

# **FAMILY ROMANCE**

**A One Man  
Musical Theater  
Piece**

**by**

**Reinaldo García**

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PRODUCTIONS  
Monterey, CA**

## **Dedicated to Moose**

There is, it would seem, in the dimensional scale of the world a kind of delicate meeting place between imagination and knowledge, a point, arrived at by diminishing large things and enlarging small ones, that is intrinsically artistic.

-Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1950)

Blindfold a man, spin him around, and he has forever lost his sense of direction.

-Erin d'Quincy MacLeod (1981)

*June, 1969:* One bases his evaluation of what is "good" on what another person or persons deems to be good. There is no absolute objective standard of value. Obviously, someone has to start the esthetic ball rolling, one who does not heed the opinions of others as to the value of the latest system of esthetics or morality. This person is the visionary, the truly independent free man--the Artist.

I am dedicating my life to this end.

But the possibility exists that that the seeds of this desire may have been sown in me by the prevailing social ethic of asserting one's "individuality." If so, I am more the knowing pawn than the man who is just now sprouting a moustache and donning his bellbottom trousers. That is, to be aware of the manipulative forces constantly eroding one's individuality and being unable to rise above them is the sign of one who is truly a child of impotence.

-Ronald Peet (1950- )

## ***The Songs***

1. Family Romance (2000)
2. On the Grindstone (1974)
3. The Fate of Rosie BlueRain (1973)
4. 3311 Hamilton Way (1974)
5. Glenn Annie Road, Storke Rd., Next Right (1972)
6. The Red Moon Ecstasies (1976)
7. Fool For Love (1989)
8. Until I Get It Right (1993)
9. Bright Flame (1998)
10. Alma My Dear (2000)
11. Memory & Desire (1981)
12. My Barefoot Chicanita (1998)
14. The Older I Get, The Better I Was (1997)

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A father was having trouble with his misbehaving son, so he took him to the village sage. The sage asked the father to explain the problem. The father launched into a 30 minute monologue on his son's sins. The village sage said, "I think someone here deserves a spanking." The father beamed. Then the sage pulled the father over his knee and gave him several hard whacks on his buttocks.

-From Sufi Folklore

No man is rich enough to buy back his past. One's real life is often the life that one does not lead. Experience is the name everyone gives to his mistakes. Scandal is gossip made tedious by morality. One can always be kind to people about whom one cares nothing. Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live. It is asking others to live as one wishes to live. Children begin by loving their parents. After a time they judge them. Rarely if ever do they forgive them. Everyone is born a king, and most people die in exile. Every woman becomes her mother. That is her tragedy. No man does. That is his.

-Oscar Wilde

When one has not had a good father, one must create one.

-Nietzsche

I cannot bear the crying of children, but when my child cries, I cannot hear.

-Chekhov

You can tell a man's character by the health of his wife. Come for your inheritance and you may have to pay for the funeral.

-Yiddish proverbs

**Gurdjieff, George Ivanovich**, 1872-1945 [*sic*], Armenian spiritualist and author. After spending years traveling, Gurdjieff settled in Moscow (c. 1913). He fled the Russian Revolution (1917) with a band of followers, settling in Fontainebleau, France, where he established the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man (1922). He taught that ordinary people could attain a higher state of awareness and take control over their lives. Disciples in the United States organized the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York (1953) and a similar group in San Francisco (1958). His writings include *Meetings With Remarkable Men* (1963, repr. 1969) and *Beezlebub's Tales to His Grandson* (1973). See studies by Kenneth Walker (1980) and James Webb (1980).

-*The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Fifth Edition (1993)

"[Sam] Shepard's ideas about character started changing while he was in England, for three reasons. One was his contact with [Peter] Brook, who like Shepard was a student of Gurdjieff, or as they say, 'in the work.' (Brook directed the 1979 film *Meetings With Remarkable Men* based on Gurdjieff's philosophical memoir.)" (Page 161) "[Collaborator Joseph] Chaikin's illness was one of three severe emotional blows that Shepard received in the spring of 1984. In March came the death of Lord Pentland, the English-born leader of the Gurdjieff movement in America. And Shepard had barely returned from Pentland's funeral in suburban New York when his own father got hit by a car in Santa Fe and died at the age of sixty-seven." (Page 156)

-From Don Shewey's *Sam Shepard: The Life, The Loves, Behind the Legend of a True American Original* (Dell, 1985)

## ***FAMILY ROMANCE***

*Over a dark stage, we hear Ray Charles' "Born To Lose," from his huge-selling, groundbreaking MODERN SOUNDS IN WESTERN MUSIC album. The stage gradually brightens, but stays dimly lit. We see a well-stocked bar in a 1960s suburban family room, complete with bar stools and a white formica counter. Two rheostated, gradually brightening lights over the bar provide the dim illumination. Over the bar, we see a huge family portrait, taken in 1961, of (left to right) Dennis (age two), Gaynor (age 33), Reinaldo (age 11), Kevin (age 9), Lindsay (age 6), and Wilma (age 30). Stage left, we see two white swinging grilled doors, as in a bar. The grilled doors are small, with two feet of empty space below them, and three feet of empty space above them to the door frame. The floor is composed of large light tan linoleum tiles (with large dark tan tiles scattered random~y). In the front center stage, a huge "P" is made from dark tan tiles. The song fades out as...*

*Followed by a spotlight, a MIDDLE-AGED WHITE MAN carrying an acoustic guitar walks through the two swinging doors to center stage. He grabs a bar stool, carries it to stagefront, sits on it, and sings "Family Romance":*

Hey baby, meet your new in-laws.  
They're beautiful, with just a few flaws.  
Grandma never learned the virtue of silence.  
Dad's still raving about *Shaving Ryan's Privates*.  
Mom's still planning to move to cooler climates  
like Algeria or to the south of France.  
Welcome to my family romance.

Hey baby, meet your new in-laws.  
This ain't Kansas, it's the Land of Oz.  
My brother's always sincere whether he means it or not.  
He'll do anything, long as he don't get caught.  
My uncles tell me they think you're really hot.  
And you still haven't met my aunts!  
Welcome to my family romance.

Hey baby, meet your new in-laws.  
Shake their hands. Watch out for claws.  
I got a brother Ken wears 3-D glasses and walks into walls.  
He dresses like Barbie and stabs his voodoo dolls.  
My sister gargles with razor blades and hides bull balls  
in the pockets of her checkered pants.  
Welcome to my family romance.

I got a cousin, raised by women.  
He's still swimmin' in an alcoholic trance.  
Welcome to my family romance.

MAN: My father the third-generation plumbing contractor designed this addition to our San Fernando Valley suburban home in 1961. Those are the doors to my parents' bedroom. This was his dream design. The house as bordello. Notice the lack of parental privacy in a house with four sons. The sons' shared bedrooms have regular doors, but they are not allowed to close them.

*The MAN sings "On the Grindstone":*

I got the letter yesterday. Said my grandfather had passed away.  
I'm all right. I'm all right. They said he went out in a blaze of light.  
He was born in a mining town, way up in Oregon where the rains come down.  
His folks moved down to LA in 1908 for a little sun and higher pay.  
He learned young that life is work. He nearly broke his back shoveling dirt.  
He and his mates made the waters flow from Owens River Valley to San Fernando.

On the grindstone, beneath the wheel, through this life, your work was real.

He took him a wife named Marjorie MacLeod.  
They had four sons. Only two are still around.  
One was born deathly still. By a runaway car the other was killed.  
He started a business in the plumbing game, cleaning sewers to make his name.  
Luck was his, and in thirty years, he found himself a millionaire.  
The eldest son stayed on with the firm. His sense of duty was easy to learn.  
His four grandsons don't know who he was. They'd say, "There goes old  
Granddad. He never talks too much."

On the grindstone, beneath the wheel, through this life, your work was real.

I was groomed to follow his path. I'd be a plumber. I'd relive his past.  
He offered money and a safe career. When I refused him, he shed tears.  
His wealth to him had little worth. He said he'd die if he gave up his work.  
He and Marjorie gave up last year in a leisure village not far from here.  
We never looked each other in the eyes. For that I can never apologize.  
Now he's gone. I hope he's free. He was my grandfather, a stranger to me.

On the grindstone, beneath the wheel, through this life, your work was real.

BLACK OUT. *The overhead bar lights come back up, more brightly than before.*

MAN: In 1909, Freud said this about the family romance: "The psychology of the neuroses teaches us that, among other factors, the most intense impulses of sexual rivalry contribute to the feeling of being slighted. As a child grows up and tries to break away from the authority of his parents he regards this authority as hostility and responds by feeling that his own affection is not reciprocated fully. A boy has more hostile impulses toward his father than his mother. When the child comes to know the difference in the parts played by fathers and mothers in their sexual relations, he contents himself with exalting his father, and no longer has any doubts of his maternal origin. The second, sexual stage of the family romance is actuated by another motive: The child, having learned about sexual processes, tends to picture to himself erotic situations and relations, expressing his desire to bring his mother into situations of secret infidelity and into secret love affairs."

BLACK OUT. *We hear a child's voice: "Am I in trouble?" We hear the second movement from Beethoven's SEVENTH SYMPHONY, and it plays softly throughout the following monologue. The overhead bar lights come back up.*

MAN: In 1953, my father and mother returned from six weeks in Europe with a black Triumph TR-2. My father had won the trip because he was the points champion in that year's Southern California Sports Car Club rally competitions. Actually, he shared the prize with his younger brother, who drove, while my father navigated their father's Jaguar through Southern California's mountains and deserts. While I do not know why my uncle surrendered the trip to his older brother, I am not surprised my father prevailed. My parents returned with reels of eight millimeter movies, including footage shot by my passenger mother as my father guided the Triumph around England's Silverstone, Germany's Nurburgring and Italy's Monza and Mille Miglia race courses. A series of frames of my 22 year old mother, shot at the entrance of an ice tunnel in the French Alps, made me believe her sisters were Ingrid Bergman and Sophia Loren, not the pugnacious Arkansan alcoholic we called "Champ," who during Christmas dinner in 1958 assaulted her second husband with a carving knife, screaming, "I'm gonna cut your balls off!" as he dragged our drunken aunt to their Chevrolet, where my cousins Stephanie, Theresa and baby Hans sat in shame. Two decades later, Hans snuck into the bedroom of his estranged girlfriend and her boyfriend, said, "Here's what you did to me," stuck a shotgun into his mouth, and pulled the trigger.

My father painted the Triumph white, with two off-center blue racing stripes running its length. Our San Fernando Valley neighbors laughed at the small foreign car. I laughed at theirs, those boxy, finned monstrosities with their automatic transmissions. My lifelong snobbery for esoterica, for the agile and the exotic, is rooted there. I have never owned a car with an automatic transmission, and I never will.

After a heavy winter storm in 1956, my father loaded me into the Triumph TR-2 and, heading for Mount Pinos up the Grapevine, we stopped, in Gorman, that old stagecoach stop, for hot chocolate, which my father poured into a dented green metal thermos. As he drove, my father regaled me with stories of the places we passed. I remember especially the Oak of the Golden Dream, where gold flakes were discovered in onion roots years before Marshall found

his stone. I bedeviled teachers with this nugget for years. When they'd say California's gold was first discovered in 1848 at Sutter's Mill, I'd raise my hand and, with a misdirected patricide that still bedevils me, I'd hang my public school hacks from the Oak of the Golden Dream.

After a day of saucers on Mount Pinos' slopes, my father picked up a boulder-sized chunk of snow and stuffed it into the recessed grille of the Triumph TR-2. "We'll bring snow back to North Hollywood," he said. "We'll make sno-cones for the whole neighborhood. From real snow."

As we pulled into our San Fernando Valley driveway on that slanting afternoon, I leaped from the moving car, ran in front of it, and checked the recessed grille for snow.

*BLACK OUT. A home movie screen drops down. On it is projected the album cover from Miles Davis' classic SKETCHES OF SPAIN. The SEVENTH SYMPHONY fades out. "The Pan Piper," a selection from Miles Davis SKETCHES OF SPAIN fades in, and plays throughout the following monologue. The lights over the bar come up, but dimly.*

MAN: Child is a bother to the man. And I, lost in the punhouse, went out to the dusty, castor-oiled garage one summer afternoon in 1960 and looked around. There, disassembled on the dirty work bench, lay my father's never-flown-in-my-lifetime blue paper-and-balsa U-control airplane. And there, in a testing block, sat the grimy McCoy .35 engine. Dusty shafts of light spiked through holes in the tarpaper. One illuminated a black pebbled leather case, so I opened it, releasing a brassy perfume. Yellow shaggy felt cradled a discolored trumpet. A mouthpiece rattled next to it. Averse even then to any physical contact with my knock-kneed, spindly-legged father, I washed the mouthpiece with a garden hose, inserted it into the trumpet and, imitating a Miles Davis photo in one of my father's albums, pinched my lips and blew. The trumpet snorted to life. This might be something of which my father, who had taken to calling me a bum, might approve. And I liked the slim silhouette of Davis on the album cover, serenading a dying bull. That night, I asked for trumpet lessons. One night, a week later, a man carrying a large black case appeared in our living room. Flanked by my parents, I watched him open the case and remove an accordion and a thin glossy covered book containing polkas. I said I'd asked for trumpet lessons. The man said, "Trumpets cause buck teeth, All that blowing. And the teeth want to conform to the mouthpiece," I said, "Miles Davis doesn't have buck teeth." My father said, "That's because his father's a dentist." My Arkansas-born mother, ashamed of her overbite, said nothing. That Saturday at ten a.m., I found myself with four other children in a converted office on Magnolia Boulevard, wheezing away on Lawrence Welk's instrument of choice. Three weeks later, I quit. My parents agreed that I was always enthusiastic going in, but lacked the gumption to complete what I'd started. Now I was not only a bum, but a quitter. A year later, Melinda Kellerman's trombonist father came to our class and wowed us with his showbiz stories. He recruited volunteers to emulate his robust notes. I buried my tight lips into the trombone and nearly blew out the windows, Melinda Kellerman's dad told me I should take lessons.

*BLACK OUT. The Miles Davis piece fades out. A 1950s-style bongo drum instrumental fades*

*in. We hear: "Who do you think you are? The world doesn't revolve around you!" On the home movie screen, we see a picture of the MAN at age ten. The rheostat lights over the bar come up dimly.*

MAN: Now for the family slide show. Like an unjustly-imprisoned death row denizen who studies the law to save his life, I became an expert, at twelve, in abnormal psychology. The word "abnormal" itself fascinated me. Since I was labeled a freak, I wanted to catch up on the rest of the brotherhood. Photos of bug-eyed women with rebel thyroids and elephant-sized legs interested me less than written descriptions of delusional denizens of their self-created twilight worlds. I studied the mind and its infinite warped dimensions, and found a carnival. I watched the "Mister Wizard" and Julius Sumner Miller IV science shows, and nature documentaries, and one Sunday morning I saw a study of two cages of baby monkeys. In one cage, the babies clung to a wire, flannel-covered effigy of their mother. In the other, the infants hopped madly around a naked wire effigy, jumping on it and then, as though it were red hot, leaping off while they wailed and bounced around the cage like exploding popcorn. Said the solemn narrator, "We tested the effects of the removal of maternal love on baby rhesus monkeys. Those in the cage on the right found a suitable substitute in the cloth and blanket mommy. The babies in the cage on the left went insane." I noted that our mother never touched her four boys. Twenty years later, when I was visiting, out by the swimming pool, I asked my mother why this was so. Swirling her afternoon vodka and orange juice screwdriver, she said, "Your father told me that if I touched you boys after the age of six months, I would turn you into homosexuals." So much for the Oedipal conflict: My father, protecting our best interests, had neatly removed us as rivals.

*BLACK OUT. The bongo instrumental fades. On the screen, we see a photo of the La Brea Tar Pits, with its sculptures of mastodons and saber-tooth cats sinking in the ooze. We hear: "Am I in trouble?" The stage stays dark. The MAN is lightly a single spotlight.*

MAN: But my taciturn grandfather still branded me a sissy. Why? I played sports, fished and camped out. Why? Because I made it clear, before I was ten years old, that I would not enter the family plumbing business, despite the steady pressures, such as the annual summer vacation taking of inventory, when I was forced to count every pipe, coupling, washer and fixture on the Laurel Canyon Boulevard lot, which had been purchased early last century with an insurance settlement won by my grandparents when their beloved son Ronald, after whom I was named, was run over by a car while his brother, my father, who was sitting next to him on the curb, looked on. Since the age of six, I'd been winning essay prizes, and was writing short stories, ever since my father had read to me Jack London's "To Build A Fire," the tale of a Yukon explorer who dies of exposure while his loyal dog looks on. Indeed, at the age of nine I wrote a London-inspired story of a wolf called "Loup," which is French for wolf. The story opened with a grisly and naturalistically-accurate account of the way wolves wean elk herds by separating the old and the weak and the young, then ripping their jugulars with their teeth. After my third grade teacher read my copycat tale, I found myself in the school nurse's office, interviewed by an L.A. school district psychiatrist, who, "concerned," queried me about my gusto for gore. Even then, I was



defiant about my work, and told her I had based my account on the opening of a book in the school library next door, a saber-tooth-tiger and mastodon-infested study of the La Brea Tar Pits called *Tales of Old Los Angeles*. While I was at it, I said that the La Brea Tar Pits, down on Wilshire Boulevard, were redundant. "Redundant?" asked the publicly-funded shrink. "Yes," I said. "*La* in Spanish means 'the,' and *brea* means 'tar.' We are therefore discussing the the Tar Tar Pits." Though the psychiatrist recommended I skip a grade, my father bemoaned my lack of normality. "Why can't you spend weekends mowing lawns and washing cars for spending money, like a regular kid? You're a bum." According to my grandfather, writers and artists ("you 'creative types'") were un-American and effeminate. Real men had grease under their fingernails and told dirty jokes. The family plumbing business, therefore, would save my masculine soul. I could not summon sufficient gratitude, and, struggling all the way, sank deeper into my own pit of tar.

BLACK OUT. *The photo of the Tar Pits disappears. We hear a Frank Sinatra song from COME FLY WITH ME. On the screen is projected an advertisement for mixed drinks from the 1960s. The lights come back up, dimly, with a reddish tint. The Sinatra song is lowered in volume.*

MAN: Synonyms for "inebriated," plucked randomly from under "S": Smashed, snoggered, sloshed, swizzled, slammed. The day after my parents' weekend bridge games with another married couple, this is how my father described his good time: "I was completely snoggered!" His favorite beer was Olympia, and this fed my hopes that somehow Greek gods were inserting themselves in our home, sending me signs, keeping me going until I could escape. I also elevated the mundane mixing of cocktails into medieval alchemy. Every Christmas and Thanksgiving, I watched my father's mother, a meticulous blue-collar Bostonian with Brahmin pretensions, spoon sugar and drip bitters into a green glass, where she'd mash the blend with a metal pestle before splashing soda and pouring in a jigger of bourbon. Jigger? Enlightened liberals, we called them jegroes.

BLACK OUT. *The screen rolls back up. We hear: "Who the hell do you think you are?" spoken with a drunken slur. The lights come back up, brightly.*

MAN: By the mid-1980s, my mother was mass-mixing vodka and orange juice screwdrivers in 99 cent glasses and lining them up like artillery shells in the freezer until those half-dozen times a day, terrified by her rage, she'd thaw one out while reading back issues of *TIME* Magazine, then sip herself into oblivion. Christmas dinner 1995, in a Thai restaurant, she defecated in her pants. A week later, neighbors found her face down on our suburban street, nearly dead from alcohol poisoning. When I called her in the hospital, she said everything was the fault of "your father and his whores."

BLACK OUT. *The screen rolls back down. On it is projected a portrait of Sigmund Freud. The lights do not fade in, still dim, until halfway through the following monologue.*

MAN: I remember a five year old boy glimpsing his mother stepping from the bath. Her skin

is white, pink now from hot water and steam. Her hair is black, and through the crack in the door he sees a black cloud below the navel, softest cushion imaginable. The angel wraps soft terry cloth around her, sucking droplets. She razor strokes the calves and thighs. The boy is stiff with dancing innocence, this mother creature who pats him off to school and coos in his ear while medicating scrapes. This naked angel. The boy is terrified by first sin and fears capture as the young wife adjusts her brassiere. Papa enters. He licks the nape of her neck.

*BLACK OUT. The Freud portrait disappears. During the following song, various images, including shots of the MAN's grandmother and grandfather, will appear then disappear from the screen. Lit by a single spotlight, the MAN sings "The Fate of Rosie BlueRain":*

Peacocks and umbrellas, the ghosts of antelopes, they howl when Rosie speaks  
Of streetcar soldiers, clocks and Neptune's fires piled on empty streets.  
Lord, I'm cold tonight in Rosie BlueRain's chamber  
Where the black gloves search for leaks,  
And the moonglow sucks the hollow milk. Like silk,  
Her mastermind wraps chains around my feet.

Allah! My head, she cries while Rosie sleeps.  
And the fate of Rosie BlueRain is all I have left to keep.

Below the Savior's shadow hangs the sacred Blonde on Blonde,  
giving himself away.  
He was never once taught how to get what he wants.  
Now he's living from day to day.  
Rosie's in the pool room, cooking up slavery, because it keeps her demons away  
With tortured threats of savage bricks that walled her into Fortune's game.

Allah! My tongue, she tastes like swallowed gauze,  
And the fate of Rosie BlueRain tears at me with claws.

Down in the cornfield, used cars go to seed, as junkmen dig for gold,  
And Fortune's agents nail me to the earth when I start to feeling old.  
And a white fog settles down like Spanish sailing ships, and blankets all the folds  
Of skin that stretch across the coastal highway, speeding through the cold.

Allah! I'm tight, and I just can't explain  
Why the fate of Rosie BlueRain lays drowning in the rain.

On the beach, the seagull struts his hourglasses filled with Rosie's sand,  
And waves like stomachs bursting full of sharks pound like rock and roll bands.  
And you wish you weren't like this, the way you've come to be,  
as Rosie wraps her hands

Around divining rods that point to Persia's distant fertile lands.  
Allah! I'm cold, and your arms no longer reach  
The fate of Rosie BlueRain laying gutted on the beach.

When the Seventh Seal began to break, your emerald child lay tired.  
You said, "Go be wasted on the hill, where the diamond thieves and the liars  
"Throw babies' bodies in the mouths of stone cathedral cellars,  
"And witches feast on siren songs sold to discreet private buyers."

Allah! I'm wasted, and they've bought and sold her soul.  
And the fate of Rosie BlueRain lays buried in a hole.

Their machines are strong, their minds are blazing bullets blasting cellophane  
dolls.  
We can hear the soft explosions in the distance. Like alleycats they call  
To feathered ladies dancing on the stage, waiting for the stage to fall,  
As Christian undertakers click down flowered halls and nail her body to the wall.

Allah! These dreams, I won't let them fade away.  
And the fate of Rosie BlueRain is buried in my brain.

*BLACK OUT. The screen rolls up. The lights come back up. A wildly painted curtain now hides the suburban family room set.*

MAN: I, the privileged white male, moved to Berkeley in the late 60s, where I attended the university with the idea of chronicling the revolution. After all, I'd already had my motorcycle racing stories published, after having competed in European moto-cross events all over Southern California. I worked with the Black Panthers, sat in Sproul Hall for affirmative action, got arrested, blah blah blah, and one night my father told me he would disown me if I fled to Canada to avoid the draft. Judging my radical leaders to be self-promoting sociopaths, I dropped out of college and hitchhiked around Europe, seeking my roots.

*BLACK OUT. The single spotlight focuses on the MAN.*

MAN: When I returned, rootless, I rented an East Hollywood apartment below a whorehouse. I got a job in a Gardena hippie candle factory, working at Wacko's Hot Wicks Waxworks. At night, I'd hear strange sounds from upstairs.

*The MAN sings "3311 Hamilton Way":*

It's just a short walk from Club 39. Take the A bus to the end of the line.  
She's in the very last building with the wrought-iron gate, to the right.  
There's a woman at the door with pearls in his voice.

She orders you to choose the proper creature of your choice.  
There's the harlot in black. There's the negress. And there's the boys.  
You gotta be prepared to be pretty strange at 3311 Hamilton Way.  
You just might find your Dorian Gray at 3311 Hamilton Way.

You find a leather chair. You're feelin' kinda lost.  
Your host comes up. She's fingerin' the Cross.  
You wonder who's gonna play the role of the Boss.  
You decide it's okay of you take it where it goes, so you shove her face between  
her toes.  
She's a wrought-iron maiden. A funny kinda feelin' starts to flow.  
It's alright, you're okay at 3311 Hamilton Way.  
All the businessmen are gonna get laid at 3311 Hamilton Way.

You wanted to do this all your life: A night out with the boys,  
to hell with the wife.  
You're gettin' kinda tired of the 9 to 5.  
A little degradation gonna make you come alive.  
So you hide your suit and tie and you powder your face.  
There's the high-heeled boots. Don't forget the saffron lace.

There's a room down the hall with antlers on the door. An expert inside on Nazi  
lore  
Takes you 'round the world. You still want more.  
So you get down on your knees and you give her the power, beggin' her to give  
you her golden shower.  
She's a flesh-eaten carnival, runnin' every 24 hours.  
And there's just a small admission to pay at 3311 Hamilton Way.  
It's a high class building down in Silver Lake: 3311 Hamilton Way.

It's just a short walk from Club 39. Take the A bus to the end of the line.  
She's in the very last building with the wrought-iron gate, to the right...

*The spotlight stays on the MAN.*

MAN: A high school friend, son of an alcoholic TV producer, told me he'd taken up with the wife of a cutting-edge film director who'd put him in his latest film, *TWO-LANE BLACKTOP*. Mona had secured for him a one hundred thousand dollar advance from MCA Records after he'd written thirty songs. Positioning him as "the next Bob Dylan," MCA began designing billboards for Sunset Boulevard before he'd recorded a single song. He wanted me to move into his rented Encino home and help him record his debut, to be produced by the guy who'd produced The Byrds' "Mister Tambourine Man." Only twenty-two, and wanting to add years of hard living to his voice, to give him "street credibility," he had me bring him breakfasts of two

uppers, a Dr. Pepper, and a bag of potato chips. He spent the rest of his advance on black leather pants and women. One was a French supermodel he tried to steal from Marshall Chess, Jr., whom I met at the Troubadour when my friend made his disastrous debut. One afternoon, in her creamy Fiat convertible, Georgette drove us north on the Pacific Coast Highway, while Don McLean's "American Pie" spilled out of the speakers. Five years later, my friend appeared on my doorstep with Sara, Bob Dylan's wife. Six years earlier, he was one of Janis Joplin's last pretty boys. Last I heard, he was living in Burbank and driving a taxi.

Before the album was finished, my high school friend fired his producer and his manager in an amphetamine-fueled rage. Mona, the film director's wife, abandoned him, and turned her lights on me.

She was leading a group of young writers and filmmakers in a Hollywood mansion once rented by Jimi Hendrix. I moved in.

*BLACK OUT. We hear a Gurdjieff solo piano piece. The screen lowers, and a portrait of Gurdjieff appears on it. The lights come back up, dimly.*

MAN: The New Orleans native told me she was a teacher of the Gurdjieff Work. Conscious labor and intentional suffering. I cut off from my bourgeois family. I deconstructed myself, and laid the pieces out on the floor. I threw the Valley Boy into the trash, cleaned and oiled some underused parts, shined up others, then reassembled myself over the next decade. Worked forty hours straight in acting workshops held in the huge downstairs rooms. Learned of the truth to be found in exhaustion. Wrote a hundred songs. Collaborated on screenplays. Was interviewed by George Lucas for the Ron Howard role in AMERICAN GRAFFITI. Babysat Jack Nicholson's daughter Jennifer. Received instruction in sex and voodoo. Mona answered Freud's question: "What do women want? I'll tell you what women want," she said. "A man who's not passive. We don't want money, we don't care about looks. We want a man who's active. We hate passive assholes."

*BLACK OUT. A single spotlight focuses on the MAN. The MAN sings "Glen Annie Road, Storke Rd., Next Right":*

I have lusted for you. To climb my stares to nowhere.  
I have been in isolation. Isolation makes me tender.  
Tender makes me hard for you. You who are the center.  
    You've entrusted your warden with crust of the velvet.  
    He stoops in the garden, holding his heart on.  
    He's hanging on hard on the soft of your breast.  
        Of your breast...

Others have lighted on you. Lost inside your darkness.  
Angels have died in your cave. The cave that sucks their hardness.  
Hardness makes them long for you. You who are the sender.  
    Scorpio crawls on the blade of a knife

Plunged in the folds of your quickening meat.  
There's quivering lips on the milk of your breast.  
Of your breast...

I have been waiting for you to climb my stares to nowhere...

MAN: And you, nearing forty, dogs and maybe a horse or two, chains and whips. Lost in the cold ash of rotting embers. Southern mansions hulking in cypress, a traitor in the cellar, spirits in the attic. I craved old age so you would love me. I picked up some good moves, a trick or two. Big deal. A morning child I am and always will be. *(Pause)* I love you at seventeen. Forever seventeen you are to me. Can't feel the hag or the slut, not yet. No flabby whores in plastic sandals, no. Please just some Aphrodite in the poppies, and if I be blind to the shit in your toes I am only too embarrassed by my lack of chic. *(Pause)* I was easy ignorance. Now I know too much. My limitations confound me: To look at you is to be reminded of what I am not. Let's pretend I can show you a trick or two. Something new. *(Pause)* How can I take myself seriously in the glow of your ancient lamps? I hold squeamish mystery in my gleaming fists. You know me too well. In that you find black crow delight. See, I've done it again. I refuse to end this way. *(Pause)* While fog whispers moonlight and ivory, I caress you with scented marrow and pin hawk feathers in your hair. Shining bracelets. Good-bye.

BLACK OUT. *The lights come back up. We hear another Gurdjieff piano piece in the background.*

MAN: But I could not leave Mona. In early 1974, convinced western civilization was crumbling, we all moved to the distant Mendocino Coast, where I renamed myself Erin d'Quincy MacLeod. Over the next seven years, cut off from the twentieth century, I tore myself apart, obliterated my ego in that spiritual process available only to the most towering egos. I craved the void. Living in the shadow of the mantic arts, anorexic, I rebuilt myself, combining the medieval with the Middle Eastern, and in a syndrome far beyond Stockholm, swore lifelong allegiance to my Gurdjieff guruette.

*The lights and the piano piece fade. Lit by the single spotlight, the MAN sings "The Red Moon Ecstasies":*

Come down to the beheading. Whisper obscenities.  
The Central Committee awaits you. The Red Moon Ecstasies.

Black cat loose in Fredonia. Swaying down by the sea.  
Look at her wrists and she'll show you the Red Moon Ecstasies.

Cross afire. Dance in the heat of the light.  
See the pig roast. Wards of the state sing our your fate.  
The ghost in the choir was right.

She lives high in the lighthouse. Searchlight on your disease.  
Some call her the inventor of the Red Moon Ecstasies.

Cast neither shadow reflection, walking alone through the walls.  
Aging like mammoths gone homeward, born at the masquerade ball.  
Scythians blooming obscenely, cast in a shadow of doubt.  
Bequeath you symmetrical redwood. Tropical winds of the south.

Drill to the core of the ocean. Statues are cast in a mine.  
Diamonds are flashing pale fire. Visigoths run out of time  
Demanding dementia unaltared, lost in a forest of cream.  
Pyramids diving in greenhouses paint you my harlequin dreams.

*The spotlight stays on the MAN.*

MAN: After Mona put me on trial, declared me a "passive father," stole my daughter, my stickshift truck and my house and ten years of screenwriting, I returned to civilization with the clothes on my back and a suitcase full of songs and promptly had my first stage play stolen by a Pulitzer Prize-winning cowboy Gurdjieffian writer's-blocked playwright who was leaving his wife for a blonde movie star, who herself had just abandoned the melancholic Russian defector dancer father of her daughter. After one of my plays had received two well-received Bay Area productions, I accepted an invitation to move back to Los Angeles and write for a television series starring Cybil Shepherd. After my new wife and I rented a Venice house, and I was told that NBC wanted to use its own staffers on the short-lived series, I mounted an original musical in Hollywood and thought it only appropriate that I completely embrace the LA lifestyle and involve my wife and me in a trendy *menage a trois* with a Santa Monica midwife. Meanwhile, as he'd been doing for years, my grandfather continued taunting me whenever he'd greet me by asking me if I was rich and famous yet from my writing. When my musical closed in early 1984 after a six-week run, I looked at a map of America for any mountainous place I'd never been to in my previous hitchhiking around the U.S.A. Santa Fe, New Mexico was our next destination, and I accepted an invitation from St. John's Graduate Institute to enroll as a candidate for a Masters in Philosophy. Our departure was delayed by my grandfather's oncoming death.

The last time I saw him, he was bedbound in a Ventura hospital. When the nurse invited me in, I asked her what would be appropriate behavior. She suggested I kiss him good-bye, which is what "regular people," as she put it, do. Once again, "normal" behavior not only was out-of-bounds, but repellant. Shaking off the bourgeois shame (something at which I'd already become adept), I entered his room and found him on his back, tubes running into his arms, tendrils of reddish pubic hair straying out from under his gown. At the end of the long toes which trademark our family, my grandfather's toenails were thick and yellow, yet his full head of hair showed only flecks of gray. I took his right hand in mine and looked into his eyes, careful now to let nothing false occur. Monitoring my inner processes according to my Gurdjieffian training, I watched his eyes moisten. I saw myself split into two beings, and my right eye sent this message: "Well, motherfucker, look who's leaving this world. Fuck you, haha, you're outta

here, and I'm moving on to fame and fortune." My left eye said this to his: "What a shame. You really blew it. You could have known me and now you never will." And as I shifted back and forth, he started to cry silently. I said, "I'm moving to New Mexico," and withdrew my hand. But my dying grandfather clutched my fingers, and I relented. I realized that, once again, I was letting him down in some unknown way, and I stiffened. I pulled back, and he clutched harder, as more tears fell.

BLACK OUT. *The screen lowers, and the words ANYWHERE YOU ARE IS HEAVEN appear. The spotlight comes back on, focused on the MAN.*

MAN: My first wife and I moved to Santa Fe. After ten days of graduate school, I was expelled when our ex-Jesuit professor was repulsed by my exegesis of the Book of Genesis, in which I defined Original Sin not as disobedience to God, but as the embracing of the illusion that we are separate from God. Illusory separation came before disobedience, and I, disobedient, was separated from St. John's Graduate Institute. After I was appointed Playwright-in-Residence for the state of New Mexico, my wife told me she'd discovered, thanks to our California dalliances, that she prefers women, and she left me for a Latina. Since that day, I have only been with Mexican women...but I get ahead of myself.

*A gut string guitar softly playing Mexican music fades in and stays soft.*

MAN: After a stint at Harvard Law School, where I learned through the family grapevine that my father was looting the plumbing company, and two of my younger brothers, employed there, were supporting cocaine habits with forged company checks, I returned to the West Coast and married a Mexican Marxist sociologist with family ties to Mexico's ruling PRI. She hated America. In February 1988, figuring I'd pick up where Ambrose Bierce left off, we loaded up my new stickshift truck and drove to Mexico City, to stay with her gringo-hating parents until her mother's boss, the Speaker of Mexico's Senate, was "elected" governor of the adjoining state of Morelos, where we soon moved, to a house at 10,000 feet above sea level, after the governor appointed my second wife the head of the Department of Rural Development, where she would tend to campesino grievances.

I wrote and performed my songs in a Cuernavaca nightclub, and apprenticed to a *bruja* named Meche while researching a screenplay about a Mexican shaman. One September night in 1989 my wife came home to tell me that the governor had declared that her marriage to a gringo was a political embarrassment. She'd been offered a promotion, a pay raise, and a house if we separated. "What's in it for me?" I asked. Her reply? "If you don't leave, you'll be deported or, worse, set up on a phony drug bust and sent to a Mexican jail."

The next day, I went to my *bruja* for advice. Grabbing her tape recorder, Meche led me to her candlelit tower. I clicked on the tape machine while Meche went into a trance and began channeling a Nahuatl-speaking spirit named Miguel. After Meche emerged from her trance, she listened to her monologue and told me that Miguel had this advice: "Stay in Mexico until Christmas. By then, you will meet your soulmate."

This was my mustard seed of salvation. A Mexican charlatan muttering nonsense while channeling an Aztec spirit? Hey, it was good enough for me. After I was pistolwhipped by a



Mexican attorney who worked in the federal drug-enforcement unit, I left my Marxist wife and moved into the basement of a man and woman who owned a bookstore called *Bajo el Volcan*, or "Under the Volcano," an explicit homage to Malcolm Lowry's classic novel. On November 13, while I, having just recorded an album called *ANYWHERE YOU ARE IS HEAVEN*, was in the bookstore with the cover art under my arm, a tiny young *senorita* walked up to me and asked if I was a writer. I said yes, then asked her if she was a dancer. She said yes, and told me her four favorite writers were Carl Jung, D.H. Lawrence, Krishnamurti, and Henry Miller. Inwardly, I ticked off the signs: Esoteric psychology, literary passion, metaphysics, and sex. I asked her out to my truck to hear my album on the cassette player. After listening a few moments, she declared me a genius and asked me if she could hear my songs in person. We drove to my basement and I sang her several, including "Fool For Love," which I'd composed for my Marxist defector after stealing the title from my cowboy Gurdjieffian plagiarist.

*The Mexican music fades out. On the screen, we see a photo of Popocatepetl, the volcano which looms over Cuemavaca. The MAN sings "Fool For Love":*

I waited in the rain for you, like a guard at Buckingham.  
I created a lake for you like the Grand Coulee Dam,  
Where you could dive for pearls, like the brown Tahitian girls.

Yes, we both know what I am:

I'm a fool for love. I can't get enough.

Lately, I ain't gettin' any. I spent a pretty penny  
on that sentimental stuff I never learned in school.

I ain't so tough. I'm just a fool. A fool for love.

I broke through your pain with you, like an ancient rutting ram.

I waited at the stake for you, like a sacrificial lamb

You could give to God. But the plan was flawed,

because God knows what I am.

I'm a fool for love. I can't get enough.

Lately, I ain't gettin' any. I spent a pretty penny  
on that sentimental stuff I never learned in school.

I ain't so tough. I'm just a fool. A fool for love.

Is this a weakness I've had from the start?

Or am I a witness to the grandeur of the human heart?

I drove two thousand miles for you to our private Vietnam.

I killed your enemies for you 'cause you were in a jam.

And like our own Saigon, when it fell, you were gone,

to leave me as I am.

I'm a fool for love. I can't get enough.

Lately, I ain't gettin' any. I spent a pretty penny

on that sentimental stuff I never learned in school.  
I ain't so tough. I'm just a fool. A fool for love.

*The spotlight goes off. The photo of Popocatepetl disappears. The screen rolls up. The stage lights come back up, brightly.*

MAN: The tiny dancer has been with me since that night. I brought her to America and married her in New Mexico, before returning to California, where I was told that, as a privileged white male, I was ineligible for job interviews in my profession. After several years of this racism, I changed my name to Reinaldo Garda, and my writing assumed sociopolitical legitimacy. After an emotionally devastating mid-90s visit to my parents' home, when we presented our newborn daughter to my family, I pondered the character/destiny synergy, and how difficult it is to change our lives in any radical way.

*The lights go off. The MAN, lit by the spotlight, sings "Until I Get It Right":*

Swept along by winds of hate, I wonder if it's just too late  
To change what's left of simple fate and abdicate the fight.  
But then I think of all that's left  
For me to learn before my death  
'Bout how these winds can give me breath  
And teach me with their bite, until I get it right.

Until I get it right, I'll trust this appetite  
For fires burning bright outside the lives of men.  
Then I'll do it all again, until I get it right,  
Before the bitter end. Amen.

Yes, I will feed on what you miss  
While you are searching for your bliss  
Across the rubble of the kiss  
You bargained for last night.  
The kiss that love has left upon your cheek  
You turned while learning to be meek  
From masters who must fear the weak,  
Who feast on their delight, until I get it right.

Until I get it right, I'll trust this appetite  
For fires burning bright outside the lives of men.  
Then I'll do it all again, until I get it right,  
Before the bitter end. Amen.

I see the damage that they do  
While mucking up the Human Zoo.  
How come they all look like you,  
Who kneel to suck this parasite?

Until I finally get it right, I'll join the Armies of the Night,  
To reconcile the Black and White,  
And look at you with blinding sight  
Until I get it right.

Until I get it right, I'll trust this appetite  
For fires burning bright outside the lives of men.  
Then I'll do it all again, until I get it right,  
Before the bitter end. Amen.

MAN: I could not "save" my parents. I could only be the best father and husband I can be. And that demands consciousness. Estranged from my birth family, exiled in my own country, I continued my spiritual quest and decided to let the dead bury the dead, while forgiving them. I realized that all of my romantic strategies arose from a frustrated primal need to connect with my birth mother. Who, essentially, was dead.

*Still lit by the spot, the MAN sings "Bright Flame";*

Burning white, down to ash.  
You lit the night with a flash, Bright Flame.

Bright Flame, your face was your name.  
Someone placed you behind a windowpane.  
Rain was beating against the glass. You watched the hours as they passed away,  
Bright Flame.

Bright Flame, misplaced with no blame.  
Someone placed you behind a windowpane.  
We all watched you reach out to us. Your solitude was a fabulous display,  
Bright Flame.

Bright Flame, your grace was your shame, brilliant as the light on the midnight train  
Bearing you to oblivion. You left the Soul Pavilion today,  
Bright flame.

BLACK OUT, *while the song continues. The painted curtain disappears. The movie screen lowers, and on it is projected a photo of a twentyish Philippine woman, with a flowered lei around her neck, in a public park in Southeast Asia. Below the photo, the words BABES IN THAILAND appear.*

Fuego brillante, tu cara era tu nombre. No estuve tu hombre...

*"Bright Flame" fades. As the rheostat lights come back up dimly, allowing the photo still to be seen, we're back in the suburban family room with the bar.*

MAN: My grandmother outlived my grandfather by 16 years. During her decline, my father arranged for a 40 year old undocumented Filipina caretaker to move into my grandmother's home in a luxurious retirement community. That's her, years ago, in Thailand, where she escorted American businessmen. Her real name is Luzuiminda de los Reyes. She calls herself "Babes" nthat's right, "Babes in Thailand"--and my father ignored his widowed mother's disappearing cash and jewelry after "Babes," a piece of ripe watermelon dangling from her mouth, walked across my grandmother's living room one afternoon and offered it to my septuagenarian father, who ate it from her lips. My father moved out of his house and rented an apartment. While waiting for the divorce to go through, still drawing a salary from the family plumbing business, now run by one of my ex-addict brothers who was supporting it with credit card cash advances, he and "Babes" drove all over America in the company sports car. My grandmother died in April 2000. We drove down to Camarillo for the memorial service, held in my grandmother's stripped home while "Babes" and her relatives sat in the kitchen, joking and drinking. My mother refused to attend. I sang a song, while others offered memories of our grandmother's grace and vigor. Then our father of four sons told the four sons they could have anything left in the home. But then we discovered that anything we chose had already been promised to "Babes" who, with her relatives, had backed up a rented van to the garage.

*BLACK OUT. A photo of a Christmas tree appears on the movie screen. A Christmas carol fades in, softly. The overhead bar lights come back up, dimly.*

MAN: Eight months later, during Christmas, my father secretly asked my Mexican wife, a talented graphics designer, to forge a wedding invitation, which he and "Babes" would submit to the INS, enabling the rest of the Filipina grifter's relatives to immigrate illegally to America. My father gave her a list of names which he wanted on the phony invitation. My wife was a "bridesmaid." Our three year old daughter was a "flowergirl." Merry Christmas! I could not believe my father would ask my green-carded wife to engage in a felony which, if detected, would result in her deportation, or worse. I wrote him a strongly-worded rebuke, and two weeks later, my father married "Babes." California's community property laws entitle "Babes" to half of my father's loot, which increased substantially when he sold my grandmother's home and other valuable Los Angeles properties. I can't concern myself with that. My riches are our daughter. And my wife, Alma Sandra Castro Garda.

*The overhead lights go off. The photo of the Christmas tree is replaced by a photo of the MAN's daughter suckling at the breast of the MAN's wife. The MAN, lit by the spot, sings "Alma, My Dear":*

Like water to the lake, as the skin is to the snake,  
I hold you near, Alma my dear.  
Come over here and hear the lovebirds coo in the willow tree.  
What I am to you, you are to me.

Like the leaf to the branch, as the snow is to the avalanche

In which we disappear, Alma my dear:  
No earthly fear nor heavenly taboo will ever make me leave.  
What I am to you, you are to me.

I'm the rosebud on your sled. You're the lover in my bed.  
In some rosy dawn when we're found dead,  
Soul-to-soul we'll still be wed...

Like blackness to the cave, as the sea spray to the wave  
before it hits the pier, Alma my dear:  
None will interfere and nothing will subdue our deep blue sea.

What I am to you, you are to me.

BLACK OUT, *except for the spotlight.*

MAN: My father followed "Babes" to the Phillipines. I imagine he figured he'd spend his last years like Walter Houston in *TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE*, a film my father made me watch in 1957. The old miner found his treasure while reclining in a hammock in a remote Mexican village, where enraptured *senoritas* dropped tropical fruit in his grateful mouth. But as with all his manic pursuits of pleasure, this too turned dark. One late winter night, he phoned me from the luxurious hillside house he and "Babes" had built with the family money, which he'd transferred to a Manila bank. My father's normally booming voice was weak. He said he had something important to tell me, in person, and that I should fly at once to Manila, and he'd pay half the ticket price. Still a fool for love and morbidly curious, I landed on a rainswept runway, hailed a cab, and presented my hands crawled destination to the driver. We arrived at my father's concrete lovenest while the brawling storm whipped the palm trees level, and they kissed the red tile roof. *(Pause)* I duck "Babes"'s offered peck and go straight into their bedroom, where he lays blue and bloated. My father wags the pointer finger that was mangled in a chain-driven washing machine in 1934. I come close. He whispers, "I have three things to tell you. First, Babes poisoned me with a snakebite. Second, she gives great head. Your mother would never swallow. Babes gulps. So I can't complain. Third, I got a joke." My father always ended our talks with a sports update or a joke, and he always blew it by announcing it was a joke. Better to say, "I got a story." Or even better, just tell it. Anyway, I lean in as his voice grows huskier. "Once there was a village idiot," he begins. "One day the village con man comes up with a small jar and says, 'Howdja like to buy some smart pills, Village Idiot?' Idiot says, 'How much they cost?' Con man says, 'Five bucks a jar. Take three a day, then come back for more.' Idiot takes the jar, opens it, and sees what look like raisins. Con man says, 'Look, if they don't work, you get your money back.' Idiot gives the con man five bucks. Over the next week, he eats every smart pill but the last one, and when he chews the last smart pill, he gets suspicious. He goes to the con man and says, 'These aren't smart pills. These are rabbit droppings.' Con man says, 'See, you're gettin' smarter already.'" My father can barely control his mirth. "Wait," he says. "Got another one. Amish guy and his kid see their first elevator..."

*(Pause)*

MAN: My father died a week after I returned to Monterey. We made half-hearted attempts for an autopsy, and to get the body flown back to California. "Babes" kept the corpse. And the family money.

*The MAN sings "Memory & Desire":*

There's no reward for passion and other forms of vanity.  
Glory has gone out of fashion. Cowardice is sanity.  
Bold men squander energy. Wise men hide their lust.  
Lovers exploit destiny. God protects the just.

We're men in the middle, torn by memory and desire.  
We're not pagan nor Christian, oracles or liars.  
Gray is the riddle for men in the middle.

Go down where the peach tree blooms, through the sunny pasture.  
In a house of many rooms, freedom has been captured.  
See her writhing where she croons her endless song of rapture.  
In a house of many grooms, I would be her master.

Dissatisfied by satisfaction never guaranteed,  
Pay attention when distractions masquerade as needs.  
Daily lies to see us through leave us cold and bare.  
Day-to-day and me-to-you are burdens we shall bear.

We're men in the middle, torn by memory and desire.  
We're not pagan nor Christian, oracles or liars.  
Gray is the riddle for men in the middle.

BLACK OUT. *The movie screen lowers, and we see a photo of Monterey County's hills, dusted with snow after a winter storm. The spotlight comes back on, focused on the MAN.*

MAN: As I ended the transPacific call with the American embassy, the spitting rain grew dense and blew into my writing studio. I closed the window and called out to my four-year-old daughter. "Hey, Victoria," I said. "There's snow on Fremont Peak. It'll be gone by tomorrow. Let's go!" We stopped in SanJuan Bautista for gas and candy. I regaled my half-Mexican daughter with tales of California's history while we snaked up the snowy road. Before we hiked to the summit, I stopped in front of John C. Fremont's memorial plaque and read it aloud to my uncomprehending daughter. Then more snow started to fall. Victoria picked up a big chunk and asked me if we could put it in the car and take it back to Monterey.

*The image of the snow-covered hills disappears, and is replaced by a photo of daughter Victoria sitting barefooted on the edge of a raised pond. The MAN sings "M:v Barefoot Chicanita":*

Running 'cross the green grass on a golden afternoon,  
Followed by her puppy and a helium balloon,  
There's no baby sweeter than my barefoot *chicanita*.

And then we sing, "*Esta niia linda que nacio de dia,*  
*"Quiere que la lleven a ver a su tia. "*

Reaching for my camera while she strikes a pose  
Underneath the shower of a garden hose,  
There's no baby sweeter than my barefoot *chicanita*,

And then we sing, "*Esta nina linda que naci6 de noche,*  
*"Quiere que la lleven a pasear en coche. "*

Come on out and see her running through the park,  
Chasing all the pigeons while the sky grows dark.  
You'll love the way she'll greet ya: My barefoot *chicanita*.

And then we sing, "*Esta nina linda se quiere dormir,*  
*"Haganle su cuna de su toronjil. "*

And then we sing, "*Esta nina linda se llama Victoria.*  
*"Esta nina linda lne da gran euforia. "*

BLACK OUT. *The rnovie screen rises and disappears, and the lights come up to a cornfortable glow over the bar in the suburban family room.*

MAN: The older we get, the better we were. Love, or perish. Go in peace.

*The lights begin a slow fade to black as we hear "The Older I Get, The Better I Was":*

I joined the club that never said no, just before my sixteenth year,  
The boys and I would always go wherever there was fear.  
The flips ide of desire was gasoline to fire, I don't know why, just because.  
The older I get, the better I was.

I loved the girls who never said no, until I drove them to it.  
Every time my heart disrobed, I'd drive a dagger through it.

The bloody side of love, the fist inside the glove, the things I heard a lover does.  
The older I get, the better I was.

Mona offered me her head on a plate, I went to get two straws.  
I found instead a wooden crate, and grabbed it with my claws.  
Her head would not fit in, so I just bit in, while Mona gave me wild applause.  
The older I get, the better I was.

You've seen how the heart withdraws, to wrap its savage self with laws.

Mona loved her tropical birds, and taught 'em how to talk.  
She taught 'em all the filthy words a woman can concoct.  
I told her I would kiss 'em, but Mona would not listen.  
I left her with her blue macaws.  
The older I get, the better I was.

You've seen how the heart withdraws, then reappears without a cause.

So now I am a complex man, making heaven out of hell,  
Every day I die by my own hand, but I don't hurt myself.  
Yes, now it's safety first: I watch my heart just burst on frozen memory as it thaws.  
The older I get, the better I was.

...And now our collective memories blur.

The older we get, the better we were.

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