

Gary's Callback

Characters

Gary Bean

Chancey

Rondell

Rikki

Fool He is played by the same actor as The Fool in "The Fool and the Red Queen."

Chorus Voice off

Scene

A loft with large windows to the sky, three chairs, a screen for projections.

Gary Gary. Gary Bean.

Chancey Spelled B-e-a-n-e?

Gary No e at the end.

Chancey So?

Gary I'm on the list. I should be on the list. 3:30, Gary Bean.

Chancey Actor, are you?

Gary Gary Bean.

Chancey Never heard of you.

Rondell I know him. I knew his kid, Danny Boy.

Chancey Oh. Right. I forgot. You remember me?

Gary Not really.

Chancey Chancey, Chancey the cameraman.

Gary Oh. Did we meet?

Chancey We met. (*Con mucho gusto.*)

It's The Angel of Death and Major Junk-head.

Rondell He's a callback, Chancey.

Gary I'm here to audition.

Chancey For what?

Rondell The lead, Chancey.

Chancey Who's your agent?

Gary I don't have an agent.

Rondell He hasn't been working.

Gary I had one once, years ago. Todd.

Chancey Todd?

Gary Todd. When he was an agent.

Chauncey What is he now?

Gary He's a producer now.

Rondell He does performance pieces here and there.

Chauncey Todd?

Rondell No. Him, Gary. What is it, Oedipus?

Gary No, Archimedes, and another called Orestes. And I'm working on an Agamemnon.

Chauncey Greeks.

Gary Yes.

Rondell So I told him we're doing some experimental film, I asked him to come over, see what we could see. But we don't have a finished script yet.

Chauncey But we do have sides.

Rondell We have sides and a basic idea. A premise. A hook.

Gary What's the idea?

Rondell It's a protest.

Chauncey It's a love story.

Rondell It's a protest.

Chauncey It's a protest, it's a love story.

Gary What are you protesting?

Chauncey The stupidity, ignorance, arrogance, and bloodlust of mankind. How's that?

Gary That's a lot.

Chauncey And we're sorry for it.

Rondell So be nice and look up so we can see your dumb-ass eyes. Camera wants to see your eyes.

Chauncey *Look up, Gary.*

Rondell Your son? Dan? Snorted H, peoples shooting at him in the park?

Gary Yes.

Rondell *Downtown. Gunfire.*

Chauncey Nice kid. Actor son of an actor. Kid with no future. *I've survived my son.*

Rondell Here's a line, Rondell, that just came to me. "Did you come by here to die, Fool, like many do, in this time of suicidal madness and mass murder?"

Chauncey Too many M's. and S's. But go on, Chauncey.

Rondell "There's the front of the line and the back of the line. Guys in front want to go first."

Chauncey *This is insane.*

Rondell The insanity of Man. What'd you think, Gary?

Gary I thought that was good.

Rondell Good. Let's get on with the... whatever this is, the callback.

Chauncey Did you bring anything, Mr. Bean?

Gary Excuse me?

Chauncey To show us for the callback.

Rondell Of course. he has the material, performances that he does, the Greeks. Am I right?

Gary Yes.

Rondell Why don't you do one then?

Gary Now?

Rondell You need a second, Gary?

Gary Yes.

Rondell Give him a second, Chauncey.

Chauncey One second.

Rondell *Pause.*

Chauncey Time's up.

Gary Okay, should I do it from here?

Chauncey Stand up first, Mr. Bean. Good. Now take a couple of steps to the right, and one forward. Right there. Good.

Rondell And keep your eyes up. Don't look down. And don't move around. That's your spot. Stay on your spot. Okay?

Gary Okay. This is called *Orestes*.

Rondell Don't look down.

Chauncey Go. Roll camera.

We see GARY on the screen as he performs. He announces the title.

Gary *Orestes. He comes to avenge his father, he who has paid his father's dues, his rent, his charges, his indemnity—he who was the cause of her fury, his mother's fury—she who could not let go, be calm, give up, bow down, say her thanksgivings, give her blessings, she who was the murderer of his father. The Greeks knew all about it, how the husband is killed in the image of the Father, how the mother is killed for the image of the Father, and here he comes, our boy, Orestes: Bitch. Scam-sucking whore bitch.*

(As CLYTEMNESTRA) Here I am, you sniveling, cowardly son. Say hello, Say hello, Son, Sonny boy, you cowardly boy, come to kill your mother. Come to slay your mother, have you, boy?

(As ORESTES) Yes, but first I'll tear your heart out and slam you against the wall a few times. How's that? How would that be?

(As CLYTEMNESTRA) That's good, that's fine, do your worst, go ahead and rape me, too, if you want, if that's what you want.

I shall express my rage, I shall express my fury, which is not sexual, no, intimate, but not sexual, not about fornication, but revenge of the blood, revenge of blood on blood, purifying revenge, holy terror revenge, revenge by the sword.

(As himself) And then he hesitates at the door, he hesitates at the Palace door, and sees himself frothing and panting at the door, his heart hot in is chest, sweat pouring down his neck, his thought mangled in his head. He hesitates.

The Palace door. The Greek palace door. The murderous Queen is beyond the door. The Queen is beyond the door. She is a Queen after all, above him and beyond the door. He feels small, insignificant, he is nothing, after all, a product of his ancestors, after all, saliva pouring from his mouth as he rants and raves and curses the ancestors. (Pause)

And then he sets fire to the door and burns down the door, the magnificent palace door. The door of Agamemnon goes up in flames. Orestes' terror is exalted by the flames, his terror rises to the gods. The terrible rage of Orestes rises to the heavens in the bonfire made of Agamemnon's palace door.

The killing of the Mother, killing her off, means separation from the ancestors, from the earth—the isolation of Orestes is complete—no, confirmed, confirmed by the burning of the door—but it is not complete, no, because

before him stands the flesh of Clytemnestra, the Mother, the ancient Gunt of Earth, her teeth bared, a growl in her throat, a dagger in her right hand. Clytemnestra stands in the threshold of the burning door, indomitable and aflame with rage.

And so the isolation of Orestes is not complete, the Mother-murderess stands above him, enraged.

You tadpole, you twist of Agamemnon, I gave you life! She cries.

And he cuts her throat with his sword. Like this.

One stroke.

Once again the blood of Man gushes into the soil, nourishing the earth, polluting the earth with murder and revenge. For what is Man but the fountain of madness, of War, of wayward thought, of hysteria and hate?

And so goes the feeding of our hungry earth and its merciless Moon!

(Pause.)

Chauncey That it, Mr. Bean?

Gary Yes. Thank you.

Rondell You get that, Chauncey?

Chauncey I thought the ending was a little shaky. I thought it was confusing at the top.

Rondell Not what I asked you.

Chauncey Of course I got it. But I don't know what the moon has to do with anything.

Rondell Well, it's up there, isn't it, reliable as death, and the talent's there, so let's go on with our story.

Chauncey Would you like to see it again, Mr. Bean? We can run it for you.

Gary No. No, thanks.

Chauncey Okay. No problem.

Rondell Let's talk about our story.

Chauncey The story is a love story, Gary, not far from yours, with a Queen, medieval but contemporary, with lots of kidnappings and beheadings, blood flowing in the streets. But it's positive. It has a positive outcome.

Rondell Positive and negative.

Chauncey Positive and positive.

Rondell How's that, Chauncey?

Chauncey I don't know how yet. Positive is positive. Happy ending.

Rondell Tell him the story.

Chauncey There's a guy. You know, like I said, around your age, middle age, your age, and he needs a friend, someone to help him out when it's dire.

Dire.

Chauncey You know, someone to call, to rely on, when you get sick or fall down or something, when the shit hits the fan or something, when bad things happen, like a stupid mistake or something, or you say the wrong thing, or you're so lonely you think you want to die, well, you'll need a friend then, won't you, Mr. Bean? So. It's about finding a friend, wouldn't you say? Rondell?

Rondell Yes. Yes. To be held by a woman, to be rocked like a baby. To be loved.

Chauncey To find a friend who'll help you die? Maybe that? That makes sense to me. Mr. Bean?

Gary Well, I don't know.

Chauncey Like in the Rapture or the End Times.

Rondell You mean the front of the line for the Rapture, Chauncey, or what?

Chauncey Well, I guess so, yes, I think I do. Yes.

Rondell Vague.

Chauncey You could say that's why you're here, isn't it? Mr. Bean? To die?

Gary No. I agree with Rondell.

Chauncey You agree?

Gary I agree it's vague.

Chauncey Oh.

Gary You mean here on earth, or here in this room?

Chauncey I mean, I don't know yet, actually, what the story is. I'm just talking about the character, you know, and maybe a line here and there. Actually, he's a regular guy, a soldier. Yes, a soldier. Rikki. We're trying to find our way through, Mr. Bean.

Rondell And the girl, the love interest, Serena, she's not here. She's not here at the moment. You want to see her photo? We got a mug shot of her. Here's Serena.

CLICK: SHOT of SERENA on the screen.

Gary What a beauty. She's breathtaking.

Chauncey Nice girl. Our candidate here has that look, Rondell.

Rondell What it is. Sexual starvation. It's species survival is what it is. Totally out of control. I'm clear of that now.

Chauncey Mr. Bean, he's like our guy. He wants a woman or he wants to get on line and rapture up to oblivion.

This is insane.

Chauncey What you say?

Rondell Head of the line, hanging on to Jesus' foot.

Chauncey Riding up through the sky to heaven.

Rondell And he's never coming back. Does that correspond with you, Gary? Does that ring a bell, does that rhyme?

Gary No, me, I want to get on get on get on get on with my life, you know, in the real world.

Chauncey He's stuttering.

Rondell He's just nervous. Man's pasty-faced. He's going to look sick on camera. And he can't act if he can't talk.

Chauncey He's horny.

Rondell Species survival, Chauncey, like I said.

Chauncey Rondell here is celibate.

Rondell I do shoot guns. Here's me in the National Guard.

CLICK: SHOT of RONDELL in uniform, with a rifle.

Chauncey People get shot every twenty minutes in America and the world.

Rondell You think?

Chauncey I just made that up.

Rondell Remember his boy, killed by a gunshot?

Chauncey Sorry. Too many guns, all kinds of guns, neighborhoods bristly with them, bristly with guns.

Gary Bristling.

Chauncey Thank you. Bristling with guns. We love them. We love guns. This is America we're in right here. Looks like downtown LA, but it's still America. Rondell knows all about it. Three wars.

Rondell Vietnam and one in the Gulf, and the two or more we got now. Lots of bang for your buck. I told his kid, you hang around, you walk around, you expose yourself, you might get shot.

Bullets flying in every direction.

Rondell And he did and he was.

Chauncey The suiciders are next, the bombers. Blowing flesh through walls and windows, body parts in the trees, Allah applauding in the heavens, virgins on their knees.

Rondell Nice.

Chauncey Waiting for their martyrs.

Rondell Mindless monkey-heads.

Chauncey You say you're a friend of Todd's?

Gary He was my agent. Producer/agent/producer. Not anymore.

Chauncey What?

Gary He's not anymore.

Chauncey What is he now?

Gary I don't know, actually.

Chauncey Is this him?

CLICK: SHOT of TODD, at the beach, arms wide, looking up at the sky.

Gary That's him.

Chauncey He's in rehab.

Gary No shit.

Chauncey In Malibu.

Gary I can't believe it.

Chauncey He goes once or twice a year, cleans up and dries out.

Rondell I'd go there for a job if I were you. You got some recovery.

Gary What would I do?

Rondell Therapy.

Gary I'm an actor.

Rondell I know. How about "performance therapy"?

Chauncey Excellent, Rondell.

Rondell Let's do a scene.

Chauncey Let's say I'm always trying to forgive myself.

Rondell Pardon?

Chauncey Forgive. Forgive myself always. Like I wish I hadn't done a certain thing, said a certain thing, missed the mark, so to speak. Gave in or gave up.

Innocent people killed like insects.

Rondell Nobody's innocent. Do a bad thing, a bad act. Me, too. Got to forgive it, let it go. Gots to accept. Even though it's like unacceptable. You know what I mean?

Chauncey I think I do.

Rondell Unbelievable type of mischance, so to speak, or a mishap.

Chauncey I'm talking impulses, like with words or looks, little things that turn into big things.

Rondell Like a stupid phone call or an e-mail or a remark, or a slip of the tongue, where you have all these enormous consequences with your wife, I mean Life, and it takes days or weeks or years, or never, before it's over?

Chauncey Yeah, like never.

Rondell It's like you can't get back from those.

Chauncey No.

Rondell No way back. So then what?

Chauncey Well, that's what I'm thinking. Forgive and forget.

Rondell There's an example for you Gary, of fucked-up performance, wounds needing healing. Lack of impulse control.

Chauncey Like when you read a letter or you hear a message, you know, on the phone, like that.

Rondell Right.

Chauncey One that you're not supposed to hear or read, one that's incredibly revealing.

Rondell It's strange, the way people think.

Chauncey How's that?

Rondell I'm just saying. Thoughts. Imagining things.

Chauncey I'm not talking about that.

Rondell What are you talking about, pray?

Chauncey Imagining. I'm talking about reading somebody's private inventory or something, their secret diary or something.

Rondell Oh.

Chauncey I'm not talking about strange thoughts.

Rondell That's okay.

Chauncey Although that's a possibility, I'm talking real events here.

Rondell I am too, actually.

Chauncey I'm acting now.

Rondell Right. I knew that. So am I.

Chauncey So you're thinking you're in one thing and it's another thing.

Rondell Exactly.

Chauncey Another thing altogether. And then there's shit in your face and you're out the door.

Rondell Exactly. What I'm saying. Shit in your face and you're out the door. And then what?

Chauncey Exactly.

Rondell You have to ask yourself.

Chauncey Which I do. I ask myself, what the fuck, how could this happen?

Rondell Yes, it's human stupidity.

Chauncey Yes, it is.

Rondell Human stupidity, right to the end.

Chauncey Exactly. *(Pause)*

Rondell To me.

Chauncey How could this happen to me?

Rondell That's where your performance therapy would come in, Gary.

Chauncey Right. But here's the thing.

Rondell What?

Chauncey Here's the thing. Tragedy. It's all in the foretelling. They tell you, the chorus tells you what's going to happen, and then it happens. You get that? Gary?

Gary Yes. Tragedy.

Chauncey It's all in the fact that we are things we don't know about. And they, I mean we, we do things, we don't know we're doing them, and then we pay the price.

Rondell Well, you read somebody's letter, you read somebody's note to their boyfriend, whatever.

Chauncey We said that already. Didn't we say that already?

Rondell Yes, we did. We lost it there. I'm sorry.

Chauncey Well, too bad. We lost it there. We were improvising, and we lost it.

Rondell Can you help us, Gary?

Gary Tragedy?

Rondell Where's your ears? You got ears? I see ears on your head, boy.

Gary I mean, where the wound don't heal and you can't go back. I suppose that's tragedy.

Rondell You think?

Gary I think it is. I think it could lead to trouble. That's how it is in the Greeks. You kill the father and the son kills you.

Rondell There you go.

Chauncey Can we leave it for now? Can we drop it for now?

Rondell I don't know, Chaunce.

Chauncey You ever listen to LA? You know, stick a mike out the window and make a tape? Catch the sound, the racket? Sirens. Gunfire. Cars braking. Freeway. Crashes. Horns. Alarms. Power lines. Air conditioning. Hammers. Sledgehammers. Gears. Engines, engines. Trucks and trailers, tractor trailers. Buses. Motorcycles. Fire engines. Sirens. Garbage trucks. Dispose-alls. Lids clanging. Shouting. Kids yelling. Tires. Planes. Crows.

They listen. The sky outside the window is gray. A flock of dirty pigeons takes off with an ominous flutter.

CLICK: We see the pigeons in the sky.

Chauncey “Me, I feel like I might go on a spree, though. I feel like I might go on a murder spree.”

Rondell Go ahead. I'll wait.

Chauncey That was a line, Rondell, from our actor/author/performance artist over here, Mr. Gary Bean.

Rondell That was my answer to your line.

Chauncey Oh. Funny.

Rondell I thought so. Gary?

Gary I never said anything.

Chauncey Right. That was your character, Rikki.

Gary “Rikki?”

Rondell Yes. The soldier.

Chauncey Nevermind. So. Why'd you become an actor, Mr. Dean?

Gary Bean.

Chauncey Bean.

Gary Why?

Chauncey I'll tell you why I shoot, if you're interested, if you want to hear about it.

Gary Okay, why do you shoot?

Chauncey I always wanted to shoot the last, you know, the last and the lost, the last moment, live. Last and the lost, that's the meaning of the camera, Gary.

The last and the lost?

Chauncey Did you say something?

Gary No.

Chauncey Right. There's a camera over the door, and one in the hall, and one in the elevator, and another one right over the entrance here.

Rondell And you have another one right over the bed there.

where the girl Laura was found dead by your son. And another one out there, over the audience.

Chauncey Cameras catch the light. They appeal to human vanity. Usually it's embarrassing. See yourself. Hear yourself. So. Rondell, you feel like doing another scene?

Rondell No.

Chauncey Not improvisational. I've got a side right here, from our puny efforts right here, Mr. Bean. Take a look, Rondell. Come on. The Narrator. And you, you're Rikki, Mr. Bean, based on a true story.

Gary Rikki?

Chauncey Yes, Rikki. *Otra vez*. He's our main guy, you could say. Okay. I'll give you a second, and we'll shoot.

Gary looks at the page.

Rondell Sit over there, and we'll do the lights. We're in the café of the Hotel Marapol.

Chauncey I'll be the innkeeper, Don Antonio. Ready? Okay. Action.

Rikki *I felt like going on a murder spree. We marched for a few days and came to a settlement. It was a kind of compound surrounded by fences and gates. We approached with cannon and hungry dogs. The plan was to kill everybody in the compound and then, if anyone survived, to set the dogs on them. So that's what we did. We commenced the killing and then the dogs attacked the wounded survivors. How will you pay for this, Rikki? You may never be able to pay. You will go to hell for all eternity.*

Rikki *So, yes, there were survivors of the initial onslaught and we let in the dogs. And when that was over we launched a hunt, a reign of terror.*

Chauncey This is you now, Rondell. Pay attention.

Narrator *Men and women were torn limb from limb. Children were impaled on iron stakes. Corpses lined the road, blood flowed in the ditches. The sky was dark and starless, just the crack of a crescent moon. Murderous thoughts thickened the dank air. Men covered behind walls, in burrows, in caves, underground.*

Rikki *I started walking away. I saw myself walking away. I saw Rikki the Murderer walking away. I saw my shoulders and the back of my bowed head, walking away.*

Narrator *Cut to many days or years later, or twenty hours later, in another city, the city of Marapol, and we see Rikki, a chastened man, a kinder man, a solemn man. Bright sunlight makes a golden aura in the plaza, birds sing, and Rikki, suffering mightily, remorsefully finds a table away from his fellows at the café.*

Click: SHOT of RIKKI sitting at the café.

Rondell Is it me now or him?

Chauncey Wait, Rondell. Now Rikki tells us the scoop and then it's you.

Rikki *I had seen myself as a creature made of earth, of dust, of clay, animated by a kind of electrical shock, like Frankenstein, set in motion by lightning or something, truly hating everything alive, on a spree.*

Narrator *Or like a shadow on a screen or the wall of a cave, Plato's cave, a shadow made of reflected light.*

Chauncey Good, Rondell.

Rikki *I came out of my cave and sat down and looked directly at the Sun.*

Rondell I thought that was my line.

Rikki *I surrendered, and the Master came.*

Chauncey Now, Rondell.

Rondell The Master?

Chauncey You be the Master.

Rondell (As MASTER) *You must start to pay. Start now and don't ever stop.*

Rikki *How do I pay?*

Rondell (As MASTER) *Help. You must help everyone and everything in your path. Whatever it is, whoever it is, what they want, what they need, help of all kinds, for the dying, for the just born, the sick and the lame, the laborers and the beggars, the stupid and the insane, you have to help all, with money, with food, with affection, without judgment, you must help. You get that, Rikki? Yes. He gets it.*

Gary Yes.

Chauncey Good. Cut. Thank you, Mr. Bean, Rondell.

Rondell Script sounds just like you, Chauncey.

Gary You wrote that?

Chauncey That was a dream I had, Mr. Bean, sort of, you could say, a nightmare with a happy ending. Most of the time I was terrified in the dream, and then there was this tremendous release from fear, because the guy was making amends.

Rondell Chauncey here has access to the spirit world. Don't you Chauncey?

Chauncey Yes. It's the world right behind this one. It's writing, Rondell, writing and acting. Mr. Bean here would know.

Gary Call me, Gary. (Stands as if to go.)

Chauncey Gary. Sit down. We're not done.

GARY sits. CLICK: SHOT of GARY in the chair.

Do you agree, Gary?

Gary Yes, I do agree with that. You let the character come into your body.

Rondell Is that it?

Chauncey That's it for now, Rondell.

As outside darkness falls.

Chauncey It's getting dark.

The streetlights disfiguring the night like scars, the car beams cutting through in a stream, like a bloodstream of light for the glow of the city.

Chauncey Of course, killing is advantageous from an evolutionary point of view, historically or scientifically.

Gary My son's death was random. There's no meaning to random.

Rondell It's not personal. Let him think.

Chauncey Could be jealousy or pride. Could be sex on his mind, as usual, as always, love and affection as usual as always, or a biological advantage, you could say, something like that, some kind of an advantage accruing from murder, some kind of an edge, wouldn't you say?

Gary No. No, that's not what I would say.

Chauncey Otherwise it's totally meaningless, wouldn't you say?

Gary Yes, I would. It's totally meaningless.

Chauncey Genocide and fratricide, because the land's used up and the trees are gone and the water's muddied, so it's a kind of suicide as well, wouldn't you say?

Rondell I think he would.

Chauncey Peoples invade another country, going after the water, or the land, or the oil, or the gold, whatever, get the indigenous tribes at each other's throats, no holds barred,

like our boy Rikki here, and then they tell them to get their shit together or they're leaving. You get that?

Rondell Here's the thing I'm trying to say, which is you don't want to know the private material, his stuff, her stuff, you don't want to know, you don't want to comment, you don't want to run their show, you want to mind your own business, live and let live.

Chauncey That's fine, Rondell, but I don't think that's what we're talking about here.

Gary *I think I'll go now.*

Rondell (*Standing*) I think I'll go.

Gary Hold on, Beano. This is a true story.

Chauncey How is it true?

Chauncey It's true, in the way true is true, you know, but no, it's more like a legend, I would say, with archetypes. Rondell!

Rondell I would say so, truly.

Chauncey Sit down, Mr. Bean.

GARY sits.

Pray continue, Rondell.

Rondell That said, there's trouble with the wives, plus two daughters down in Long Beach, am I right on that?

Gary My wives and I get along fine, and my daughters are fine.

Rondell Fine. People adapt. They'll make their adaptations. People adapt. So you don't mess with their adaptations. They'll adapt or they die, they'll get in front of the line. So.

Chauncey Did you follow that?

Gary No.

Chauncey Me, neither. We were talking about archetypes and he was talking about something else.

Gary Actually, I do think I'll go.

Chauncey Wait a minute. Don't leave now. We're on a roll here.

Rondell My audition camera is still set up. All we need is light.

Rondell Hit the switch, Chaunce.

Chauncey There we go. It's on. We're lit, we're on. It's on now, Mr. Bean, Gary.

Rondell Where you going to go, Bean? Out to the desert to your loneliness, to your self-reproaching loneliness and turkey dinner isolation in the coffee shop from hell? Pay, Gary, pay. Here's a chance to pay!

Like in our little medieval movie.

Gary How? For what?

Rondell In front of the camera. Like Rikki. For all our sins, our weaknesses and our crimes.

Gary What should I do?

Rondell Good man. Just be yourself.

Gary Is the camera on?

Chauncey Camera's on. See the red light?

Rondell We can watch the monitor, but you can't. Don't look at the monitor.

Chauncey Action.

Gary First Danny Boy is shot dead and then I'm alone on the street. I would stand there somewhere you know under a streetlight in an alley and shake and tremble and weep.

And then I walked on. I had a vision.

Rondell Say more, Mr. Bean.

Gary It was a man, or it was God in the form of a man.

Downtown LA. The sky turned red and the earth cracked.

I saw the Angel of Death and the Underworld. Now, things have changed. I don't see like I used to. Now when I look at people I see the brain matter in their heads.

Chauncey Excuse me?

Gary The brain matter. I didn't mean to jump.

Chauncey Nevermind. Talk. You're still on.

Gary The brains, the soft matter of the brains, which makes the thoughts and feelings and hunger and loneliness and lust. And it's not true. There's no truth in it, but the people don't know, that the brain matter is getting the picture wrong. They don't know why, they don't reason. They have reasons, but they don't think much. I see death a lot. That's what I mean about the brain matter. My mother's gone, and my stepfather and some friends of mine are dead and others are dying. It's like you say, everybody's at the front of the line.

Rondell You included.

Gary Me included. I don't know what I was going to say there. Pain and suffering awaits us all. People trying to get out of their bodies and make it to the spirit world. Some people can see the spirits flying off, up into the sky.

Rondell You believe that?

Gary No. I don't know.

Chauncey Excuse me. You want to play all that back?

Gary No.

Chauncey Okay.

Rondell You an alcoholic?

Gary No. I don't think so. Why do you ask?

Rondell You raise your hand at meetings and say the words?

Gary I do.

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Rondell Why?

Gary I don't go to a lot of meetings.

Rondell Why you hold your hand up?

Gary Why not?

Rondell If it ain't true?

Gary It's true then. I feel like I belong. Like Rikki. Something missing, something wrong. A murderer, an alcoholic, a bad actor. Actually, I'm just an actor.

Rondell You need to pay, like me, like Chauncey.

Chauncey Let's do the side. Now's a good time. Let's do Rikki.

Rondell You need to pay a lot, and fast.

Chauncey Let's get more of the story before the light runs out, before the tape runs out, and so on.

Rondell Time runs out, and even then we don't know what happens, do we Mr. Bean?

Gary No.

Chauncey I wanted to leave that unsaid, Ron, about time.

Rondell Oh.

Chauncey Hit the button, Rondell.

CLICK: On the screen, we see the café at the Hotel Maropol.

Narration, please, Rondell.
(As NARRATOR) Night has fallen. Rikki sits alone in the café. He thinks again of corpses and ruined cities and the stupidity of human motivation, human action, of painful remorse. He ponders a glass of sparkling red wine to soothe his loneliness. He has sworn to abstinence and

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- humility but he is alone. He is alone and no longer young. A man approaches, wearing a monk-like cowl.
- Chauncey** That'll be me.
- He raises the hood of his sweatshirt.
- Gary** (As RIKKI) I believe I know you, Sir.
- Chauncey** (As INNKEEPER) Don Antonio de la Selva, at your service.
- Gary** (As RIKKI) I have slaughtered hundreds of people, men, women, children, and hundreds of animals, dogs, cats, cows, horses. It was my duty. I did my duty.
- Chauncey** (As INNKEEPER) Your wine, Sir?
- Gary** (As RIKKI) Leave it, Innkeeper.
- Chauncey** (As INNKEEPER) As you wish, Sir.
- Gary** (As RIKKI) Long have I been in service to this Realm of the Red Queen.
- Chauncey** (Is that your line?)
- Gary** (That is my line.) (Continues as RIKKI) I was there at the death of her Father, the King.
- Chauncey** (As INNKEEPER) So was I, of course.
- Gary** (As RIKKI) They say the spirit of the King still hovers over the lake behind the castle.
- Chauncey** (As INNKEEPER) I believe it does. You can hear his longing call in the North wind. (As himself) (That doesn't sound right.)
- Gary** (Why not?)
- Chauncey** (Why is he longing?)
- Gary** (For release.)
- Rondell** (Never mind, let's keep going.) (Continues as NARRATOR) The King was miserly. He misses his gold. Some say a huge treasure lies buried at the bottom of the lake.
- Gary** (As RIKKI) He was in great pain and he wanted to get out.
- Rondell** (As NARRATOR) He wanted to keep one eye on his gold, and the other on his daughter, the Red Queen.
- Chauncey** (As INNKEEPER) He begged permission from the hero-phants to take leave of his tormented body before the proper time.
- Gary** (As RIKKI) And they agreed?
- Chauncey** (As INNKEEPER) I warned him: He could become trapped near the earth, that if he left too early, his might not rise.
- Gary** I watched my mother and my stepfather die.
- Chauncey** That's not in the script.
- Gary** Mama Bean and Daddy O. It was difficult.
- Chauncey** It's not supposed to be fun. It'll happen to you too, soon.
- Gary** There were no angels with harps waiting, or welcoming spirits with bells.
- Chauncey** How do you know?
- Gary** I don't. I don't know.
- Chauncey** Let's get back to the script.
- Gary** Are there bells and whistles in the script?
- Chauncey** Read on and learn. The Fool and the Red Queen. That's the title. Rikki must die.
- Gary** Is he redeemed, like Milarepa, or must he suffer the torments of hell?
- Chauncey** Read, Rondell. The Narrator.
- Rondell** (As NARRATOR) And so the Father hovered over the lake, watching over his daughter and his gold.
- Gary** (As RIKKI) The fish were poisoned long ago by the gold.
- Chauncey** That's right.
- Gary** (As RIKKI) It's all chemistry. Even the slaughter of the innocents.

Chauncey That's Rikki, am I right?

Gary Yes. *(Continues as RIKKI) The throats slashed, the death rattle, even the remorse—chemistry. Is that so, Don Antonio?*

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) That is so, perhaps.*

Gary Perhaps?

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) I only do my duty. If anything remains, it has nothing to do with me. I am Death. (As himself)*

Well, I don't know about that line. That seems a little stilted.

Rondell It does, a little.

Chauncey Let's go on, though.

Rondell Is it me now?

Chauncey No, it's him.

Gary What was that about chemistry?

Chauncey Let Rikki talk now.

Gary *(As RIKKI) Why did the Red Queen go to War? I believe it was a chemical reaction in the brain, nothing more than that.*

A flicker, a thought, a fear, a grimace, an insult, a cause, a fantasy, an image; and then, in the real world, came the taxes, the armament, and the bloody attack on our neighbors.

Rondell Too many "nothings."

Gary I was asking about the chemistry of Love.

Rondell So what?

Gary Does it mean anything?

Rondell Money means something, so you don't die on the street, alone, teeth bared to the indifferent night, face frozen in a grimace of fright.

Chauncey Who's rhyming now? "Face frozen..." Come on.

Gary Parental love, maybe, the love of the parent.

Chauncey Do we have footage of the Fool?

Rondell Yes, we do.

Chauncey Thank you, Rondell.

Gary I think I have to go now.

Rondell Where?

Gary I don't know where.

Chauncey Hit the button, Rondell.

Rondell You got nowhere to go, Gary, for God's sake.

He hits the "button." The FOOL appears on the screen and speaks directly into CAMERA.

I grew up alone and at first I was defiant. I had renounced the kingdom and set out to make my name and fortune. I was angry and proud, though my father had been a Fool, and his father before him. Fools all. I had no understanding and no wish to dance and caper for the royals. There were a few honest men, farmers, craftsmen, but the roads were haunted by thieves and the insane, the demented and the dying, killers and mad boys, who, like me, were lonely and confused and looking for refuge, but had fallen into violence from which they would never recover.

IMAGE ends.

Chauncey Rondell.

Rondell What?

Chauncey Turn it off.

RONDELL *does so.*

Rikki says something important now. That's you, Gary.

Gary *(As RIKKI) It was violence as performance. There were no moral consequences save for the cruelty of punishment.*

Rondell Could you follow that?

Gary Yes.

Chauncey War as a video game. The Narrator, please.

Rondell It's not the Narrator now, it's the Innkeeper.

Chauncey *Oh. (Continues as INNKEEPER) Will you drink, Sir? Your wine is untouched. Look how it gleams in the glass, like the blood of angels. No, like the essence of the red sky.*

Rondell He's talking to Rikki now.

Chauncey Right, but the camera's on me. We'll figure it out later.

Gary?

Rikki?

Chauncey Yes, Rikki.

Gary *(As RIKKI) No, I will not drink.*

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) Tell me Sir, what will you do? What path will you take?*

Gary *(As RIKKI) I have met my Master, as I have said, and I aim to pay. Through abstinence from sex, and no indulgence of food nor drink, nor of creature comforts in general: a hard bed, a bookcase and a lamp are all I have in my room.*

Chauncey Narrator?

Rondell Ah, we have footage here.

Chauncey Are you with us, Mr. Bean?

GARY *nods.*

Go, Rondell.

We SEE the following scene on the screen.

Rondell *(As NARRATOR) Rikki is at the Hotel Margpol, where he lives now, in solitude and repentance. He sits alone at the patio, a goblet of red wine placed before him. Here, he sits, like this, and here is the table and the wine, and the Innkeeper approaches, or better, the Innkeeper is standing in silence, his head bowed, in the presence of the repentant murderer, who has earned an atmosphere of sanctity and respect.*

Gary *(As RIKKI) Don Antonio?*

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) May I help you, Sir?*

Gary *(As RIKKI) Yes. Who is that man in the sun, over there?*

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) Formerly the Red Queen's Fool, Sir, now banished from the castle.*

Gary *(As RIKKI) He lives here?*

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) Temporarily, while he awaits word from the Queen.*

Gary *(As RIKKI) He suffers.*

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) He is in limbo. Thumbs up or down.*

Gary *(As RIKKI) Tell him he is banished. Thumbs down. We are under a death sentence, he and I. Offer him some wine.*

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) Right away, Sir.*

Rondell *(As NARRATOR) The Innkeeper, Don Antonio, crosses the patio and approaches the Fool (O.S.).*

Gary Shall I play the Fool?

Rondell Famous last words.

Chauncey No, we have footage.

Rondell No sound, unfortunately. Here it is.

ON THE SCREEN, the FOOL in another spot, waiting.

Now we must wait for the Innkeeper's return. See: The Innkeeper approaches the Fool. Now he is telling him about you, that you are a soldier, demented, fortunes of War, and so on, tormenting yourself with the wine.

Gary Oh.

Rondell You are a killer, and you suffer. The wine represents the blood of your victims. The wine represents the bliss of redemption. The wine represents the pleasures of ordinary life, now forever lost to him. Will he take a glass?

Gary Will he?

Rondell Apparently he will. He just waved and nodded.

Gary Did you see?

Rondell Yes. (*Waves and nods and smiles back.*)

Chauncey And now the Red Queen arrives at the Hotel Marapol. I can hear the horses and the drunken cries of the driver.

NOISES off.

Rondell The Innkeeper is himself an old-timer in the Kingdom, and before he was retired to the Inn, he was, like all citizens but the Fool, and certain privileged sons of the nobility, a conscript in the army.

Chauncey Shall we hear from the Innkeeper then, before the arrival of the Queen?

IMAGE fades.

Rondell Yes, we shall. Mr. Bean?

Gary (*As RIKKI*) You told the Fool, Innkeeper, what I said?

Chauncey (*As INNKEEPER*) I did, Sir.

Gary (*As RIKKI*) And he asked for an explanation.

Chauncey (*As INNKEEPER*) He did, Sir.

Rondell You are too laconic, Innkeeper.

Gary (*As RIKKI*) Tell him, because I have seen the human heart, and the explanation is in the moon and the stars. Shakespeare.

Rondell (*As RIKKI*) Tell him the explanation is in Shakespeare.

Chauncey But the story may have happened before Shakespeare.

Gary Then I have no explanation. I myself have lost a son in this world for no fucking reason.

Chauncey I would like to say how the Innkeeper came to be the Innkeeper in Marapol.

Rondell Good. Mr. Bean?

Gary (*As RIKKI*) Tell me, Innkeeper, before The Red Queen arrives—after the War of Succession, how did you come to be the Innkeeper in Marapol?

Chauncey (*As INNKEEPER*) When the King died we listened to his moaning for days on end. He refused to stop breathing.

There was a rumor that the King had buried his treasure at the bottom of the castle lake. All the fish died. The prize carp, and the miniature turtles, too, fell to the bottom, poisoned, they say, by the gold. I, the new Deputy Commander, along with the rest of the servants without seniority, was made to wait in the town. It was

at that time when my future Queen began communing with her personal God, in order to speak with the spirit of her father.

Gary *(As RIKKI) And the name of this God?*

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) The name of the God, that is, to be more exact, the name of her guide in the Spirit World, is Rufus.*

Rondell *Well, let's move on. The Red Queen has arrived. The Fool will get his ass kicked and Rikki is a dead man.*

Gary *The Rikki scene.*

Rondell *He's into it.*

Chauncey *I know he is.*

Rondell *Dawn approaches in the city of Marapol by the sea.*

Rikki sits facing his glass and the waterfront becomes visible in the morning light. He has been told by the Innkeeper:

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) You may sit with your wine. Do not drink. Collect yourself and prepare to die.*

Rondell *These are the condemned man's thoughts. Gary?*

Find your chair and your light.

Gary *I'm ready.*

Chauncey *Action.*

Enter RIKKI.

Gary *(As RIKKI) I look at the wine, at the color red. I feel myself looking. I lose my attention. I realize this and I return my gaze. I look at the glass. I feel my life is coming to an end, its proper and natural end. I look at the sunshine in the glass. I feel its beauty and my*

stomach tightens. I have had no alcohol, though I sense its strong spirit in the wine. I breathe. The air is crisp and sweet, like the air of my youth. I have absolutely no judgment upon anything, including myself. I am forgiven.

The Innkeeper approaches, as he must, as he should. I listen to his footsteps, not slow, not quick, right on time, like a hunter, like a man. I am his quarry, his destination, my death is his duty. He is coming to strangle me, on the orders of the Red Queen. But he is in no hurry, his duty is clear and inevitable. He knows I will not run. I have fasted three days and nights and I have not moved from the table. Every hour I pour the wine into the dust, a perverse libation to the spirit world, an imitation of the blood running in the streets on the day of the massacre. I had become intoxicated by wine and the exhilaration of slaughter. First the exhilaration of slaughter, the pleasure of indiscriminate killing, unbounded destruction. And then there was the madness of drunkenness and then the rape and murder of virgins. I will never be right again but I want my mind to be dry, free of alcoholic delusion, alcoholic thinking, the inflation of the ego, the bloating of the self. My path is easy because my executioner is on his way. My penance is short. Perhaps a count to a hundred and back.

Rondell *All right. And now we'll have to stop and consider.*

Chauncey *Consider?*

Rondell *The question of conscience, and compassion for the Queen.*

Chauncey *Put it in the text, Rondell. She has a speech, I believe?*

Gary *I think it's terrific.*

Chauncey *What?*

Gary The play. Whatever it is. The writing.

Chauncey We're theatre folk. We're superstitious. So we don't say things like that. Read the speech, Rondell.

Rondell *Moments earlier, the moon is still high in the sky. The Red Queen stands in the moonlight, her weight on her left side, her right foot pointed west, toward the sea. The light is just so, shining on her cheek, illuminating her thin lips, her sovereign chin, her purposeful brow.*

A wisp of red hair blows in the light breeze from the sea. Thus she stands with folded arms, as the Fool sits beneath her on a stone bench and sighs. "My goodness, what a beauty," he thinks, "what a loss I have suffered."

"Yes," speaks the Red Queen, as if replying to his thought, "but what is lost can be restored, what is wounded, healed. It is not hopeless, there is always hope. This is what I believe, this is what I was taught to believe by my father, and so I shall always believe.

Therefore do not despair my dear Fool, but take heart. You shall always be protected by my Realm and its

Laws." "Quite beautiful, still, but perhaps quite mad," thinks the Fool, "though I grew to love her dearly, in my way." And then again, as if answering his thought, the

Red Queen's gray eyes become solemn, her weight shifts slightly forward, and she says, looking down at the Fool, "I don't think love is personal, not at all, to be perfectly honest with you, love is something that is there, that is part of the Realm, one of the Laws of the Realm, you could say, outside of us, and within us, something we share in together, but not personally. Do you agree with that?" The Fool doesn't agree or disagree, he just hopes

he hasn't done anything wrong, as is his wont, so he's silent, as usual, and so she says, "I'm just trying to engage with you, you don't have to hide. This is our last night together, after all." The Fool struggles to speak.

For a moment he glimpses the evanescence of being. He is in a biological endgame, not breathing, frozen in time, sensing the stone bench beneath him and the dark sky and the Red Queen above him. "I've done nothing wrong," he says, finally, way too late, a lifetime too late.

"Oh," she replies, after a heavy moment and in a new tone of voice, huskier, regal, and resigned, "I wasn't thinking that at all, not at all, that was only in your imagination, Fool, these many years, that I thought you'd done something wrong. Isn't that interesting? Well, maybe it's not so interesting to you, it's probably a shock for you, but never mind, I wish you well. Now I shall ring for my carriage." And so the sound of bells and horses. In the mind of the Fool, who has not moved, the Red Queen is lifted off her feet by her footmen and whisked away weightlessly, like a paper doll, her face shining and regal and tragic, and flutters into the meaninglessness of time.

Chauncey Well done, Rondell.

Rondell Let me say something more.

Chauncey Not too much.

Rondell Finally I can tell the difference between conscience and feelings of guilt. I just want to say something about that.

Chauncey Go ahead.

Rondell That was it.

Chauncey Nothing else?

Rondell I know so much more now about what the wine means, the wine of remorse.

Chauncey So we'll try to be quiet and respect that.

Gary I agree.
And so they are. As the Red Queen has taken her leave for the last time from her old servant and companion, the faithful Fool.

Chauncey There'll be a pause here, while Rikki waits for dawn.

Ready, Gary?

Gary I'm ready.

Rondell The Innkeeper steps on stage, a garrote over his arm in place of his napkin.

Chauncey *(As INNKEEPER) Watch as I approach the little Soldier, who is motionless as he sits in his chair staring at the wine. See how he is buck naked now, having burned his uniform and underclothing. (The stench could be smelled for miles.) Watch as I slip the rope around the Soldier's neck. His sweaty neck, red from the sun. His head is bare and I can see the movement of lice, whitish in his black hair. He takes a deep breath. When I greet him he is courteous but says he has made his peace and has nothing more to say. He encourages me to do my job well and then to clean up well after him, suggesting scavengers and beasts, perhaps, as the most effective and proper way to dispose of him. I say nothing. Perhaps I grunt. I notice a blue haze on the horizon, smoke from distant fires, the smoke of war. And then I tighten my grip around his throat. I am cutting off his breathing. I am stopping the flow of blood to his head. He gargles and his lungs gasp. He does not struggle, but spasms once or twice, and his*

eyes roll. A sigh (I imagine gratitude in it) and the Soldier is gone. His name was Rikki. I took note inwardly of the fading light and then, slowly, deliberately, trying hard to know my footfalls in the sand as I walked, made my way back to the Inn, leaving the Soldier in his chair, as he was, for the vultures and the jackals, as he had requested with his final breath.

Rondell Nice, Chaunce.

Chauncey I think the Fool must die and Rikki must live in repentance.

Gary No. Rikki must die, as it is, and the Fool must live. He must see a woman, an angel, and decide to live.

Chauncey Serena? She's our angel. But she's missed her chance.

Rondell Here's her head shot.

CLICK: SERENA again, in a different pose.

Chauncey She's missed her chance, Rondell.

Rondell She way missed it, Chaunce.

Chauncey She thinks I'm the Devil, her. *El Diablo. Porque? Es la mirada.* The look.

Maestro de la Mirada.

Chauncey It's just another step, you know, when you realize you are a look, you realize you are that look, looking from above. *La Mirada.*

The Gaze.

Rondell I couldn't follow that.

Chauncey I am that look.

Rondell I still couldn't follow it.

Chauncey Camera's just a device. She didn't show because she's scared. There's the front of the line and the back of the line. Guys in front want to go first.

Rondell Like the Rapture or the End Times.

Gary It's what Daddy O used to say. Falling off the edge of the world.

Rondell Head of the line, hanging on to Jesus' foot. Ha!

CLICK: DADDY O in the sky.

Gary There's Daddy O! Riding up through the sky to heaven. I'd like to keep a picture of that.

Rondell Here's me in the National Guard.

CLICK: same photo of RONDELL in uniform.

Chauncey Here's Serena again in her white gown.

Another SHOT of SERENA.

Gary What a beauty. She's breathtaking.

Rondell She ain't gonna show. You can leave if you want.

Chauncey You can leave. Come back later. Come another time.

Rondell Or never come back.

Chauncey Maybe you can call first? Give us a ring, give us a buzz, see if she's here, Serena? Or are you leaving now?

Rondell Goodbye.

Gary No, I'll stay for the end.

Chauncey Good.

Rondell Nice. Funny I didn't recognize you before. You looked like a different person. Pasty-faced. *(To CHAUNCEY)* He used to look in shape.

Chauncey We've come to the end. We know the end. Right, Rondell?

Rondell That's it, Chaunce, that's all she wrote. You come to a time when you got to give it up, like the man says. So that's my story, not unlike our friend Bean here, I was seeing protoplasm instead of the human soul. And I still have a problem right there, like we've been saying, off and on, an attitude, like fuck off and fuck you, life's a drag, and so on, without meaning or hope, just stuff pouring from the earth and crawling around. I'm a big black man who fought in the jungles of Vietnam and I made one hell of a target in the daytime. Mainly I dug a hole and lay down in it. And that's what I do. Dig a hole and lay down, keep my head down. Tried to shut my mind off, too, which was hard, so I used, as you all know, as everybody knows, can't be too sensitive. My choices were monk-like, like our boy here, Rikki, or Gary, but the time came anyway to give it all up and turn toward whatever life was left, become the Narrator or whatever and clean up and lie low and improve my impressions. I have a daughter, Chloe—

Chauncey You have a daughter?

Rondell Chloe, I tell her, turn off the dream box because people will dream their lives away, those are grooves the thing is making in your brain, you can't be too careful, but of course she won't do it because you get back in your automobile and there it is again, life as it is, aggressive idiots, male and female, spitting contemptuously onto

the roadway. This so-called War of the Red Queen is just like a bubble on the brain of Earth. A bubble or an abscess, an infection, an inflammation, that's the word I'm looking for, an inflammation, so you got some bloodshed and the Sorrow of Gravity.

Chauncey

Oh, I love that.

Rondell

Yeah, yeah. I stole that. God knows where from. Our boy here is going to wake up soon and Dr. Jones will be sitting there holding his hand. Or one of his wives or his friend Vernon, or his agent, Todd, will call him on the phone and he'll startle up and he'll say to himself, another day, keep it together, keep it together, thank God you're warm and breathing air. That's what I do every day, every day, I thank God I'm warm and breathing air, and I'm ambulatory.

Gary

I must be dreaming. That's what I do, too. So what's wrong?

Chauncey

What's wrong, Rondell?

Rondell

Nothing's wrong. Everything is exactly what it's supposed to be. We're just incomplete so we're always filling the gap with something, like I expounded already, some kind of foolishness in the brain. Or a substance, like alcohol. Well, we know all that, we all know all that already. I've given it all up myself. I'm a Bill Russell fan, myself.

Chauncey

Well, that's news.

Rondell

Man was a champion. Wouldn't take nothing to alter the chemistry, am I right?

Chauncey That would be right.

Rondell So he's my hero. Not too self-righteous, like some people.

Chauncey 'Course the chemistry might be wrong.

Rondell Might be at that. Leas'tways, I'm free at last, free at last.

Chauncey And we finished our Play, *The Fool and the Red Queen*, entire.

Rondell

Good night from us here.

The End