“Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.”
(--W.H. Auden, Funeral Blues)

Characters:

Gia Lenvers, in her 30’s
Eva Lenvers, 20 / Waitress, 60’s
Terry Clare-Dunn, 30’s / Hound
Grey Dunn, 30’s / Daddy
Cod / Journalist, 30’s

Playwright’s Notes:

Gia and Eva’s names: In Italian, Gia means “Yes indeed!”. In French, a l’envers means inside out. Eva’s name: is pronounced eev-uh.

The “Voices”: can be distributed as the director thinks fit.

Gia’s internal monologues: are suggested by italics.

Acknowledgements: Debbie Hunter and John Severn for their anecdotes and JoAnn and Kimberly for their invaluable input.

Production History:

Stop All the Clocks (formerly Time.Love.Triangle) received a semi-staged workshop reading in July, 2005, by Quintessence: Language & Imagination Theatre. The director was Michael Griggs.
Act I

(Enter Gia. She carries pen and paper and is looking up at the stars.)

GIA

Wish you were here tonight, Eva.

(Enter Eva, a ghost. Looks over Gia’s shoulder at her paper:)

EVA

‘Time makes love.
Time makes lust—is breeder.
Time ripens the scientist, and the poet.’

Would you stop that?

GIA

Fine, Sis, I’ll write my own poem, then. Let me see . . .
‘Well nice try, Newton.
But give me Einstein every time:
Tick tock--waves or dots
Tick tock--waves or dots . . .’

GIA

‘Time shapes; it forms forms.
Time turns like the worm
And rots.’

EVA

‘Time is lonely, and laughs.’

I’m too scared to laugh, Eva.

EVA

‘Time is a cannon that pounds at us day after day till it hits.’

(Lights up higher; Eva steps away. Gia blinks, gets her bearings, puts pen away, holds paper ready.)
GIA
I wish I could disappear. Are you out in the audience, hating me, Terry? Wish we could go back in time and fix it. Did Grey come? I wish I had a cigarette . . . a latte . . . an orange . . . anything. You’ll hate this poem, Terry. Eva would’ve--

EVA
Ladies and Gentleman, may I introduce the new Poet Laureate, MISS GIA LENVERS!

(Appplause.)

GIA
Fuck!

(A podium is visible now. Gia goes to the podium with her paper.)

Thank you . . . uh, um . . . thank you for this honor—the Laureateship is the most important event of my life. It’s . . . I know it’s customary to make some comments about the current state of poetry in the land, but I am not interested—ah--willing to do so. It is customary to read a poem, and I’ll read “Clock Word”. It is a further exploration of my interest in—some would call it an obsession with—Time. It’s part of a series of four volumes of poems called “Stop All the Clocks”. By the way, I hope it annoys my critics as much as my past work has. “Clock Word.”

‘Time makes love.
Time makes lust.
Time ripens . . .’

(Time jumps forward, lights change, applause. Terry, now in her mid-30s, and Grey enter.)

TERRY
Damn you, Gia, congratulations.

GIA
You came! Thanks, Terry.

GREY
Congratulations, Lenver-Denver. Oh, I’m Grey Dunne, remember me?

GIA
I know, I’ve been . . . uh, working, and working and--
Hey, wouldn’t have to be hiking, there’s fishing.

E-mail me.

Don’t have it.

Text me.

Don’t have it.

He’s hopeless.

So did you see that sunrise this morning?

No, I slept in.

So did Terry.

Writers stay up late, right Gia?

I think John Donne musta gotten up early with the janitors.

Okay, so what about the dawn, Grey Dunne?

You know, no. You missed it—too bad, you both missed it, look at that line at the buffet.—Food! Eat!

Man! Hunt!

(As Grey exits:)
Hey, olives!

Hey, damn.

I know. I liked it better when we were friends. Remember?

I hate how fast you write. You ever sleep?

After Eva died, I swore on her grave I wouldn’t waste my time.

Shit.

Anyway, I’m always writing . . .

Like when?

While I’m waiting—at the grocery store in line—

Come on!

Seriously, the stop light, uh before bed. In the woods. Have you tried going for a walk and just--?

Do I look like fuckin Wordsworth?

Writers, we gotta stick together.

You’re so out of touch.

Yeah, miss you.
TERRY
That poem you read for your acceptance speech . . . I think you’ve lost it, Gia.

GIA
I thought I won. I knew you’d hate it.

TERRY
Is this a game to you?

GIA
You started the metaphor, Terry.

TERRY
The old-fashioned bullshit, is that all there is for you?

GIA
I thought that piece was very free, for me—very new-fangled.

TERRY
Is that your idea of being funny?

GIA
Didn’t we have this argument a hundred times in school?

TERRY
When did you ever “suffer and create”?

GIA
Terry--!

TERRY
Say something!

GIA
Why can’t you hear the form and how it informs--?

TERRY
What are you trying to say? I have no idea.

GIA
Idea! There you go!

TERRY
What’s in your heart, Gia, not fuckin Einstein?!!
GIA

Terry--!

TERRY

No, but I guess people don’t want truth or faith—they want four volumes of this pseudo-intellectual abstract formulated--

GIA

Who cares what they want?

TERRY

You’ve become such an arrogant . . . haven’t you? You’ve really changed since Jim.

GIA

Me? How about you? Maybe all the drugs you peddle affected your . . . sorry. I wish someone would give me some wine.

(Enter an elderly Waitress, who hands them each white wine.)

Wow, I didn’t know this honor bestowed instant gratification.

WAITRESS

Congratulations, dear.

GIA

Thank you.

WAITRESS

You’re welcome. I have a question about your—but, excuse me, uh, later.

(Exit Waitress.)

GIA

I gotta find a career—can you imagine waiting tables at that age?

TERRY

So you are jealous of something—my career. You know, I still write--I sent you my poem months ago, and . . . you never answered me. Afraid I’d beat you out?

GIA

I have missed you guys.
TERRY

Didn’t you read it?

GIA

I read everything--the permit in the elevator, advertisements on billboards, license plates, rail stops, ‘I heart Manuel’ on the door of the stall—of course I read it, words are plunging into my head all the time, aren’t they for you?

Well?

GIA

I liked the . . . directness.

And?

TERRY

You didn’t like it.

GIA

I’m glad you’re writing, okay? Okay.

TERRY

Do me one favor, Gia, now you’re the Laureate, say what’s haunting you. Since Jim left . . . you’re just hiding.

GIA

How dare you tell me what to write! Words haunt me, okay? All the time!

TERRY

So I’m jealous, right?—somebody who got everything they wanted, somebody who gets to do . . . what they want.

GIA

Terry, stop, come on.

TERRY

Einstein can kiss my ass.

(Terry walks off.)
Wench. ‘Wench’—that was Jim’s word. At the Inns at Court, that warm April afternoon-- Shakespeare and Jim. Lost. “The uncertain glory of an April—”

(Re-enter the Waitress with a book.)

WAITRESS
Ms. Lenvers, excuse me, congratulations. Um . . . oh, dear, I don’t know how to, uhhh . . .

GIA
Want me to autograph that?

WAITRESS
Yes. Say, and . . . I . . . well, could you tell me what is the . . . this one poem is about—“Steven stoned”?

GIA
Oh. “Mob Stoned Stephen”? Little different connotation, eh?

WAITRESS
Yes, I’m supposed to be working, but—

GIA
Tell them that the New Laureate Poet required a lot of wine.

WAITRESS
Okay. I’m just . . . er, my husband and I are both working tonight, his name is Marv, see, over at the bar . . .?

GIA
My best friend is the bartender. I recall reading somewhere that this is one of my ‘least structuralist and most approachable pieces.’

WAITRESS
Oh . . .

GIA
It’s bad when a writer memorizes criticism of their work, but I can’t help it—I’ve got a persistent memory. Do you know what reincarnation is?

WAITRESS
Oh, that silly thing—does anyone really believe that?
GIA
Who cares what you believe, use your brain.

WAITRESS
Goodness me.

GIA
Goodness what?

WAITRESS
Ms. Lenvers, well, um, but--it doesn’t make sense.

GIA
I find a lot of people absolute. Quite often my critics reluctant to use their imaginations. Is that your problem?

WAITRESS
Well, it doesn’t make any sense!

GIA
But does it make you wonder?

WAITRESS
But what’s the answer?

GIA
You tell me!

WAITRESS
Oh, Marv! It’s your funeral, pay up, dear--she just admitted it doesn’t make any sense!

(Exit Waitress.)

GIA
Why do people like you even bother getting out of bed?!!

(Gia sits down.)

Jim used to say that, too.

(Gia observes the Waitress.)

Or maybe . . . maybe . . . he doesn’t care. He smiles, Marv the bartender pays up and smiles. Why doesn’t he care that she’s so . . . ? Another happy couple,
fuck.--How can a reception . . . with this many people, be so silent? I wish I were dead. Or really drunk.

(Enter Journalist, loudly:)

JOURNALIST
MISS LENVERS? ‘Scuse me, Miss Lenvers? I work for the paper.

GIA
Oh, hello. How are you?

JOURNALIST
I’m good, Miss Lenvers, and I bet you feel just great, uh?

GIA
No, actually I feel like a cigarette, but I gave up smoking along with, er, apparently everything else. You drinking that?

JOURNALIST
Well—no, here.

GIA
Thanks.

(Takes his wine and drinks it.)

JOURNALIST
Uha, uha, well, say, I wondered if you could give me a few words for the . . . you know, the paper.

GIA
You’re it—no photographers, no TV . . . ?

JOURNALIST
Um . . .

GIA
I would be glad to “give” you some words.

JOURNALIST
Good, good. First of all, uha, what about—where’s my list?—how do you feel, how does it feel, being the youngest Poet Laureate ever?

GIA
Which?
JOURNALIST

I don’t follow.

GIA

How does it feel or how do I feel?

Whatever.

GIA

It feels like an answer to lingering question. I feel . . . old, believe it or not . . . and aching for a cigarette in my mouth.

Really?

GIA

I thought you wanted my words.

I didn’t mean that.

GIA


On top?

Ha, more like lonely at the.

GIA

But all these people around, all this support for your work, you feel lonely?

GIA

They’re not supporters, mostly writers looking to get a publisher or publishers looking to get laid or making bets . . . I’m afraid I’m not up for this.

JOURNALIST

Hey, no, you’re doing good. I mean, the temperament—the edge—I like it. Was it hard to beat out your best friend? I mean, same college, both published right off the bat, and you’ve really, well really uha helped each other out career-wise.
GIA
You can’t call poetry a career in this country—how about vocation?

JOURNALIST
You’ve both sold books, and the Laureate pays.

GIA
A little. For four years. When it’s done, I’ll be in my forties and then what’ll I do for a career?

JOURNALIST
Maybe you’ll win again!

GIA
You see it like a sport?

JOURNALIST
Well, kinda looks like that—like the Olympics, with judges, ya know.

GIA
I see. You cover sports?

JOURNALIST
Yeah, I do—that’s where you’ll usually find me on a Saturday night . . . er, but that’s . . . . Your competition—what about beating Terry uh what’s-her-name?

GIA
Clare . . . Clare-Dunn, I mean. Mixed . . . feelings.

JOURNALIST
Yeah, yeah, it’s tough, friends. Uh, why do you think you won?

GIA
A lotta hard work.

JOURNALIST
Right, yeah, so, quantity—what, four volumes of poetry about like physics and time and love and stuff in two years?

GIA
Time well spent. Right?

JOURNALIST
Sure. Oh.
GIA
What’s wrong?

JOURNALIST
Oh, I’m looking at my questions . . . here . . . I, geez. This is personal.

GIA
Then don’t ask it.

JOURNALIST
But it’s on my list here.

GIA
A journalist with some vestige of integrity, but not enough?

JOURNALIST
You don’t hafta answer. After your divorce with James Threadle, he was quoted as saying—“I gave her a choice: me or her writing. She didn’t choose me.” Are you more interested in--?

GIA
Great! That’s just great! Here’s your headline: “Poet Laureate Claims Husband Deserted Her.” Here’s your quote: “Gia Lenvers said: ‘I chose iambus over coitus, Jim.’” Do you want me to repeat that? ‘I chose iambus over coitus, Jim.’ That’ll make Miss Clare-Dunn happy—don’t you hate these hyphenated names?—she wants me to be more from the heart.

JOURNALIST
Iambus?

GIA
Thank you for the interview.

JOURNALIST
Ah, oh, thank you for your time. You’re a . . . you’re quite a . . . hmm . . . excuse me, I’m going to go interview your opponent now.

GIA
Good luck.

(He exits.)

Nice ass. Why am I so . . . ? Why did I only take one valium?

This is the crappiest day of my life.
(Enter Grey with wine.)

GREY

What?

GIA

Hi! I said this is the happiest day of my life!

(Takes wine, drinks.)

GREY

All alone, Mrs. Big Words?

GIA

Well . . .

GREY

How’re ya doing really?

GIA

Taxed.

GREY

Damn.

GIA

You eat?

GREY

Full!

GIA

How’s the food?

GREY

Oh! Can’t answer that without giving myself away.

GIA

I already know you.

GREY

Thought it would be better--whatta you know? You eat?
No.

GREY

Want me to do you a plate?

GIA

Not hungry.

GREY

But supposed to be happy. Big night for Mrs. Big Words.

GIA

Miss.

GREY

Right.

GIA

You look handsome, all dressed up.

GREY

You’ve only seen me like this one other time.

GIA

Yeah, your wedding.

GREY

Won’t happen again.

GIA

Until someone’s funeral?

GREY

You are taxed.

(Enter Waitress, gives her wine.)

WAITRESS

There you are dear.

(Exit Waitress, grinning.)

GREY

It’s been too long since we all . . . ever hear from Jimlet?
GIA
I hear from him, he doesn’t hear back.

GREY
Ah. Whyn’t you come over some time, Lenvers? I got no fishing buddy.

GIA
Too stinky. Why don’t you call Jim?

GREY
Terry wouldn’t fulfill my carnal needs if I had anything to do with him.

GIA
She is a feminist.

GREY
She’s hates betrayal. Anyway, he’s not exactly my buddy, never was.

GIA
Because he left me?—we weren’t married.

GREY
Maybe his IQ got in the way.

GIA
The exquisite Jim—just an act.

GREY
Too superior for me.

GIA
I act that way, too—hell, so does Terry.

GREY
It’s different.

GIA
Because he’s another man?

GREY
Maybe it’s because he’s not funny.

GIA
I’m funny?
Very.

GIA

I feel like I’ve lost it. But fishing stinks, I’ve always despised it.

GREY

“Despised”? Who the hell says that besides you? I think you’re funny.

(Beat)

Don’t like the party?

GIA

I hate big parties and all the small talk.

GREY

Still like the big-talk, Miss Big Words?

GIA

Yeah, Grey, don’t you want to engage instead of just . . . ?

GREY

I do . . . but shit, my shoe’s untied.

GIA

So’s mine!

GREY

Nice laces, Denver.

(They both kneel and tie their shoes; however, Gia doesn’t have laces.)

GIA

Grey, don’t you wonder, “Why am I here?” I know you do!

GREY

After that buffet, yes.

(She laughs.)

GIA

Chicken?
GREY

No, this weird pork.

GIA

I bet you wonder while you work. I mean, well that’s a question--what in a maintenance man’s work fills him with wonder about the universe?

GREY

Smells do.

GIA

Smelling the banana peels and spilled milk in the cafeteria?

(Grey inhales and smiles.)

GREY

For a while there, I thought I knew why.

(They regard each other. They stand.)

But, why am I here? I dunno, I’m going home.

GIA

Sure, run away, fine, while I have to stay. You think Terry’s finished schmoozing already?

GREY

We came separately.

GIA

Very clever.

GREY

Good seeing you, and . . . enjoy, I know what this means to you.

GIA

You’ll console Terry?

GREY

Oh yeah. When she lets me.

GIA

Grey would you . . . never mind--I’ll email—wrong, I’ll call you, let’s talk more.
GREY

Yeah, Denver.

GIA

You big chicken.

GREY

Full of weird pork.

(Grey exits. Enter Terry on the phone with her girlfriend, Rowena. Gia eavesdrops.)

TERRY

But Rowena . . . no, I'm saying, there's nothing in her work--all this crap about clocks. Dog-time, me-time, Einstein—but I mean what does she feel, for God's sake? . . . yeah, I know . . . yeah, she used to come over a lot after her split . . . well, but those were hard times for her, and the three of us got close . . . I don't know how to put it, it seemed we all just--we fell together . . . oh my God she had a sense of humor then—oh.

(Terry sees Gia.)

GIA

Now I just have a sense of liquor!

(Gia laughs, drinks off the glass of wine.)

TERRY

Gotta schmooze some more . . . no, it's terrible, all this crappy meat . . .

(Enter Waitress with wine.)

WAITRESS

More wine?

GIA

Sure!

(Exit Waitress.)

TERRY

Sure, shopping, great, you pick me up . . . Bye.
(Terry hangs up.)

GIA
Terry, I'll tell you how I feel—drunk! How about you?

TERRY
Oh, Gia. How did we get here?

GIA
Yes, that's the big question.

TERRY
I'm doing this, but when did I start wanting to do this? And it's not just something you'd put in your diary and look up—oh, yeah, I remember that trip when we rode the mules in the Grand Canyon and you couldn't walk the next day and I knew it was love! I mean it's . . . why do I love Grey? Still? The sacrament—is that all? I have conversations with you when you're not here.

GIA
Me too! I mean you!

TERRY
Why I'm a writer? Do you ask yourself that?

GIA
All the time.

TERRY
I feel like shit.

GIA
Me too! This wine is shit. Want some more? The waitress and I bonded . . .

TERRY
No thanks. Congrats, Gia. I'm going home. Bye.

(Terry exits. Enter Waitress, takes wine away from Gia. The party is over. She staggers forward and stands alone, swaying. Crying?)

GIA
Home. Taxi!

(She sits down.)
Work. Alone. No. Don't want to write, want to go back in time . . . to the hike . . . come back to me, Grey . . .

(Enter Grey. Gia walks to him, tired at the end of a long hike. This is a few years ago.)

GREY
Don’t pout, Lenver-Denver! Nothing wrong with coming in second!

GIA
Out of shape! Beautiful!

GREY
Is Terry okay?

GIA
Fine. Jim is talking geology with her.

GREY
Geology? Jimlet?

GIA
It’s his newest thing.

GREY
I don’t know why we don’t hike more. I mean come on, cedars and waterfalls forty-five minutes away from my house! Crazy.

GIA
Grey, let me jot a few notes before I forget.

GREY
“Jot.”

GIA
Stop, I’ve got an idea . . .

(She looks for her pad and pencil.)

. . . for a poem—the way the light looked on the water!

GREY
You never stop.
Writers!

Yeah. I married one, ya know.

Gotta use every minute I can!

You always been so driven?

Since my sister Eva died.

Oh, yeah. She was twenty? God.

Waste. I write for both of us, Grey Dunne--oof.

Blister?

Maybe.

Let's see.

Stinky.

I'm a janitor, remember?

(Takes off her shoe and sock.)

Whew! Just joking. Yep, that's a good one. Don’t stop writing, I'll just—

You'll just ow!
GREY

Next time, wear wool.

GIA

Yeah?

GREY

Cotton tears up your feet. Nice toes, man.

GIA

All toes are ugly.

GREY

Oh no they aren’t, although really not very suckable right now.

(He massages her foot.)

GIA

Ahh.

GREY

Tight.

GIA

That’s . . . almost . . . as good as sex.

GREY

I won’t tell Jim. Maybe some hiking boots, too.

GIA

For the one time a year I get off my--ohhh.

GREY

Better do the other one.

GIA

I love you.

(Grey massages the other foot.)

GREY

I didn’t know love was so easy, I’d’ve done this when I was trying to get dates.

GIA

You’re hot, you got lots of dates I bet.
GREY

So sweat’s your kink, eh Denver?

GIA

All I can say is Terry’s lucky.

GREY

So’s Jim.

GIA

Damn you’re sweet. So all four of us are happy and we’re only in our thirties! Weee!

GREY

Woooo!

GIA

Wah-hah!

GREY

Whoa-ho! You’re in good spirits, is it the air?

GIA

Must be love.

(Puts her shoes back on.)

Or maybe it’s . . . hey Grey, I got some great news, before Terry and Jim catch up—I made the final cut for the Laureateship!

GREY

You did?

GIA

Yes! So, in a few years, you might know a famous writer.

GREY

Yeah. Um, Terry did, too.

GIA

She did? Oh.

GREY

Yeah.
GIA
That’s great. Damn, I hate competing with her. I didn’t know she was writing much these days.

GREY
It’s a struggle, but . . . hey, look, here they come, finally. Hey, you guys! What took you so long . . . ?

(Grey exits. Gia jots something and exits. Enter Grey, singing, with a lunch box and change of clothes. He is singing. This is the present, outside the school where he works.)

GREY
‘Never young forever
These days
Where have you gone?
Baaaaaaabyy,
Which way--?’

(Enter Gia.)

Gia! What’re you doin here?

GIA
Hello . . . so this is where you work?

GREY
That’s a lame answer.

GIA
Yeah . . . I really needed to talk to someone.

GREY
So I’m someone?

GIA
No, I mean . . . are you off work now?

GREY
Yeah, but I’m warnin you: I stink.
Then I won’t cling to you overmuch.

Good idea. We can talk here, why not?

Is that all right?

School’s out.

Thanks, Grey.

Let me just . . . I’ve got a clean shirt.

(He changes shirts.)

After school special.

Viewer discretion advised. I still stink, but oh well.

I’ll sit up-wind.

What’s up?

I’m . . . I don’t know how to start.

Shit.

Yeah.

Well, I’m ripe but I’m easy, so relax. Bite of an orange?
GIA
No, thanks. I've never heard you sing.

(He peels the orange.)

GREY
Did some backup vocals, but mostly I . . . shit, long time now. Career?

GIA
Not exactly, but everything’s intertwined, isn’t it?

GREY
“Intertwined.” I’m not good for guessing games.

GIA
You smell like--

GREY
Told ya.

GIA
But with that citrus it’s oddly sexy.

GREY

GIA
Do you like your job?

GREY
It’s mine, I get to be by myself—yeah.

GIA
By yourself, yes, that’s . . . that’s attractive.

GREY
With myself. That’s more like it—I like to be with myself.

GIA
But you have so many friends . . .

GREY
You’re staring at my orange.
You’re right.

(He hands her some.)

GREY
You’re thinking so hard I can almost hear you.

GIA
You can hear what I’m thinking!?

GREY
Heavy.

GIA
Sturm und Drang.

GREY
Now we’re cookin.

GIA
Grey, you know, all my adult life I’ve been striving for this laureateship. Why are you smiling?

GREY
Sorry, “Striving”!

GIA
It’s the right word!

(She hits him playfully.)

GREY
Okay, okay. I do find myself saying stuff like, “Hey, little dude, throw that ‘naner peel away, wouldja?”

GIA
Right.

GREY
It’s so you. Anyway, big career Thing . . . ?

GIA
I haven’t written a line.
GREY
You just got it—what, a month?

GIA
I know. I think I’m . . . frozen. Too much time alone.

(They eat.)

This is good.

GREY
You’ve never had writer’s block? Never, Lenver-Denver?

GIA
Never . . .

(She regards him.)

GREY
More big-talk?

GIA
Afraid?

GREY
Alert.

GIA
I think you’re afraid, Grey-Grey.

GREY
Not me, Gee-Gee.

GIA
Really, I need help. I need . . . I feel safe with you, and . . .

GREY
What’s wrong?

GIA

(They regard each other.)
GREY
I know, I’m in love with you too, Gia.

(Beat)

GIA
When? When . . . when did you know?

GREY
The day. We went hiking--

GIA
Yes! My stinky feet--

GREY
Sexy toes. Man! But I didn’t . . . after Jim left you, and you’d come over--

GIA
You and Terry and I talked and talked--

GREY
Something changed--

GIA
The three of us--

GREY
Everything somehow . . . shifted. So, now what?

GIA
I have no idea.

GREY
I’ve always known, if we go on, there’s no going back, is there? So I’ve kept quiet.

GIA
Should we talk about it?

GREY
Your move.

GIA
I shouldn’t move.
(After a silence, Gia kisses Grey.)

GREY

Now you’ve done it.

(Enter Terry, moving with some stiffness at their home; Gia is unaware of her. For Grey, the action is simultaneous.)

TERRY

If you loved me, you wouldn’t be doing this.

GREY

This is . . . like it’s out of . . .

GIA

Time.

TERRY

You’re hurting me, can’t you see that?

GREY

I . . .

GIA

I should go.

TERRY

Don’t you love me?

GREY

Yes. Wait--

GIA

I shouldn’t call you. So, would you call me?

TERRY

You’re not paying attention!

(Exit Gia.)

GREY

Yeah.--I am now.
TERRY
You’ve suddenly lost interest in monogamy? Are you listening to me?

GREY
You’re moving funny—you okay?

TERRY
This arthritis is worse . . . I haven’t taken my meds. Forget that, I mean, what now? What are you going to do?

GREY
Nothing.

TERRY
So what EXACTLY happened?

GREY
She came to see me over at school. We . . . talked. We kissed.

TERRY
I’ll be damned if I’ll let her get away with this. You know, Grey, love isn’t relative! Remember marital vows? Marriage is a sacrament!

GREY
Your religion, not mine.

TERRY
What are you afraid of?

GREY
Nothing!

TERRY
God! Grey, you keep away from her! We absolutely have to stick together! This car is a two-seater, we got no kids. Right?

GREY
God, I feel like my insides are all . . . turned out.--Where you going?

TERRY
Store.

GREY
Terry, don’t start smoking again . . .
TERRY

Don’t call her! A sacrament!

GREY

One little kiss . . . !

(Exit Terry; exit Grey. Enter Gia, unaware she is followed by Cod. They are on a trail in the woods.)

COD

Quantum mechanics.

GIA

Huh?

COD

You’re one of the few women I know who gets excited about quantum mechanics.

GIA

I’m sorry, but--

COD

Doc Cod, we met 520 or so days ago at dusk on a stretch of beach in front of your—no, you were renting.

GIA

Oh, oh, you, sorry, yes. Yes, I left you a message with a physics question.

COD

Then I left you a message—

GIA

I never called you back--

COD

And then we collided at the beach.

GIA

Great conversation—we agreed that superiority is relative, I think.

COD

Absolutely.
I remember.

 remember the two particles—

 Attracting and repelling. It was a long conversation. Wait, that’s not how it started--you were asking about women.

 How good’s your memory?

 Better than yours, I bet.

 Oh yeah? Remember this?

 (Cod sits down and points.)

 ‘She must be cold.’

 (Gia sits next to him, and the two play the game that they are back on that beach at dusk.)

 ‘It’s called nipping out.’

 ‘I meant wearing shorts at dusk. Why do women wear clothes like that?’

 ‘It’s the beach.’

 ‘It’s dusk.’

 ‘Got your attention.’

 ‘Which is . . . validation?’
‘Usually.’

‘So, making men excited is validating.’

‘Usually.’

‘Does she want attention?’

‘You mean sex? Who wouldn’t?’

‘I thought that a male perspective.’

‘It’s my perspective. So, you’re a physicist?—Funny word.’

You’re very good!

You’re paraphrasing.

You were more polite.

No I wasn’t.

‘Why did you call?—I’ve been curious.’

‘To ask you about Time for a series of poems I’m writing.’

‘Ah.’ A series?

Up to four volumes, trying to start the fifth. Then what?
It was a long time ago.

Make something up.

No! Wait, didn’t I ask about your . . .

(Pointing:)

‘Your beach house?’

‘No, I’m renting. Poets don’t own beach houses.’

‘Ah.’

‘Glorious view! Nothing but ocean and sky!’

‘I like the waves.’

‘Poets live for this.’

‘So do physicistssss.’

‘Because it calms and stirs?’

Were you quoting yourself?

Then the sand fleas.

Right! ‘Sand fleas—annoying little quarks.’

‘Geek.’
COD
‘So you want to know about the way a physicist looks at past and future?’

GIA
‘I’m trying to understand time and I’m stuck. Wait, your name—Doc Cod? Are you joking?’

COD
‘Do I look like a joker?’

GIA
‘Maybe I’ll call you Anagram.’

COD
‘Oh, I see, Gia. Then I’ll call you Iga.’

(Acting it out with relish:)

GIA
‘Very good—ouch—do sand fleas bite?’

COD
‘I skipped zoology. But I know preachers do.’

GIA
‘Preachers bite?’

COD
‘Oh, yes. My father did—what a piece of work he was. I have the scars, so I can prove it.’

(Beat)

GIA
You never showed me the scars. Teeth-marks?

COD
Well, if you want me to . . .

GIA
Then it got dark. ‘Getting dark, getting some stars.’

COD
I’m lost.
GIA
Um, didn’t I say something like, ‘The pain of lost love is the writer’s material.’

COD
Oh!—‘In science, we use analogies, like a poet does.’

‘Ah. So is time relative?’

COD
‘Absolutely.’

GIA
Cute. ‘I’ve come to the conclusion that time just is.’

COD
‘Which is why you called me. Well, ah . . . look up.’

‘Yes?’

COD
‘You’re looking at stars.’

GIA
‘Beautiful.’

COD
‘You are looking backward in time.’

GIA
‘Into infinity?’

COD
‘The universe may or may not be infinite.’

GIA
‘It it’s not infinite, then what?’

(He demonstrates with a gesture:)

COD
‘The Big bang . . . expanding . . . then contracting to . . . the Big Crunch.’
‘What do you see when you look up?’

‘The past. But mostly, I look down in—that’s the future of physics, quantum mechanics. We’re finding smaller and smaller particles.’

‘And is the universe infinitely small?’

‘We’ll find out. We keep looking deeper and deeper.’

‘You sure you can handle it? I hear quantum shit gets stranger and stranger all the time.’

‘I do think we will find the unifying principle—and tie everything together, the big universe up there and the small universe’—ouch!

Not a sand flea!

Maybe mosquitoes—but, see?--long sleeves, long pants.

I remember it going something like that.

Me too, and here we are. Now. So, how are you, Iga?

Fine, Doc . . . Fish.

I should get out into the woods more.

You need better shoes for the mud.

Ah.
GIA
I came out here to try and do some writing. In fact, I still don’t really get quantum mechanics, I’ve got to admit.

COD
It’s great—uncertainty, extra dimensions, and perception.

GIA
So tell me, how does this thing work where the universe does what we want?

COD
Oh, you mean . . . here . . . visualize a screen with one slit. Then there’s another screen behind it with two slits in it. Or think of it as two holes--

GIA
Is this dirty?

COD
Hmm? Iga—I like you. You shoot an electron through the first screen and it goes through the one hole. It gets to the second screen—which hole does it choose?

GIA
The electron has freewill? Then I hope it chooses the top one.

COD
Both.

GIA
Figures.

COD
I mean whichever you’re looking at.

GIA
So the universe reacts to you.

COD
It satisfies your desired result.

GIA
You realize, Anagram, that you’re saying the universe is male.

COD
But are you following my reasoning?
GIA
How does this connect to the fact that light is dual—both wave and particle?

COD
I love a paradox, don’t you? You know the principle of complementarity?

GIA
Are we talking gender relations again? I think you quantum guys should study psychology.

COD
We are looking at psychology, yes, we have to. It relates, everything relates.

GIA
So physics says things are two-faced?

COD
You could put it like that.

GIA
Time, too—two-faced?

COD
Ah, maybe. And people.

GIA
Right.

COD
And every experiment depends on the observer—their frame of reference.

GIA
And, we live in a universe of complete uncertainty.

COD
Exactly. But I’m fine with that. I don’t like being wrong, but I don’t care about uncertainty.

GIA
Right this second it’s scaring the shit out of me.

COD
Oh, what, you believe in God?
Don’t insult me.

Sorry.

So has quantum mechanics helped you with your relationships?

Ahhh . . . you know, I don’t meet a lot of women, unfortunately, and, to be frank, most of them confuse me on virtually every level. But . . .

The shoes have got to go.

Thanks. Damn.

Your watch stop?

No, but I’m late for a . . . I have time with the particle accelerator this evening, and--

Hot date.

One trillion eV.

Scorching.

It is so amazing what you see when you look deep inside . . . er, could I call you or something? We can talk some more?

I . . . I’ve got your number at the university.

Fine.
GIA
Cod, did you follow me up here?

COD
Coincidence. You know, at any given moment, the electron doesn’t know both where it is and where it’s going. Right? Why should we be different?

(He exits.)

GIA
Nice ass. Maybe what I need is . . .

(She sits down.)

Sex.

(Takes out her pad.)


(Terry enters with pill bottles. Professionally:)

TERRY

(Gia takes bottles and gets out pills. Exit Terry. Enter Eva with orange juice. Gia swallows pills and drinks juice. She staggers.)

EVA
Who, big sis. That cannon finally hit you too?

GIA
What? Oh, Eva, what’re you doing here? Is this my funeral?

EVA
I hope not.

GIA
Eva, I said some lovely things at your funeral.
EVA
I only heard about that later.

GIA
Time travels in diverse paces with dead people.

EVA
No shit, Shakespeare.

GIA
You were smarter than I was.

EVA
Wow, I had to die to hear that.

GIA
I'm lost, Eva, please--

EVA
You just needed someone who lived in those same barren suburban hills of our disaffected youth?

GIA
Rebel Sisters!

EVA AND GIA
Protest! Defy! Fuck off! And die!

GIA
I think I stopped believing in God when you died.

EVA
Ah. You knew that I never made love?

GIA
I figured.

EVA
The last thing I thought . . . the very last feeling . . . was, God I'm so horny.

GIA
Really? What's Time like for you?
Hey, I’m like that character in your poems: the little girl? She’s excited she’s lost leaving the mountains, running through the woods into the meadow, across the plain, and tumbling down by the sea. Your map.

I forgot about her. Do you think he can love us both?

How should I know? I’m a dead virgin. Don’t you like being lost in the wild any more?

Maybe not now.

(Drums.)

Ohhhh. Maybe it’s not safe for little girls . . . who lust after married men.

Love you, Sis . . . I feel funny . . . must be falling asleep . . .

Time dissolves.

Whatever, don’t mind me.

(The lights slowly dim. Gia lies down on a bed, which seems to be in a hospital.)

Words take time--fill a mouth like a massacre.

That’s morbid—but not bad.

Wish you were young?

Eva?
VOICE
What are you doing with your mind?

GIA
Why can’t I write?

(Enter Cod.)

COD
Iga?

EVA
He’s cute.

GIA
Isn’t he? Nice ass.

EVA
Yeah!

COD
Should I have brought flowers? I’m not very good at this.

(Enter Cod. Terry appears at her pharmacy counter.)

GIA
Are these moments . . . or years?

EVA
It’s hide and seek, dummy, you’re it, count to a trillion! COUNT!

GIA
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten . . .

(Cod presents a piece of paper.)

COD
Good evening, Mrs. Clare-Dunne, what have you got for a coma?

TERRY
Hello, doctor. Patient is named Lenvers, eh? Here, I’ll put the medication in some juice. Ten drops. Oh, that may have been more than ten! Oh well, more is better, right?
You’re the pharmassicist.

Are you screwing her?

Maybe.

She can use a straw. Or just dump the shit into her I.V. Why not?!

Thank you!

*(Cod brings Gia orange juice, Gia drinks it. Exit Terry.)*

Ugh. My teeth are cold. What’s with the orange motif?

Didn’t your ex-husband attend Syracuse University?

Mouth feels weird . . . Uhhhhhhhh . . .

*(Lights get strange as Gia slips into a coma. She hears voices.)*

Words.
Words.
Words take time.
Fill a mouth.
Fill a mouth . . . like a massacre.

*(Intermission.)*
Act II

(Lights. Gia is lying as before. Enter Eva; she nudges Gia her with her foot.)

EVA
Party-pooper.

GIA
Leave me alone.

EVA
You’re not playing, you just want to dream about sex.

GIA
Long afternoon lovemaking . . .

EVA
Then what?

GIA
We down some meds with orange juice . . . no, no, we drink some wine, and we talk . . .

EVA
But Cod doesn’t like wine.

GIA
Oh, yeah, Grey likes beer.

EVA
Making love instead of making work?

GIA
Leave me alone.

EVA
Comatose.

GIA
Must escape all these traps. Must go deeper.

EVA
You are the trap, Sis.
(Surprised:)

GIA
You heard that?

EVA
Face it, you’re fantasizing feeling the shapes of your breasts and wondering what he would think of them.

GIA
Don’t you think fondling is arousing?

EVA
Fondling the idea of love—

GIA
Shouldn’t we all do that, Eva? Fondle the idea of love? Fondle each other . . . ?

EVA
Or, short of that, fondle ourselves?

GIA
Better than nothing!

EVA
This is sooooo deep, lonely girl.

GIA
This day has lasted forever. He said tomorrow he’d come.

EVA
And used that verb? Nothing like a dirty double entendre—

GIA
Mmmmmm.

EVA
So undersexed and now, suddenly, wishing it, aren’t you?

GIA
Love, Eva.

EVA
Or is it sex you need?
Will he really come?

Traded writing for lusting?

Grape on the vine . . .

I’m not the little girl.

GIA

Eager to be eyed, smelled, touched, mouthed, tongued, chewed . . . skin could break.

EVA

Face it, you are the little girl, Gia.

(Enter Grey with flowers.)

GREY

Wake up, Gia. It’s me, I’m here.

EVA

Don’t forget he’s MARRIED!

(Gia starts up. Exit Eva.)

GIA

I fell asleep.

GREY

I’m early.

GIA

Those are gorgeous.

GREY

I went hiking.

GIA

I used to do that.
GREY

Here.

(She takes the flowers and smells them.)

GIA

Wild. Thank you. Well, here we are.

GREY

Yes.

GIA

Yes.

GREY

Maybe we could walk up the hill, and take one of the trails.

GIA

Walk and talk?

GREY

A short hike.

GIA

That would be lovely, Grey.

(They walk.)

It's so close, but I never go up to the woods.

GREY

Got warmer.

GIA

It could break—

GREY

Yes.

GIA

Will—

GREY

This way . . .
It’s soft now—

The soil, yes.

Warm, you’re right.

Fresh out here.

Smells like wine.

I’m a beer man.

(They stop and laugh.)

Nobody’s perfect. You don’t like wine? Why?

That’s our favorite question. Wine turns my teeth grey, and I’m already . . .

BAD.

(She hits him.)

I like something that tingles: mmm, beer.

Wine tingles.

Hey, Gia, there’s a song--“Never Young Forever.” Remember that?

Pop song?
GREY
You’ve never heard it?

GIA
No. Snob.

GREY
I’m sure my . . . I’m sure the lyrics wouldn’t impress you that much, but I . . .

GIA
Your song? This is a song you wrote? You’re still getting residuals or whatever they call it?

GREY
Yeah, okay, yeah, my lyrics, a few bucks, I was twenty.

GIA
You never told me.

GREY
You never asked me, thank God.

GIA
You believe in God?

GREY
My point is, where do we find forever? In being young? Or, in what we believe? I want to do the right thing, and I want enough time to live. Whatever that means.

(Enter Terry, still stiff, more grey in her hair, smoking.)

Is that deep, or . . . oh.

GIA
Yes?

TERRY
I won’t let her take you away from me.

(Terry coughs.)

GREY
Um . . . lost my train of thought.
TERRY
What do you want from our marriage?

GREY
It was one little kiss!—I have to go, you know, Gia.

GIA
Will I see you again?

GREY
I better go, bye.

(T Grey takes a step toward Terry.)

How was work?

TERRY
Filled pill bottles for old men--tried to smile, but it was hard to smile, Grey.

GREY
You smell like smoke.

TERRY
Your hands are dirty.

GREY
What do you mean?

TERRY
I mean your hands are dirty.

GREY
Could we talk?

TERRY
Sure, let's, because I feel like I've swallowed poison.

(Exit Grey and Terry. Enter Eva, acting like a little girl.)

EVA
Why aren't you playing?

GIA
Huh? I'm depressed. I'm an adult.
That sucks toes. Catch me!

I don’t run any more.

Weeeeeee.

I’ve got to write.

Unless there’s a fire.

What do you mean?

Remember Terry Clare’s house burned down?--and she lost all her toys and they couldn’t do anything about it even though they were rich?

Eva, don’t ghosts have better things to do?

We can play ride the wave of light!

I don’t have time, I’m going to WRITE!

Where’s your sense of humor hiding?

I’m in a coma! Comas are not funny!

They’re . . . distressing.

Oh, boo hoo!

I’ll get you for that!
(Eva runs off. Gia’s phone rings. Enter Terry.)

Hello?

TERRY

Oh, I wasn’t sure if our phones would work in here. Remember my lousy poem?

TERRY

“Entryway
No entry . . .”
REMEMBER?

GIA

“Choking next to the sidewalk . . .”

TERRY

“Puking next to the urinal fountain.”

GIA

“Dissipated.” See? Yes, I remember, okay: it’s gross! Satisfied?

TERRY

No. Dissatisfied. But my shift is over, and I’m going to go home and put my husband in my mouth. What do you think about that?

(Terry hands her a pill bottle, exits, saying:)

Amen.

GIA

Terry? Hello?--Wench.

(Gia takes the pills.)

These distractions! These, these, voices! LEAVE ME ALONE!

(Gia throws away the pills. Throws away her phone. Enter Cod.)

Ick, what’s in my mouth?
COD

Iga, you’re hard to get hold of.

GIA

Oh, it’s you. Careful!—black beetle.

COD

Ah—wouldn’t want to squish your bug on my new shoes.

GIA

Ah.

COD

I tried to call you, but no answer.

GIA

I’m trying to . . . get away from traps—I mean, distractions, and prescriptions, and do some work.

COD

Prescriptions? Ah, I took valium in grad school—the good old days. So you like sitting here in the woods with the bugs?

GIA

Listen—hear the beetle climbing on that leaf . . . the bird jumping around in the ferns. There’s a bee . . .

COD

Orbiting my head—get!

(He swats at the air.)

GIA

It won’t sting.

COD

How do you know?

GIA

Did you ever think how time moves for bees? Or trees?

COD

I . . . I got new shoes.
GIA

They’re . . . nice.

COD

More . . . um, stylish.

GIA

Look, this is terrible to say, but I came down in here to write, to be alone, to get away from everyone—sorry.

COD

Not stylish?

GIA

Well, definitely an improvement over loafers. But, for walking in the woods? Oo, sun’s out--look up--so many different values of light: dapples, mottles, beams.

COD

You’re ignoring me and my shoes in favor of . . . zoology.

GIA

Look, I’ve been lost, or frozen, something—and work is my only . . .

COD

I’m . . . it’s just I want to . . . spend time with you.

GIA

Oh . . . Doctor . . .

COD

Doc Cod.

GIA

I know, Anagram.

COD

Iga.

GIA

Doctor—sorry—I’m, um, sort of involved with . . . I’m in a mess.

COD

Oh. Seriously sort of in a mess?
GIＡ
I . . . think so, I mean, yes—it is serious. I don’t know.

COD
Ah. That’s too bad . . . for me. But, we’ll still be friends, and . . . I’ll come to the woods again—and, or something—I should go, these stylish shoes and I . . . should . . . leave you to your . . . mess.

 Thanks--good bye.

COD
Good bye.

GIＡ
Hey, Cod.

COD
Gia?

GIＡ
Do come back some time.

COD
I have an idea. I will be back.

(Gia stays. Cod walks away and Grey enters, and they have their scene apart from Gia who tries to write.)

COD
Your wife’s out?

GREY
Working.

COD
She’s a pharmacist, Gia tells me.

GREY
And you’re the physicist?

COD
I am. I smash particles.
Hmm.

You’re the maintenance worker.

That’s my day job.

I like janitors.

You know janitors?

Where I work, late, yes.

Ah.

Quantum mechanics, particle research . . .

I know.

You do?

What do you want?

You’re very blunt, good. Mr. Grey—

It’s my first name.

So, ah, you’re right, this wasn’t a random event. Ms. Lenvers and I have been meeting on occasion to talk about physics—discussing the paradox about light. That it appears to be both a wave and a particle, but then if you know all about physics--
Doc, really, get to the point.

COD
I came to ask you to stop with Ms. Lenvers. Make it more . . . clear. Tidy things up.

GREY
Why?

COD
I’m in love with her.

GREY
Ah.

COD
So, you see.

GREY
What?

COD
The geometry: I’m not married, you are married to a wife.

GREY
Yes, I see our marital statuses.

COD
Then I think that’s clear. Stop.

GREY
You just said light was both things.

COD
Light isn’t people. Am I not getting through to you?

GREY
I see what you’re doing.

COD
Good. So, stop.

(Cod starts to leave.)
GREY
Did you think this would work? To push in here and say, “This is mine” and then just walk out?

COD
I’ve said what I wanted.

GREY
You like playing games?

COD
You don’t believe me?

GREY
I thought maybe you’d followed me home from school, like a private eye.

COD
I . . . I don’t think . . .

GREY
So did you follow me? I think you might be a creep—I think you should leave Gia alone.

COD
Be reasonable. You’re married—doesn’t that mean anything to you? Don’t you care about your wife? Do you want to smash your marriage? Tell me—has she written anything since you two started . . . ?

(Gia looks up from what she’s writing and interjects:)

GIA
It was just a little kiss!

COD
Now, Gia, you stay over there. We’re over here, you can’t hear us.

GIA
Of course I can.

GREY
You think that’s my fault?

COD
You’ve heard of cause and effect, I presume?
GREY
I know when I don't like somebody.

COD
Oh, that’s good logic.

GREY
Screw logic. Why did you have to get involved?

COD

(Cod moves back to Gia.)

GREY
Codpiece.

(Grey dials the phone.)

COD
So, Iga, I talked to him, I told him I love you.

GIA
Oh! Cod! Why did you have to get involved?

COD
Don’t you feel the attraction?

GREY
Come on, Lenvers, answer!

GIA
Yes, but . . .

GREY
Dammit!

(Grey exits.)

COD
I feel it, too. You need love.

GIA
Love or sex? What’s sex like for you?
Huh?

Like drums, pounding? Not like waves, not like lines of text, or the word . . . what’s it like for you?

It’s a sensual . . . what’s the word?

Shock.

Yes.

Me too. Thought is fast like light. But loving should be slow . . . drums, trembling. Waah-waah-waah: don’t you think?

Yes, I really do: waah-waah-waah!

God I am so horny!

So am I!

There’s a hiding place here I found, down, behind the salal and Oregon grape.

Let’s go!

(They crawl together out of sight. Gia’s phone is ringing somewhere. A knocking. Knocking. Enter Gia, in a state of semi-undress. Knocking.)

Funny taste in my mouth. Come in!
Terry. I must’ve fallen asleep . . . You . . . are you okay? Hey, you stopped dying your hair, it’s going grey . . . do you have arthritis? Did I dream that? How much time has passed?

TERRY
I hear you’re fucking some physicist—what a weird word.

GIA
Who told you that?

TERRY
He did.

GIA
Cod told you?

TERRY
There’s a drug for everything. Writing’s our drug—we need it.

GIA
I’m sorry, I didn’t plan it to hurt you--

TERRY
Well it hurt. A new volume! It’s very, very long. Here.

(Terry holds out manuscript.)

Go on, read it. Wet your finger, the pages stick.

(Gia takes the manuscript. She finds the pages sticky to turn.)

GIA
What’s on here, honey?

TERRY
You being ironic?

GIA
I can’t get the pages apart.
Then get your finger wet!

*(Moistens her finger, turns a page, moistens it again.)*

GIA

Bleah, this paper tastes terrible. Funny taste--

TERRY

Read!

GIA

There’s nothing here— it’s blank!

Keep going.

*(Gia moistens and turns.)*

GIA

It’s all blank.

TERRY

All blank? Ah. Maybe it’s your manuscript! Kiss it. Screw it. Marry it. But touch my husband again, I’ll shoot you dead with a live bullet.

*(Terry slouches away stiffly. Gia sits down, blank manuscript in front of her. She picks up the pen, she puts it down; she is ill, poisoned, confused.)*

GIA

Can’t talk . . .

*(Lights dim.)*

Am I going deeper?

*(Whispers:)*

VOICES

Deeper and deeper, yes!
But is it death?
   Ah, shit, not death!
Death makes grey; it deforms faces.
Makes fertilizer.
Death is a comic, laughing.
   Death is fucking annoying.
Is undertaker.
Death’s constant, hard as iron.
   Is this a comedy?
Is destroyer.
   Not very funny.
Death is Time’s cannonball pounding us night after night until it hits.

GIA

Oh, shit!

DADDY

Stinky!

(Lights up. Daddy is playing with an imaginary baby.)

What a dirty poopy diaper, yes, indeed! That’s you!
(Laughs)

You are ‘Yes, indeed!’

GIA

Who are you?

DADDY

Wee! My little ‘Yes indeed!’ Miss Happy, Miss Easygoing! Good little Miss Sleeps Through the Night—thank God!

GIA

Daddy?

DADDY

Aaah, Gia, Gia! Daddy and Mama’s little Italo-Frencho ‘Yes, indeed!’

(Mock Italian accent:)

Gia, Gia, eh?
GIA

Yes, Daddy, I wish--

DADDY

Tomorrow we’re going to play, and sing, La Gioconda ring-ding!

GIA

Daddy, hold me!

DADDY

It’s late, now, gurgler.

GIA

I thought it was morning—

DADDY

Now, now, come on, Little Miss. Sometimes the little ‘Yes indeed’ has to sleep, peep, eep, neep—sweeeet and bbooboooo . . . leahhhhhhh!

GIA

Hee hee hee!

DADDY

‘Night, my dearest one, my little Gia.

GIA

‘Night, Daddy.

DADDY

Shuuuuussshhhh.

GIA

Don’t leave me alone, Daddy!

(Exit Daddy.)

Daddy? Grey, where are you? Stop. Where the fuck am I? Can I be dead? Dreaming? I should write this down. Where’s my blank manuscript?

(She looks around.)

No walls . . . no ceiling . . . but a ‘floor’—floor means dimension. Hard. Cold. Bare. God!

(Enter Hound.)
Woof. Where?

HOUND

GIA

Uh . . . why don’t you stay here, and I’ll just go over--

HOUND

Round the moon?

GIA

Sure.

HOUND

And down the darkling deeps?

GIA

You’re paraphrasing.

HOUND

And high past the sky. I thought you were going.

GIA

Better than discoursing with a . . . dubious-looking . . . did I summon you?

HOUND

I answer when I’m called. Woof.

GIA

So, we’re playing conceits? You’re the dog that . . . ?

HOUND

Pursues.

GIA

Oh, for God’s sake.

HOUND

Yes?

(Enter Cod.)

GIA

Come on, I mean you’re God?
COD
It’s Cod. Remember? Gia—I heard you make a sound, what did you say? It’s Cod, remember? Doc Cod?

(Exit the Hound. Gia gets in the hospital bed.)

GIA
Hey, you’re a great lay . . .

COD
It’s a cliché, but I wonder if you know I’m here, somehow.

GIA
I do, I’m here, with this . . . dog. Oh, she’s gone.

COD
Did you hold it against me that, uh, if we got married your last name would be a bottom-sucking white fish? He’s married. Why can’t we . . . have a relationship? With outstanding sexual intercourse, of course.

GIA
You can’t hear me, can you?

COD
We had fun talking, didn’t we?

GIA
And fucking. Or was that all in my head?

(Cod takes her hand.)

COD
If you wake up, will you give me a chance?

GIA
You’d take care of me, wouldn’t you.

COD
You know, relationship—there may be a relationship between the quantum universe and the unconscious, so maybe . . . I never have the words . . .

(Exit Cod.)
Nice ass . . . come back!

(Enter Hound.)

God, not you.

Have you deserved love?

Sure, why not?

Run.

No.

Better run.

I prefer hiding.

Hunting.

Tricking. You’re in my brain, ticking, while I’m lying on a table in a coma in a world somewhere out there--

Chasing.

I UNDERSTAND THE CONCEIT.

Still afraid, still hiding, still running away.

Go chase your tail . . . go play in the highway.
HOUND
No tail . . . no highways. Visions and wisdom, yes. Tails, no, highways, no.

GIA
I don’t want your crappy wisdom, dog.

HOUND
Hound.

GIA
Your breath smells like a dog’s butt.

HOUND
Grrrrrrrrrr.

GIA
I don’t believe this. I gotta get outta here.

HOUND
Woof!

(Gia exits, pursued by Hound. Enter Eva on all fours, wagging her rear:)

EVA
Ruff, ruff, ruff! Hah, he’s all mine, Sis.

(Enter Journalist:)

JOURNALIST
Hey, uh . . . well, I’m here for the story. Are you Miss Lenvers?

EVA
Yes, I am Miss Lenvers, unsew my stifling hymen, please.

(She shows him her rear.)

JOURNALIST
Wha--? . . . ohhh, uhhh, sorry! I’ve got journalissistic principles. See? Can we get started?

EVA
Yes, please.
JOURNALIST
I mean the interview. First of all, uha, what about—is—how do you feel, how does it feel, being the mad Poet Laureate?

EVA
Penetrating!

JOURNALIST
Now hey, I’m here for the story: so I’m after the who what where when why how, not the . . . Uha—that’s it, I’m uh, I’m a journalisssst.

EVA
So make me your story, fish-lips.

JOURNALIST
Now, Miss Lenvers, I didn’t come here for that.

EVA
Why won’t you come in?

JOURNALIST
Jesus—oops, no blasphemy allowed in the surreal coma deep-freeze, sorry! I’m sorry! Christ! Um, listen, this isn’t working out, I’ll get the News to send somebody else.

EVA
Why? You’re perfect, and I’m . . . okay, okay, so you want my story, don’t you?

JOURNALIST
Uh, I guess News wants it.

EVA
So you want it.

JOURNALIST
I guess so.

EVA
Say it.

JOURNALIST
Say what?

EVA
Say I want it.
JOURNALIST

I want it.

EVA

Ahhh, so do I. God I am so . . . ! Now, I’ll give you what you want if you give me yourself, now, so, come here . . . come, come, come . . .

JOURNALIST

Er, Miss Lenvers, are you sure--?

EVA

YES!

JOURNALIST

But you--

EVA

I want love!

JOURNALIST

Love or sex?

EVA

Come here. You want my story? COME!

JOURNALIST

Okay! What if I interview you . . . during the uh . . . ? Kill two birds with one . . . ?

EVA

You’re making me crazy—do you know how long I’ve waited?

JOURNALIST

Is it a deal?

EVA

YES! Use my back.

(Eva returns to all fours. The Journalist ‘enters’ her from behind, meanwhile jotting notes on a pad with a pencil, using her back as a desk.)
JOURNALIST
It’s hard to write. Gotta get into rhythm here. Okay, so, Miss Lenvers, the News / would like / to know / your theory on how / you were poisoned--

EVA
Ohhhhhhh.

JOURNALIST
Uha / uha / uho / uho . . .

EVA
Ohhhhh . . . !

This isn’t working.

EVA
Oh yes it is!

Concentrate!

EVA
Mmmm hmmm . . . !

JOURNALIST
Did you O.D.? Your rival poison you? Are you mad / mad / mad / mad?

EVA
I mount!

(She ‘mounts’ him.)

JOURNALIST
It was easier writing the other way.

EVA
My chest.

(He puts the pad on her chest.)

JOURNALIST
What’s your theory about--quantum jiggling?
EVA

Lust!

JOURNALIST

How does it feel to have your personal consciousness—titillated?

EVA

Like rose-water in my mouth, down my throat, a warm animal in my loins, and the curtains of the world breaking! AHHHHH!

(Cannon fire. Enter Gia, searching vainly for pen and paper. She sees the pad and pencil in the Journalist’s hands and takes them and writes, having broken through writer’s block.)

GIA

Keep it down! Hey, give me those.

Hey.

EVA

That’s my idea of heaven.

GIA

I’m finally writing, sis!

You’re a writer, too?

GIA

Whole undulating thoughts! I’ve broken through!

EVA

Me too!

JOURNALIST

Hey, this was supposed to be my breakthrough story, the nutcase poet in a coma!

EVA

Say Newsboy, how long does it take your particle accelerator to warm up again?
Eva, shut up!

JOURNALIST
Eva?

EVA
Ruff, ruff, ruff!

JOURNALIST
I thought you were Miss Gia Lenvers.

GIA
I’m Gia, she’s Eva my sister—now shut the fuck up! I’m working—Volume Five!

JOURNALIST
Damnation, I need my pencil!

(He takes it.)

And the pad!

GIA
Fuck you!

JOURNALIST
You think that’ll stop a journalist? I’ll get my own manuscript!

EVA
Hurry back!

(Exit Journalist.)

GIA
What’ll I write on now?

EVA
Your naked skin.

GIA
What’s gotten into you?

EVA
Pop goes the cherry.
GIA

My shirt—I’ll write on the inside of my shirt.

(Gia takes off her shirt, turns it inside out, and writes.)

EVA

Aren’t you jealous?

(Eva goes to all fours.)

GIA

Why are you acting like a . . . ? Dog—dog motif. Eva, hey, hey, do you know the hound?

EVA

We’ve played fetch a few times.

GIA

Who is she?

EVA

Just a bitch, but dry, not in heat like I am! Why aren’t you in heat, Gia? Why are you so cold?

GIA

God!

(Enter Hound.)

EVA

Now look what you’ve done. Grrrrrrrr.

HOUND

Woof.

GIA

I know who you are, dog. Stop the disguise, Terry! Stand up and let’s have it out, once and for all!

(The Hound stands up and becomes Terry.)

TERRY

You dirtied my marriage, Gia Lenvers
(Terry slaps Gia. Enter Journalist with two pistols. Crowd cheering sounds, perhaps.)

JOURNALIST
Listen to that crowd! AND here we are in the subconscious arena of our Poet Laureate and it’s bedlam, folks, ‘cause it’s the ultimate showdown!

GIA
Terry, it was one little kiss!

TERRY
Judas!

EVA
How about a big bang, loverman.

JOURNALIST
It’s a duel, not a bang, Miss Eva, to the DEATH! You be her second.

(Enter Grey.)

GREY
What’s the ruckus?

TERRY
We’re settling it.

GIA
Daddy, help me.

GREY
Daddy?

JOURNALIST
She’s a little nuts, never mind.

TERRY
Can’t love us both.

EVA
The dual nature of love—sex!
JOURNALIST
Down, girl, down, the duel is to the death!

EVA
Sex should never wait!

JOURNALIST
You, the husband—you be your wife’s second. And you, be a good girl and take her a pistol.

GREY
These are weird pistols.

(Eva gives Gia a pistol as Grey does the same for Terry.)

JOURNALIST
Ready? Five paces, go!

(Terry paces off.)

GIA
Stop! This is absurd, I don’t know how to shoot this thing.

GREY
Should I show her?

TERRY
Stay out of it, Grey, this is woman’s business.

EVA
Grrrrr.

JOURNALIST
This is a question of honor, you smelly janitor! Start over.

GIA
It’s utterly absurd.

JOURNALIST
Ready? Five paces, go!

(They pace. Terry shoots Eva instead of Gia. Eva lies still.)
JOURNALIST

Dead. DEAD! What a story!

GIA

God damn you to hell.

(Gia shoots Terry and she dies theatrically. Grey, in grief, has a heart attack.)

GREY

My chest! My wife! My heart!

(Grey dies theatrically. Gia tries to go to him, but the Journalist pushes her away.)

JOURNALIST

What a game!

(Gia is pushed into the bed and sits; the Journalist becomes Cod. The hospital room:)

GIA

No, no, no!

COD

You’re awake, you’re awake! Gia! It’s Cod!

GIA

Where’s my shirt? Where’s my shirt, my shirt?

COD

Gia, it’s me, it’s Cod, you’re out of it.

GIA

Look—they’re all dead—look!

COD

Gia, it’s okay, lie quiet—

GIA

Dead, I killed Terry, ’cause she shot Eva, Grey’s having a heart attack--!
COD
Gia, it’s just us, you’re in isolation, it’s okay, it’s alright, it’s alright, I’m right here.

GIA
Don’t you see them? Look!

COD
See whom?

GIA
THEM! Grey, there. And Terry and Eva, over there!

COD
You’re just coming out of your coma, it’s okay, it’s alright, this is wonderful! I think you’re just disoriented.

GIA
Look, will you? Why won’t you look?

COD
You’re in a hospital, there are no dead bodies here—that would be absurd.

(Gia tries to get up.)

Calm down, shhhhh.

GIA
Someone poisoned me! Let me off this bed! And what did you do with my shirt?

COD
You’re acting irrationally, Gia, can’t you see that?

GIA
Okay, okay, I’m calm, I’m calm. Okay?

COD
Okay.

GIA
Now will you please look?

COD
There’s nothing to see. Ah, I’m going to turn the lights down, they’re playing tricks on your eyes.
GIA
No, don't do that!

(He turns down the lights or they just go down. He goes into the darkness where the bodies are.)

What are you doing? You're taking them away! You're doing something to them! I can hear you!

(Cod drags the other characters offstage.)

DADDY’S VOICE
‘Night, my dearest one, my little Gia.

GIA
Daddy?

COD
Gia, please, you’re really upset, you have to calm down.

GIA
I’m not crazy! Turn the lights back on! Turn them on!

EVA’S VOICE
How come I was smarter, Sis, but I had to die?

GIA
Eva! How can you be my doctor, you’re a physicist! This doesn’t make any sense! And this . . . this isn’t a hospital room, where am I?

TERRY’S VOICE
Bye Gia, you bitch.

(Drums. Gia sinks deeper back into the coma.)

VOICES
Void, entangling glassy-no-more surface
It’s kind of like getting stuck in seaweed
Turbulent tides
Without a life jacket
See the space-sea, the space within
Ride the waves like a see saw
Seize, if you may, the self
Or else pitch and drown your voice
Wrecked at the shore
Your soul scattered into sand.
Once radiant, bright, quick
That’s what death is, dark divisions—
   It’s kind of like when you shatter a glass at night:
Sand in a cyclotron,
Our cells scattered madly
Like caustic laughter in an echo chamber . . .

(Pause. Darkness. Echoes.)

GIA

Cyclotron?

(Some light, pause.)

If I’m dead, why do I keep hearing words? Painters see strokes, filmmakers see shots, mathematicians see variables, physicists—weird word—physicists see particles. Building blocks. Need the building blocks—make a mosaic.

(Echoes cease. Enter the other characters.)

Move the tiles: the words.

EVA

Live?

DADDY

Love?

JOURNALIST

Lust?

HOUND

Lord, these games you play!

GIA

No games . . . can we talk?

DADDY

Sure!
HOUND
Woof—playing a dog is marginal, but playing a mosaic tile?

JOURNALIST
I feel like I’m being objectified as a hard object, you know?

GIA
Where’s Grey?

JOURNALIST
Fishing for orange peels, smelly son of a bitch.

EVA
Grumpy.

JOURNALIST
Haven’t had my latte . . . my cigarette.

HOUND
I’ve got a pack. Oh, but no light.

EVA
Dreaming of past oral fixations, sis?

DADDY
It’s really big in here.

EVA
It’s a lousy assignment.

DADDY
Frightening when there are no limits.

JOURNALIST
Yeah, no referees.

DADDY
Geographical features.

GIA
I love you, Daddy.

EVA
Hmph, you’re more fucked up than I was.
I love you, Eva.

Too late, I’m dead, remember?

What you need is a good screw, lady.

Don’t talk to my daughter that way!

Nobody loves around here any more.

Can I have that cigarette?

No phallic references!

Don’t you want to screw, Eva?

I already did my fake screwing. Instead of just thinking about things, you do ‘em, sis!

(Gia stands still.)

Oh. Oh look, a bed. I think . . . I’ll lie down.

(Gia goes and lies on the bed; the others are now their other selves in the hospital room; Eva exits.)

Will there be any . . . brain damage?

Won’t know till she wakes up again.
TERRY
If she wakes up again.

GREY
Multiple drug interaction! Terry, you’re the pharmacist. Was it deliberate? Did she O.D.?

TERRY
She was taking, well at least three different prescription drugs: an antidepressant, a soporific, and a painkiller. She took a bit too much—deliberately? Who knows. In rare cases, the side effects can be extreme.

GREY
Every time I come to visit you’re here.

COD
I’m a loyal physicisst. Jealous? Visiting hours are up anyway. Go home, comfort your wife.

TERRY
Come on. With a coma, it could be hours or weeks, darling.

COD
Please not months or years . . .

(They leave.)

GIA
Hey, stop! Years? Wait . . . Hello? Eva, I’m all alone, they left me all alone, Eva . . .

(Eva enters sucking a lollipop.)

EVA
What you whining about now, sis?

GIA
What’s that smell?

EVA
Memory.

GIA
Mercury?
Your fillings?

Funny taste in my mouth . . . a massacre . . .

Interesting image.

Poison? Oral fixations?

Burns your tongue?

Foul, get me out from inside here, I’m ready.

You sure? Better look up here first.

Where? Oh. So bare.

Rows and rows and rows . . . frozen. Reminds me of that silver thaw when we couldn’t leave the house.

You slid down the driveway on your bottom.

Careful you don’t slip--a finite space can be infinite.

Remember that time you held me after I fell down and cracked my skull?

I was afraid your head would break into pieces. Yeah--I petted your hair.

Would you pet my hair now?

Now look there, Sis--
GIA
Are those blackberry bushes?

EVA
Go ahead, eat the canes.

GIA
We both loved blackberries . . .

EVA
There isn’t any fruit.

GIA
Why? What are you sucking?

EVA
This is your mind, not mine! Your funeral, your fuck! Don’t ask me why it’s frozen! Don’t make me read your symbols! Why were you always leaving? I was lonely, too! I didn’t have a Daddy either, did I? But you, big Sis, face it: you always took everything you wanted! Even the boy I wanted!

GIA
I didn’t know until later you loved Jim--

EVA
What a fucking soap opera! And I died alone! There, eat that guilt, sis!

GIA
I am so sorry, I regret that--!

EVA
Stop! Don’t think about me any more, you understand? I have things to . . . not do! Go on and lie down. Lie down in your selfish somnolence with your frozen synapses, licking them one at a time if that’s what you want, if that’s all you care about. I’ve got things . . . to not do. Places to not be—like inside you!

(Gia lies down in the hospital bed. Eva exits. Enter Grey and Terry; they have lattes.)

GREY
Gia, Terry and I are back! It’s a beautiful morning.
TERRY
We know how much you love lattes, can coffee revive you? Take a whiff . . . mmmmmmmmm!

GREY
Shall we tell you jokes?

TERRY
Oh, like that hilarious adultery joke you told me the other day.

GREY
That was in poor taste. But so was your Judas joke.

TERRY
Heh, heh, still got my wicked sense of humor. Hey, Gia, I'm writing, like crazy, aren't you jealous?

GREY
Hey, her eyes moved.

(Gia stirs.)

Terry, look!

(Gia opens her eyes.)

See?—I think she’s awake. She’s awake! Gia?

GIA
Photons?

TERRY
Oh thank God.--COD! Get in here, she said photons!

GREY
You’re awake!

GIA
Grey, I love you. Is that coffee?

GREY
I love you, too!

GIA
I love you too, Terry.
(Enter Cod.)

COD
She said photons . . . ? Gia, you’re here!

GIA
I lust you, physicist.

COD
You do? You ‘lust’ me? Okay, I lust you, too! And if lust converts to love, then would you marry a man with a bottom-sucking whitefish for a last name? Look, I bought new shoes, just in case!

GIA
Kiss me, Doc—a big kiss.

COD
Smashing!

TERRY
Kiss me, Grey—a bigger kiss!

GREY
Baaaaaaby!

(They kiss.)

GIA
In my coma, I . . . I discovered the unifying principle: it’s love.

GREY
Definitely.

TERRY
Amen.

(Enter Eva. Lights dim. Distant drums.)

COD
It’s strings. String theory. Probably.

EVA
Nice try, Einstein.
Look, it’s getting dark out.

GREY
Is there an eclipse today?

COD
No . . . there’s no eclipse today, but there must be a scientific explanation . . .
what’s that noise?

TERRY
Oh my God!

(They go to a window and look out.)

COD
Huh. I’m confused--why is it getting dark in the middle of the morning?

GIA
Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!

(They look up at the stars. Tableau.
Drums louder.)

EVA
Isn’t that sweet? Alright, gotta hurry, thanks everyone for coming to my funeral,
you can all go on in your own courses, but as you know . . . and if not I’ll remind
you . . . that time stops at the speed of light. Good night.

(Eva exits or disappears or shrinks to
zero. From the near-darkness:)

GIA
I love you!

(Starlight.)