

Personal Archive of Jokes,  
Quotes & Conversations  
with Garry Shandling



By  
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*“Writing about yourself is an odd mix of therapy and lap dancing:  
exciting and yet a little shameful.” -Eric Idle*

**March, 2006.**

While I was working on my first novel, *Written in the Ashes*, I held down several jobs that enabled me to scrape together time for my writing: teaching yoga, counseling, and also helping my friend Frank Angiuli at his hemp clothing store, Natural High. I met Garry Shandling there on a Sunday afternoon in March, 2006, across from the Urth Caffé on Main St. in Venice, CA. He was with comedian Orny Adams.

A man stood at the mirror, trying on a shirt. From where I stood folding trousers, I could see his tattoo on the back of his neck. "You have an enso tattoo, that's so cool," I blurted out. I was 29 years old, slightly feral, and deeply devoted to my private study of Buddhism.

He spun around to face me. It was Garry Shandling. As a kid growing up in the 80s I had watched "It's Garry Shandling's Show", and recognized him immediately.

But he looked at me with a burning intensity that made me wonder if I'd said the wrong thing. He walked straight towards me, "I've had this tattoo for years, and you're the first person to know what it is. Who are you? Do you work here?" His eyes - lit with fascination, but approaching accusation - searched my face.

"I'm Kaia. I do."

"I'm Garry." He shook my hand firmly, smiled.

"Pleased to meet you, Garry. Can I help you find anything?"

"Does this shirt make me look gay? Seriously. Orny, what do you think?"

Orny was busy hitting on my gorgeous, cleavage endowed Persian co-worker.  
"It's a nice shirt, Gar."

Garry leaned in toward me and lowered his voice. “I think I’m going to be here until he gets her number... What do you really do? You don’t just work here...”

“I teach yoga. And I’m writing a novel.”

“You teach yoga? I do yoga. I need a yoga teacher, actually. To come up to The House.”

We had an instant spark. I hunted for shirts for him as we chatted. “What about this one?” He tried it on, looked in the mirror: pleased with the shirt, somewhat displeased with himself. I adjusted his collar.

“I mean it,” he said, his voice now tender, vulnerable.

“You want a private? I like the fit.”

“I do. But... Let me ask you something... Is there anybody you know that I know who could call me and tell me that you’re not crazy?”

I laughed, thinking he was kidding. He was not kidding.

“I’m serious.”

“I have no idea, Garry.”

“Do you know Dave Duchovny?”

“No.”

“Sharon Stone?”

“Um... No.”

“Well, maybe there’s someone from the yoga world we both know.”

I asked him if he knew Seane Corn, and coincidentally, he did.

“Great. I know Seane. Have her call me and tell me you’re not crazy. Then I want you to call me in 3 days, can you do that? Here let me give you my number... That’s our food there, by the way.” He indicated the takeout bags on the counter. “We’re going to find some homeless people to give it to... We played basketball today up at The House... I want the shirt.” He took it off so I could ring him up. Then he wrote down his number on one of the business cards from the store. He had me give him my number, which he put in his phone.

Garry invited me to join them for dinner that night, and I closed up the shop and we walked over to the Urth Caffé together with Orny. We talked about Zen, camping, his dog Shep, meditation, comedy, spirituality. It was easy between us. Comfortable. Like we’d known each other forever.

Around that time I had this Asian model roommate named Stacee in Venice (self-styled Stacee with 2 “ee”s), in a tiny little 2 bedroom duplex off the Canals. I had set the card with Garry’s number on my desk, and when she cleaned the house - high on whatever - the card mysteriously disappeared. I felt terrible, as I’d made Garry a promise and had no way of calling him, and I hadn’t written his number down anywhere else.

A week or so later Garry phoned me. “Kaia? It’s Garry. I woke you up. I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry I woke you. I called too early. I’m not even usually awake this early. I’m sorry. Why didn’t you call me? You promised you would call me.”

I pretended to be awake and asked how he was doing. He said Seane *did* call him, however she told him I was “good crazy like him”, which he found acceptable. “Can you come up to The House today?”

I’d just been through a devastating break up, and my schedule was clear aside from a few public yoga classes. I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes and said, “Yes”.

Later that day, I rode my Vespa past my old junior high Paul Revere, down Sunset Blvd. to Mandeville Cyn., and swung a left below the shaded streets that smelled of jasmine, freshly cut grass and moss. Foliage is luxury. Inside the bleak concrete I inhabited, there was only thick ocean brine drifting in mist over piss on the sidewalks. I parked in Garry's cul de sac, and got off my bike.

I hadn't owned a television in about 10 years. I'd only seen a few episodes of *The Larry Sanders Show*. Garry lived in a part of town I grew up in and always admired. Mandeville Canyon is like the Mt. Olympus of Los Angeles.

Garry Shandling lives *here*? This was an entire street with just four or five houses on it, each of which had acres of land to maintain. Every gate led to a home bristling with security cameras and dogs. This opportunity both enthralled and intimidated me. I really wanted to do a good job, and prove myself as a professional.

Garry greeted me barefoot at the front gate, immediately setting me at ease, and walked with me through the courtyard, across the cobblestones, to the wide wooden door of the main house. He complained about The House a lot- it was cold, set wrong for the light, and I remember feeling mildly confused because his home seemed so magnificent and comfortable. He gave me a tour, walking beside me in a circle around back by the office, and through the living room into the dining room. "These are the plans... Some of the plans," he said, showing me blueprints.

"To fix your house?"

"To fix my house. You pay attention; I like that. This is Edge's guitar. He gave it to me. And this is my book from *Ashes and Snow*."

"Sorry, who is Edge?"

"You're fucking kidding me right now.... The guitarist from U2... Did you just get out of prison or something?"

I explained I'd been living off the grid on Maui for years, then in a little cabin in the redwoods in Santa Cruz where I had created a meditation garden. This would prove irresistible to him, and he would insist on educating me about pop culture and all things comedy. There would be hours of talking, videos, old tapes, fishing through boxes in his library, and strolls along the beach. If he needed a project, or just the company, he passionately proceeded to change my life. The man was nearly 30 years my senior, and far more hip than I'd ever been in my life. It lent him a sex appeal that was never commented on much in the media, but that was palpable around him, in his aura, the scent of his clothes.

He walked me into the kitchen. "I forgot to ask you what you charge. For a private."

"One fifty."

He stiffened. "Is that your real price or just what you're charging *me*?"

"It's what I charge for privates, Garry... honestly. But I can charge you more if it makes you feel special." He laughed, instantly satisfied. "Let me change and I'll meet you outside."

I set up for yoga on his patio. I moved some heavy chairs around and made space so he could look out at the view of the Pacific Ocean from his mat. When he came downstairs, his expression was hard to read when he saw I moved his furniture, and I realized I may have been caught wrong-footed and quickly apologized and offered to move it back.

But then he smiled. "No other yoga teacher has done this. You took initiative. It means you're smart. You're not afraid of me."

"Should I be afraid of you?"

"Shut up and tell me what to do."

I remember being surprised at how athletic he was. And in his body. Graceful. Focused.

When we finished that day he doubled my rate to \$300, and paid me in cash.

I tried to refuse. It was too much.

“I’m debilitatingly generous. That’s my problem. One of my problems. Take the money. You deserve it. You’re really good. You’re smart. Let me walk you out.”

To a young broke aspiring writer, Garry Shandling was a godsend.

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For the next few weeks we practiced inside in various rooms of his home, as it was overcast and cold out. He helped me set up, and always took time to connect before we got started.

“I never move anything. That spoon has probably been there for 6 years. Change frightens me. Hey, I’m going to my boxing gym this afternoon. I box. Did I tell you that already?”

For the 2 years I was with Garry, I had no idea when he said “my” boxing gym, he meant he *owned* the fucking gym. He talked about boxing a lot as a metaphor for life, and how he regretted not starting younger. We watched boxing matches together. He enjoyed the deeper meaning of staying true to your own intentions no matter what your opponent is doing. He liked to put on a match and explain it all to me, and I was interested. Around Garry I became interested in things I’d never thought of as interesting before; the depth he penetrated any subject that stimulated his spiritual instincts felt like a direct transmission from a guru.



I think it was Kevin Nealon who in Judd Apatow's documentary series, *The Zen Diaries of Garry Shandling* said, "Garry changed my fabric." He was capable of that, and I felt that way, too. How many people do you ever meet in your life who change the way you think? And do it with love? I think you're lucky if you get one.

We hit the mat.

"I'm talking too much. I'll stop. Just one more thing..."

"Do you have any injuries, Garry? Health issues? I should have asked you that before."

"Plenty. Do scars count?"

"Glaucoma, any surgeries..."

"You name it."

"Are you pregnant?"

"You're funny. You don't know that about yourself yet, I can see that."

"But does anything hurt now, Garry?"

"Everything! I take painkiller when I wake up in the morning if that tells you anything."

"Well, Garry, you're the one paying me for my time. Feel free to complain. All you want."

"I swear I'll stop now... Do I look puffy, though?"

"Ka-ching!"

Garry called every day. He wanted me up at The House more often, three days became five, then six. My devotion to Garry gradually eclipsed my entire life. He seemed completely burned out. He struggled with his energy. He wasn't happy with his weight. He was generally discontent a lot of the time, uncomfortable in his body, frustrated he didn't feel good. He wanted me to stay longer and longer. "I burned my focus," he often repeated, staring out at the pool. Disconnected from his creative energy, with his health deteriorating, he felt lost. I hugged him, my concern deepening.

"Why did you become a comedian?" I asked him one day.

"Because it's where I felt I could learn the most about myself. I was terrible when I started, but I got a few laughs. Some encouraging words from George Carlin. That was enough to want to keep at it. I'm kinda tired today. I burned my focus. Did I tell you that? I've been working on this DVD thing, and it's been a lot. Maybe too much. But maybe everything before that was too much."

"Are you okay to practice?"

"Jerry is right, TV will kill you... I'm okay. Really. We can start. Where should I start?"

"Ujjayi breath, Garry."

"I don't know. I don't know what's wrong with me. The doctors don't know... Could be my thyroid. Or my adrenals. But I'm glad to be here. With you. It's a beautiful day, isn't it? I have basketball games here on Sundays. You should come sometime... I'll stop talking now... Do you have a boyfriend?"

"No. I'm kind of on the back side of a breakup. With someone. What about you? You have a boyfriend?" Always avoidant of this conversation, I wasn't about to explain my last relationship was with a woman, or that I was bi. I felt that even though he was open, and real, he was still paying me for my time, and that I needed to keep it professional. That would become increasingly difficult for me. "What about you, Garry? You have a boyfriend?"

He rolled his eyes. “I’m confused about women... Never date a comedian or a musician.”

“I thought it was never date an alcoholic...”

“It’s men in general, actually. I hear lesbians can really communicate.”

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“So, are you acting?” he asked me on the way out to the front gate.

“No, I’m a real yoga teacher.”

“You’re funny. You should develop that... I don’t say that to everyone.”

“Thank you. But...”

“But what?”

“I thought you... had to, like, be *born* funny. Are you saying you can get better at it?”

“Can you get better at downward facing dog, Kaia?”

“You’re so good at laughing at your pain. I dunno. I’d love to know how to do that.”

“Listen. Comedy isn’t words. It’s a place you’re coming from inside yourself. So, you practice that... Here, let me give you a hug.” He embraced me, dripping in sweat, and laughed. “See? You weren’t expecting that. Now go on. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

I remember walking through his courtyard at twilight, enjoying the scent of roses and jasmine, and he called out, “You know you don’t have to always wear

black... You, of all people, don't need to wear black. That came out wrong. I mean you're really pretty..."

"Thank you, Garry."

Was he was flirting with me?

\*

**April, 2006.**

I didn't meet many of Garry's friends. I was too shy to show up at basketball though he invited me weekly. But one day I met Kevin Nealon, who'd been at The House. Garry was giving him the new Eckhart Tolle book. He introduced us as Kevin was leaving. "Let me walk you out, Kevin. Kaia, I'm just going to walk him out. Help yourself to anything in the kitchen. There's fresh fruit."

"Can I have an apple?"

"Sure -"

I reached for an apple in the basket, picked it up.

"- But not that one!" he said.

I dropped it on his kitchen floor and he just howled. "That's my favorite joke. I'm just kidding. You can have it." He picked it up and threw it to me. I loved his capering moods.

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One day after yoga out on his patio, while I was packing up he asked me, "So, what happened to you?"

"What do you mean?"

“I mean, what’s your pain?”

I brushed him off. “It’s a long story, Garry.”

He reached toward me and touched my arm, and held my eyes with immense sincerity. “I have time,” he said.

I teared up, and he apologized. “Did I hurt you? I didn’t mean to hurt you. Can you stay the afternoon? Is there anywhere you have to be? Why don’t you sit down. Let me get us some tea.”

I sat. This would become our new ritual. Stay. Can you stay, Kaia? *Stay with me...*

He made me some yerba maté tea. He’d filmed a segment earlier that day for the *Larry Sanders* DVD extras, and I was learning that after filming he was always more relaxed. It would drain him, but then he would be so peaceful. I could see he needed his art, and yet, it was hurting him.

The ancient Greeks had a word for happiness *Eudaimonia*. What it translates to is “a well-pleased daimon”. *Daimon* is the Greek word for what the Romans called your *Genius*. Garry’s genius filled him with satisfaction, and yet, it drained him because he was so artistically hard on himself. In our yoga sessions I began focusing on opening his heart, but the boxing stance always threw his armor back on. It was like he had an instinct to protect himself that had kicked in only after the damage had been inflicted, and he was making up for lost time.

“Was it your mother or your father? I’ll go first. For me it was my mother,” he said.

“My dad is a heavyweight control freak. I can’t let him near me, and if I push him away he gets vindictive. It’s exhausting. I never feel safe, honestly,” I said.

“Is he successful?”

“He invented moisturizing lotion in 1951.”

“Narcissist?”

I nodded.

“I know about that. About narcissists. My mom is that way. Did he ever hit you?”

“No, mind games.”

“Sometimes that’s worse. The emotional abuse. My mother wants to marry me. My brother died when I was ten and she just fixated on me.”

“Oh my God. I’m so sorry. Where are you from?”

He shrugged. “I was born in Chicago, then we moved to Tucson, Arizona.”

“There are Jews in Arizona?”

“Not many! My mother ran a pet store. Muriel Shandling’s Pet Fair. With her name on the top of the sign like it was a theater marquee, if that tells you anything. Every time she comes here to see me she brings me another fucking animal... But I want to hear more about you. Are you in therapy? Where did you grow up?”

“I have a therapist, you know, budget depending... And just a couple miles from here. In the Palisades and Topanga. I had horses and stuff.”

“That’s interesting. Are you an only child?”

“Yes. Well, sort of. I found out about my half-sister when I was 25. My dad’s been married five times.” (That number would be seven before he died.)

“Has anything helped you?”

“Yoga. Camping. Meditation. Surfing. Writing helps me. To process it all. Writing is like my third lung... I can’t live without it.”

“What kind of writing? I remember when we met you said you were working on a novel... I pay attention.” He touched my knee, smiling attentively.

“Historical fiction. I’m interested in the events that led up to the burning of the Great Library and the woman, the world first female philosopher and astronomer, Hypatia, who was running it. She was brutally murdered by the Christians. Anyways, I like to think my relationship with my father will be better when I have some success. You know? I don’t exist to him otherwise, except when he needs someone to attack.” It felt good to open up to Garry. He made me feel safe, understood.

“I do know, but, let me tell you something from experience: success will make your relationship with your father worse. Maybe even a *lot* worse. My mother went to the store recently and picked up a tabloid, and saw a photo of me with some actress they’d photo-shopped and called me, infuriated. ‘Why didn’t you tell me you’re dating her?’ I’m like, ‘Mom, because I’m *not* dating her. Those magazines make everything up. It’s not true.’ And she says, ‘But I read it there in print, so it must be true.’ And she believes the magazine. And not me. Can you imagine? I know you can. I can see it in your eyes... Imagine your dad calling you to complain you don’t talk about him enough on stage, on TV. Then pay his bills for him. That’s what I’m dealing with. People are crazy. No one is awake. Like maybe 2% are awake... Do you like the tea? Is it too hot? I made it too hot, didn’t I... Do you want more honey? Let me tell you about my dog.”

Shep. His dog was named Shep. Garry did most of the talking, but I didn’t mind. I loved his stories, and listening. But as I was there in a professional capacity, I wasn’t really sure whether I could let my hair down. Students tended to fall in love with me, and that transference didn’t leave any room for me to be a flawed human being with needs. But Garry didn’t seem

romantically interested in me, so I shrugged it off, happy just to be with him. I wasn't very good at reading the room, as they say in comedy.

He went and got a photo of Shep to show me. It made him so delighted to remember that dog. He would speak for dogs when we ran into them on hikes, like, sharing what they're thinking, which was hysterical, and I do it now for my cats. He had dog jokes. "My dog doesn't understand meditation. Like, how could the point be *not* chasing the stick?" That was one of my favorites.

"I felt a connection to this dog, but we went home, and then Kevin - who you just met - Kevin was in Hana later and found this black and white dog that had been hit by a car, and it had a broken leg, and he brought him back to California. And I said you have to bring him over, and it was the same dog... It was the same dog." Garry got a little choked up. "I carried him up and down the stairs each night from my bedroom when he got too old to go out and pee... You know, nothing is harder to love than a human being. Nothing. That's why God invented dogs. Do you believe in God?"

"I believe in the Tao. The Mystery. In a divine, intelligent force inside and beyond everything. Goddess. Energy. Truth. Love."

"Well, I believe God is an alcoholic... I'm just being honest!"

We giggled. His cell phone rang and buzzed and jittered across the table.

"Sorry, Kaia, let me just get this: Hi... Yes, I know who this is... Because I have your number programmed in my phone... No... No! I was not having sex. You think I would answer my phone if I was having sex?"

He covered the phone and whispered to me: "It's my mother."

\*

He wanted his agent to sell a limited series with 8 episodes about God as an alcoholic, but his agent buried it because 8 episodes at the time, before DVD



sales and streaming, wouldn't make much money. The world got robbed of that.

His filming often ran over. Boundaries blurred. Days blurred. I took to bringing my bikini and a book to The House as he was often late. I didn't mind. I planned out his yoga sessions and worked on sequences to help him burn up enough energy so he could relax and feel his heart again.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry to be so late, Kaia! I don't like to waste anyone's time... But this was a good idea. That you got in the pool. It's just the filming really ran over today. Wait a minute, I'll put the hot tub on and join you."

"It's okay, Gar. You look like you're feeling better."

"Maybe a little bit. Maybe that's because you're here. Do you have to be anywhere today?"

"Well, our class was supposed to be 2 hours ago."

"I mean dinner. Can you stay for dinner? After our session, obviously. I want to make it up to you."

"That would be great, Garry. Thank you."

"Hey, I wanted to ask you, who's your favorite comedian?"

"This is a trick question." I swam away from him in the pool.

"It's not a trick question! I have the guys coming over for basketball on Sunday. I want you to meet them. I told you about Dave. Sacha is in town. You know who Sacha is? And Judd might be there. He never comes. So you should join us."

"It's totally a trick question. I work Sundays. At the store. And I have my prenatal yoga class, remember?" By that time I knew I needed at least one day a

week for income that wasn't Garry. My safety net was eroding quickly. I'd worked for Ashley Judd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Anthony Hopkins. All it takes is for them to book one movie, one publicity tour, and suddenly all your income vanishes.

"Right. Where we met. Of course. I remember everything about you."

"But to answer your question, it's probably Dylan Moran."

Garry looked baffled and slightly jealous. "Who? Who is *that*?"

"I mean, after you. My favorite after you." I splashed him.

"Let's do fucking yoga already. I want to get the painful part of the afternoon over with so we can get on to the painful part of the evening. I brought you a towel. I'm joking."

When we got out I followed him to the garage. Garry threw our swim suits into the dryer. I stood there barefoot in the towel intensely aware I wasn't wearing any clothes. It smelled like Tide, a scent that still brings me back to that moment with him, when our shoulders brushed and I felt a jolt of panic that I was becoming emotionally involved with my client, my client who I was starting to truly love.

"I haven't shown you my Porsche. It's mint. I almost never drive it." An eggplant colored Porsche sat in the garage behind him, sparkling in the dark.

"So, let's drive it."

"Would that make you happy?" He almost kissed me. Then changed his mind and got sheepish and started wandering around the garage.

"We should get you on the mat, Garry."

“You’re right. Never argue with a woman. It took me 57 years to learn that. Did I tell you my favorite joke?”

“I dunno. Which one?”

“So, a lion was fucking this zebra. And the zebra looks up and sees another zebra coming over the hill and she says to the lion, “That’s my husband. Quick, make it look like you’re killing me!”

\*

I sang to him after every session. Sang him out of savasana, Sanskrit bhajans. *Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Devo Maheshwara*. Sometimes he fell asleep. Sometimes he snored. He usually woke up peaceful, rested.

“I want you to sing at my funeral,” he said one time, sitting up.

“Oh my God, Garry... You’re sick?”

He admonished me gently. “You know, you could have said, “Let me check my calendar and see if I’m free that day.”

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**May, 2006.**

There was another savasana, on his patio. The sun had come out. I remember feeling this powerful, palpable love for him radiating from my heart. Maybe I vaguely realized I hadn’t ever felt love for a man like that before. That something was happening through me on a divine plane that was completely incomprehensible to my ego.

Eventually he roused himself and sat up.

“Why are you smiling?” He looked at me suspiciously.

“Because... Because, I care about you,” I stammered.

Garry’s eyes twinkled as he brought his hands together in prayer. “Fuck you.”

“No, fuck *you*.”

“Really, go fuck yourself. Namaste.”

“Namaste.”

He walked me up to the house from the basketball court, that twinkle in his eye he had when he felt pleased, when something or someone surprised him by making him laugh.

Fuck you became our pet phrase for “I love you”.

I finally had my perfect relationship: a relationship where we never had to talk about the relationship.

\*

One Friday night I was leaving The House around 9pm he said, “I wish you didn’t have to go. I’m going to drive up to the beach tonight... I want you to come with me. Will you come with me?”

“What? Where?”

“Didn’t I tell you I have a house up in Malibu?”

“Wait... You have *another house*?”

“I mean, I just rent it. Near Paradise Cove. It’s small, not like Johnny Carson’s. You should come up with me. Can you come up? You could even stay the weekend... If you wanted. And we’ll do yoga. Both days.”

“Well...”

“Is it too much? It’s too much, isn’t it?”

“Garry, I just... I have a date tonight.”

“Oh! I didn’t realize. I had no idea... You have a date. Of course, you do. You must have a date every night.” He paced the house. Back and forth, around the kitchen island, out of the room, back into the room. The hug he gave me that night was a long one. He was holding onto me. He didn’t want to let go. Neither did I.

I was in way over my head. How could I navigate the power dynamic of this attraction, this intimacy, this job where he held the purse strings? I decided not to give in. I could lose all my income, and this was a famously capricious man. But day by day, my needs were being eclipsed by his. But I loved him. It would be many years before I would find my voice and feel comfortable setting boundaries, with anyone. Attraction blurred our lines, made the moments sparkle. I got mad at myself for my feelings.

But when is attraction, or love, ever a *choice*?

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That next morning in Malibu the sun was out, and Garry was cheery. His house was at the end of a private lane, and hung with Indian tapestries.

“I got you a present.” He dug around the closet.

“Awe. You didn’t need to get me a present!”

“Well, I don’t know when your birthday is. When is it?”

“Not till November.”

“Oh really? Mine’s in November. Are you a Scorpio or a Sagittarius? I’m really trying to ask you how old you are but I know it’s a rude question. So, I won’t ask.”

“It’s okay, I’m almost 30, and a Scorpio but don’t let that change how you feel about me.”

He found the gift, wrapped in tissue paper, and handed it to me, looking slightly nauseated.

“What? You don’t like Scorpions?”

“It’s not that. I just had a hard morning on the phone with my attorney. You know you’re old when your attorney is listed as next of kin in your emergency contacts... That’s a joke I’m still working on. I know it’s not funny yet. I got this for you at a little shop I like on La Cienega.”

It was an ornamental glass candle holder, dipped in silver. “I love it. That’s really thoughtful, Garry, thank you.” I hugged him, and he blushed and looked away.

“I realize I forgot to pay you yesterday, and I’m really sorry. That won’t happen again. Don’t worry. That was my mistake.”

“Oh wow. I totally forgot about it... All these days are blending together.”

“I hope it’s not too much.”

“I’ve loved every minute, honestly. I hope you’re feeling better. I know it’s been really healing for me to be here with you. In your environment. I wanted to thank you. For this. And for everything. I love our time together, and our conversations. For you teaching me about comedy.”

He looked pleased and nervous. “Well, it’s a nice day, we should go for a walk on the beach. Did I tell you what happened to me with my manager? With Brad Grey? I think it’s why I’m sick like this. And I keep gaining weight. My team really fucked me. Do you know about building a team? I got us some food from the deli. For later. I don’t know what you eat. I figure you eat healthy. Do you eat rice?”

I touched his hand. “I’m sorry you had a rough morning. The food looks fabulous. And I love the idea of a walk. I didn’t want to ride all the way up PCH on my Vespa with the yoga mat, do you have one here?”

He seemed so relieved I stayed on subjects he could handle. “Yes! I do! I have a mat here. That’s great. We can go for a walk and then come back and do yoga.”

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**Malibu, June.**

“Garry, can you go ahead and get into savasana? I just have to pee.”

“Sure. The restroom is through there on the right.”

“Pee here now.”

“I’m really sweaty... If I die of a heart attack I want you to know it’s all your fault...”

The sliding doors were open to the sea. A wedge of blue shifted inside the glass as a line of pelicans swept past. I thought he was asleep when I got back. I sat behind him and massaged his neck for a while. But he wasn’t asleep. He sat up, took my face in his hands and kissed me.

When I left the beach to head home 3 days later, I didn't want him to pay me for the weekend. I slipped out quietly Monday morning while he was in the shower, full of feelings and too many thoughts about my feelings.

What kind of man carries his old sick dog downstairs in the middle of the night to pee?

A good man. A *good man*.

Too late, I was in love with him.

\*

One night Garry had been stuck at Sony all day in meetings, and he was complaining that they hadn't had cameras set up. "I said I wanted cameras at every meeting!" But they had blown him off. His friend Gavin was with him, and Gavin said something profound.

"That is why I want cameras at every meeting!" he yelled at them. "Because of what Gavin just said. Because that was a real moment." He was frustrated no one had obeyed him. Feeling ignored was a monumental trigger for him, because he was pretty much always right, especially when it came to the art.

He lay down with his head in my lap and closed his eyes. "*Ring the bells... ring the bells...*"

"What?"

"Gavin told me this line of poetry. I can't remember it. I wanted to share it with you, because you would like it."

I stroked his hair. "*Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering There is a crack, in everything. That's how the light gets in.*"

"That's it! You know it? How do you know it?"



“I love Leonard Cohen.”

He jumped up and left the room.

“Where are you going?” I shouted.

“I’m emailing an introduction between you and Gavin,” he said. “You’re going to love each other.”

“Hey you know there’s a Leonard Cohen documentary playing right now, we should go.”

“Great, let’s go tomorrow,” he said.

We went to go see the Leonard Cohen documentary *I’m Your Man* together down at the Laemmle the next night. We sat in the back row. Garry couldn’t stop himself from commenting on every scene, and the other moviegoers started to groan. I found his comments so endearing and hilarious, but also could see how irritating we were to people.

“But if they could just get a tighter shot... Oh God. Please, more nose hair. I don’t even like to see myself on screen that close. This is practically unendurable.” He cringed in his seat, uncrossing, re-crossing his legs at the knee.

I laughed at his commentary, which made our disruption worse. A dude down a few rows calls back to “Shut! Up!”

“We should just leave, maybe,” I whispered.

“What? You’re not enjoying this either? I don’t see why not...” Garry couldn’t whisper. But his commentary was often the best part of anything we were watching. (He really should have done his own MSC3000. *Glarry* MSC3000.) He had a few different modes depending on what we were watching. When he

watched the news, he was in comedian mode. When he watched comedy, he was in critic mode. When he watched a film, he was in director mode, and would often stop and rewind and explain everything. I loved learning from him.

“Let’s just go, Gar.”

We went out into the lobby. “I mean, I love Leonard Cohen, but that was a travesty! I really wanted to see that movie. I feel robbed. They robbed Leonard Cohen, actually,” he said.

“Dude, I feel you. It was well-intended, though.”

“Unendurably well-intended. Just don’t let that happen to me when I die. I should put it in my will: No extreme close ups. Do you need to pee? I need to pee. Did you eat already? I was thinking we could walk over to The Ivy. Or what about Chez Jay? Sean Penn really likes that place. Don’t order the shrimp, though.”

“For a guy who hates gossip you sure name drop a lot... We can go wherever you want. I ate earlier.”

“I’m just trying to impress you. Is it working? Because if it’s not working I can stop... I do yoga, I’m flexible that way... Why are you smiling?”

“Can I just be happy to be with you?”

“Fuck you.”

“No. Fuck *you*.”

Garry walked across the lobby to the bathrooms. “Go fuck yourself!” This got some looks from the theatre staff.

While Garry was gone a well-dressed man in a suit approached me and started hitting on me.

Garry came out and stormed back across the lobby, jealous, irritated. “Kaia, is he bothering you?”

The guy was more than happy to have his game interrupted by a celebrity. “Oh wow. Garry Shandling? I love your movies.” He shook Garry’s hand and wouldn’t let go.

“I mostly do TV.... Was he bothering you?... Sir, you need to let go of my hand now.” Garry snatched his hand back.

The guy didn’t even seem to register Garry’s irritation. “*It’s Garry Shandling’s Show* was the best! And *The Larry Sanders Show* was just incredible. Defined HBO.”

“Most people don’t realize that. Thank you. Goodnight. Come on, let’s go.”

The guy followed us like a puppy to the main doors. Garry stopped him, raising his hands, fierce but friendly. “We’re not interested in talking to you. Have a great night.” When we got outside he was miffed. “Men hit on you a lot, don’t they?”

“Well, I dunno what ‘a lot’ is. Maybe they do... I know I get sick of it.”

“Why were you letting him talk to you then? What’s that about?”

“I just don’t know what to say! I don’t want to make anyone feel bad. And some guys are assholes when they get rejected...it can be scary. What do you think I should say?”

He paused a long time. “Okay. I’ve got it. Here’s what you say...” He paused for dramatic effect, and raised his hands. “NO.” He lowered his hands, gave

me a Garry look. "I'm giving you Gavin's book when we get home remind me. You need it."

"Okay, Gar. Thank you. I can do that... Do you get recognized like that very often?"

He shrugged incomprehensibly. "When I got famous I started to understand what beautiful women must endure with people coming up to them all the time. It's a nuisance. Most men have no idea..."

"Are you upset with me?"

"Does it seem like that? No, not at all."

He kissed me, stroked my hair. But he was faraway. "I'm sorry. I can get withdrawn. It isn't you... But stop acting your age. I liked it better when you were pretending to be older."

"You pig."

He giggled. We made out in the parking lot for a while, against his Toyota. Eventually he pressed his forehead to mine and said, "I like who I am when I'm with you. You know? That's different for me."

"That's different for me, too, Garry."

\*

**July 4<sup>th</sup>, Malibu.**

"If you see a Greek god out there on a paddle board that's my neighbor, Laird."

"Lord Hamilton?"

“Lord. That suites him. You’re getting faster. We’ll see him and his family later for the fireworks. Remind me, I want to write him a check.”

“Speaking of. It’s a little awkward that you pay me in cash after our nights together.”

“What do you mean?”

“I was wondering—“

“But the yoga...”

“I know you want the yoga.”

I hoped he would get the picture. *He didn’t get the picture.* “Garry, could you just put me on a monthly retainer maybe?”

He hemmed and hawed, stood up, started pacing. “But I don’t do that... That’s not how I do things, though.”

I had no next move. “Garry?”

“This is what makes me feel comfortable.” There would be no discussion about what made me feel comfortable.

“You mean you don’t think we can get through a month without wanting to kill each other? After all this time?” I felt so confused.

“I don’t think I can get through a month without wanting to kill myself.” He was firm. My concerns for his health had eclipsed my life, which seemed temporary, because surely he would get better... but the months continued to pass, and he showed no improvement. I encouraged him to see a doctor. I swallowed my pride. The people on the downside of a power dynamic, the women especially, we don’t get much say as to how we’re perceived.

“Let’s watch the DVD you brought to show me. Who is this comedian again? He’s Irish? Dylan *what?* Moran? You know I won an award in England when I was filming *The Larry Sanders Show* and they wouldn’t let me get on the plane to receive it. I always regretted that.”

We watched *Black Books* pilot together and it was the first time I’d watched any comedy with Garry, which I quickly realized was the most excruciating way to watch anything funny. Nothing escaped him. And he did NOT LAUGH.

“They put the laugh track in the wrong place.” And finally, a nod of approval. “This is better than anything on American television. Do you know how hard it is, to get the story lines to sync like that at the end?”

Garry went into the kitchen to get some snacks for us. “Hey, how’s your writing going? What’s your novel about? I’ve been meaning to ask you.”

“It’s about Hypatia, the first female mathematician/philosopher in history. She was running the Great Library of Alexandria in the 5th century. I was always curious how the library burned.”

“How did it burn?”

“No one knows for sure. But based on my research I went with the Christian evangelicals in the 5th century. The librarians back then wrote each other often. Kinda like, trading baseball cards around the Mediterranean. I’ll trade you one Pythagoras for one Homer – type of thing. So, we have the letters from the librarians. Then in the 5th century, there’s a drop off after Hypatia’s murder. And I found that interesting, so I wrote about her.”

“How’s it going?”

“Well, it’s not going so well, Garry. I bent the genre a little by adding the legend of the Emerald Tablet, and that’s made selling it tough. My lit agent dropped me. Which is embarrassing to admit to you, honestly.”

“Maybe he doesn’t know anything. Agents never know anything. That subject is fascinating. And you’re disciplined. And smart. Which is everything... So you need a new agent.” He went over to his computer. “Let me help you. We can write a letter together.”

“You would do that for me?”

“No, I would do that for *me*.” He started typing. “You really never thought of acting. Or show business? You might learn something about yourself.”

“Honestly, Garry, after hearing all your stories I feel like I’d rather swallow a hot potato full of napalm and broken glass.”

He howled. “That’s true. That’s exactly what it is!” The relief on his face, of someone who understood his pain. “But you’ve never acted? I studied with Roy London, do you know who he is? He’s dead now.”

“No. I starred in a magic show for two years, so I can say from experience I hate the spotlight.”

“You starred in a magic show? What was your act?”

“Levitation.”

\*

Garry was the first person I’d ever known who thought I was funny. Comedy, Zen, his filming comprised most of our conversations. I learned so much from him, about all of it, about his perspective on what he wanted out of his artistic process, which was fascinating, and understandably exhausting. He wanted to capture reality: like a light in a jar. It’s impossible to do, and yet he was so good at it.

Garry was asleep on the chaise lounge in the shade. I reclined in his arms, reading his book on Zen Buddhism. He woke up. “Did I fall asleep?”

“Maybe an hour ago.”

“How do you like the book? My monk friend gave it to me.”

“I dunno. It’s hard for me to keep my mind empty unless I’m moving. Like when I bellydance or surf.”

That night was the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. He wrote a check to Laird Hamilton, for a few thousand dollars. On the envelope he wrote: *Because no one should ever have to pay for fireworks alone.*

\*

We walked back to Garry’s house on the beach after the fireworks, 4<sup>th</sup> of July. (I wish I had the photo his friends took of us that night, as it’s the only one that exists of us.)

“The Academy called me. I didn’t tell you that. I haven’t told anyone.”

“You mean... They want you to host? Garry, that’s amazing!”

“I turned them down, actually.”

“What? We’ve been here 3 days together. You totally buried the lede. I mean, all you seem focused on is your relevance... Wouldn’t it help you?”

“That’s very observant of you and I’m not sure I appreciate it, by the way. I don’t know... It’s so much work. You have no idea. I did the Emmy’s, and the Grammy’s, so I know. It’s months of preparation, rehearsals, writing. I feel burned out. I just don’t have the focus...” Then he got to the crux of it. “And the truth is I’d like to do a film I feel proud of first. Before I get on that stage. I’ve spent the past few years trying to salvage my reputation from the smear campaign Brad Grey did against me in the trades. It was humiliating. At a level you could never possibly understand. I’m still trying to redeem myself. He



really hurt me.” He went on to talk about working on his first movie *What Planet Are You From?*, and how hard it was for him to work with the director, Mike Nichols.

I ignored his little jibe. “Garry, have you seen a doctor? Recently?”

“A new one last week. He gave me a vitamin injection. I have no idea if it helped me or not. I feel puffy.”

“Can you go back to Hawaii? Maybe you just need to rest.”

“That’s a good idea. I do need to recuperate. But I think I only have the energy to get about half way to Hawaii. That’ll be the name of my next stand up special: Half Way to Hawaii.”

“How can I help you?”

“There’s nothing you can do. You’ve been so supportive. It’s exhausting being me... I mean, I hate myself!”

“You’re too hard on yourself. Come here.” I wrapped my arms around him, and just held him. Finally, he opened his arms and put his head down on my shoulder, and cried.

Sometimes I would look at Garry and remember Kafka’s line. “I am in chains. Don’t touch my chains.”

\*

Garry talked a lot about David Duchovny. Like a lot a lot. He called him Dave. (Apparently, he was the only person to call David “Dave”.) Dave’s spiritual path, his scripts. He seemed concerned about Dave, and interested in his direction, clearly full of admiration and affection. “Dave is going a different direction. He’s going opposite. He’s more sensitive than people realize.” Dave. Dave. Dave. Dave’s happiness was never far from his thoughts.

I enjoyed teasing him about that, and said, “You know you’re talking about Dave a lot again. Like, teenage girl crush a lot.”

He smiled mischievously. “I’m not saying I’m attracted to him, but if we ever have a threesome I get to be in the middle.”

I started calling Dave his “boyfriend”. They talked on the phone almost every night for a stretch. I would fall asleep in bed while Garry was in the other room talking to Dave.

“Is that your boyfriend on the phone again?”

His phone would ring. “Is that your boyfriend calling again?”

He would smile at me, silently mouth “Go fuck yourself” and affectionately shut the door in my face.

It was hilarious, and also endearing. Garry cared tenderly for his friends, but David had a very special place in his heart. I’d never seen a man love other men so well before. He did things like send them flowers. I loved that.

“What did you think of his script?”

“Um, I think it’s a disturbingly accurate portrait of either Steve Ross or Bryan Kest, or some combination of both,” I said. “Like, it should maybe be a documentary instead?”

He defended his boyfriend. “You know he’s really smart. Like, intellectually smart. People don’t get him.”

“Dude, I’m not arguing with you. I can see you find him irresistible. But does his wife know about you?”

He just stared at me with this cocky smile like: *Stop it some more.*

\*

“How many friends do you think you have?” Garry asked me on a hike one afternoon.

“I dunno. Like, close friends?”

“Close friends. People you can call at 2am.”

“Including my mom? Maybe three?”

“I was going to say you’d be lucky to have five. I think three is about right. I think I have three.”

“So many people love you, Gar. So many.”

We hiked a while in silence together. He seemed lost in his thoughts. He was getting withdrawn. The DVDs were taking a toll on him. I started looking for an assistant for him, for a massage therapist, for a doctor. Maybe I started to fuss about his health, but I was increasingly concerned he was going to have a heart attack. I printed out pages on places he said he wanted to take a vacation: Thailand, Greece. I cooked for him, and I hate cooking. What was happening? I only knew I was starting to lose myself in him, and it was terrifying. I hadn’t written in weeks.

He stayed in more often. “I’m just gonna hang out here tonight and watch the game.”

Writers were always coming to his house, leaving the house, man bags and unkempt hair. There was never a woman among them. I began to realize I was the only woman in his entire life, full of men, except for the occasional reference he made to Sarah Silverman.

Garry talked a lot about his “monk friend”. He prized the photo of the monks playing basketball that hung in his kitchen. He was impressed that this particular monk whose name I can’t remember had burned off a couple of his

own fingers in meditation. Why would anyone do that in the name of spirituality? Maybe as a woman it's hard to imagine the masculine path to the divine, which is often so estranged from life.

I remember once telling him about my Dzogchen teacher, Pema Khandro Rinpoche.

"Who is he?" Garry asked.

"You mean who is *she*? She's a Buddhist yogi. They're householders in a Tibetan lineage called Ngakpa. They can get married, have children."

He frowned.

"What?"

"A woman Rinpoche?"

"You mean to tell me you don't think women can be spiritual? She's a tulku."

"That depends."

"Garry! What does that say you think about me?"

"You're only a woman on the outside."

"What?"

"I mean that as a compliment," he clarified.

I took it as a compliment coming from him, and it was then. But times have changed, evolved into a clear line between what's woke and what's not, and I also feel like I've grown into my feminine. I certainly don't fault him. I mean, Blake Edwards could never make *The Party* now, either. Sellers in blackface as an Indian bungler? Never now. There's so much pressure for comedy to be

increasingly PC, and I wonder what Garry would have to say about that, because I imagine it would be voluminous.

“Come on, let’s throw the ball around.” He wandered outside and collected a basketball. “Do you know anything about basketball?”

He had this one particular tone that made me feel like he was testing me, measuring me up, determining whether I was going to be allowed to stick around. When was my audition going to end?

“I was a forward in high school,” I said.

“Then why aren’t you coming on Sundays?” He seemed irritated with me.

“Dude, my layup is so rusty. You think I want to test it out in a pack of celebrities? No fucking way.”

“A forward. So, you’re good at catching rebounds,” he said with that special twinkly eyed grin that meant he was about to take the piss out of you. “In basketball or just romance?”

“Both, apparently.”

\*

Garry’s symptoms worsened, then seemed to get better, but then would flare up again. He was tired all the time. It was clear something was wrong with his health. But he had to finish the DVDs. He had a reverence and dedication to what he was creating that went beyond *Larry Sanders*, and he served that inner master.

Garry mourned the way *The Larry Sanders Show* fell apart. It broke his heart. The actors counting their lines. The lawsuits. He mentioned it often, every day for a while. It was hard for him to remember that it had been happy before it ended, so the DVDs gave him a way of celebrating the people he loved who

had been part of it, and even though it was hard for him to rally the energy, doing those extras for the DVD box set meant the world to him.

I have notes in my journal that we spent a week watching the Scorsese doc about Bob Dylan. He eagerly anticipated the release of the Roy London doc. He talked about what he learned from Roy with such respect, and really wanted me to understand the importance and significance of Roy's legacy and teaching. "Garry, I have no idea how you can link spirituality with being on TV."

"It's not about acting. It's about *not acting*. We had a closed set. Very few people got it. My best writers got it. But I was always losing them because Brad Grey was triple dipping. The show was about love. At the core, I mean. Everyone wants something. So, we explored that. What people want and what they're trying to get and how they try and hide their pain but everyone can see through it. Exactly the way you and I talk. That's the way I try to write my shows, because that's interesting to me."

This happened a lot. We would start talking about spirituality, about what he called "The Path" or "being real" and "the human experience", and he would spiral into his unhealed pain over Brad Grey. I tried to give him empathy. The lawsuit. The betrayal. He was so sensitive, and he also hated his own sensitivity. What chance does our culture offer men like that? Tender men who feel their feelings? My heart hurt for him, but not just for him, for the way he wanted to belong, and found himself still an outsider, after all his success and fame... nothing was enough. Something was missing for him, and he knew that, and so did I, but what could I do? I could hold his hand, and listen. I could hear his pain, and care for him. I cared so much.

He didn't think he was that famous. I hadn't known that famous people rank themselves against the success of other famous people. To anyone outside of fame, you're just famous or you're not. But for him, he struggled with wanting to be more popular. I'm not sure he ever realized how beloved he was. He loved his ham radio- and he was a great transmitter, in need of a receiver.

“Gavin says ‘we’re all coped up’. He’s right, you know. It’s our coping mechanisms that run the show.”

Garry didn’t talk about freedom, per say, but looking back I can see it was one of his core values. He wanted to feel free to do what he wanted, and live his vision, and make choices for himself that were true to his vision and his art and his way of seeing.

He just wanted to be free.

\*

One afternoon in Malibu he perched himself on his elbow and looked at me with a warm affection.

“What?”

“You look so happy right now. You should see yourself. Go look in the mirror. Go look.”

He got up, took my hand and walked me to his bathroom mirror. Did my happiness feel like his accomplishment to us both? It was – and is- the most romantic thing a man has ever said to me.

Garry had 5<sup>th</sup> gear and coma, and nothing in between. I also run my energy that way. Looking at him some days, I could see myself, and the ways I try to escape from myself, how tired I can get after a creative streak. We carved out this refuge inside each other for the other. I never saw our ending coming until it was already too late.

\*

There was one day he was feeling good, and I was feeling down. Some innocent young black kid had been killed in a gang shooting the night before on my doorstep in Venice. That same night, I had 2 old friends staying with

me, who had chosen that particular night to drop acid. So I was babysitting a bad trip, the cops showing up, the sidewalk in front of my house barricaded. I put on some Pink Floyd for my friends, and the phone rang. It was my ex-girlfriend calling from New Orleans to tell me she'd gotten married, and was pregnant. We'd broken up like 6 months earlier, and she was pregnant, getting married? Jealous, I told her about Garry. She asked to borrow money. I didn't sleep much that night.

I'm not good at hiding my feelings and Garry had magnificent bullshit detector anyway, so of course, he picked up on everything the next morning during yoga.

"You're wearing make-up today. You always look beautiful. I mean, you don't need it."

"Forward fold. Thank you, Garry."

"Don't mention it. But you seem upset about something. I hope it isn't me. If it is, you don't have to tell me."

I sat down between his hands. "It isn't you."

"Be real with me for a minute. Can you do that? Because I think this session needs to be about you today," he said, and he sat down on the mat.

"Okay, Gar."

"Sit cross-legged. Now draw a circle around your body with your finger... Now do it again. Again... and again. That's your personal space. And no one can enter it without your permission." He took some time to let me breathe, and feel. "Now, get up, and come with me."

He led me to his back patio, to his heavy punching bag. Garry collected a pair of boxing gloves. "These won't really fit you, but I want you to get the idea." He put the gloves on me. "Now get up, and hit the bag. As hard as you can."



Throw a punch? I felt ridiculous, but I tried.

“Oh my God, is that the best you can do? Okay, let me show you. Step back, like this. And keep your elbows in. A boxer has to be able to last 12 rounds, and you can’t do that with your elbows out. Now hit the bag again.” He demonstrated. “Yell. Yell *fuck*. Just keep yelling *fuck*.”

*Fuckfuckfuckfuckfuck!*

“That’s a lot better. Now you’re connecting. Can you feel that?”

I hit the bag until the tears came, and I couldn’t hold them back anymore. I sat down and cried. “Figures, the one time I wear mascara.”

“I’m just amazed it’s taken me this long to make you cry. I think that’s a new record for me, actually. My analyst will be proud of me.”

\*

“You should think about directing,” he said to me one night while we were watching something and taking it apart. I was asking technical questions about the shots, and he was pointing out how well the actors were listening - or weren’t listening - to each other.

“No, no, no. That’s your world. I’m a novelist!” I felt like he didn’t *understand* me.

“You think I don’t know what I’m talking about?” He challenged me. “I mean it. You ask all the right questions. Do you realize how interested you are in this?”

“No, Garry. I’m not into it. Besides, the only female director I can even name is Terry Gilliam.”

He started laughing so hard he doubled over, his head between his knees. I was like, “What? What? WHAT?”

He looked at me and giggled even harder. “Nothing.”

\*

**September, 2006.**

Indian summer. Post Labor Day.

“You look tan, have you been laying out?”

I’d had some good news. “Yoga Journal called me, Garry. They want to shoot me for the cover!” (I thought it would change my life. It would: I’d acquire a stalker. Thanks to Gavin’s book *The Gift of Fear*, I’d know how to handle him, but not until after he’d broken into my house.)

“Congratulations. That’s great. That’s really great. You deserve that. I’m sorry I’m not as present as I’d like to be with you right now. Do you know who Anthony Pellicano is? Of course you don’t. It’s just that I’m dealing with all this bullshit. I feel like my life is caving in on me.”

“Which is why I’m here! So we can do yoga. And be together. Cheer you up.”

I hugged him, kissed him. He was aloof. Our moods collided. “Is there anything you can think of to be grateful for, Garry? You have so much. You have a career that most comedians would give anything for. Everyone admires you.”

“You really have no idea how fucked up my life is, though. Brad Grey destroyed my reputation. I got stuck doing this fucking movie with a script I had to re-write – that I hired multiple writers to re-write- because it was so bad... and I played a fucking turtle in it. I couldn’t get out of it, because it would prove to everyone that Brad Grey was right, that I’m difficult to work

with... Jim Carrey got out of it. I'm just saying. We can start now. I'll stop. I mean, this asshole was wire-tapping my phones. And you know how private I am. But we can start now."

*"All the water in the world cannot drown you unless it gets inside of you."*

"Are you quoting a fucking yoga sutra at me?"

"Eleanor Roosevelt, actually."

"Never heard of her."

"Did you know how hated she was in the press? A Pulitzer Prize winning journalist with a readership of like 10 million followers tried to take her down. He basically said something like: her withdrawal from public life would be a fine public service."

"If he's still alive maybe he can do my PR."

We practiced, but ended early that day because his energy was low. After the yoga, he seemed withdrawn. Still attempting to cheer him, I asked to see his Emmy. He went and got it.

"Wow, it's really heavy."

"It looks good on you."

"Do you feel anything when you look at it?"

"Not really. Or maybe I do when I see someone else appreciating it. Then I can feel it. My ego kicking in, ha."

"You really think the work is the most important thing? Are you sure there's not more? To being human than just... working?" We had a deep talk that night, even about marriage, though not pointedly about each other.

He put his sunglasses on. It was nearly 10pm. “I think this is the most sane conversation I’ve ever had about marriage. I think most people get married for the wrong reasons.”

I didn’t stay the night.

Around this time Garry broke his leg playing basketball.

Our ending was abrupt and painful. No discussion. He simply pulled away and withdrew completely. He stopped yoga. Without that container, we disintegrated.

I played Jeff Buckley’s album *Grace*, over and over, staring out the window of my bedroom in Venice Beach, unable to transcend the pain of Garry’s distancing.

*I feel too young to hold on  
I'm much too old to break free and run  
Too deaf, dumb, and blind  
To see the damage I've done*

I assumed he met someone else. Surely he’d met someone else. Afraid of finding out about this apocryphal other woman I invented, I couldn’t bring myself to reach out to him through his walls except for the occasional email. Years would pass. I would eventually sit down to watch Judd’s *Zen Diaries*, and be run through with the horrible realization that Garry hadn’t met anyone else, and he’d only gotten sicker after we split up. That had I stayed, had I stayed, had I just insisted he lower the draw bridge... Oh, regret, you cold sonofabitch.

*Sweet lover, you should've come over  
Oh, love I've waited for you  
Lover, you should've come over  
'Cause it's not too late*

\*

As a student of love, I seem to repeatedly find out how much I still don't know about it. Like an archeologist discovering an entire city through the lens of a few pottery shards and some scattered ochre at a gravesite, I get down on my knees and dig for the truth. But I do know this: if love is fire, I looked for its light in the wrong windows for a long time, in the gasoline fires that leave you empty, cold, malnourished. Garry was a campfire. His light warmed me, illuminated the entire world around us, and fed my soul. I never loved anyone the same way again.

Every few years I would start to drive to Garry's house, and stop myself. And I would turn my car around. Maybe next month. Maybe soon. Soon.  
*Soonsoonsoonsoonsoon.*

I always intended to reconnect with him. Once my book was published, maybe. I'd have something to show for my art, and it would give me a good reason to contact him, and thank him for his support and encouragement. Why are the children of narcissists so vulnerable to believe our only value is our work? As if it is the only thing worth loving about us? Garry and I were a stubborn equation. I wish to God I'd known he was trying to contact me in those months before he died. He'd been emailing an old account I never checked. I found the emails and had to grieve his death all over again, locking myself in my bathroom so I could cry without my son seeing. I would have given anything to be there for him then, if only just to walk him home. I hate that he died alone.

The recession of 2008 derailed my entire life, and the publishing industry. Everything I'd worked for crumbled overnight. In the end, it took 10 years to get my first novel published by Harper Collins.

Garry died a month before it was published.

Nothing in life works out the way you think it will.

Sometimes I stand before the sea with my surfboard in hand and think of him.

Not fuck you. But I love you.

*I love you for free.*

These were some of Garry's last emails to me, which were more about his process, and his spiritual perspective. The first one he was addressing my questions on what he thought about the law of attraction film, "The Secret". Typos are his.

3/2007

*Keep the mind empty. Know your intention. Integrate it into every cell of your body, and commit. And you can do anything.*

*Remain unresult oriented, but live moment by moment in process, and what you are in this goalless, unspeakable, focused path will result in what you want.*

*Thinking about what you want, and then acting like you are committed to getting it, to the degree of already getting it, is just a confusing way of twisting people around. Quantum mechanics, and the field of energy that exists transmits on a frequency far deeper than thought.*

*Sure, thoughts will create reactions. Empty mind, pure heart will result in being right where you are supposed to be. The Secret is a good way to get people to think about consciousness on a simple, slightly distorted way, but at least thinking about it. It is not a secret that you can be whatever you want, and make your life what you want, but it comes from the still place, not the mind, thought, acting-out place. Clear the mind, and get out of your own way, and be.*

*You will automatically find the natural action and discipline by which to find peace, and create the life and people you want around.*

*"Forcing" is not the secret. Commercial. One must be quiet, and grateful for where they are, before forward movement happens. And it will happen organically. The tone of the talk on cd I have sounds shallow, and doesn't resonate. As opposed to Eckhart Tolle. Who doesn't need to seem to play music, and have other teachers throw in*

*their two cents every five minutes.*

*That's my instinct. I had to stop after two discs.....I was getting nauseous.....as I often do.*

*G.*

And his reply after I asked him about the time he was on Bill Maher and his cell rang during the show:

*5/2007*

*No, the cell phone was no gag. I often "live" on these talk shows, so if it feels natural to me, for myself, I take the cell phone with me in my pocket which I would ordinarily do, so just because it's tv, I don't stop doing what I ordinarily do. Sometimes I have a pen, and a bunch of notes in my pocket, or cash, or whatever, and a real moment like that is just what I shoot for. Not planned in anyway, but there for the opportunity.*

*Thanks for your note, and yes it has been too much work the last three years. And know I will really try to recuperate.*

*Garry*

\*

I dream about Garry. Sometimes I wake up feeling like he's in the room or I can hear him breathing next to me. There's no question these dreams are more like a transmission. None of my other dead relatives or friends do this. The connection I feel to him seems even stronger after his death. I can feel his intention, strong as ever. I dunno. The women are witches in my family.

*Garry! I've been meaning to call you. It's so good to see you.*

*I'm available.*

*But... you're dead.*

*You can still call me. Anytime. I'll always take your call, Kaia.*

*What's it like, where you are?*

*It's just like living in Hawaii, only you never have to use the bathroom.*

I had read something somewhere once about dying stars, red giants maybe, I can't remember... that though they emit tremendous light, they're unstable at the core, and their fusion becomes an attempt at self-preservation.

*I am in chains. Don't touch my chains.*

Garry and I had an enso for both a beginning, and an ending. "The Enso" instead of "The End". An ellipsis, instead of a full stop. Life, death, *in media res*.

Garry saw something in me. He called me a "genius", and at the time I thought he was just trying to get me into bed. He believed in my potential. I felt like he didn't get me when we were together, but the twist was that I was the one who didn't get myself. I didn't know yet what inside me was passing fancy versus what my true gifts are.

I learned so much from being near him: How to make strangers laugh. How important it is that people around you feel appreciated, acknowledged. That it's always a good idea to send anyone flowers for any reason. To be certain you can trust the people around you with your reputation. To just pick up the phone.

What if I believed in myself the way Garry had believed in me? Even half as much?

*Who would I be?*



Terry Fucking Gilliam, maybe. (Only with a vagina, thanks for *not* telling me, motherfucker.)

After *Zen Dairies* dropped my mom and I were talking about Garry, and she said something insightful. “Garry is just as powerful after his death as he was in his life. His soul is funny. He’s enlarged his career, and expanded his range of success. He’s pretty busy in Spirit World!”

I can still hear the outgoing message he had on his voicemail:  
“I don’t think I’m heeeeeeeere...”

In some way, these notes are my love letter to him. He never knew I chronicled our time together. I was the place he didn’t have to have a camera rolling, and that solace we shared was irreplaceable in my life. Garry Shandling, you were always a good transmitter, in need of a receiver. I love you and I miss you, and I’ll see you on the other side someday.

Thanks for having your ashes scattered on the beaches of Hawaii, so that when your friends want to see you, we have to find the sea turtles and ask them,  
“Have you seen Garry lately? How’s his hair?”