Mourning Breadth

Or

Gerbils, According to Joseph Hegadus

By George Lopercio

George Lopercio
25-40 35th Street
(917) 425-8169
George.Lopercio@Gmail.com
SETTINGS

Bob's office
Sue's classroom
John's kitchen
Mary's back yard
PRODUCTION NOTES

Time and place information goes here, along with anything else that will help the reader understand the script.

Production notes go here.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank various people for their support and encouragement.
FRAN
He’s gone.

OWEN
Aren’t you sneaky?

FRAN
Me? What about you? Your ghost stories.

OWEN
It wasn’t a ghost story.

FRAN
No? Every word was true?

Beat.

OWEN
Maybe not every word.

FRAN
What are you up to? Why do you want this place so badly?

OWEN
It would be the realization of a childhood fantasy.

FRAN
Yeah? Your barbie dream house?

OWEN
Sure.

FRAN
I don’t know if I believe you. Frankly I don’t know what the fuck you’re up to-

OWEN
-I’m not up to-

FRAN
-I know you’re up to something and I don’t really care. You want the house and I want the money. If Gaaron won’t sell it to you, then I’ll find someone he’ll sell it to.

OWEN
That isn’t fair.
FRAN
Why not?

OWEN
Because I want it most.

FRAN
Ha.

She crosses to the painting and looks at it.

FRAN
So then who are you Mr. Adney?

OWEN
Who am I?

FRAN
Yeah. Who you are. Small town boy with an expensive suit?

OWEN
Sure.

FRAN
Lived here all your life?

OWEN
Yep.

FRAN
Good.

SHE stands.

FRAN
Then I’m sure plenty of folks around here will know as much about you as you seem to know about plenty of folks. I’ll make sure to strike up a conversation with the gal at the grocery store.

SHE walks toward the front door and opens it. HE grabs her by the arm.

OWEN
The gal at the grocery store’s name is Frank.
FRAN
Yeah? Is she talkative?

Pause. Eyes.

OWEN
Okay. Not all my life.

Beat.

FRAN
You’re proving to be a very unreliable narrator.

SHE wrenches away from him. And walks back into the living room.

FRAN
How much are you willing to pay for this place?

OWEN
I’ve gone through all this with you brother.

FRAN
Well now you’re going through it with me.

OWEN
I can’t pay any more than 40. I simply can’t.

FRAN
And I suppose no one else is interested because...because it’s haunted. Is that it?

OWEN
You want to ask around about that story? Go ahead. People believe it around here.

FRAN
But it’s not true.

OWEN shrugs.

FRAN
Fuck it. It is or it isn’t - makes no difference to me. The man is dead and his life was miserable. It’s over.
OWEN
Not yet. You still own his house.

FRAN
There are people besides the hicks around here who would be interested in this property.

OWEN
Okay. Be my guest. You want to stick around? Get yourself an agent? Wait god-knows-how-long-in-this-economy for an offer from some developer? Go for it. You’ll make an extra 10 grand - 5 after you split it - of course there’ll be an agent’s fee and so after all is said and done you’ll walk away with an extra 3,000. Maybe. Does that sound worth it to you?

Beat.

OWEN
I know that it doesn’t. You want to get rid of this place right now and I’m the one who’s buying it. So please Fran. No more idle threats. Which leads us back to square one. Your brother.

FRAN nods.

Pause.

FRAN
My brother went blind at the age of ten. It was awful. We shared a bedroom and I woke up one morning to screaming. And he just kept screaming and screaming and screaming.

OWEN
How?

FRAN
How?

OWEN
How’d he go blind?

FRAN
He witnessed a terrible crime.

OWEN
No!
FRAN
But look how badly though you wanted to believe it!

OWEN
Forget it.

FRAN
Measles.

OWEN
Kids in America still get measles?

FRAN
Kids whose mothers don’t have them vaccinated.

OWEN
And what kind of a mother neglects to vaccinate her children?

FRAN
The kind with a lot on her plate. Who then goes back for seconds and thirds and fourths.

Beat.

FRAN
...we would stand at the bedroom window and he'd get me to tell him what I saw. I'd describe to him the houses across the street, the little patch of grass next to the path, the gate with its rotten hinges, forever wedged open that Grandpa was always going to fix. Front and center was this tree. Leafless regardless of the season. He'd stand there quiet for a moment. I thought he was trying to develop the images in his own head. Then he'd say: "I can see little twinkle stars, in far away windows. Rings of brightly colored rocks floating around orange and mustard planets. I can see huge tiger-striped fishes chasing tiny blue and yellow dashes, all tails and fins and bubbles." And I’d say: Nope. Not even close. And then I’d describe to him, in tedious detail the dead Bermuda grass and the sidewalk, and the asphalt. The awful things that were forced upon my eyes every single day.

OWEN
Poor you. You know if you wanted to go blind so badly, I understand that there are certain activities-
FRAN
-Oh trust me. I did my best.

OWEN
So what are you getting at?

FRAN
He woke me up in the middle of the night once. He demanded that I look out the window. I thought perhaps something was wrong. So I sprang out of bed. Still half asleep. (beat) The tree was covered in Christmas lights. And painted Crape paper fish, must have been two dozen of them... all different sizes dangling from the branches. He stood next to me - trying so hard not to smile. “Hey Fran,” he said...”tell me what you see”. And what could I say but, “twinkling stars and colorful fish.”

OWEN
That’s a very serious story.

FRAN
My point is that he’s seeing this place as a mustard planet. And I can tell him, “no, garron - it’s a moldy house” - I can tell him so a thousand times. But then we’ll walk in tomorrow and the place will reek of dijon. Oh God - how much would that drive down the price?

OWEN
That’s a very serious story indeed.

FRAN
What do you mean by that? I wasn’t trying to tell you a serious story. I was explaining to you the way his fucked up little brain-

OWEN
-To me it was a very serious story. You see I never had anybody like that.

FRAN
Like what?

OWEN
Somebody who took care of me like he...took care of you...in that story.
FRAN
Were you listening to another story in your head while I was telling mine? Because I was trying to say that-

OWEN
No. That was a gift he was giving you. And it wasn’t a holiday - nor was it your birthday. Just to be woken up by someone in the middle of the night so that they can give you a gift for no reason at all. To me that’s what it means to be taken care of. I do hope you found occasion to return the gesture.

FRAN
To take care of him? You hope I found occasion to take care of him?

OWEN
Yes.

FRAN
Yes. I found more than one occasion as a matter of fact. Who do you think it was that helped him to...dress...to...eat. To bathe - to...make sure his little wiener was aiming at the toilette - to do his homework. to describe the movie. Huh? I’ll give you a hint. It wasn’t my grandparents. It wasn’t my fat grandma with emphysema who herself could barely make it from the bedroom to the bathroom Nor my grandfather. Who seemed to get along wonderfully with the dunkin’ donuts guy and the nurse who administered his dialysis but struggled to meet his quota of three words a day for us.

OWEN
Let me guess. It was you.

FRAN
Yes it was.

OWEN
And how long ago did you desert him?

FRAN
Excuse me?

OWEN
It seems as though it’s been a while.
FRAN
It’s true. You have an extraordinary penchant for crossing lines.

OWEN
It’s understandable. I mean...I’m not blaming you. I think many young woman with such burdens would have-

FRAN
-I didn’t leave because...I felt burdened. I left because I fell in love. And yes. It was amazing. Here was this guy who could tie his own fucking shoes. Who would make dinner for me. And who knew exactly where to aim his little wiener. And suddenly my life was...fun...and easy. The knots in my stomach - one’s I didn’t even know were there...began to slowly unravel. He just happened to live in New York.

OWEN approaches her.

OWEN
And how’d he work out for you? In the end?

Beat.

FRAN
Great. We have a cozy little mansion in Connecticut where we raise guinea pigs and laugh at the news.

OWEN
Oh yeah?

FRAN
No.

FRAN sits on the couch in a manner that again shows her thighs and crotch.

OWEN
You know I’m not blind...right?

FRAN
What do you mean?
OWEN
I mean I just met you and the way you’re sitting affords me the opportunity to see the outline of your whole pussy.

Pause. She looks down at her crotch. Then back up at him.

FRAN
Yes. I know you’re not blind.

Pause.

FRAN
I thought perhaps we could uh...resume negotiations.

OWEN
My offer is 40. It’s all I have.

FRAN
Really? Nothing... tucked away under the mattress?

Pause. OWEN smiles and moves closer and closer to her.

OWEN
I guess that depends.

FRAN
On?

OWEN
On what else I’m getting.

FRAN
I’ll throw in the furniture.

OWEN
Keep it.

FRAN
re-shingle the roof?

OWEN shakes his head.

FRAN
Well then I’m sorry. I don’t know what else I can offer?
OWEN
Yes you do.

FRAN
Oh? And how much more generous are you willing to be with us...Mr. Adney?

OWEN
You can have everything under the mattress.

FRAN
And what does that come out to?

OWEN
...About 17 dollars and change. (beat) Close your fucking legs please. I’d like to continue this very serious conversation we’re having and I’m finding the sudden presence of your vagina in this room a little distracting.

Pause. She closes her legs.

OWEN
Thank you.