

Say Good Night by Gary Young

SETTING: Park
across from a
hospital.

SON

*(Age 25-40, dressed for work, tie is loose.
Jacket can be removed during the play)* I'M NOT
HYPERVENTILATING. IM NOT EVEN VENTILATING. I'M
YELLING! All right. I'll take my time. I'll
try to listen harder. No promises. But I'll try.
I'M TRYING! BUT PLEASE, TAKE YOUR TIME SPEAKING!
(pause, attempting to collect himself)

*FATHER walks with a
brain tumor-induced
shuffle, dragging
one leg. HE is in
his 70's, wearing
pajamas and robe.
His mind is still
active.*

FATHER

*(Gives son a dirty look, angry sounding but unable
to form the word)* Truth.

*FATHER clears his
throat.*

SON

You want to sit on this bench? It's a nice park,
Pop. Really nice. I can see your hospital room
from here. Mom's at the window.

*FATHER reacts
negatively.*

SON (cont'd.)

Whadaya wanna talk about, Pop? Food. The metaphor
for life. And your obsession. I hate food,
except ice cream. And Girl Scout cookies. And

a Mai Tai served pool side or at the beach, especially Kapalua. *(a little sarcastic)* And I remember my Bar Mitzvah cake. It was in the shape of a torah. I ate Leviticus. I hear that Deuteronomy was good too. *(pause)*

A mime goes by and tries to interrupt. MIME does "the wall," walking against the wind," and makes a little fun of the FATHER during the next few speeches.

FATHER

(unintelligibly) Truth.

SON

You said, "Truth." Right? That means that you're going to give me the true skinny here, right? Okay. Truth. I have to be straight with you too. I can't understand a word you're saying. Which is nothing new for us huh? Okay, most words, then. The cussing somehow comes out as cussing.

FATHER

(barely intelligibly) Cigar. *(trying to find cigar in coat pocket)* Cigar. *(mimes cigar, points to coat pocket. Tires to wave the MIME away. Says brief gibberish, with an intelligible "fuck" included.*

SON

(To mime) I think he said go fuck yourself. Stop it. Get a job!

MIME exits, sadly, picking his nose.

FATHER

Cigar.

SON

Cigar? Are you sure you should smoke?

*FATHER makes an
ironic gesture.*

SON (cont'd)

Yeah, you're right. *(Gets CIGAR out of his coat)*
Want me to light it for you?

*FATHER points
vaguely.*

*FATHER grabs CIGAR,
puts in mouth,
straightens up, now
able to speak
coherently.*

FATHER

I never light them.

Pay attention.

My doctor says I should give up sex at my age.
Then my doctor died. And I'm still having sex.
But not at the moment.

That's amazing, isn't it? That I should find my
voice as a borsht belt comedian. *(Shrugs.)* Me, I
can't even understand most of the time now. I
never liked borsht, but now I have a craving.
Even though it's called Borsht. I don't know who
makes these things up.

You're looking at me in the cigar and the way I'm
talking. I discovered this process while a cute
nurse was giving me a sponge bath. I was holding
my toothbrush and suddenly started talking like
this. It's amazing what you can discover during a
sponge bath. By the way, don't put a toothbrush
in your mouth when you take a bath. You can poke
an eye out with that.

I gotta itch. It's on top of down below.

SON

(not comprehending Father's throughout) You look like you're the opposite of comfortable. What can I do for you? Are you uncomfortable, dad?

FATHER

No. Itching is good. And you're not scratching it for me, if that's what you were suggesting. I'll keep it itching for a while so I can tell that I'm still alive. So maybe it is good. I'll scratch it later. I'll pick a good time.

SON

I'll take that as an "I'm okay." Right?

FATHER

You take it any way you want to take it. I know you think I'm a pain in the ass. I am. I don't care. It's a thing that happens to old Jews. I don't know from gentiles. Maybe they are a pain too. To me, just Jews are a pain.*(rocking in chair to get up)*

SON

(Sees that FATHER is trying to get up, tries to help) Here, let me help you.

FATHER

I can do it. I can do it. Wait a minute. Here. Wait a minute. Stop already with the hands out. I can do this, Sonny Boy. *(Waving off the SON, rocking again in chair to get up)* You know, the best thing about already being in the hospital, they have an early bird special on colonoscopy.

SON

Did you say colonoscopy?

FATHER

(beat) Colonoscopy. *(cigar in mouth)*

SON

Some words come out so clearly. It's amazing.
Did they give you a colonoscope for a brain tumor?

FATHER

You should try it. You're such a tight ass
anyway, it might help. You should know, my doctor
kept humming "Some enchanted evening" He had a
lovely voice. The camera went ALL the way up
there. I think it got lodged for a second under
my left arm pit. I asked for a copy of the
video. Reality shows are in. Gives a new meaning
to the term "residuals," doesn't it? (*a puff on
the cigar*)

SON

I think we're having an argument. But I'm not
sure.

FATHER

It's not an argument. It's a discussion. I'll
let you know when the argument starts. Sony boy,
we gotta talk. I gotta fucking brain tumor.

SON

You're cussing. Colonoscope and Fucking, clear s
a bell. I take that as a good sign.

FATHER

Even with the fucking brain tumor? A good sign?
Well, the brain tumor, that you knew. You and I
never got along. We need to now.

SON

Pop, do you want to...

FATHER

Don't call me Pop. But you still will because you
never take my advice. On anything. Maybe about,
"Order the Pastrami, it's leaner than the corned
beef," maybe that. But not important stuff. We
had a difference of opinion, style, point of
view...I was coming from experience and you were
coming from the gym.

Listen to me. You don't need me. Anymore. Stop being embarrassed to be a human being. It's not so bad, being human. Some of my best friends...except for the poker guys, they're all ass holes. They are animals. And they fart. (beat) I had to say fart at least once. While I still could. You are still listening? Let me see your eyes (*pretends to blow smoke into them*). That was a test. 78 is passing.

(*Makes a face*) Do you hear that? (*pause, pointing to his head*) It's clicking. Do you hear it? Do you?

SON

You want me to look at your head? So what am I supposed to see there? You have bandages. This is very frustrating. Maybe we should be getting back to the hospital now. They are probably wondering if you're okay.

FATHER

They met you. They're probably wondering if you're okay. Maybe you should sit and I'll stand. You know, they took out a big chunk of my head here. Like a couple of inches in diameter. And when they put it back, it didn't really fit right. How could that be? It's from my head, and it goes right back. And it doesn't fit. It makes this clicking sound, with every heartbeat, I hear click click, like there's a bomb in there...well there is. I guess it will stop clicking soon enough. I'll know I'm alive by the clicking. So I guess it's good, but it is driving me crazy. The tumor is about the size of Rhode Island. On a warm day. A warm, humid boring, boring day. It's why I can't talk, although I'm doing good now, aren't I?

SON

You said Rhode Island? Are you in the mood for lobster? Why don't we head back now?

FATHER

You're totally facked, you know that? So they looked and then shook their heads and put things back...the wrong way...the clicking. Surgeons aren't supposed to say "shit," at the end of a

procedure, I know that. I saw Dr. Kildare and Ben Casey.

Actually, the operation is redundant. Your grandmother hacked off my head years ago. 1960, I think. During the Perry Como show. In black and white.

Well, that was when that-that-was, was an IS. Now the Is is a Was, and so will I be soon. I'll be a was, so what's the point of even eva being an Is?

Speaking of what was/is/is/was... So I flunked the operation. They give me six months. They say six months. I say four. I'm gone in four months.

Not six. Doctors. What do they know? *(pause)*

(Sincerely) Sonny boy, I'm sorry to be letting you down this time. I'm gonna miss you. *(pats SON'S cheek)* Yeah. Really. Unless I get a betta offer.

SON

Do you need a hug, Pop?

FATHER

If you call me Pop one more time, I'm gonna shit in your hat and pull it over your ears! *(pause)* And yeah, a hug is maybe a good thing. I can't read any more. I can't talk. Lots of other stuff. The clicking erased all that. I do a little exercise when my stuff is movin around the right way, I can walk probably maybe three inches. That's a lot of inches at my age. *(beat)* I'd hover if I could. But I can't levitate. It's too close to Passover week. *(beat, cigar in mouth)* I'm tired.

(FATHER gets up, takes off his glasses, puts his cigar down, assumes the partially crippled position and looks up, hand up to SON'S face)

SON

I didn't understand very much of what you said. Did you think you were getting through? I could make out "tumor," I think, and "Rhode Island." Oh, and the cussing. I saw the emotion, though. And I know. You probably told me what the doctors already told me and told you. 6 months.

Now I'm the grownup, huh?

I'll do a good shivva for you. It's so weird to be telling you this. But I probably won't cry. You took care of that many years ago. Yeah. Even when I fried my hand in scalding bacon grease. I don't know if you remember, but it finished me when you didn't let me cry. Sorry. This isn't the time for anger. Well, maybe it is, but I should be more sensitive. This is about

you, not me. Grown men don't cry. Wish they did. Never mind. Maybe I'll cry one day. But not if you're looking.

FATHER

(barely perceptible) I love you. I'll miss you.

SON

FATHER is looking at SON. There is a tear in FATHER's eye. HE reaches out to SON and slaps him gently on the cheek, then points to Son's face.

FATHER

Fucking shivva. *(throws away cigar)*

SON

Yeah. It sucks.

*SON Clears throat.
A tear.*

SON (cont'd)

Come on. Let's go.

FATHER rocks four times and manages to get up from the bench. Son's arm around FATHER's waste.

THEY exit.

The end