a while ago, I ran into this woman Monica on Wilshire Boulevard. This was after I was evangelized by that Juana.

This is Monica, mother of Laura, the junkie daughter who junked herself.

GARY: I was shocked to see her.

Danny Boy had found Laura dead on a bed.

GARY: Monica?

MONICA: Gary?

She's got all her goods in a baby cart.

GARY: Hey.

MONICA: Hey.

It's a stroller.

GARY: Hey, you have a place to sleep? Where do you sleep?

MONICA: I slept in my car for awhile. That was all right. Then I got lost. I went back you know, from foraging or what, and I couldn't find my car. Then I never found it.

GARY: And now? Where do you sleep now?

MONICA: I don't know what happened to it. It was in a lot. You hesitate, and then your car is gone. Do you have that? Experience?

GARY: I do, yes. It's like I lose my confidence and I don't know where I am, or I don't know what to say. I feel paralyzed.

MONICA: You hesitate. It's a glitch in the nervous system. A disconnect. Drugs and alcohol will do that, or excessive worry in the mind.

GARY: Who told you?

MONICA: My shrink. My ex-shrink.

GARY: Where do you sleep?

MONICA: There are shelters for women. I'll go to them. I'll rotate around, so they don't see my face too often, because I have an inner embarrassment. Do you have that?

GARY: I do, I definitely do.

MONICA: I thought you might.

GARY: You want to be careful. You want to stay inside.

MONICA: I have to walk.

GARY: I have to walk, too.

MONICA: You carrying that box?

GARY: This is my Danny Boy in the box.

MONICA: I burnt my Laura, too, you know. So I totally understand. We burnt up our Laura and now she's immortal. On DVD. It's strange.

GARY: Is that your stuff in the stroller? Is that all your stuff?

MONICA: Yes, plus my little bag here, my dainty little hand-bag. Got to travel light, because I walk a lot.

GARY: Me too. I walk a lot.

MONICA: I walk all over. I come to a nice neighborhood, I might sleep on a lawn. I slept on my own lawn one time. That was strange.

GARY: Well, goodbye Monica.

He doesn't know what else to say.

MONICA: Can I share an experience? It's not just all about you. Can I share?

GARY: Sure. What is it?

MONICA: About Laura. My daughter. It's a memory of her. You want to hear it?

GARY: Yes, please.

MONICA: I'm standing in the gymnasium looking out. It's a gray June day in Venice. Children are doing exercises. First and second-graders. Little girls, they look as frail as paper. My daughter – Laura – smiles at me and waves. So much special love passes between us. We appreciate each other's help in a strange world. I look out the window. Cars are going by silently. The strength of the palm trees seems so poignant. They stand up straight. They hold the ground. I think: It's a good thing we can take our kids to school. What a marvelous achievement of man: a civilization, with schools! And now there's terror. I think that 's a shame. And I think: This moment can never be repeated. We can see, but it's no more than a flicker, no more than a burst of light, a coming to, and then...what? *(Pause)* Bye.

GARY: Bye, Monica.

17.

(Enter ANTONIO)

ANTONIO: Hey.

Hey.

GARY: Hey.

ANTONIO: No water in river. You could stroll right across, end up downtown. And then? Eat some garbage.

GARY: Hey. I know you?

ANTONIO: Antonio.

GARY: Hey, you got a knife?

ANTONIO: Me? Take a look! *Mira!* Where I keep knife?

GARY: Oh.

ANTONIO: I don't need no stupid *cuchillo*.

GARY: So what do you do?

ANTONIO: I make it to daylight. Then I make it again. You?

GARY: Gary. The River?

ANTONIO: No water in river till flood-times come. Gary?

GARY: Yes?

ANTONIO: You could jump into current then and drown. Me? I live on urban edge. Me? I live under river. Land shakes and you could fall into crack.

GARY: Hey. I know.

ANTONIO: Pictures are nice. The sky-line. Aspiring architecture. Rising up. There's moon. And satellites.

GARY: You got a bike?

ANTONIO: Me? No, no bike.

GARY: What happened to your bike?

ANTONIO: I never had bike.

GARY: Where do you sleep?

ANTONIO: I don't need no fucking bike.

GARY: You sleep under the river?

ANTONIO: I sleep in box.

GARY: Under the river?

ANTONIO: No, fool! Where you think? I sleep on bench!

GARY: Sorry, I thought you said box.

ANTONIO: Bench! Many peoples sleep on bench!

GARY: Okay.

ANTONIO: *Tonto!* You see them, they old, confused, *estan confudidos, viejos, locos, borrachos.*

GARY: What's that?

ANTONIO: Crazy people, drunks. They not know where they are, them. Look up sky. Nothing behind eyes. Is it photo, cinema? *Que es esto?* Trees, sky. He hears something. *El sonido del muerto.* The death rattle. I want to lay down, I say Move over, excremento! He scrunches to edge. I

give him kick. *Una patada*. He falls off bench. Some dog come, take him to morgue, now I can sleep. *Asi es*.

GARY: Thank you. (*Trembles*)

ANTONIO: What's the trouble? What's the matter? He's shaking, him.

He sees something.

GARY: Oh, my God.

ANTONIO: *Que paso?*

GARY: MAN! (*Light flash*) YOU SEE THE MAN? HE'S LOOKING AT ME! (*GARY pivots*) Ahhh!

ANTONIO: What happened, you?

GARY: Is he gone?

ANTONIO: *Quien es?*

GARY: Man. You see the Man?

ANTONIO: *No miro him. Nada.*

GARY: He spoke. You didn't hear him?

ANTONIO: *No. Que dijo?*

GARY: He said, "Turn your face away!"

ANTONIO: Me no hear nothing. *Nada.*

GARY: Okay.

ANTONIO: You want to lie down?

GARY: No, no, *estoy bien.*

ANTONIO: You look sick.

GARY: I'm fine.

ANTONIO: You feel bad?

GARY: *Si.*

ANTONIO: (*Este es un momento aqui, una momento de mirar, the Look, un Hombre Pasamando, **Man** passing by.*) Why, *Amigo*? Tell me why.

GARY: My pride. I feel my pride.

ANTONIO: *Asi es.*

GARY: Fuck off.

ANTONIO: Hey. You feel insulted?

GARY: No.

ANTONIO: You feel wrong?

GARY: Yes.

ANTONIO: You feel like world's too harsh?

GARY: Yes, I do. Yes.

ANTONIO: *Yo tambien.*

The world's a horrible place.

GARY: Hey. You kill people?

ANTONIO: I cut throats.

GARY: Step back.

ANTONIO: I drown people. *Asi es.*

GARY: God.

ANTONIO: Or I hang them.

GARY: Oh, my God.

ANTONIO: It depends. *Eso depende!* Okay?

GARY: So what's going to happen?

ANTONIO: *Vamos a ver!* You could get hit in head. You could fall down. You could get sick. You could get old and can't run.

GARY: Wait! Kid on a bike?

ANTONIO: You could get stabbed. Eyes gouged. Guts torn out. *Quien sabe?* (Exits)

GARY: Hey! You said! Come back!

ANTONIO: (*Returning*) No kid on bike for you, *Gringo*. Must be photo, cinema, eh? Kid on bike, but not for you. Is red car, boy in red car. Listen to me, I am the Angel of Death.

(*Suddenly, he transforms, into:*)

An old man, bent over, sneaking home to his hovel, ashamed but defiant, an angry specter of things to come, stooped, plastic bag in shopping cart, as first light starts creeping over concrete -- starvation and madness.

He screams at retreating night. No sound. Fade to grey of city.

18.

GARY: Kid on a bike?

No, no. That's not him.

GARY: You see him?

No, that was a grown man, an old man -- he had his entire home on his bike, including a boom box, and a cigarette in his mouth.

GARY: Old man had it figured out. Where to go, where to sleep. Boom box. Smokes. But where did he plug in? *(Pause)* Batteries. Got to have batteries. Keep an eye on that. Batteries and cigarettes, and take care of your bike, and you're cool. Fight for your bike. Fight for your smokes.

So it's awful.

GARY: You have to have a plan, and a schedule, and a list. And a knife. And a budget. Make sure of the batteries and the smokes, and your bed-roll, and your life's all right. And he's got his regular alleys where he goes. He can ride there on his bike. So he's cool. He's got his basics.

Fire's gone out and we have to go.

GARY: Where to?

It's cold and rain and fire's gone out.

GARY: Then you have to have certain other things. Like an umbrella. You got to have an umbrella. And a knife. And he's got his bike. So he's fine. I didn't see an umbrella, but I'm sure he's got one.

Who cares? Who cares if he has an umbrella?

I care, because I don't want my head to get wet.

GARY: I'm tired of talking about this. I don't give a damn about this guy on the bike. This homeless jerk. The hell with him. He's not the kid on the bike. And I just want to get away from people altogether.

Let's go.

GARY: From competition of any kind. Space, food, sex. I don't want any competition or company. Because company equals competition.

Go sit in a cave, like Milarepa, like was mentioned.

GARY: Why not? I think people are the problem. You know, what are they? They're like advanced worms or slugs, with skulls, with brains. That's all. With cars.

Let's go.

GARY: I don't want them coming near me. And then when they die, the so-called brains get eaten up by worms and bugs.

We must get out of the rain, my friend.

GARY: I'm not your friend. We're not friends. There is no such thing as friendship. Not anymore. There are no friends. There are only transactions. Didn't you know? I'm sorry. But that's the way it is. There are only commercials, and commercial events. There is only competition. And there are too many people in the world, and that's it.

Okay. I'm just saying.

GARY: A reason for homelessness. To get away from people. But you still have to go to the store. For batteries, for smokes. That's all I'm saying. Where are we?

We're in Santa Monica, Gary, land of the homeless.

GARY: That's what I thought.

Watch out.

GARY: And what did he mean? Antonio? About the cinema, the photo and the light?

Be careful.

19.

Gary can see the Pacific ocean. It looks dirty, with black strings of crap in it, and goop.

He remembers when he had his own bathroom.

GARY: I'm so frightened I can't breathe.

He is frightened of destitution.

Then he sees another man, another homeless person.

His name is Bob.

BOB: You coming here to lay down?

GARY: No, I'm not.

BOB: Keep moving, Pal.

GARY: I intend to, that's what I intend to do, Sir.

BOB: So, move.

GARY: I'm moving.

BOB: No, you're not. Move. Get the fuck out of my space.

GARY: It's not your space.

Don't argue, Gary.

GARY: You don't own it.

Let's move on, Gary. (Dog growls)

GARY: Is that your dog?

BOB: That's my dog.

Let's go, Gary.

GARY: I was going to use the facilities. *(Dog growls)*

Uh, oh. Maybe not.

GARY: That's okay. I'll wait.

BOB: Weapon?

GARY: Excuse me?

BOB: Do you have a weapon?

GARY: Me? No, no weapons.

BOB: Not in your pack there?

GARY: No.

BOB: Hidden under all that shit in there? (*Rummaging*) What's this?

GARY: That's a camera.

BOB: You don't look like a tourist.

GARY: No.

BOB: You look like one of us.

GART: Right.

BOB: What's this?

GARY: That's a box.

BOB: Me, I need money for the bus.

GARY: The bus?

BOB: To San Jose. To see my mother.

GARY: I have no money.

BOB: No money.

GARY: No money.

BOB: Give me something from your pack.

GARY: What?

BOB: Give me something from your pack.

GARY: I don't have anything.

BOB: Give me the camera, or I'll cut your face off. (*Flashes a switchblade*) with this.

Switch.

GARY: I can't give you the camera.

BOB: Give me the camera.

GARY: My son's pictures are on there.

BOB: The box. Pretty box.

GARY: It's an urn.

BOB: What's in it?

GARY: Ashes.

BOB: Ashes?

Not Danny Boy, Gar'.

GARY: My son's ashes. Actually, it's my son.

BOB: Your son?

GARY: Yes.

BOB: Your son's ashes?

GARY: Yes.

BOB: What are you doing with his ashes?

GARY: I'm going to sprinkle them into the ocean.

BOB: What?

GARY: I'm going to sprinkle them into the ocean.

BOB: Why do that?

GARY: It's what he would wish.

BOB: You don't know that, what he would wish. It's what you want, it's what you would wish.

GARY: Yes, you're right.

BOB: So I don't think so. I don't think you should sprinkle any ashes in there.

GARY: I see what you mean.

BOB: We don't need any more pollution in the waters.

GARY: No.

BOB: No more shit in the water.

GARY: No.

BOB: No more ashes.

GARY: No.

BOB: No more dead bodies.

GARY: No. I'll go now.

BOB: In Santa Monica Bay.

GARY: I won't do it now.

BOB: Floating on the tide.

GARY: Right.

BOB: Don't do it. Go away.

GARY: I'm going.

BOB: I'm watching.

GARY: Okay, bye.

BOB: Bye, bye.

GARY: Bye,

Bye, now.

BOB: Go on.

GARY: Bye.

Gary is paralyzed.

GARY: I can't move.

BOB: I'll count to three. That's one.

GARY: Fuck you.

BOB: That's two.

Say goodbye, Gary.

BOB: That's two again.

He's a schizo, Gary. (Dog growls)

GARY: Okay, I'm leaving.

BOB: Get your filthy ass out of here.

Say thank you and goodbye, Gar'.

GARY: Thank you and goodbye.

BOB: That's three.

GARY: Go fuck yourself! *(Enter VERNON, in the back.)*

VERNON: *(Off)* Go away, Bob, or I'll call the cops!

BOB: Fuck off, Vernon!

VERNON: *(Off)* I'll call them right now, Bob!

BOB: Oh, drop dead you stupid Okey!

VERNON: *(Onstage)* You see this? It's a phone, Bob!

BOB: I know it's a phone! I know what a phone is!

VERNON: I'll count to one!

BOB: *(Of VERNON)* You know this guy?

GARY: Yes.

VERNON: ONE!

BOB: *(To GARY)* You're saved, motherfucker. But if I catch you around here I'll sic my dog on you, okay? Then I'll cut you up and feed you to him. Okay? Get it? *(Exits)*

VERNON: Gary!

GARY: That you, Vernon?

VERNON: It's me, Gary.

GARY: You know him?

VERNON: That was Bob.

Bob. Only a human could act like that.

VERNON: He used to be a grip, and then he lost it, ha, ha, he lost his grip, To drink. Now he lives on Ocean Avenue, under a tree.

GARY: With his dog.

VERNON: With his dog.

GARY: Scary dog.

VERNON: I'm out here running. That's how I ran into you.

GARY: Oh. Lucky me.

VERNON: People get killed out here, Gary. Innocent people are murdered every day.

Weird beasts I would say. Hairy and unclean.

VERNON: A man needs a roof over his head. You need shelter, you need refuge.

GARY: You still taking pictures?

He feels paralyzed again because of gratitude and hostility. Blended.

VERNON: What? (*Silence*) It's totally dangerous, Gary. Go ahead, ask me something.

GARY: Your camera?

VERNON: I take pictures. Up and down the beach.

GARY: You know what it's like? Living on the street? Living rough?

VERNON: Yes. It's isolation. You get isolated, and lose your significance. It's for drunks and schizophrenics, Gary. People who walk all night and sleep on the sidewalk. I been there. Long time ago, lived on the street. Glendora, LaVerne, out around there. Is that Danny Boy? In the box? Okay, come on. We'll go over to my house. We'll take a shower. We'll have a meal. We'll talk. It's me, Vernon. We live on the beach, two miles up there, in the Palisades. Great view. We wake up. I smoke a joint. We look out at the ocean. All my life I dreamt of this. And now, you know?

GARY: Vernon and Marcia.

VERNON: Right. It's great. I grew up in Glendora, remember? No ocean there. There's nothing in Glendora. But I figured I could do those stupid beer commercials.

GARY: Johnny B. was a student of mine. You know? I taught the son of a bitch timing, how not to slobber on the audience. And Todd?

VERNON: I haven't seen Todd lately. He checks himself into rehab, two, three times a year.

GARY: I'll call Johnny B.

VERNON: No, don't call him. And don't call Todd.

GARY: He's a movie star now, Johnny B.

VERNON: I got to run. Twice a day I run. So I'll run up to the house ahead of you?

GARY: Okay.

VERNON: I'll tell Marcia I saw you.

GARY: Sure.

VERNON: She'll be asking. Ashes in a box?

GARY: That's an urn.

VERNON: I see.

GARY: Go. Run.

VERNON: I changed my mind. I'm not going to run anymore. Just come on over. Come on to my house. Marcia 's on her way.

GARY: Thank you.

VERNON: You're welcome. There's a guest house in the back. You can wait there if you want.

GARY: In the back?

VERNON: In the back.

GARY: Thank you.

VERNON: So I'll try to run for a few minutes

GARY: Thanks a lot.

VERNON: You don't have to keep thanking me. I'll run up ahead of you and open up.

20.

Give us one more impression, if you will, Gary, of your accidentally murdered boy.

GARY: He was an L.A. kid, he had a sense of foody air and dusty land, of palm trees bending down and watery canals and a surfy beach. Rainy winters with misty windshields and shiny lights and trains in the sky over the 405.

Good, Gary.

GARY: And acting classes and girlfriends.

I'm sorry.

GARY: A sense of the 21st Century glittering in the night. He loved it. Didn't weigh as much as a snapshot, which is about all it weighed, just a click.

What's that, Gary?

GARY: Just a moment there, in time.

(Flashback. Danny Boy.)

GARY: I'm proud of you son, I'm proud.

I ain't done nothin', Dad.

GARY: Well, you're a good kid.

I still want to be an actor, Dad.

GARY: Why?

It's a chance to be –

GARY: Your mother –

Somebody.

GARY: Your mother doesn't like the idea much.

What do you think?

GARY: It's hard. It's hard work.

I don't mind hard work.

GARY: It's a tough life. Don't do it just because I do it.

I take classes.

GARY: Classes.

Acting classes.

GARY: What for?

Didn't you?

GARY: I never took classes.

But you teach acting.

GARY: I never took classes. They're not teaching acting anyway. They're teaching writing, writing for television. Interpretation, illustration, storytelling, motivation, behavior, and so on – it's writing, not acting.

What about you?

GARY: I don't do that shit and I don't teach that shit.

Oh. Okay.

GARY: I don't do commercials and I don't do television.

Like Vernon.

GARY: Like Vernon. The jerk.

Beer commercials.

GARY: Beer commercials.

And Johnny B.

GARY: And Johnny B.

Who is a star now.

GARY: He sure is, son, God bless him.

It's not too late, Dad.

GARY: Yeah, it is. It's too late, Danny Boy.

21.

GARY: Oh, here's Vernon again.

VERNN: I decided to come back for you, so you don't get lost. Let's walk together.

They walk.

VERNON: I realized, we don't exist. Not just you, anyone. Ask me why.

GARY: Why?

VERNON: Because if you're not on TV, it's difficult to know about your existence. People have to understand the significance of that. You could know a lot about something, but unless you say it on TV, it doesn't have any meaning at all. I think there is a reason for that. Ask me the reason.

GARY: Why, Vernon?

VERNON: Because TV is permanent. You have actual footage. Thoughts are not actual. Thoughts are not permanent. Experience itself is fleeting. It's the most amazing phenomenon. That's why I don't like dreams in movies. Because movies are real.

GARY: Thanks, Vernon. (*They walk.*) You sound just like Todd.

VERNON: So? Anyway, Marcia wants me to keep an eye on you, so you don't hurt yourself or drown yourself. How's your acting?

GARY: I think I fucked up my whole career.

VERNON: Yeah, people have to know that face. Face recognition and voice recognition.

GARY: That's for commercials, Vernon. You do commercials.

VERNON: And you? What do you do?

GARY: I teach.

They walk.

GARY: You think I could have a class back there sometime?

VERNON: A class?

GARY: You know, a class.

VERNON: Back where?

GARY: At your place, in the back. In the guest house.

VERNON: What kind of class?

GARY: You know, acting.

VERNON: An acting class?

GARY: Sure.

VERNON: Back there?

GARY: You think no one will come?

VERNON: Well, who would come?

GARY: I could call a few people.

VERNON: I don't know if it's a good idea, Gary.

GARY: I could call Johnny B.

VERNON: No.

GARY: I could call Todd.

VERNON: Don't call Johnny B. And don't call Todd.

GARY: Get into acting again, get back into it. Because it's a spiritual activity, of course. Even though there's a lot of humiliation. I look at the beach, I look at the palm trees, at the light, the sunset, and I ask myself, How can I express that? What meaning does it have?

VERNON: You could take a photo.

GARY: That's not what I'm saying.

VERNON: What? What meaning can it have? None. It has no meaning, Gary. It is what it is, and that's that.

GARY: You have any photos?

VERNON: A little revenge I could understand. You lost your son and you're carrying his ashes around in a box? What meaning could that have?

GARY: No meaning.

VERNON: Say something real, Gary.

GARY: It's a search.

VERNON: What is?

GARY: It's a search. Meaning is a search.

That's why you're such a nothing asshole, Vernon, such a gut-bag of cheap chemicals.

VERNON: I'm not going to argue with you, Gary.

Just another deluded pothead, Vernon.

GARY: You didn't hear what I said – you got any photos of Danny Boy?

VERNON: Sure, I do. I got lots of 'em.

GARY: Good. Maybe I show you mine, you show me yours? When Marcia comes?

VERNON: Deal.

22.

(Enter MARCIA.)

MARCIA: What's he doing?

VERNON: He 's not doing anything. He goes over there and stands there looking and he contemplates. What, I don't know.

MARCIA: He's looking at the ocean, Vernon. Gloria is on her way.

VERNON: She's coming?

MARCIA: She decided to come. He can't see out of his left eye.

VERNON: The man had talent. He had genuine talent. It's a waste.

MARCIA: He can't see out of his left eye, Vernon.

VERNON: So what?

MARCIA: I'm just saying. And he has bruises on his arms.

VERNON: I hope it's not a disease.

MARCIA: No, no. He bangs into doors and shit. It's his balance. His balance is off. Look at that, Vernon.

VERNON: What?

MARCIA: Those people come here. On the beach?

VERNON: Yes?

MARCIA: I don't think they should be allowed on the beach. Too much crap on the beach. (*GARY rejoins them*) I was just telling Vernon, I think they're aliens, obviously.

GARY: Who's that?

MARCIA: Those people.

GARY: You mean foreigners?

MARCIA: Yes. That's right.

GARY: I can't see them.

You're blind in one eye. You almost walked off the cliff. You can't drive a car. You fell down the steps.

GARY: They look like pieces of shit.

MARCIA: It's a good thing you can see the ocean.

GARY: It's misty, though. I'm so surprised by that.

VERNON: Why?

GARY: *Merde.*

MARCIA: It's his eyes, Vernon.

VERNON: Why, Gary?

GARY: Why, what?

VERNON: Why are you surprised?

Gary is busy holding on to the ashes. Being resolute with the ashes. And breathing. The air.

GARY: Cosmic fecal matter. *(Steps aside.)* Excuse me, Vernon. Marcia. *(Steps further away.)*

VERNON: He's doing it again.

MARCIA: I don't know what's wrong with him, really.

VERNON: Some people don't have enough personality. They don't value themselves. They're like ducks, they're like fish. All they can do is blink. They can't manage. They can't have a drink and relax, sit down and throw it around, make a connection, make a deal. So it's hard. So he has no plans. It's a problem. And when is he going to deal with the ashes?

MARCIA: Maybe he's waiting for Gloria.

VERNON: He walks over to the edge and he just stands there looking out with his one eye. And he 's seen God, Marcia. He tell you about it? He's seen God and the Angel of Death, whose name is Antonio. *(Back comes Gary. VERNON steps aside.)*

MARCIA: I have to go.

GARY: A bundle of rags on the beach. They take it to the morgue and put a tag on its toe. Unknown homeless piece of shit.

MARCIA: Oh, for God's sake, Gary, have you been drinking?

GARY: No. Something about the sand and salty air. Pollution in the water. The water is polluted. When I heard that, I was a boy, I thought, I felt, this is the end of God, this is the end of childhood, this is the End. That's what I'm trying to say. And I feel grief. Because the future is short and narrow. But full of sunny days.

MARCIA: Gary?

GARY: And the end is near.

MARCIA: There'll still be sunny days and good clean air, Gary.

GARY: And I've made a lot of mistakes in my life.

MARCIA: Gary?

GARY: And I cannot escape them....Oh, I have to take a leak. (*VERNON approaches*) Excuse me. (*Walks off*)

MARCIA: He always does that. Walks away.

VERNON: You know, he's some kind of natural idiot. Some people are born with it. A missing factor. A lost genome. So they can't compete.

MARCIA: He'll hear you, Vernon.

VERNON: The Idiot. Gerard Phillipe. You see it?

MARCIA: No.

VERNON: You look at the back of people's heads, it gives you a certain perspective. It shows you something. The nature of things. It's sad. Some people cry when they hear certain songs. God bless America. America the Beautiful. They're touched. And me? I'm not touched. But I recognize the facts. The land of the free, the land of opportunity. And so on. You see thirty thousand commercial images a day in America. Uh, oh. He's coming back. Here he comes, our friend.

GARY: (*Returning*) I was trying to say. I was saying to my wife. I.e. my ex-wife. So maybe you could walk away, Vernon. (*VERNON moves away.*) Maybe I was imagining, but I thought I saw God, Marcia. Like in the Bible. In the form of a Man. "Look at me and you'll die," the Man said. "Turn your face away." And I did. I looked away. The sky was shining, Martha, shiny black, all aglow. Aflame. Flaming black. Along the L.A. river.

MARCIA: Oh, Gary.

GARY: I suppose I was hysterical.

MARCIA: I'm sorry, I have to go, pick up the children.

GARY: Say Hi for me, please.

MARCIA: I will. Gloria 's coming.

GARY: Good.

MARCIA: Take care of Danny Boy.

GARY: Okay. Bye. (*MARCIA exits*) Vernon?

VERNON: Yeah?

GARY: Can I look in your camera?

VERNON: Okay, and let me look at yours. (*They exchange cameras.*)

GARY: You got any of the park?

VERNON: I don't think I was there. (*They look into each other's cameras.*)

GARY: (*Looking into VERNON'S camera*) You seen a bike anywhere?

VERNON: No.

GARY: A red car?

VERNON: I don't remember a red car. (*Looking into GARY'S camera.*)
You got some nice ones. Such a nice kid. I'm sorry.

GARY: Kid on a bike?

VERNON: I wasn't there, Gary, remember?

Our boy straightens his back. He sighs and grimaces. It's the time of day for that sigh, that grimace. He trudges warily down the path toward the beach. When.

GARY: Antonio!

ANTONIO: Hi.

GARY: It's you!

ANTONIO: Stinking stuff coming out of ground, nobody knows what it is, a grey, sticky compound with burrs on it, it flows like soapy water. We could be facing extinction.

GARY: The question is this:

ANTONIO: *Digame.*

GARY: Black kid? On a bike?

ANTONIO: No. What I say?

GARY: Red car,

ANTONIO: *Asi es.*

GARY: What was his name?

ANTONIO: Rule.

GARY: Rule?

ANTONIO: Rulay.

GARY: Where is he now?

ANTONIO: *Quien sabe?* I think now maybe he is soldier in Iraq. He wants to serve. He wants to hide.

GARY: Why? Whe'd he do it?

ANTONIO: *Quien sabe?* Random. People are stupid and cowardly, credulous and lazy. And their impulses are random. It's random, but there's a pattern to the impulses, so they think they're in a body, in a life.

GARY: I didn't understand that.

ANTONIO: That's why you are a slave. Right there in the chaos, Gary, why you bow and scrape.

GARY: I see. Question.

ANTONIO: *Andale pues.*

GARY: Can there be reparation? For the past? For error? For the sins of pride?

Silence. Antonio shakes his head. Did he say Yes or No? Did he say Yes and No? Gary stares at the ocean. He is willing to suffer. Or is this a permanent state? Yes, it is, he whispers to himself. Antonio scrunches up his mouth:

ANTONIO: Our ancestors came here to pillage. And the gold is gone and the oil is almost gone, and there's payment due on the real estate that can never be met.

There are no answers. He says to himself. Only stories. He smiles.

ANTONIO: I'm going to kill you now.

GARY: Why?

ANTONIO: Because it makes no difference. Because you're a piece of shit and it makes no difference. And I don't like you. I'll cut your head off for you. That way you don't have to think about it. One blow, swift and clean. Or you can go for a swim and get too tired to make it back to shore. And then you drown.

GARY: That's what I'll do, then, I'll go for a swim. (*Starts*)

ANTONIO: And the ashes?

GARY: (*Stopping*) Right. I changed my mind.

ANTONIO: You no swim?

GARY: No.

ANTONIO: *Bueno*. Stand right there.

GARY: *Que dice?*

ANTONIO: Stand.

GARY: Stand?

ANTONIO: I said stand. *Parate*.

GARY: I'm standing.

ANTONIO: *Bueno*. Stand there.

GARY: I'm standing.

ANTONIO: And don't do anything.

GARY: I think I'll stand right here then.

ANTONIO: Good. *Y no digas nada*.

GARY: Okay.

ANTONIO: Don't say anything.

GARY: I won't.

ANTONIO: Be quiet. (*Long pause.*)

GARY: I feel quiet now.

ANTONIO: Who cares? *(Long pause)* I'll catch up with you later, don't worry about it.

GARY: I'm not worried.

ANTONIO: Keep quiet, please.

And let the sun burn away shame.

Man is small and made of nothing and his days on earth are few.

ANTONIO: *Bravo. Chinga su madre, y Adios.*

GARY: And fast. And pride is quicker than lightning. My face is burning.

Antonio turns and runs. He is made of nothing, an imaginary specter with hair on his legs, a jogger, elbows working the air like pistons. He is tightly wound, head bobbing, of Spanish mien, dark, with a hooked beak and glowering brow, eyes blank, muscle and bone disappearing down the beach.

24.

(Enter GLORIA)

GARY: Gloria. I'm glad to see you.

GLORIA: What happened to your tongue?

GARY: I bit it.

GLORIA: What happened?

GARY: I was looking at the sun. I got dizzy. I couldn't breathe. I fell down.

GLORIA: You fainted?

GARY: Yes.

GLORIA: You have to be careful, Gary. You have to take care of yourself.

GARY: I ran into Antonio.

GLORIA: Antonio?

GARY: You don't know him. He said something about that, too. He alluded to it. He had observed the situation.

GLORIA: What situation?

GARY: That it was pride. Sneaking in there. Quick as a flash.

GLORIA: Oh, Gary.

GARY: What?

GLORIA: You're so odd sometimes.

He laughs. It's okay.

GLORIA: It's okay. Let's say goodbye to Danny Boy.

GARY: June days, I think of high school. No, not high school. Ball. Playing ball on the field next to the high school. Long days, late nights. Summer coming, the air is warm. Breathing's good. Best days of his life for an American boy. We'd be choosing up sides for a softball game. Play in the twilight. (Pause) Are you ready?

GLORIA: I'm ready.

They look out at the darkening sea.

GARY: We'll watch the sun go down.

It goes down in Malaysia. It goes down in China. People lose their lives and they never get them back. We'll watch the red sun sinking over the Pacific as the gulls squawk and the line of cars stops.

GLORIA: Look. They don't know we're here.

She says.

As tired beggars lie down in the sand.

THE END

Murray Mednick

8/20/20

Final

