

3-Way Stop  
a play in one act by George Gray

*A sparsely furnished basement flat. DALEY and QUINN, 44 and 50, respectively, discovered on. DALEY is eating a meat sandwich. QUINN reads.*

*Pause.*

*QUINN chuckles. DALEY looks up. Pause.*

*DALEY looks away, munches his sandwich. QUINN clears his throat with a rasp. DALEY looks up.*

*Pause.*

*QUINN guffaws raucously. Impulse degenerates to violent coughing spasm. DALEY watches. QUINN's cough becomes convulsive. He drops his book, falls to the floor on his knees. He claws his pocket for a handkerchief. Tears come to his eyes. DALEY watches.*

*After a moment, QUINN's cough subsides. He sits on the floor wheezing, rent, exhausted.*

*Pause.*

*DALEY takes another bite from his sandwich, watches QUINN, curious, passive.*

*QUINN takes a deep breath. He flashes a quick smile at DALEY. DALEY looks away. QUINN takes up his book, resumes his seat, reassumes composure; stops to think.*

*Pause.*

*DALEY eyes his sandwich dispassionately.*

*DALEY*

Bloody bother going on sometimes.

*(QUINN lost in thought.)*

Can't stand the look of it, let alone the taste, eh? What I wouldn't give for a plate of snails and garlic.

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*Pause. QUINN registers the comment, looks at DALEY curiously; DALEY avoids his eyes.*

*QUINN reads.*

*DALEY sniffs at the sandwich, opens it, sniffs the meat, tastes the butter, closes it, ponders.*

*QUINN looks up in thought, regards the book, thumbs the pages.*

QUINN

*(To himself, satisfied.)*

One page at a time...

*(Continues reading.)*

*Pause.*

DALEY

*(Registers, looks up.)*

Come again?

QUINN

*(Looks up.)*

What?

DALEY

What you said.

QUINN

Did I speak?

DALEY

Didn't you?

QUINN

No...

*Pause. QUINN is puzzled. DALEY munches his sandwich.*

*(Recall.)*

Oh. Books. Put together. Always know how far you've done, how far you've left to do. Hold it in your hands. Not like a play or a concert. If you wish, you can compare.

*(He demonstrates.)*

I've only just begun, you see?

*(Smiles.)*

Empirical stability. No doubts.

DALEY

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*(Arbitrary.)*  
No suspense.

QUINN

*(Imperative.)*  
No questions.

DALEY

Only how it comes out in the end.

QUINN

*(Self-satisfied.)*  
Exactly.

DALEY

*(Smug.)*  
But I understand what you're getting at.

QUINN

Do you?

DALEY

*(Uncertain.)*  
Don't I?

QUINN

Explain it, then.

DALEY

*(Holding the last bit of his sandwich.)*  
Now you see it...

*(Puts it in his mouth.)*  
Now you don't.

QUINN

*(Extenuating.)*  
But it still exists...

DALEY

*(Chewing. Smug.)*  
Of course.

QUINN

*(Prodding.)*  
Life after death.

DALEY

*(Not conceding.)*  
Afterlife.

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QUINN

*(Brief pause. Agreeing.)*

Afterdeath.

*Pause.*

*QUINN reads. DALEY ponders. DALEY sits on the floor in front of overstuffed chair stage right; QUINN in butterfly highback wicker chair stage left.*

*Door stage left to TILLIE's room. Door stage right to long basement hallway. Walls are white stucco, low ceiling, exposed beam, pipes. The floor is concrete, covered by a worn Persian rug. It seems always damp and cold. DALEY and QUINN wear coats. QUINN wears a muffler.*

*DALEY reaches in his coat pocket, withdraws an apple half wrapped in Saran, unwraps it, reaches in other pocket for knife, cuts slice, puts slice in mouth, wraps apple, puts apple and knife away, chews thoughtfully.*

DALEY

If you want to know what I think...

*(QUINN reads.)*

I say if you want to know what I think; I mean, if that's of any interest to you at all...

*(QUINN reads.)*

Here, look up what I talk to you!

*(QUINN looks up.)*

I say if you want to know what I think, well, I think there's more to this than meets the eye...

QUINN

More to what.

DALEY

This business about books. It's like an iceberg...

QUINN

Yes.

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DALEY  
And only ten per cent is visible...

QUINN  
I quite agree.

DALEY  
*(Disappointed.)*  
You what?

QUINN  
I say I quite agree. You're right.

DALEY  
Not necessarily.

QUINN  
No?

DALEY  
Just because you agree don't mean I'm right.

QUINN  
It's a consensus, Daley.

DALEY  
A consensus of two.

QUINN  
Majority rules, sad to say.  
*(Reflects. Pontifically.)*  
Truth is the consensus of beliefs!

DALEY  
*(Digests this.)*  
Food for thought.

QUINN  
A pearl from the Oyster, Daley.

DALEY  
*(Unappreciative.)*  
You can't eat pearls, Quinn.

*Pause. QUINN reads.  
DALEY scratches his head; his  
stomach; his neck; his crotch.  
He takes off his shoes and  
scratches his feet.*

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*Pause.*

*(Impatient.)*

So what, are you going to sit and read all day?

QUINN

*(Looks up.)*

Say what?

DALEY

*(A beat. Deferring.)*

I mean there's other ways to pass the while....

QUINN

*(A beat. Rudely.)*

Can't you see I'm occupied?

DALEY

*(Affected.)*

Occupied?

QUINN

*(Condescending.)*

Engaged. Employed. Active.

DALEY

*(Incredulous.)*

Active?

QUINN

Operose.

DALEY

*(Nonplused.)*

Operose?

*Pause. QUINN reads.  
DALEY takes package of  
cigarettes from shirt pocket,  
selects one, places it in his  
mouth, searches pockets for  
matches. QUINN observes him  
over book; DALEY feels his gaze,  
stops search, replaces cigarette  
in package, returns package to  
pocket.  
Pause.*

*(Broaching the subject.)*

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Here, say I just go rap at the door to see if she's awake?

QUINN

Not likely.

DALEY

Ought to be, God knows. It's done past teatime.

QUINN

She had a rough night.

DALEY

*(Suspicious.)*

One o' them dreams?

QUINN

*(Casually preoccupied.)*

A big black bugger with a sword.

DALEY

A sword?

QUINN

A sabre.

DALEY

*(A beat.)*

So what did he do?

QUINN

Cut her up in pieces.

DALEY

No.

QUINN

Then he ate her, piece by piece.

DALEY

*(Chuckling in relief and disbelief.)*

Go on...

QUINN

It's true. You don't have to believe me.

DALEY

Ate her up, did he?

QUINN

Then he vomited her back up and rearticulated her.

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DALEY

*(Smiles.)*

That must have been a trick.

QUINN

And that was only the beginning. After that he tied her up and beat her with his whip, and pulled out her hair, and kicked her in the cunt with steel-toed shoes...

DALEY

*(Chuckles.)*

The brute!

QUINN

Gouged out her eyes and poured boiling water in her ears.

DALEY

*(Giggling obsessively.)*

Owww!

QUINN

But there's more, Daley. You haven't heard the worst.

DALEY

*(Sensing doom.)*

Don't tell me.

QUINN

He performed an unnatural act, Daley.

DALEY

*(Covering his ears.)*

No no no no noooo!

QUINN

He mounted her from behind.

DALEY

*(Startled.)*

What?

QUINN

She was squealing like a ruptured duck.

DALEY

That's disgusting.

*(He imagines the event.)*

I think I'm going to throw up.

*Pause. QUINN continues to read.*

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*DALEY stares ahead.*

How's she taking it?

QUINN

Who?

DALEY

Tillie.

QUINN

How's she taking what?

DALEY

This incident with this here savage.

QUINN

I never said he was a savage.

DALEY

You did!

QUINN

Never once. You supplied that bit of information for yourself.

DALEY

*(Defensive.)*

Well what would you call a big black bloke with a sword, I'd like to know? What goes around bugging folk!

QUINN

Actually, he was an actor playing *Othello* at the Aldwich, come by for a game of whist. Nice chap, matter of fact.

*Pause. QUINN reads, DALEY stares ahead.*

DALEY

So how's she taking it?

QUINN

Taking what?

DALEY

Bugged by this here Zulu.

QUINN

*(Jeering.)*

Jealous, Daley?

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DALEY  
What me, jealous? What's to be jealous of?

QUINN  
Didn't I tell you?

DALEY  
Tell me what?

QUINN  
She's gone for him.

DALEY  
Gone for him?

QUINN  
Head over heels.

DALEY  
Not Tillie!

QUINN  
Jealous?

DALEY  
*(Rationally.)*  
A black chap.

QUINN  
Black as a sweep's arse.

*Pause. QUINN reads.  
DALEY reaches in his pocket,  
feels something, hesitates.  
Takes out a small revolver.  
Examines it curiously, in  
wonderment. Removes cartridges,  
examines them, replaces them.*

DALEY  
Quinn...  
*(QUINN continues to read.)*  
Quinn, look what I've found.

QUINN  
*(Looks up, sees pistol. Casually.)*  
Where did you find it?

DALEY  
In my pocket.

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QUINN  
Is it yours?

DALEY  
I don't remember having it before.

QUINN  
That's odd.  
*(Pause.)*  
Give it to me.

DALEY  
What for?

QUINN  
I want to examine it.

DALEY  
Why?

QUINN  
It might be mine.

DALEY  
I don't think so.

QUINN  
Let me see.

DALEY  
No.

QUINN  
If you're going to be that way...

DALEY  
*(Studies gun.)*  
It might be a handy thing to have around...

*Pause. QUINN reads. DALEY plays with the gun like a child, retrospective.*

QUINN  
*(Uncomfortable.)*  
I wish you wouldn't point that thing at me. It might go off accidentally.

DALEY

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Would it matter?

QUINN

Point it at yourself.

DALEY

*(He reflects.)*

How old am I, Quinn?

QUINN

Forty-four.

DALEY

That's pretty old.

QUINN

Not really.

DALEY

Very old, Quinn. I might well die today.

QUINN

So might we all.

DALEY

In which case I'm as old as I shall be, give or take some hours.  
That's pretty old, Quinn.

QUINN

My father's eighty and still strong.

DALEY

How old are you?

QUINN

Here, don't you think this has gone on long enough? Put that thing  
away.

DALEY

*(Pointing gun at QUINN.)*

How old, Quinn?

QUINN

Fifty. Fifty.

DALEY

*(Smiles.)*

Aha! Good.

*Pause. DALEY puts gun in  
pocket. QUINN reads.*

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*(Suspicious.)*

Here, how do you know all this?

QUINN

*(Not looking up.)*

All what?

DALEY

All this about Tillie and this here black bugger.

*(Accusative.)*

I think you've made it up.

QUINN

See for yourself.

DALEY

See?

QUINN

It's plain as the nose on your face.

*Pause. QUINN reads.*

*DALEY crawls across floor to*

*TILLIE's door; hesitates;*

*listens; peers through keyhole.*

DALEY

Caw...

*(A beat.)*

She's not got any clothes on!

*(A beat.)*

She's still asleep, all right...

*(A beat.)*

Quinn?

QUINN

What?

DALEY

She's all alone.

*(Looks at QUINN.)*

She's all alone, Quinn. There's no blackie with her at all!

QUINN

*(A beat. He looks up.)*

No?

DALEY

She don't look none the worse, neither, Quinn...

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*Pause. QUINN forgets, tries to remember, gives up, reads. DALEY peers through the keyhole.*

*(Abruptly.)*  
Oh, what a nuisance!

QUINN

*(Mumbles.)*  
What's that?

DALEY

She's plopped over on her belly.

*Pause. QUINN reads. DALEY watches a moment more, then sits cross-legged, back to the door, staring ahead. QUINN chuckles.*

*(A beat.)*  
What?

QUINN

*(Looking up.)*  
Mmm?

DALEY

You laughed.

QUINN

*(Neatly.)*  
Humorous passage.

DALEY

What's it say? Read it to me.

QUINN

You wouldn't get it.

DALEY

*(Stung.)*  
What did you say?

QUINN

Sorry.

DALEY

I say, I don't think that's very kind!

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QUINN  
You're quite right. I apologize.

DALEY  
*(A beat.)*  
What's it say?

QUINN  
What?

DALEY  
Funny thing you read.

QUINN  
Wasn't funny, actually. A bit droll.

DALEY  
*(Companionably.)*  
I appreciate a bit of humor now and again.

QUINN  
Honestly, it was just a turn of phrase...

DALEY  
*(Childish imperative.)*  
Read it.

QUINN  
Oh, if you insist...  
*(He reads.)*

"Mister *Michael* Johnson was a man of a large and robust body, and of a strong and active mind; yet, as in the most solid rocks veins of unsound substance are often discovered, there was in him a mixture of that disease, the nature of which eludes the most minute inquiry, though the effects are known to be a weariness of life, an unconcern about those things which agitate the greater part of mankind, and a general sensation of gloomy wretchedness. From him then his son inherited, with some other qualities, a 'vile melancholy,' which...

*(He begins to chuckle.)*  
which in his too strong expression...  
*(Losing control to laughter.)*  
of any disturbance -- of the mind...  
*(Racing laughter to the finish.)*  
made-him-mad-all-his-life-at-least-not-sober!"

*QUINN's laughter becomes hysterical, then degenerates horribly into another violent*

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*coughing spasm. concluding in a sound which can only be described as a death rattle. Pause.*

DALEY

That's rather a nasty cough you have there.

QUINN

You didn't get it, did you?

DALEY

What's the name of the book?

QUINN

The Life of Samuel Johnson.

*(Patronizing.)*

I told you you wouldn't get it.

DALEY

*(Uncomfortably.)*

Here, it's my turn.

QUINN

Confess, Daley. You didn't get it.

DALEY

'Course I got it.

QUINN

Explain it, then.

DALEY

Let me tell one.

QUINN

*(Threatening.)*

Explain it, Daley.

DALEY

*(Horrorified.)*

It was about this bloke here that was crazy on account of his father was crazy before him. Can I tell one now?

QUINN

Why didn't you laugh?

DALEY

Didn't think it was funny, that's all.

*(QUINN is confused.)*

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Was it meant to be?

QUINN

Well I thought so, obviously; otherwise I wouldn't have laughed, now would I?

DALEY

You think the fellow what wrote the book expected you to laugh?

QUINN

That's hardly the point, I'd say...

DALEY

I say it's quite to the point. This fellow Johnson, did he think it was funny, having to carry the sins of his father around on his back?

QUINN

It's not a sin to be insane, Daley.

DALEY

It's nothing to laugh at, neither.

*(QUINN chuckles.)*

Here, let me tell one.

QUINN

One what?

DALEY

A joke.

QUINN

I don't think so.

DALEY

*(Stunned.)*

Come again?

QUINN

I said I'd rather not. We don't seem to share the same sense of humor.

DALEY

*(Blowing off.)*

Blimey, you're a sport. You're a real sport, you are. Here I let you tell me this pathetic tale about this crazy chap, and when I give my opinion -- my honest opinion, as I would to a friend, as friends we are, I hope. As friends...

*(A beat.)*

Is this what we've come to, Quinn. After all these years?

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QUINN

*(Smug smile.)*  
You are jealous, aren't you.

DALEY

What, me? Jealous? Who of?

QUINN

The black fellow in Tillie's dream.

DALEY

That's a bloody lie!

QUINN

You needn't get angry with me. I'm your friend.

DALEY

I'll do without your friendship, if you don't mind.

QUINN

Have it your way.

*Pause. QUINN reads. DALEY wrestles with his pride.*

DALEY

Bloody Christ!

QUINN

*(Not looking up.)*  
Hmm?

DALEY

*(A beat.)*  
Nothing.

*Pause. QUINN reads. DALEY stares ahead.*

*(Groveling discreetly.)*  
Do you remember the summer we spent at St. Tropez?

QUINN

*(Not looking up.)*  
Mmm.

DALEY

There was a young Greek chap in the party. What was his name?

QUINN

*(Hardly hearing.)*

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Morris something...

DALEY

No, not Morris. The Greek chap, with the curly hair. Victor? Was that it?

QUINN

Mmm.

DALEY

I often wonder what became of him.

QUINN

Vittorio.

DALEY

What?

QUINN

His name. Vittorio. Not Victor. Italian, not Greek.

DALEY

*(Beat.)*

He certainly had a way with the women...

QUINN

Mmm.

DALEY

*(Beat.)*

Only I thought he rather fancied the men...

QUINN

Tush, Daley!

DALEY

Well he did have a peculiar way of looking at one, if you know what I mean. Direct, but oddly veiled, shadowed. A smouldering sort of look.

QUINN

Smouldering?

DALEY

He used to write to me, you know.

QUINN

*(Feigned indifference.)*

Did he really?

DALEY

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*(Diminutive.)*

Not seriously, of course. Not letters of passion. But once he sent me his photograph.

*(A beat. QUINN reads.)*

I returned it.

*(A beat.)*

"Gentlemen do not exchange photographs," I told him.

*(A beat.)*

He stopped writing after that.

*Pause. QUINN reads. DALEY  
stares ahead.*

QUINN

*(Reading aloud.)*

"To Johnson, whose supreme enjoyment was the exercise of his reason, the disturbance or obscuration of that faculty was the evil most to be dreaded. Insanity, therefore, was the object of his most dismal apprehension; and he fancied himself seized by it, or approaching to it, at the very time when he was giving proofs of a more than ordinary soundness of vigor and judgment."

*Long pause. QUINN stares ahead.  
DALEY stares ahead.*

DALEY

It was the proper thing to have done, wasn't it?

QUINN

What?

DALEY

To return the photograph. I mean the relationship was verging on an indiscretion, so to speak...

QUINN

*(Frankly, but not unkindly.)*

You know what the trouble with you is, Daley? It's simple. You've no concept of a higher order. I mean, there's nothing demeaning in mental existence, so long as one remains aware of some vestige of ones latent aptitudes -- ones sacrifices. Your trouble, my friend, is that you've lost sight of the stars.

DALEY

So there's no hope for me?

QUINN

None at all.

*Pause. DALEY stares at his*

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feet. QUINN stares at DALEY. The door to TILLIE's room opens and she appears, a horse-faced whore of twenty looking both younger and much older, a child ravaged. She wears as little as the traffic will allow; DALEY reacts accordingly. At best he is embarrassed. QUINN reads.

TILLIE

(To QUINN.)  
Have I had any calls?

QUINN

No one who'd leave his name.

TILLIE

Anyone coming by?

QUINN

I rather doubt it.

TILLIE

Maybe I'll take the night off.

(Pause.)

Anything on the telly?

(Pause. QUINN reads. DALEY won't or can't look at her.)

Well, we're a sociable lot today. Did you leave anything to eat?

DALEY

(As QUINN doesn't answer.)

There's lunchmeat and cheese.

TILLIE

Nothing sweet?

DALEY:

(Grudging.)

A cake or two from tea.

TILLIE

(Leering.)

Saving them for yourself, wasn't you?

DALEY

Them as sleeps through tea-time forfeits all rights to the cakes.

TILLIE

Must I get them myself, or will some kind gentleman offer his

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services?

(DALEY stands, exits. TILLIE stands behind chair. To  
QUINN.)  
What's it about?

What? QUINN

Your book. TILLIE

Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. QUINN

(Disdainful.)  
Oh. TILLIE

(Pretentious.)  
Actually, it's quite interesting. QUINN

It wanders a bit for my taste. TILLIE

You've read it? QUINN

I have been educated. My father read at Oxford. TILLIE

(Unpleasantly.)  
I forgot. QUINN

It's not important. TILLIE

(A beat. Pleasantly.)  
I'm intrigued by his paranoia of insanity. One might say that very  
fear was his sole symptom. QUINN

Most of us live in fear of reason. TILLIE

Exactly so. He was destroyed by doubts -- unfounded doubts... QUINN

TILLIE

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That's the condition of humankind, I've learned. Always destroyed by the fear of losing something -- whatever we live for. Ergo necrophobia, in its varying degrees. Do you have any cigarettes?

QUINN

We don't allow smoking.

*Pause. TILLIE stares at him; he returns her gaze. DALEY enters with a tray. TILLIE sits.*

DALEY

I've sweetened your tea.

QUINN

*(A beat. Continuing.)*

I myself have never been afraid of death. Does that mean I have no life?

DALEY

*(Confused.)*

Come again?

QUINN

*(Impatient.)*

RogerMason, Daley.

DALEY

I'm sorry.

TILLIE

*(To QUINN.)*

What?

DALEY

You haven't said that for a long time, Quinn.

QUINN

*(Incisive.)*

We have been two for a long time, Daley. Now we're three.

TILLIE

Here, what's all this?

DALEY

It's a family saw, you might say. All it means is I've stepped into the middle of your conversation. RogerMason.

QUINN

*(A beat. TILLIE giggles. A beat.)*

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You haven't answered my question.

TILLIE

You know the answer, Mister Quinn. I'll be happy to corroborate it, if you like.

QUINN

*(Consternated.)*

Hmmm.

DALEY

*(Continuing.)*

You see, once I was telling this tale about a bloke called Roger Mason, and every time I'd get halfway through somebody new would step up and I'd have to start all over. It was quite a laugh, actually. I've forgotten the tale, it's been so long, but each time, halfway through, "so about the time he was doing this or that," I'd be saying, and someone would say, "Who?" and I'd say "Roger Mason," and they'd say "Who's he?" and I'd have to start it again...

*(A beat. It isn't funny.)*

So ever since, when somebody steps into the middle of a conversation, we say RogerMason.

*(Brief pause. Impulsive.)*

Is it true you're free this evening?

TILLIE

*(Amused.)*

What sort of thing did you have in mind?

DALEY

Well I thought, you know, we might go to the pictures, perhaps, or...

QUINN

*(Unconscious interruption.)*

Do you actually mean to say I'm not alive?

DALEY

*(To QUINN.)*

Come again?

QUINN

I wasn't speaking to you, Daley.

TILLIE

I would say that you are alive only insofar as you are breathing, your heart is beating, and you continue to ingest and defecate; but not to the extent that your death would make any significant change in your disposition or your prospects.

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DALEY

*(A beat. Bemused.)*

A titillating conjecture.

QUINN

*(Emphatic.)*

Not to be confused with truth!

DALEY

*(Apologetic)*

I was only saying...

QUINN

Look at me! I'm in the pink! I'm as supple as a lad of twenty!

DALEY

*(Sitting at TILLIE's feet.)*

Off we go again...

QUINN

And again and again and again -- until I have demonstrated to the world that the essence of life is the soul and the seat of the soul is the infinite potential of the mind!

*(Orating.)*

How subtle -- how strange -- how carnally majestic is the process of thought! The quiver of anticipation; the subconscious preparation; the insight; the quick channel of electricity in the maze: the image! The abstract! The mechanical selection, linking east and west, far and near, present and past and future. Thought is life! Thought! Thought!

*(He begins to cough.)*

Thought...

*He falls into a fit of coughing which at length subsides. He wheezes. DALEY and TILLIE watch him passively. He continues weakly.*

I am alive. I am not dead. I am alive. You are dead. I am not dead.

TILLIE

*(Regaining her balance.)*

I didn't say you were dead.

QUINN

*(Rising again.)*

You in your little worlds are dead, but I live in many worlds. I

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will never die!

DALEY

*(After a pause. To TILLIE.)*

There's a good one playing at the Haymarket, I hear.

TILLIE

*(As though QUINN were not present.)*

What about him?

DALEY

He won't mind. He's a good chap.

TILLIE

What if he needed tending while we were out?

DALEY

The woman upstairs is good about stopping by.

*(A beat.)*

What do you say?

TILLIE

I don't think so. Pictures isn't my sort of amusement.

QUINN

*(Caustic.)*

Hear, hear! Vicarious ecstasy stifles the mind!

TILLIE

*(Ignoring QUINN.)*

We could go to my room if you like.

DALEY

*(Abashed.)*

I don't have the coin.

TILLIE

We can settle later. Chalk it up, say.

DALEY

*(Shy smile.)*

It's been my policy always to stay off the books.

TILLIE

Let's go it on the house, then. Good-o. Just for friendship's sake.

DALEY

*(A jerk of his head.)*

What about him?

3-Way Stop

TILLIE

He won't mind.

DALEY

You never can tell about old Quinn. He don't let on much how he feels.

TILLIE

Ask him then.

DALEY

Ask him?

TILLIE

Point blank.

DALEY

Oh, I couldn't. It's against my principles.

TILLIE

I'll ask him.

*(To QUINN.)*

Hello, Mister Daley and me was wondering how you would take to him and me stepping into my room for a little.

QUINN

*(A beat. To DALEY.)*

Do you want advice or permission?

DALEY

*(To TILLIE.)*

See?

TILLIE

*(To QUINN.)*

An emotional response was more what we had in mind.

QUINN

*(Slight hyperbole.)*

You mean I'm being consulted as a person?

TILLIE

Just a show of manners, actually.

QUINN

I see. In that case, I couldn't care less.

DALEY

*(To TILLIE.)*

### 3-Way Stop

See? You've offended him.

QUINN

Not at all. The animals of the world have animal needs; I'd be the last person to deny them.

TILLIE

Denial is a theistic prerogative.

QUINN

Unfortunate but true. To which I must confess my impotence.

DALEY

Moral impotence is becoming in a saint.

TILLIE

And saints only clutter the brain with proverbs. None of us needs that trash.

*(A beat. To DALEY.)*

I suppose you think I'm not good enough.

DALEY

I just think a bit of courtship would get us off to a good start, is all. A bit of pictures, a bit of dancing...

TILLIE

Waste of time, Mister Daley.

*(To QUINN.)*

Tell him it's a waste of time.

QUINN

I choose to remain silent.

TILLIE

How typical. "The light of the world."

QUINN

That's not fair. I simply stated my position.

TILLIE

You deserted the field of battle! A few warm words might at least clear the man's conscience! You'd be doing yourself a favor.

*(A beat.)*

One sheep more or less, what's the difference?

QUINN

*(Repelled.)*

Sheep?

TILLIE

Don't give me that crap. The animal parallel was your invention.

### 3-Way Stop

QUINN

I know, but sheep!

DALEY

Filthy beasts.

TILLIE

Any port in a storm. The satyr in the pasture, half-man, goat-cock, symbol of virility...

DALEY

*(Meekly.)*

I'd really prefer the pictures, actually...

QUINN

Maybe if you described what you're prepared to offer...

TILLIE

He's seen it all through the keyhole.

QUINN

That's the trouble with you, Daley. You view life through a keyhole.

DALEY

*(To QUINN.)*

I say, this is a turn. Do I understand you're advising me to submit to her abominations?

QUINN

It's only what you had in mind from the start. I'm advising you to follow your impulses...

DALEY

*(Mortified; to TILLIE.)*

Here, don't you listen to him! It's a lie!

QUINN

Come on, Daley. A night at the pictures, a bit of dancing, where does it all lead? Maybe a kiss on the doorstep? What about a nightcap in the young girls' flat? Then a bit of tussle: she whines, screams, pleads, wheezes, mouths, buttons pop and out flop the mammaries. After that it's all downhill.

TILLIE

*(A beat. DALEY is mesmerized.)*

That's when the lights go out, Mister Daley. Have you ever known what happens when the lights go out?

QUINN

### 3-Way Stop

End to a perfect evening, Daley.

DALEY

*(Suffering torment.)*

Call her off, Quinn.

QUINN

Close your eyes, Daley. Make it go away.

TILLIE

*(Pulling DALEY back into her lap.)*

Lie back, Mister Daley. Let me tell you about love.

DALEY

Quinn, help me!

QUINN

*(Amused.)*

Listen, Daley. Maybe you'll learn something.

TILLIE

*(Caressing his temples.)*

Don't fight. There. Easy, now. Tillie isn't going to hurt you.

*(He is still, petrified, head against her groin.)*

Come on, relax. You're stiff as a corpse. Tillie's just going to talk.

*(QUINN takes flute from case and assembles it.)*

Tillie's going to make you cry...

*(QUINN begins to play pastoral lullaby.)*

Once in the full of the moon and the rising tide, two children met Death, and Death passed them by; for Death loves children. Some years blessed the two with a further grace, which was the knowledge of their difference. Night came and covered them, to keep them warm, and birds mingled and scattered their seed. Then sweet Mother Earth provided them with nourishment, and they were truly happy. Truly happy, Mister Daley. Truly, truly, happy.

DALEY

*(Vulnerable.)*

Would you do everything I asked?

TILLIE

In love you never ask, my sweet. If my gifts ain't enough, take what you want.

DALEY

Why were there two children?

TILLIE

We give what we have and what we want to give.

### 3-Way Stop

DALEY

Come on: why two? Why not one, or -- or three?

QUINN

*(Stops playing.)*

Death comes to all of us, you know. It's not something I have to face alone, although sometimes I seem to project that impression.

DALEY

We are three.

TILLIE

One of us is always missing. Only two pair of eyes can meet. Only two bodies can merge. Two people can't touch at once, Mister Daley.

QUINN

Three's a crowd.

DALEY

Back to back to back.

TILLIE

What?

DALEY

We can be alone together. Try it. Don't touch.

QUINN

What's the point?

DALEY

There's pictures of three people doing it. One in the cunt, one in the arse...

*(Considers.)*

Only that's two doing it to one...

TILLIE

I don't go in for games of that sort.

*(A beat.)*

Well?

DALEY

Tell her, Quinn.

QUINN

Tell her what?

DALEY

*(To TILLIE.)*

### 3-Way Stop

I know about your Zulu. Quinn told me.

*(A beat.)*

I know about the others, too.

TILLIE

Quinn told you.

DALEY

Everything.

TILLIE

And you believed him. You actually believed him!

DALEY

Don't push me!

TILLIE

What did he say?

DALEY

*(Innocence betrayed.)*

I know it ain't all the pink moonlight, that's all! It's got purple and red. Misery and pain. And how it's doubt and -- and suffocation -- eternal suffocation! Or the aching heart twisted, pain: knife: sword: and -- and -- and regurgitation Puke it up and bring it back to life! You go through hell, you do!

QUINN

*(Casually, to TILLIE.)*

He prefers to sleep in darkness. Life, love, fade to black.

*(To DALEY.)*

It's not that way, Daley. You have to pay for all those pictures.

DALEY

It's not my way -- to participate...

TILLIE

What is your way, Mister Daley?

QUINN

*(Craftily.)*

What about the gun?

*Pause. DALEY reaches in his pocket, takes out the pistol, examines it curiously, holds it to his temple, looks to QUINN for a sign. QUINN nods.*

DALEY

### 3-Way Stop

*(Suddenly blurting.)*  
Not just me! You! All of us!

TILLIE  
Fire away, Mister Daley.

*Pause. QUINN chuckles. DALEY shoots QUINN, who slumps. TILLIE screams. DALEY shoots TILLIE; she falls. DALEY puts the pistol in his mouth, fires; loud report. DALEY does not fall. He takes gun from his mouth, examines it, pulls trigger on empty chamber with a click. The gun falls from his hand. He is bewildered. A long silence. QUINN emits a muffled cough, then another which causes him to succumb to spasms of death-like violence. TILLIE rises, picks up gun. QUINN's attack subsides.*

TILLIE  
*(Holding gun out to DALEY.)*  
You want this?  
*(He waves it away. To QUINN.)*  
We almost had him that time.

QUINN  
It's my fault.

TILLIE  
You really should do something about that cough. It's bad for your heart.  
*(A beat.)*  
Cheer up our friend. I'll get ready for the next one.

*She exits. QUINN begins to read. DALEY shakes his head, looks around, runs his fingers through his hair, straightens his clothes, stands, sits in the chair. Pause. QUINN reads. DALEY stares ahead. DALEY pulls a bar of chocolate*



3-Way Stop

QUINN

*(Not looking up.)*

Mmm.

DALEY

It was in my pocket all the while.

QUINN

*(Not looking up.)*

Couldn't have been.

DALEY

Well it was!

QUINN

*(Not looking up.)*

Think back. You'll remember.

DALEY

*(A beat.)*

Never mind.

*(A beat.)*

Stupid thing to do in the first place.

QUINN

Listen to this...

DALEY

Why should I want to do us all in, after all?

QUINN

You figure it out. Listen to this: it says: "To Johnson, whose supreme enjoyment was the exercise of his reason, the disturbance or obscuration of that faculty was the evil most to be dreaded..."

DALEY

*(Dully.)*

You've read this part before.

QUINN

*(Uninterrupted.)*

"Insanity, therefore, was the object of his most dismal apprehension; and he fancied himself seized by it, or approaching to it, at the very time..."

DALEY

You've read this part before...

QUINN

### 3-Way Stop

*(Slight irritation.)*

"...at the very time when he was giving proofs of a more than ordinary soundness of vigor of judgment."

DALEY

*(A beat.)*

You've read that before.

QUINN

Absurd.

DALEY

That very passage. I recall it vividly.

QUINN

Daley, are you quite well?

DALEY

*(A beat.)*

Well?

QUINN

You've been acting strangely. Is something troubling you?

DALEY

*(A beat.)*

Like what?

QUINN

Well, of course, I wouldn't know that, would I? That's the reason I asked.

DALEY

Certainly you had a particular malady in mind...

QUINN

*(Affected warmth.)*

I care about you, Daley. You know that.

DALEY

I do?

QUINN

Of course, Daley. If there's something troubling you, I'd like to know.

DALEY

You would?

QUINN

### 3-Way Stop

What are friends for, after all?

DALEY

What, indeed!

QUINN

To offer succor, solace, in time of stress. To tender mercy, lavish pity, console. To lend a sympathetic ear.

DALEY

*(Hopelessly.)*

To what avail?

QUINN

To share. To relieve the burden.

DALEY

*(Carelessly.)*

There's no burden, actually...

QUINN

The metaphorical burden of living, Daley! The moment-to-moment tribulations of our mutual existence. Come along now, what might they be?

DALEY

*(A beat. Analytic.)*

"Existence" is the key word here.

QUINN

*Mutual* existence.

DALEY

If only there were hope of proving it.

QUINN

*(Puzzled.)*

I thought it was obvious.

DALEY

Mutual existence! You brought it up. I know that I exist; but how do I know that you exist?

QUINN

It's an absurd proposition.

DALEY

Existence is an absurd equation! Take Tillie, for example. Who is she? No more than some pitiful derelict invented by you to torment me!

### 3-Way Stop

QUINN

*(Hurt.)*

Daley!

DALEY

It's true! I never wanted to take her in. "We haven't room enough as it is," I said. And what's she paid in return for our kindness?

QUINN

That's your problem, Daley. Always looking for your reward.

DALEY

Justice is all I want. Simple justice.

QUINN

Compensation!

DALEY

Balance!

QUINN

Balance?

DALEY

Balance.

QUINN

*(Indignant.)*

What in your experience has led you to suppose that balance is even possible, let alone necessary

DALEY

There! You're trapped!

QUINN

What?

DALEY

Mutual existence!

QUINN

Simultaneous. Not similar. Mutually aware, yes -- but not necessarily to equal degree.

DALEY

*(A beat.)*

That's too abstract for me.

QUINN

I don't see how I can be more concrete. There are reliances, Daley. Dependencies. Responsibilities, if you will. Balance may

### 3-Way Stop

exist, but the very complexity of enduring time denies its measure or its satisfaction.

DALEY

*(Considers.)*

You mean it's not worth dying for.

QUINN

Not by any means.

*Pause. QUINN reads. DALEY ponders a moment, then shrugs. DALEY creeps to TILLIE's door, peeps through keyhole. Beat. He giggles.*

DALEY

Quinn!

QUINN

*(Not looking up.)*

Mmm.

DALEY

Come here.

*(No response.)*

Come here, you ought to see this...

*(A beat.)*

She's tossing herself off with my revolver...

QUINN

*(Not looking up.)*

Mmm.

DALEY

*(A beat. Salacious.)*

I wish I was in there. I'd give her a tossing off, I would.

*(Salivary.)*

Oh, the way she's writhing about!

*(Ecstasy.)*

She's completely alone. Defenseless. Oh, she's begging for it.

*(A beat. He whistles softly through the keyhole. A beat.)*

There. Now she's still. She knows she's being observed.

*(A beat.)*

She's stopped.

*(A beat. Disappointed. Softly.)*

Come one, go it again...

*(A beat. He turns away, sits back to the door.)*

Useless.

3-Way Stop

*(Long pause.)*

Quinn?

QUINN

*(Not looking up.)*

Hmm.

DALEY

How long have we been friends?

QUINN

*(A beat. He looks up.)*

Twenty years?

DALEY

Thirty?

QUINN

Quite a long time, I think.

DALEY

Do you remember when we met?

QUINN

Was it in America?

DALEY

Granada. In November. It was cool for Spain, and you were wearing a woolen sweater. Red. You said it was a gift.

QUINN

I don't remember.

DALEY

You were travelling with a lady. A very lovely lady, with red hair. Madelaine.

QUINN

Madelaine...

DALEY

I was painting then. I was in my painting stage, and I asked if she would pose for me.

QUINN

You were painting, Daley?

DALEY

I painted you together. Your red sweater and her red hair. It was a marvel of color. And when the painting was done we drank red wine and stormed the Generalife. We were Saracens plotting the

### 3-Way Stop

murder of Christ. I remember the gardens especially, the way the shrubs were molded like organic walls; but none of the flowers were in bloom. We wept for the flowers.

QUINN

*(No recollection.)*

Are you sure her name was Madelaine?

DALEY

We left her there. She met a poet.

QUINN

A Greek.

DALEY

A Swede, I think. Blond. Robust. Of course, we were young then, too.

QUINN

How sad.

DALEY

There was other women. Do you recall the little ballerina from Innsbruck? Monique? With the tiny feet? Caw, the things she did with them feet, Quinn!

QUINN

Why are you doing this?

DALEY

It ain't always been this way.

QUINN

Why bring it up?

DALEY

It's time we took stock of our assets, Quinn. What have we got? What's left for us? All the passion's gone.

QUINN

Passion is the luxury of youth, Daley. We've grown old.

DALEY

Old is as old does, I say.

QUINN

What do you suggest?

DALEY

The easy way. Bullet in the brain.

### 3-Way Stop

QUINN

You always bring it on yourself, Daley.

DALEY

You're the one what's always mucking up.

QUINN

*(A beat. A shrug.)*

Call her in then. We'll do it one more try.

DALEY

Now?

QUINN

Unless you've reconsidered.

DALEY

No. No, now's the time.

*(He turns to door on his knees, knocks.)*

Tillie!

TILLIE

*(Offstage.)*

What is it?

DALEY

Got a moment?

*The door opens on TILLIE; DALEY still on his knees, reacts. TILLIE smiles sensually.*

TILLIE

A girl's got no privacy in this dump, not 'arf.

QUINN

This won't take long.

DALEY

Do you have the gun?

*(She shows it.)*

Is it loaded?

TILLIE

*(Aiming at him.)*

Who goes first?

QUINN

Who's got the least to lose?

### 3-Way Stop

TILLIE

Not me.

QUINN

*(Takes pistol, inspects it.)*

Ugly things, revolvers. Sleek, blueblack, mechanical. I carried one in the war. Six years. Never used it once. Never saw a dead man. Never looked a Heinie in the eye.

*(A beat. Gives gun to DALEY.)*

That's your problem, Daley. You have the solution. What you lack is nerve.

*(A beat.)*

Resolve. That's what you need.

*Pause.*

*DALEY aims at QUINN. Pause.*

*Aims at TILLIE. Pause. Aims at self. Pause.*

*QUINN suppresses a cough.*

*Blackout.*

Fin.

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