

LOOKING GLASS ELEGY

by

Robert Alexander Wray

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“and if one does not know the terrors, one does not know the greatness, either”
--Soren Kierkegaard

CHARACTERS

George: a middle-aged film location scout trying to make sense of existence, plus other matters

TIME/PLACE: N/A

My mother's grave

Long conversation Dickinson seashells poetry Dickinson and on

Clara Damm

This movement doesn't have to go with that or be all matchymatchy

No hug no high 5 no kiss

It's not the same It's not the same It's not the same

The people one meets and the people one meets

A Pig's Ass

Impossible duet

Poppycock

Be alert be aware

A nightmare or dream

Don Quixote How to handle that earnest desire to live in a world of imagination and love

Keep going Moving right along Keep going

Big loft windows which unfortunately look out upon train tracks

I just want to go home

Swimming in a bountiful sea of words and wildness

God knows what's in my heart

"She ruins her body down through her thoughts"

Ultimate human need Explanation

Admiral of the High Seas

To escape time let go of memory

Sometimes in life you have to look under the hood

A pirate's glare

The butterflies of heartbreak

Chapter 26

Faded Broadway posters

Moonflowers

Ezekiel 37

"Swoosh cape and storm off right"

What must we value

"Swoosh cape and storm off right"

I haven't been to my mother's grave in years
I don't even know if I could find it now
Don't really think of her as dead

A flower left on her tombstone once got taken
for a walk by the wind around the cemetery

Something severely poetic about that

Saw Gretchen yesterday while scouting some possible
film locations A doubly warm hug A hug with meaning
and sadness Felt good seeing her so unexpectedly Long
conversation Dickinson seashells poetry Dickinson and

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on Her hair short soft looking Wanted to touch it

I wonder if she's happy

Hope so

An interesting find during yesterday's location hunt
Went to visit and explore the rooms of an old house
built in the 1800s with a weird and spooky ambience
The production manager and his dog accompany me

In one of these rooms we discover a cabinet We peek
inside and see a box with the name Clara Damm on it
Damm spelled with 2 m's Unique moniker

And in the box all carefully folded and wrapped a black
lace shawl a small Bible and 2 locks of dark woven hair
The manager asks if I know what any of this is or means
I tell him it's probably a remembrance of sorts a reminder
of mortality Quite customary in the 19th century to keep a
deceased loved one's hair make trinkets or artwork using
the hair

The manager seems a bit distressed by that Do you
actually think the person the hair belonged to is dead
he wonders I respond Well if she wasn't dead when
the hair was cut off back in the 1800s she's probably
pretty dead by now

There were several strange incidents that I attribute to
Clara Damm

Like watching the manager's dog Skipper walk to an
empty space and spend 5 minutes begging that space
for food while wagging his tail He sees something I
cannot Something not visible But if it's the ghost of
Clara Damm she's definitely dog-friendly

A flower being taken for a walk by the wind around
the cemetery

This movement doesn't have to go with that or be all matchymatchy
says the dancer with the shy but piercingly intelligent eyes and ruby

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red hair explaining how she creates choreography to music It's like
a conversation where both sides can talk simultaneously she says

I hired her to drive me for the day so that I could spot places document
stuff and accomplish other tasks while on the road She seems fascinated
by what I do We stop at one locale and as I go about getting all angles of
a building shot I see her near the car doing a variety of dance moves Her
style rhythms expressions of emotion So beautiful True deep cool beauty

Why is this causing me to cry I think to myself

No hug no high 5 no kiss
Just write me a line of verse
a piece of poetry that I can
remember forever

It's not the same It's not the same It's not the same
laments the owner of the house we want to rent and
use an engaging guy overall who seems bitter about
how much the world has changed Proclaims himself
an old hippie Loves San Francisco Kerouac Dylan A
big deal who you liked back then Beatles or Stones
he says Mick Jagger still can't get no satisfaction he
says He likens fate and destiny to having reservations
at a restaurant "You're supposed to be at such a place
at such a time but will you make it" The way he took
my mint candy was very cool Accepted the candy as
a matter of course to bond and be on familiar terms
instantly

The people one meets and the people one meets
It's hard to understand the mentality of some of
my transient colleagues Essentially what I do is
find locations take pictures and upload them into
folders so that a cinematic world can be created
which hopefully offers relief from reality Then
once production's finished I oversee the cleanup
and restore everything back to its pristine state

Like when the Cat in the Hat releases a Voom
that clears and cleans the entire place spotless

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Like when the Cat in the Hat releases a Voom
that clears and cleans the entire place spotless

But there are some people in this business who
seem clueless about the process and mess with
your sense of what's right what's wrong They
look through all the shots of possible buildings
you painstakingly took and put together and the
first thing they say is These shots should not be
in a horizontal format And you're thinking What
the fuck did you say Why do you have a problem
with them being horizontal Look at the fucking
shots

Such assholes are treacherous like an avalanche
Particularly this one production designer who's
city born and bred and walks around like a prince
"You walk like a prince You walk and I start seeing
a palace with decorated elephants and naked ladies
lounging on marble Listen you specifically said you
wanted prewar facades Every place I scouted that's
in that folder is prewar The type of building you say
you want now is not fucking prewar I just wish you
would see that and soften your dark urban sharpness"

A Pig's Ass That's the title of my next tell-all

An impossible duet me and her
Gretchen Gretchen Gretchen A
lit cigarette in her mouth moving
around the house topless then out
to the sunny grass where she lays
down "You have lots of seashells"
"What do you mean seashells" As
she puts out her cigarette she picks
up a snail's shell They do look like
seashells It almost breaks my heart
that Gretchen a girl brought up in a
land by no ocean whatsoever calls
these tiny snail creatures seashells
She finds the prettiest and biggest
one and gives it to me with delight

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She likes mean men though Needs
meanness punishment harshness to
feel whole and balanced I couldn't
provide that convincingly enough

Poppycock I just like the word
poppycock Think I'll use it more often

Be alert be aware Was walking along
lost in my own world after a lousy day
and nearly missed the vision of these
tiny red bat-like birds swooping sharply
up then down as if riding an invisibly
freakish rollercoaster Wings fluttering
then stretched and still at long gliding
intervals Also flying after one another

No hug no high 5 no kiss
Just write me a line of verse
a piece of poetry that I can
remember forever

A nightmare or dream The work week's
full of both extremes on a daily basis

One day it's you and your dancer companion
cruising around the city showing her the best
streets to drive down all the nice lobbies to go
into the greatest spots to just hang out and be
happy Along the way you entertain her with a
life defined by names of TV shows and movies
and film stars "She's nice he sucks" etc And the
next day it's a cinematographer who wants your
parking pass your golden ticket that allows you
to park anywhere you want and because you give
it to him you end up with tons of parking citations
Same cinematographer who at the end of the day is
rubbing his thumbprint on a camera lens to get a
certain effect and stops and says I want a hamburger
Your boss says Go get it So you're looking all over
town at 2:30 in the morning for a fucking hamburger
for this person who's cost you 100s in parking fees

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After finally finding a place that has it and delivering
it posthaste the cinematographer suddenly becomes
your best friend and even shouts out I love you

Why is this causing me to cry

“What I wish,” replied Don Quixote...“is
to learn from your own lips if there might
be some cure for the sadness and pain that
your strange life here seems to demonstrate,
and had it been necessary to hunt for you, I
would have hunted with infinite care.”

Don Quixote How to handle that earnest desire
to live in a world of imagination and love

Keep going Moving right along Keep going

Isn't poppycock a great word though

Big loft windows which unfortunately look out upon
train tracks But the basic view's so wide and the sky's
everywhere so it's all beautiful nevertheless Coral pink
walls white frilly curtains a makeshift bar with a single
red rose on top Picture frames without pictures in them
One sculpture of a Matisse-like figure of a falling man
Very simple decor The perfect space to shoot a major
scene for an independent film The woman with 3 kids
and 2 dogs living there's barely hanging on however

She's an artist Her clothes and body flecked with paint
of differing hues Specks of yellow black and purple on
her hands Rough coarse hands that've handled the trials
of motherhood as well as the materials of a painter's life
Her lips often quivering with a desire to say something
preparing her mouth to speak Then she simply trails off
worn down with work and care and art

After we finalize a price to rent out her place I go to the

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producers to see if we can double her rate Thankfully we can and it's cool I really wish I could help people more

I just want to go home My eternal mantra
Especially when I find the ideal spot to do
a shoot after days of searching and then the
property owner says the one thing that you
never want to hear Namely "Yeah we have
movies shooting here constantly" So it all
becomes pointless 'cause if it's known that
a location's used a lot it's the kiss of death

I just want to go home I just want to go home

Swimming in a bountiful sea of words and wildness
That's how Gretchen would describe her experience
of reading Emily Dickinson She'd read her for her
own edification I'd tease and test her "So what line
comes after 'It struck me every day'" She'd not only

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