

Café At The End Of Time

Gary Lemons



1

I don't drive fast anymore but tonight
I'm behind the wheel of a big souped up
GTO with posi-traction, and I'm goosing
It, listening to it purr, when this guy comes
Barreling down an off ramp in a shovel nosed
Dodge Challenger and cuts right in front of me.

Leaves me eating smoke and without even
Thinking about it I push the pedal down
And the GTO sucks half the sky into it's
4-barrel and wham, I'm passing this guy
Doing about 100 mph. In third gear.

He's not done. The Challenger's
Fuel injectors kick in and all of a sudden
He's right beside me and I look over and
See this really young guy, got his baseball
Hat on backwards, little wispy chin whiskers,
Big black shades looking over at me grinning
And then he steps it up a notch and, bam,
Passes me like I'm standing still.

I do a power shift into fourth and the rocket
Kicks on and were neck and neck again doing
About 150 mph when we both see the road
In front of us narrows to a single lane.

We hit the opening side by side.
The impact tears doors off both cars
Causing me to slow down as he hydroplanes
In front of me, fishtailing and rolling
Down the street side over side.

I can't stop in time and run over him,
Go flying off into the buildings, waltzing
For a brief moment as graceful as a bird
In the air until the GTO, still moving forward



At over 100 mph, stops dead against
The side of a brick and steel building.

Both cars are hissing and mangled.
There's glass and leather, small parts of metal everywhere.
The young guys steps out of his ride.
I step out of mine. He goes, "hey man,
That was fun." I go, "yeah, who'd a thought
Anyone could a survive something
Like that?" He looks at me and grins
And says, "Dude—look at your chest."

I look down and see my chest—looks about
The same to me and I say, "yeah—what?"

He's like—"man, you see something funny?"
And I'm irritated with his grin now and
Go, "spit it out man, you're pissing
Me off—what's wrong with my chest?"
And he goes—"it ain't movin is it?
Got any idea what that means?"

And I'm looking at my chest and seeing
Yeah, it's very still—no rising, no falling,
No breathing and I look up at him and he's
Still grinning that punk grin and he goes,
"We ain't breathing no more brah."

2

After I died I wondered around
Awhile—checking it out. Wasn't sure
What to do with myself. Big disappointment
The first time I walked into a karaoke bar.
I still can't sing a lick.

Guess I thought the dead could do whatever
They want and do it well but as
It turns out we can't do anything better
Than we did alive. Unless of course
We practice.

Tried to find an AA meeting thinking I
Could maybe meet up with my higher power
But no meetings to be found—guess the song
Was right—in heaven there is no beer—
Lots of spirits though.

Ran into some old friends and went out
One night, wandering the nightscape of the city,
Sliding from place to place well, yeah, like a ghost.

Went into this highbrow place and saw
Jimi Hendrix in full tuxedo behind a Steinway
Grand piano playing the Goldberg variations.

Man he was beautiful but that wasn't what
We wanted so headed on down the street
To this rave club where Bach was thrumming
Awesome heavy metal licks to a mosh crowd.
He was flipping his hair up and down
And duck walking across the stage
With sweat pouring from his guitar.

It was cool but I was still feeling
Blue from all the things that killed me
So I left my friends and walked on alone.

Then I'm in this unemployment
Line and the guy in front of me
Says, "What kind of work you looking for man?"
And I say, "oh, I don't know. I just came
In here to see what's available. It's sort of
News to me you got to work after you die."

He laughed and said, "You must be freshly
Killed man, thinking anyone here's gonna
Support your lifeless ass. One out breath
Don't change a thing."

I agree I'm newly dead and tell him I'll
Get better at it and he says no body gets
Good at it—like life you just get used to it.

So I filled out my application for work
In the woods running a chain saw, something
I know how to do and walked on down
The road where I came upon these folks
Dressed mostly in robes, some with shaved
Heads--others with dreadlocks.



Some leaned against buildings in lotus,
Eyes closed, meditating and some
Whirled and twirled so fast you could
Hardly see them. I asked another guy
Who they were and what they were doing
And he said they're gaspers--trying to breath.

I said "what?" He said "yeah, they move fast enough
Or meditate deep enough they can coax a single
Inhalation out of their bodies--some of them are good
At it--watch"

And I did. All of a sudden one of the whirling guys
Just makes this huge gasping sound and pops
From view--just disappears. Not much
Time goes by before he pops back into view
And stumbles, falls to the ground saying,

"I saw her--saw my daughter--I was with
Here for just a second and I think she saw me."

Others gaspers gather around and hold him.
One of the meditating guys disappears.
Comes back. Same thing.

Stranger standing next to me says--"see,
It's just one breath that keeps us apart, the
Living and the dead--they make the journey
Back to their loved ones by practicing
Every second to take one more breath.

Most of them never do it but some do.
Then they become ghosts and in my opinion
Probably scare the hell out of the people
They pop in on--but some folks just got
No understanding of the current limitations."

Yeah. It's different being dead. But
Not as different as I'd always thought.

I rounded up all my old dogs
From the shelter. That was the best.
Having them lick my face, all of us
Crying and whimpering and holding
One another knowing this time we'd
Never have to let go again. It was that
Way at first with everyone I loved.

Then we kind of wandered into side streets
And disappeared—just like we lived.

So I'm trying something new. I
Work on the things that interest me--

Yoga, gardening, baseball,
And practice some new things like
Playing guitar and dancing but one of the
Things I always wanted to do was cook.

So I opened a diner that never closes—stop by
Sometime. I'm sure you will. Try the daily special.
It's always fresh, always free and I guarantee you've
Never tasted better soul food in your life.

