

GUY

by Linda Manning

2007 Eugene O'Neill Theater Center National
Playwrights Conference semi-finalist

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Time

The late-1990's
with flashbacks to the late 1950's through the 1970's

Place

Guy's Living Room in Los Angeles
and the inside of his head

Characters

GUY BOYD, 65 -- a consummate salesman, once a statuesque, good-looking man his appearance is now ravaged by illness, his voice remains commanding

VIVIEN, his ex-wife, 62 -- a proud woman who has aged well and wears a mask of contentment

their children:

DIANE, 41 years old -- attractive, sexy, wound tight, but has the haunted, wary look of a perpetual outsider

JANE, 45 years old -- mentally disabled, has a soft, small body unlike the rest of her family, and her walk is cautious and measured

BEATRICE, early 90's, Guy's mother -- petite and crisp, dressed in a classic suit of the 1950's - matching hat and gloves, underneath her elegant exterior she is a tough, scrappy broad

LILIA, 40, Guy's girlfriend -- a Mexican woman, vibrant, beautiful, always agitated and aware of everything around her

played by the same actor:

THE COWBOY - He is The Man With No Name - wide brim hat, poncho, cigar between his teeth, etc., he should physically suggest a 35ish Clint Eastwood and John Wayne, tall, imposing, ruggedly handsome, charismatic with real authority
CARL CARLSON - a cocky, fast-talking used-truck salesman

GUY

ACT I

(A pair of brown leather reclining chairs with a small table between them sit in a downstage corner. A TV is directly in front of the chairs. The rest of the stage looks and feels like wide open bare space. When other set pieces are needed they easily appear and disappear. The entire back wall of the stage is covered with a scrim so that still or moving images can be shown in order to transport the audience into Guy's grand and expansive internal life.)

Lights come up on Guy and Diane, father and daughter, sitting in the matching reclining chairs. Diane is 41 years old and attractive, but wears the haunted, wary look of a perpetual outsider. Guy is in his mid 60's. Although he was once a statuesque, good-looking man his appearance is now ravaged by illness. But his voice remains commanding. He wears an old jogging suit and is covered with an afghan made from crotchet squares of brightly colored yarn. The small table between the two chairs is overflowing with pill bottles, used tissues, eye glasses, empty Pepsi cans, two remote controls, magazines, newspapers etc.

They both sit in the exact same physical position as they watch the TV. We see the blue light flickering from the television and hear the faint sounds of dialogue from the movie A Fistful of Dollars.)

GUY

Do you need some money?

DIANE

No ... thanks ... I'm fine.

(Pause. They watch the movie.)

DIANE (CONT'D)
Are they speaking Spanish?

GUY
Italian.

DIANE
And he's speaking English?

GUY
Correct. But it's set in Mexico. Actually filmed in Spain.

DIANE
The dubbing is horrible.

(Diane gets up and exits the stage while Guy is talking. She comes back with a large pile of laundry. She sorts and folds during the following.)

Throughout this scene Guy follows along with the movie dialogue and occasionally quotes it word for word.)

GUY
He has perfect hair.

"Men get rich here or you'll be killed. Juan De Dios tolls the bell once again."¹ The little guy, the bell ringer, is Juan De Dios. Do you know what that means?

DIANE
Nope.

GUY
John of God as in John The Baptist ... who prophesied the coming of Christ. So ... you can infer what you like from that, but I think the meaning is clear.

DIANE
He's Jesus?

GUY
Perfect hair ... thick, but not too neat ...

DIANE
Kind of like yours.

GUY
He's good looking.

DIANE

Not my type.

GUY

Did you stop breathing?! Are you dead?! That's an exceptional man and you know it!

DIANE

If you're into guys who speak in monosyllables, wear ponchos and spit cigar juice.

GUY

If he walks like that -- most women are ...

DIANE

These movies weren't made for women, Dad.

GUY

They were made for anybody who's got a brain in their head. It's art! Oh, look at that, they just shot at his mule. If they are going to play that game they should have just killed him and not shot at the damn mule.

DIANE

Why?

GUY

Watch. He tells the old man he has no money. He's got nothin' but the shirt on his back. Our guy walks into town with nothing. Remember that.

DIANE

Dad ...

GUY

He's lookin' for something, he'll know it when he sees it. See, he goes to the balcony to survey the situation, get the lay of the land. Look at that scenery. It's a god damn painting.

DIANE

Why didn't we ever go out to Arizona or Wyoming ... or Spain?

GUY

We did go to Wyoming, twice. You were too young to remember. (*Back to the movie.*) Then the old man gives him a reason to stay, there's an opportunity, money to be made. "Somebody has to run the place. Every town has a boss." The old man tells him about the Baxter and Rojas families -- If he kills the

GUY (CONT'D)

Baxters, then the Rojas brothers are forced to take him seriously. He's been in town for five minutes and he is working the deal. Watch this. This is key. He strolls past the coffin maker steeling himself. "Get three coffins ready."²

DIANE

"The coffin maker?!"

GUY

He approaches the Baxters. He's givin' them a shot ... a chance to do the right thing and live, but they're not going to take it.

DIANE

So he is a virtuous kind of guy?

GUY

You didn't hear a word I just said.

DIANE

You just said his strategy is to kill them.

GUY

They shot at his mule.

DIANE

How convenient.

GUY

Be quiet! "He's feelin' real bad - my mule. Now if you apologize like I know you're going to, I might convince him you really didn't mean it." Wait. Wait. (*Loud sounds of gunfire from the TV.*) That's it. He strolls back past the coffin maker, "My mistake, four coffins."³ It doesn't get any better than that, sweetheart.

DIANE

It's like watching porn. They put the dialogue in between shoot-outs just to fill the thing out. Why didn't he just walk over there and kill them?

GUY

If he's just a murderer there's no point.

DIANE

He is a murderer - a lonely, ruthless, selfish, motherfucker with no morality!

GUY

He's The Man With No Name!

DIANE

What is that?!

GUY

Symbolic! Of the God-like power within all of us. He walks into town with nothing ... no possessions, no assets, but also no past, no burdens ... therefore he is capable of anything ... of his best. Ruler of his own destiny.

DIANE

God-like, because he's got a gun.

GUY

It's a western! Everybody's got guns. They cancel each other out. It's a fucking metaphor.

DIANE

I hate these movies, Dad! Hate! I've hated them since I was a kid! It's a cartoon -- a bunch of posturing, who-has-the-biggest-dick crap trying to disguise itself as something deep and meaningful.

GUY

You're one hundred percent wrong. And in certain situations who's got the biggest dick is an important thing to determine.

DIANE

But you make me sit here and you play this game with me -- explaining it to me like this is the first time we've ever done this ...

GUY

Hoping you'll finally get it!

DIANE

Get what?!

GUY

And what game are you playing, asking a bunch of questions like you don't understand movie dialogue?

DIANE

... instead of you and I having a real conversation about things we need to talk about. I'm bored.

GUY

You know what I think is boring?

DIANE

I'm sure you're going to tell me.

GUY

An intelligent woman who has her mind so closed off that all she wants to do is fight.

(Diane stands up with the folded laundry.)

DIANE

I gotta put this laundry away.

GUY

Leave it there. Watch the fucking movie.

DIANE

I don't want to. I'm gonna put the laundry away.

GUY

Lilia can do it.

DIANE

She's got enough to do! I'll take care of it.

GUY

Leave it there!

DIANE

Fine!

(She drops the basket and plops back down into the recliner. They stare at the TV for a moment.)

GUY

Why are you in such a bad mood all the time?

DIANE

What?

GUY

You're forty years old ...

DIANE

Forty one.

GUY

It's a great age. You're a kid! This is the best time of your life. You're still young, but you're smart now. You got experience, a nice husband, a perfect little daughter, you live in the big, bad city where you wanted to be. You look pretty good ... for your age. You had a career going. What do you have to be so sad about?

DIANE

Nothing. I'm not sad.

GUY

You're bitter.

DIANE

I am not!

GUY

You've got an angry look on all the time - you're disappointed.

DIANE

It's my face.

GUY

Angry. Men don't like to see that in a woman.

DIANE

My God.

GUY

What did the world do to you?

DIANE

(seething)

Nothing! I'm fine!

(They stare at the movie again.)

GUY

Most men don't have the guts to be honest about who they are and what they want Most *people* are not honest with themselves, Diane, so they become caged animals and live a lie. He's not doing that. That's the point.

DIANE

Dad, you've gotta stop.

GUY

No, you listen to me. What you are capable of right now is all that matters, your strengths, your weaknesses, your guts, your instincts. You've got to be honest about all of it. That's it. When you're stripped bare you find out who you are and then you can really live.

DIANE

Stripped bare?

GUY

That's right.

(pause)

GUY (CONT'D)

Watch the movie, you might learn something.

(pause)

GUY (CONT'D)

I'm trying to tell you something here if you're listening. You know your old man has lived a few years.

DIANE

I know that ...

GUY

And there may be some things that you need to learn.

DIANE

I never said ...

GUY

So maybe you should just try listening.

DIANE

Okay.

(She waits for him to continue. He goes back to watching the movie.)

GUY

Don't you got something to do?

DIANE

What?

GUY

What?

DIANE

I thought you were going to tell me something.

GUY

I did.

DIANE

What?

GUY

Forget it.

DIANE

What?!

GUY

I've been telling you things all week. You don't want to hear them.

DIANE

You've been lecturing me. You've been espousing. You haven't been talking to me.

GUY

You want me to talk to you?

DIANE

Yes.

GUY

You want me to tell you something real?

DIANE

That would be great.

GUY

Why are you spending Christmas with your old man instead of your own family? You missed Christmas with your daughter.

DIANE

I came here because you needed help.

GUY

Why didn't you bring your little girl?

DIANE

What?

GUY

That's not a trick question. Why didn't you bring Katie to see me?

DIANE

I wasn't sure ... that you ... I wanted to come alone.

GUY

Why?

DIANE

Because I did.

GUY

She's you all over. You can't get anything past her.

DIANE

You want to get things past her?

GUY

Of course. She's a kid. You don't want her looking at your insides.

DIANE

She sees them anyway.

GUY

You couldn't have been more than six years old and you used to look at me like you knew everything.

DIANE

You could see that? Why didn't you say anything?

GUY

What am I supposed to say to a kid about things that have nothing to do with being a kid?

(pause)

GUY (CONT'D)

When is your ride to the airport supposed to be here in the morning?

DIANE

I don't know.

GUY

Is there an actual time of day?

DIANE

I don't know.

GUY

Should you wait out front?

DIANE

I don't know.

GUY

Well, taxi drivers don't always do what they're told, do they.

I'm sure you gotta get back.

(pause)

DIANE

Yeah.

(pause)

DIANE (CONT'D)

I had a nice time ...

GUY

Fuck off ... you hate California at Christmas time.

DIANE

The sun and beach, the palm trees, eating outside - it's fake and depressing.

GUY

And New York is reality? At Christmas time or any time for that matter?

DIANE

New York is as real as it gets and perfect at Christmas time!

GUY

Because you can freeze your tits off in a over-priced buggy ride through one tiny corner of Central Park suffocating on horse shit fumes while some desperate dumb ass who can't wait to grab your fifty bucks narrates inane trivia for you?! Or you can go look at an enormous tree that's been cut down and hauled into the city for everyone to gawk at like a wild animal in the zoo, but no matter how big or wild it is, it's still disappointing.

DIANE

When were you in New York at Christmas?

GUY

But if you saw that same tree in the middle of the forest it

would knock you backwards with the fact of its existence.

DIANE

When were you there?

GUY

When I was in the Service. We were on our way to Germany ... after we got married.

DIANE

I never knew that. Buggy rides weren't fifty bucks back then.

GUY

I embellish. Lost my wallet standing there like the perfect mark gawking up at that tree.

DIANE

You got your wallet stolen?

GUY

Yep. Your mother wouldn't leave the hotel room after that.

(pause)

DIANE

I'm going to bed.

(She abruptly exits. We hear the strike of a match, and see the lit end of a cigar in the blackness upstage. A tumbleweed, bigger than life, rolls across the scrim, music plays. The scrim comes alive with a sprawling western landscape.

The Cowboy walks into the light. His shadow is projected 40 feet high on the scrim.

He is The Man With No Name - wide brim hat, poncho, cigar between his teeth, etc. The actor should physically suggest a 35ish Clint Eastwood and John Wayne, i.e. tall, imposing, ruggedly handsome, charismatic with real authority. His mannerisms and voice throughout the play alternate between his own real voice and body, the Clint Eastwood western cliché, John Wayne's western cliché, and Carl Carlson, the salesman character. Guy is the only one who can see him.

The Cowboy flings back his poncho to reveal his holster and guns. He throws down the cigar and spits. He walks toward Guy.)

COWBOY

(as Clint Eastwood)

When a man with a 45 meets a man with a rifle, you said the man with a pistol is a dead man. Let's see if that's true.

(The Cowboy pulls out a rifle from underneath his poncho and throws it at Guy's feet.)

GUY

I told you to lay low while she's here.

COWBOY

Go ahead, load it up and shoot.⁴

(Guy starts to go for the gun and then Lilia enters. He and the Cowboy both freeze. They've been caught. Lilia is a Mexican woman, 40, vibrant, beautiful, always agitated and aware of everything around her. She stops in the middle of the room and listens and looks around. She feels The Cowboy's presence. Guy pretends to be watching TV.)

GUY

Get me another Pepsi before you go out. Lots of ice.

(She already has it in her hand, and gives it to him.)

LILIA

Good night.

(She exits. The Cowboy picks up his rifle.)

COWBOY

(still Clint Eastwood)

When things look bad, and it looks like you're not going to make it, then you gotta get mean. I mean plumb mad dog mean. 'Cause if you lose your head and you give up, then you neither live nor win, that's just the way it is.⁵

GUY

What are you talking about? Things are good. Things are great.

COWBOY

(as himself)

The girl ain't gonna help you.

GUY

She's leaving tomorrow.

COWBOY

Uh huh.

(The Cowboy plops down in the recliner next to Guy. Guy covers himself with the afghan and settles in for the night, attempting to ignore the Cowboy who is always on stage. Guy clicks through the channels, and then calls his mother on the phone.)

GUY

Huuullo! Huuullo Beatrice? Mother?!

(Beatrice is lowered from above Guy in a huge bird cage that hovers directly over his head. She is petite and crisp, dressed in a classic suit of the 1950's - matching hat and gloves. Underneath her elegant exterior she is a tough, scrappy broad. She is in her 90's, but is as quick and sharp as she ever was. At times she pretends to be distracted or not to understand what is happening. The actress also plays Beatrice at younger ages. Beatrice is eating crackers and cottage cheese. Crumbs occasionally fall through the bars of the cage onto Guy's head.)

BEATRICE

Who is it?

GUY

Guy Boyd, the one and only.

BEATRICE

WHO?!

GUY

(yelling)

YOUR SON for Christ's sake.

BEATRICE

What time is it?

GUY
It's seven o'clock Mother. In the p.m.

BEATRICE
What?

GUY
(yelling)
EVENING.

Just drinkin' my Pepsi and thought I'd ...

BEATRICE
Your what?

GUY
COCA-COLA, Mother. Did you eat dinner?

BEATRICE
Of course.

GUY
Did the housekeeper stop by today?

BEATRICE
I can't remember.

GUY
I'm going to have her cook for you if you don't eat.

BEATRICE
No thank you.

GUY
Yes I am.

BEATRICE
I said no thank you! She's Hungarian for Christ's sake!

GUY
Then eat!

BEATRICE
Is Diane still there?

GUY
No. Yeah.

BEATRICE
What?

GUY
She's leaving tomorrow ... back to New York.

BEATRICE
New York!

GUY
Yes.

BEATRICE
Was it a good visit?

GUY
Yes, we had a very nice visit.

BEATRICE
Was it nice?

GUY
Yes mother.

BEATRICE
A nice visit.

GUY
I said, YES MOTHER! (*Guy seizes in paralyzing pain.*) Agghhh.
Good night, Mother.

(He reaches for one of the pill bottles, swallows one, and puts his head back to catch his breath. Beatrice's cage rises out of sight. Diane storms in.)

This argument takes place over and around the Cowboy who watches.)

DIANE
There's no taxi coming tomorrow.

GUY
What?

DIANE
I'm not going back to New York.

COWBOY
Told ya.

GUY

(trying to hide the pain)

You want to stay another week?

DIANE

I don't know how long it will be. What's wrong with you?

GUY

Nothing.

DIANE

I need to stay here until I get things figured out.

GUY

(still riding out the pain)

What are you talking about?!

DIANE

I'm not going back.

GUY

Grab me another pillow. Under my feet.

(She does it.)

DIANE

I can't live there anymore.

GUY

Of course you can, that's where you live.

DIANE

I'm not going back.

GUY

Yes, you are.

DIANE

I am not going back.

GUY

Whatever the problem is suck it up.

(The pain subsides. He takes her in.)

GUY (CONT'D)

Shit. How long have you been gone?

DIANE

About a month.

GUY

Where have you been living?

DIANE

Here and there.

(Silence. Guy takes this in.)

GUY

With some fucking guy. You left Katie and Richard for what?!

DIANE

I couldn't keep it going. I tried, Dad, I couldn't keep it going.

GUY

Some fucking guy, some ... what is he? A musician?!

(Diane is caught.)

GUY (CONT'D)

Answer me! Some fucking musician who makes you think he's the only-fucking-thing-in-the-world-that-can-do-whatever-the-fuck-he's-doing-to-you-guy, looking all in control and like a real man, but he's really a needy, probably alcoholic/drug-addict, motherfucker who sees your needy, beautiful face staring up at him and wants to suck the life out of you tit by tit ...

DIANE

Dad!

GUY

... in order to feel his own fucking existence ...

DIANE

Gross!

GUY

I'm right, aren't I?!

(pause)

DIANE

I love him.

GUY

You don't love him!

DIANE

I love him and I left because I know it's crazy, but I don't ...

GUY

Well, that's two points for you.

DIANE

Don't tell me you don't know what it's like ... looking into that guy's face you feel your heart beat calm and your mind let go, all the judgment and fear gone. That guy is holding a key to some part of you. You don't even know what it is or when you lost it. It doesn't really matter because it's intoxicating.

GUY

I'm not familiar.

DIANE

You try to ignore what you know ... but it shocks you ... it insists on your full attention. Like it or not, you've woken up from the reverie, the false idea that you didn't know was false. You thought you had what you wanted, but a huge hole just opened up, and now you are standing outside your life. You don't belong in it. You don't fit in it. It doesn't make sense. And the best idea you've got, the truest idea, the only time you get a good feeling, is at the thought of leaving, and running off with that guy, that face. But then the old reverie, the false idea, the lie pulls on you ... it pulls you back. So you are paralyzed for a long time, right Dad? You know what I'm talking about right?! You are the only one who would really know ...

GUY

You listen to me, young lady ...

DIANE

Tell me you know, Dad?!

GUY

There is no "guy".

DIANE

Say that you know!

GUY

There never is a "guy".

DIANE

There is a "guy".

GUY

He's not gonna do shit for you!

DIANE

I'm not pretending anymore.

GUY

That's the false idea, the "guy".

DIANE

Don't say that! I can't do it. Please don't make me. You have to understand what is inside my head right now. Please Dad! Please! There is a "guy". He's a person. He's outside of me. And he's inside of me. I looked up and there was his face. I wasn't trying to find anybody.

GUY

You are packing your bag right now, we are going to get you in a cab, and you are getting on a plane today and you are going back home and getting down on your fucking knees and begging them to take you back.

DIANE

Why are you doing this? Why are you pretending you don't understand me?

GUY

I don't care what you have to say or how long you have to say it ...

DIANE

Tell me you understand me!

GUY

... or what shit you have to eat, you will eat it, and you will smile, and you will promise Richard and Katie the fucking moon and you will not do this!

(Diane grabs one of the pill bottles off of his table.)

DIANE

Say you understand me or I will swallow every one of these pills!

GUY

No, you won't.

(She pops the lid open.)

DIANE

Say it!!