

Side 4 - Gordon

## PART TWO

Scene One:  
the last day of Gordon's life

*GORDON, to the audience:*

*GORDON.* I woke up that morning – the day I died – thinking I'd like a lobster bisque.

I showered. I had breakfast. Hermia has it timed so she finishes her cereal just as I begin mine. Something proud and untouchable about the way she eats her shredded wheat. A rebuke in the rhythm of her chewing, the curve of her back as she finishes her last bite, standing, washing out the bowl. Who cleans the bowl while they're chewing the last bite? She washes the bowl like this. Getting rid of all the unchewed bits. No respect for the discarded.

I ran to the subway in the rain. I didn't say good-bye. I didn't have an umbrella. I thought about going back for an umbrella, maybe giving Hermia an old fashioned kiss on the cheek that would soften her face, but I remembered the curve of her implacable back and I forged ahead in the rain, umbrella-less.

You know when people are so crushed together in the rain, in the city, so many people, that no one person needs an umbrella, because one umbrella covers three bodies. And everyone's yelling into their cell phones, and I'm thinking: where have all the phone booths gone? The phone booths are all dead. People are yammering into their phones and I hear fragments of lost love and hepatitis and I'm thinking, is there no privacy? *Is there no dignity?* I get onto the subway. A lurch for people's eyes. I believe that when people are in transit their souls are not in their bodies. It takes a couple minutes to catch up. Walking

– horseback – that is the speed at which the soul can stay in the body during travel. So airports and subway stations are very similar to hell. People are vulnerable – disembodied – they're looking around for their souls while they get a shoe shine. That's when you bomb them. In transit. But I didn't know that then. I was on the subway buried in some advertisement for a dermatology office, thinking about the sale of a cornea. The way I'm talking now – this is hind-sight. My mind went: dermatology – cornea – rain – umbrella – Hermia's a bitch – lobster bisque.

End

I wouldn't really say that I sell organs for a living. I connect people – see: A man in Iran needs money real bad but he doesn't need his own kidney. A woman in Sydney needs a new kidney but she doesn't need her own cash.

I put these two together. You're a sick person, you want to deal with red tape? You want to be put on hold – listen to bad music on the phone for seven years while you wait for your organs to dry out – is that love? No. Is that compassion? No. I make people feel good about their new organs. I call it: compassionate obfuscation. There are parts enough to make everyone whole; it's just that the right parts are not yet in the right bodies. We need the right man to – redistribute. One umbrella covers three bodies.

Truth for its own sake – I've never understood the concept. Morality can be measured by results: how good do you make people feel? You make them feel good? Then you're a good man. You make people live longer? Great. Is it my job to stop executions in China? I don't have that power. What I *can* do, however, is make sure that these miserable fucks who die for no good reason *have* a reason – I make sure their organs go to someone who needs them.

There was this surgeon I knew who did organ extractions in China – a highly trained surgeon – he couldn't stand it after a while – political prisoners, not even dead yet, made him sick. Now he's a sushi chef in New Jersey. I showed up one day at his counter. I ate his hamachi – excellent. I don't dip my sashimi in soy sauce. Sushi is for adults. You want to really taste your sushi, taste it. Don't drown it in soy sauce, that's for children. I

enjoyed my food in silence. I thanked him in Chinese. He looked a little startled. People assume he's Japanese. I said to him in Mandarin: you don't want people to know about your old line of work, neither do I. Left it at that. Ate my sushi. You can tell with tuna whether they slice it from the belly or from the tail end. He always gave me the belly. It's the good part.

But that day – the day I died – I didn't want to eat something that reminded me of body parts. I woke up in the morning wanting a lobster bisque. So I get off the subway, go to the cafe, the place I always go. A familiar guy behind the counter, a giant, with really huge knuckles. I said, I'll have the lobster bisque. He said, sorry we're out, as though it was a casual, everyday thing to be out of lobster bisque on the day I was going to die, as though I could come back the following week. As though it were a friendly, careless matter – sorry, we're out.

So I said: did you have any ten minutes ago?

And the giant said, yes.

I said, is anyone at this restaurant currently eating a lobster bisque?

And the giant said, well yes.

Who?

And he pointed to a woman in the corner. A pale-ish woman, sort of non-descript.

So I say, I will purchase her bowl of soup.

What? He says. I take out my wallet, pull out a hundred.

Then I see it – she is tilting the bowl to the side to scrape out the last bite.

I watch it go into her little mouth, slow motion.

Son of a bitch, I say. I'll have lentil.

I'm used to getting what I want. But today is not my day. So I have the lentil.

Lentil soup is never that great. It's only ever serviceable. It doesn't really make your mouth water, does it,