

WAITING FOR A EULOGY
Another tragicomedy in two acts
by
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*"VLADIMIR: To have lived is not enough for them.
ESTRAGON: They have to talk about it."*
— Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot

Characters

Phillip, here and then there

Cooper, there and then here

Matthew, bartender

Kate and Bill, couple at bar

Rev. Shaw, a local member of the clergy

Man, presence at bar

Time

Evening.

ACT ONE

SCENE

A bar. A pool table.

The decor is rustic with dartboard and juke box. A city skyline can be seen through the windows. In a window near the entrance to the bar there is a neon "Open" sign seen in reverse.

Behind the bar there is a young male, dressed in blue jeans, wearing an open collared denim shirt over a tee shirt with a John Prine "In Spite of Ourselves" logo.

A young couple sit on stools in the middle of the bar. An elderly man sits at the back of bar. He is wearing a fedora and is looking down at his drink.

Next to the pool table, which has balls and cues on it, are two high-top bar tables.

Phillip sits at one of the high-top tables. He is in his later years, well groomed, with streaks of grey in his hair. He appears distinguished - or at least respectable. In front of him is a drink - a clear liquid in a stemmed martini glass with a lemon peel visible. His head is down as he stares at a composition book that lays open in front of him. A pen is in his hand. He taps it loudly on the table, clearly agitated.

He looks up and stares into the audience.

PHILLIP: *Frustrated. Sighs heavily.*
Oh, man, this is not going to be easy.

VOICE: *Offstage.*
It's all meaningless, grasshopper.

Phillip looks toward voice and then back at his notebook.

PHILLIP: *Confused.*
Including this?

VOICE: *Emphatically.*
Especially that.

Cooper enters the bar. He is about the same age as Phillip. His greying hair is tousled and he wears glasses. He has an athletic build and appears carefree and animated.

Cooper struts around, checking out his surroundings. He waves at the man at the end of the bar who tips his hat. He walks to the pool table, touches the felt and looks at Phillip.

COOPER: Do you remember the last time we played pool?

Phillip stands and looks at Cooper.

PHILLIP: Does it never end?

COOPER: Nothing to be done.
Turns conspiratorially to the audience.
Or maybe there is.

PHILLIP: I am surprised to see you again. Shouldn't you be in a casket somewhere? What is this? Dead man walking?

COOPER: Not only walking (*he takes steps*), but also skipping (*he skips in place*) and jumping (*he does jumping jacks*). Although you're the only one who can see or hear me. An audience of one. Just like in the old days.

PHILLIP: Well, keep it down. I am trying to write.

Phillip sits back down. He takes a sip from his drink. He fidgets with his pen and looks down at the notebook. He grumbles under his breath.

PHILLIP: Shit.

COOPER: *Sarcastically.*
Nice to see you, too.

Matthew, the bartender, comes over to Phillip's table and sets down a bowl of nuts.

MATTHEW: Something happen, Phil?

PHILLIP: Like I said, Matthew. Shit happened.

Cooper steps toward Phillip, gestures to him and laughs.

COOPER: Good one. But you already knew that.
 Turns to the audience.
The man acts like he has the weight of the world - well, my weight really - on his
shoulders - well in his notebook actually.

MATTHEW: If you don't mind my asking, what's going on?

PHILLIP: A college buddy of mine died. His name was Cooper.

Phillip looks at Cooper.

COOPER: You know, that is still my name.

PHILLIP: He was a year behind me at the university and we were in the same fraternity. He
was what we called my little brother.

COOPER: *To the audience.*
In theory, the big brother was supposed to help the new member learn about the
fraternity and help him remain in good standing in both the school and the
fraternity. With us ...
Gestures to Phillip.
... not so much. We played a lot of pool and talked about pretty much everything
except our fraternal bonds.

PHILLIP: I don't know when it started, but we always joked that we would write each
other's eulogy. Now ...
Pauses and looks at Cooper.
... the joke's on me.
Holds up the notebook.
I have lots of empty pages and I'm not making much progress putting words on
them.

MATTHEW: I'm sorry about your friend. Let me know when you're ready for another drink.

Matthew returns to the bar.

PHILLIP: *To the audience.*
When I'm ready, it will not be for another drink. It will be for the same drink again.

Phillip stands and holds his pen up to his mouth as if it were a microphone and sings John Denver.

PHILLIP: "Take me home, country roads. To the place I belong"

Phillip holds the pen out in front of him and drops it onto the table.

Cooper watches dumbfounded and then turns to the audience.

COOPER: Oh man, it's worse than I thought.

Phillip sits back down and stares into his glass. He picks up the pen and resumes tapping it on the table.

Cooper starts to roll the cue ball on the pool table.

COOPER: Ah, memories.

Phillip picks up his drink and walks over to the pool table.

PHILLIP: Yes, we spent many hours playing pool.

COOPER: Many days.

PHILLIP: Many nights.

COOPER: Many days.

Phillip takes a sip of his drink.

PHILLIP: Since you're here - or so it seems - remember when you saved my ass in the gorge?

COOPER: Interesting where the mind wanders.

PHILLIP: Is there a better place?

COOPER: *Walks around pool table. Turns to the audience.*
So, our college fraternity house had a pool table. The pool room, as we called it, was just inside of a large outdoor deck that overlooked a gorge - a gorge that had a reputation for student deaths...

PHILLIP: *Interrupting.*
... both accidental and intentional. So much so that we called it "gorging out."

COOPER: *Anyway ...*
Acts out story as he tells it.
... one of your many bad shots jumped off the table, bounced onto the deck, rolled under the railing and fell down the side of the gorge.

Phillip picks up the cue ball from the pool table.

PHILLIP: It was our only cue ball, so I had to climb down to retrieve it.

COOPER: You made it down just fine, but you couldn't climb back up. You were frozen in fear, whimpering and clinging to the rocks and vines on the side of the gorge. I coached you and coaxed you back up to safety.
Pauses.
And then we finished our game of eight ball, which I won, of course.

Phillip raises his glass to Cooper as if making a toast.

PHILLIP: All you. All me. Pretty much sums us up. I would overreach and you would undertake. And we both knew it. It was like watching ourselves on television reruns.

Cooper bows ceremonially to Phillip.

Matthew sees Phillip raise his glass and approaches.

MATTHEW: Same again, Phil?

PHILLIP: Drink, yes. Anything else, not so much.

Matthew returns to the bar and makes drink.

Phillip returns to the table.

PHILLIP: *Wistfully.*
We knew each other for more than fifty years. Unbelievable, fifty years now.
To Cooper.
Where'd they go?

Phillip picks up the pen as if he is going to sing again.

COOPER: *Grimaces.*
Oh no, not again.

PHILLIP: *Singing, this time Bob Seger.*
 "I sit and I wonder sometimes where they've gone."

COOPER: Enough already. Shouldn't you be writing my song - my swan song if you will?
 Isn't that why we're here?

PHILLIP: That's why I'm here. How did you find this place anyway?

COOPER: Oh, I just followed the trail of empty gin bottles.
 Points at Phillip's drink.

Phillip scowls as he finishes his drink and studies his notebook. He taps his pen on the table again and shakes his head.

PHILLIP: *To himself.*
 I need to say something ...
 Hesitates. Looks at Cooper.
 ... about you.
 About who you really were.

Cooper gestures his agreement.

COOPER: Exactly. It is not a resume of my life. It's the letter of recommendation. It is a eulogy after all.

PHILLIP: But we don't need just some tearful, watered down version of what other people assume you were. We need ... I need ...

Phillip becomes frustrated and closes his notebook. He looks at his empty glass and calls to Matthew.

PHILLIP: Save yourself a trip, Matthew. I'll come and get it.

Phillip picks up his empty glass and walks to the bar. He sits at the elbow of the bar and sets his glass down in front of him.

Cooper sits at the table where Phillip was sitting and opens the notebook. He pushes his glasses up onto his forehead, lifts the notebook to his face. He shakes his head as he reads.

Matthew removes the empty glass and places a new drink in front of Phillip. He moves to the back end of bar.

Cooper sets the notebook back down and puts his glasses back on. He walks over to the bar and takes Matthew's place behind the bar. He nods at the man at the end of the bar.

Couple at the bar look over at Phillip.

Phillip nods at them.

PHILLIP: I apologize if my behavior over there bothered you. I got a little carried away.

KATE: Not really. In fact, it was kind of entertaining.

PHILLIP: Well, I'm glad someone found it amusing.

Phillip looks at the audience expectantly. Cooper follows his gaze.

COOPER: More embarrassing than amusing, I am afraid, old man.

BILL: I take it you lost a friend recently.

PHILLIP: Can't lose what you never had.

Cooper looks at Phillip indignantly.

PHILLIP: *Continuing.*

No, sorry, that's not right. Yes, his name was, I mean is, Coop - Cooper - and we knew each other since college.

COOPER: Did we really know each other?

KATE: Sorry for your loss.

COOPER: His loss?

Gestures around him.

What about me?

Man nods his head in agreement.

PHILLIP: Thanks. It is what it is.

BILL: *Emphatically.*

Excuse me, but what does that even mean? It is what it is. It's like saying $A=A$ or $1=1$.

Raises his arms.

A tautology of elementary proportions.

KATE: You have to excuse him. He's a philosophy teacher.

COOPER: Popeye the Sailor says, "I am what I am." Does that make him a philosopher?

PHILLIP: I guess I'd say that it means acceptance.

BILL: But if it is acceptance then it is for the wrong reasons. You are saying that things cannot be changed. That you are closing the book. That you do not care enough to do something. It is an incredibly negative mindset. It is the equivalent of a verbal shrug.

KATE: *Touches Bill's arm.*
The man is just trying to come to terms with the death of his friend.

PHILLIP: No, he's right.
Looks at Bill.
To say "it is what it is" doesn't help explain a situation, doesn't help us understand it, and certainly doesn't call us to action.

BILL: Yes, but more than that ...
Pauses.
... those words promote a life view that discourages upholding personal responsibility. It means that you lack the resources, knowledge, or ability to act.

PHILLIP: Well, I don't know about all that. I do know that I care enough to write his eulogy. And to present it at his memorial service. I hope that I can share in words some experiences that were valuable to me. You might say that I will make what it is more than what it is.

BILL: *Nods.*
Perfect.
Finishes his drink.

COOPER: *Steps toward the audience.*
So, I guess that it is what it is until it was what it was.
Shrugs and returns to bar.

Kate and Bill stand up to leave.

KATE: *To Phillip.*
Again, our condolences. Take care.

BILL: *To Phillip.*
Well, hang in there.
Nods to Matthew.
Be seeing you, Matthew.

Matthew nods back.

MATTHEW: Until next time, folks.

Kate and Bill leave the bar. Cooper waves at them and takes one of their seats.

Matthew leans on the bar in front of Phillip.

MATTHEW: So, you said something about a eulogy. Is that like a speech you'd make at a funeral?

PHILLIP: Whatever it is, no, I don't like it.

Cooper shakes his head.

COOPER: Not true, you hypocrite. You love it.

MATTHEW: If you met in college, that's a long time ago. You could say that you grew old together.

PHILLIP: I don't like that expression. Growing old. I like to say that we made it to the Metallic Age. We had lead in our shoes, silver in our hair and gold in our teeth.

COOPER: Anyway, age is a question of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.

MATTHEW: And you stayed friends all these years?

PHILLIP: That's just it. We joked about being friends. We acted like we were. But I really don't know if we were or not. Every time we used the word, we mocked ourselves.

COOPER: You think too much, grasshopper, you always did.
Turns to the audience.
I always told him that his thinking kept him from ...
Makes air quotes.
... being "all that he could be."

PHILLIP: *Stares at his drink.*
We mocked ourselves. And we mocked everything else, too.
Pauses.
But can I mock this?

Cooper stands and puts his hands on his hips.

COOPER: You can and you should.

PHILLIP: *Turns to Cooper.*
Oh sure, easy for you to say. You won't be there to hear it. Or will you?

Cooper glances at the audience and shrugs.

Matthew looks at Phillip puzzled. He points to the open notebook that Phillip has left on the table.

MATTHEW: So, what have you got so far?

COOPER: Not much, if you ask me.

Phillip rubs his forehead and leans forward on the bar. He turns his glass slowly before taking a sip of his drink.

PHILLIP: Like I said, I was his big brother in our college fraternity. I don't really know why he picked me or even if he did. It may have been assigned. Or maybe he just didn't care or that he knew it didn't matter.
Sips drink.
That was our mantra: it doesn't matter.

COOPER: Or maybe that time it did matter.
Raises his hands palms up.
Now you will never know.

PHILLIP: Life is empty and meaningless, we said. All meaning is self-created, we said. So, we created our own meaning. Or not.
Picks up glass and turns cocktail napkin over.
We spent countless hours over the years – not only at a pool table...
Points to pool table.
... but also sitting at cribbage or scrabble boards - considering the proposition that the way to cope with the desire for meaning in an empty pointless universe is to recognize how absurd it is that we exist in an empty pointless universe and yet still desire meaning.

COOPER: Say that twice fast, grasshopper.

MATTHEW: *Doubtfully.*
So, it sounds like you at least had something in common.

Phillip looks at Cooper and shakes his head.

PHILLIP: *Indignantly.*
Oh, believe me, there was nothing common about either one of us.
Sips his drink.

COOPER: Again, with the wordplay.
Turns toward the audience.
I hope he comes up with good zingers like that to put in my eulogy. It will keep people ...
Gestures to the audience.

... the few that will be there anyway - from falling asleep.

PHILLIP: You know, after four years of college life, he was the only fraternity brother who I kept in contact with. We traveled together a couple of times, even climbed a mountain.

COOPER: *Clarifying.*
A very small mountain.

PHILLIP: We worked for the same company, more than one actually, and were part of each other's wedding. In addition to long telephone conversations, for a period of time we also had a lively exchange of letters.

MATTHEW: That sounds like a lot of material to work with.

PHILLIP: *Pensively.*
I guess it does. But, you know, when it comes down to it - his eulogy I mean - it's not what I say about him but what he'd say about himself.

COOPER: That is true, grasshopper. But we ...
Gestures to the audience again.
... want to hear what you will say, or at least what you want to say about me.

Phillip pauses, takes a drink, and looks at the audience.

PHILLIP: *Emphatically.*
What he would say is that he lived a life that had no meaning with a high degree of ethical consistency.

COOPER: Not only would I say that, but I did say that. Thanks for remembering.

MATTHEW: Are you going to use that?

Phillip scratches his head.

PHILLIP: I'm not sure. Not having meaning was a given for both of us. I just don't know if that's what should be in his eulogy.

COOPER: Keep on keeping on, grasshopper.

PHILLIP: He called himself a fisherman of thoughts. Sometimes he caught a good one - an idea, insight, observation. Other times he might have come home empty handed. Either way he considered his life to be a good fishing trip. Mostly, he practiced "catch and release." He believed that he didn't need to keep an idea for it to have value, so he would let it go.

MATTHEW: You write any of that down?

Phillip walks over to table, picks up the notebook and stares at it.

PHILLIP: So far, I've got that people - everybody really - liked him. Even though he would say that he didn't much care whether they did or not and that it didn't much matter to him anyway.

Cooper turns to the audience and grins broadly.

COOPER: I think that he may be getting the hang of this.

Phillip puts notebook on table and walks back to the bar.

PHILLIP: For me, it's like Sartre said, "hell is other people." For him, though, other people were a walk in the park. He was strolling through life, really. Some people would come up to him, some he would acknowledge, others would gaze upon him or he would gaze upon them as he kept walking. It was so easy, so natural for him. It was ...
Looks up and into the distance.
... without purpose.

Cooper looks in the same direction as Phillip is looking.

COOPER: Ah, yes. A beautiful thing.

PHILLIP: One way to picture this is the line from our favorite literary suicide, Richard Cory - the poem not the song:

Cooper lowers his head as Phillip recites with a flourish.

COOPER: Like I said, a beautiful thing.

PHILLIP: "And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked.
But still he fluttered pulses when he said, 'Good morning,'
and he glittered when he walked."

Phillip and Cooper both nod their heads solemnly.

Phillip takes a sip of his drink. They sit quietly, lost in thought.

COOPER: Why do any of us do one thing over another and why do we derive pleasure from one activity over another. I call it the diversity of human perversity.

Phillip looks at Cooper and then back at Matthew.

MATTHEW: *Attempting to be helpful.*
So, how about something he did specifically for you?

PHILLIP: *With conviction.*
 He came to my defense once.

Cooper stands and steps toward Phillip.

COOPER: *Mocking.*
 Oh, this should be good.

MATTHEW: So, what happened?

PHILLIP: Once, somebody called me a misogynist, you know someone who hates all women. And Cooper said that I was not that kind of a person.

MATTHEW: *Sympathetically.*
 Nice.

Cooper turns to the audience.

COOPER: *Gleefully.*
 Wait for it.

PHILLIP: *Continuing.*
 Instead, he said that I was a misanthrope - someone who hates all people.

Cooper points to Phillip.

COOPER: Gotcha.
 Turns back to the audience.
 Am I good or what?

MATTHEW: Umm, maybe not so nice after all.

PHILLIP: Yes, not nice, but nicely put, I think. And not entirely wrong.

Matthew continues to listen to Phillip and offer helpful suggestions.

MATTHEW: So, are there any special moments you could talk about?

PHILLIP: That's kind of funny, actually. He once told me that it isn't the journey itself that is important but what one experiences on that journey - what he called the moments - of awareness, of wonder, of insight, of intimacy, of beauty. These are what mattered most to him - not the destination or the journey - of life or anything else.

COOPER: Yes, it is not the what or the where of the journey but the how. How we think and feel about it as we go through the motions.

Cooper looks at Phillip and holds out his hands.

COOPER: So how about we just remember the moments?

PHILLIP: Except that memory is more imagination than recollection.

COOPER: That happened to me all the time. I would think that I was remembering something and then realize that it never happened or that I saw it in on television or read about it.

PHILLIP: And our memories change, too. Each time you remember something, you are actually remembering the memory of it. Not the thing itself.

COOPER: All this gives a whole new meaning to the phrase “having a bad memory.”

PHILLIP: I have to take a pee.

Phillip looks at Matthew who points offstage. Phillip leaves.

Cooper watches Phillip leave. Then he steps forward and talks directly to the audience.

COOPER: You may have noticed that I called him grasshopper a couple of times. This is from the original television show Kung Fu where the master calls his student by that name, mostly by saying "Patience, grasshopper." It's how we mocked each other - well, mostly me mocking him - for still learning what I already knew. Interestingly, he had at least one nickname in college while I had none. I rarely called him by this made-up name. Mostly we didn't refer to each other at all, although we did call each other asshole a lot. Our past has always defined our present. But this ... *gestures* ... what you are seeing here, is an attempt to define our past in the present.

Cooper turns and starts to walk to the pool table, then stops part way and looks back at the audience.

COOPER: And, yes, he does drink too much. Always has.

Phillip returns.

Phillip picks up his drink from the bar.

MATTHEW: Do you need anything?

Phillip looks at his half full glass.

PHILLIP: No, I'm good.

MATTHEW: Okay, I'll be right back.

Matthew walks to the back of the bar.

Phillip returns to the table. He does not look in Cooper's direction at first, then glances at him.

PHILLIP: No getting rid of you, I guess.

Cooper shrugs and looks around.

COOPER: Really? I thought that was the point of all this.

PHILLIP: You know, of course, that I never expected "all this." I always figured that you would be the one writing a eulogy.

COOPER: Not this time, good buddy. So, get behind the mule and plow.

PHILLIP: *Pauses.*
Okay, so while heeding nature's call, I remembered another time that you saved my ass.

COOPER: *Gestures toward the audience.*
I am sure we'd all love to hear it.

PHILLIP: *To the audience.*
Many years after we graduated from college, he ...
Points at Cooper.
... and I went to our fraternity's 100th anniversary celebration. They had a social event at a nearby resort and a shuttle bus was our designated driver. Old friends, old times, old habits. I drank martinis like they were lemonade on a hot summer's day.

COOPER: A record that still stands, I believe.

Phillip gives Cooper an annoyed look and turns back to the audience.

PHILLIP: Anyway, on the way back to the fraternity house, I asked the bus driver to drop me off at an old haunt of mine downtown. Overdressed, under the influence, and with no way back. I was sitting at the bar, when Coop here showed up to return me to the safety of our shared brotherhood.

COOPER: *Sarcastically.*
What a guy I was.

Phillip turns to Cooper.

PHILLIP: But not before you made a few new friends among the bar patrons whom I had been ignoring - especially those of the female persuasion.

COOPER: *Laughs.*

You always were an excellent wing man.

PHILLIP: *To the audience.*
And then there was the time during final exams at college, he ...
Points at Cooper.
... and I appeared on the front page of the campus newspaper playing pinball in the student union during finals week instead of studying.

COOPER: *Nods his head in agreement.*
A defining moment indeed.

PHILLIP: Speaking of defining ourselves, one topic that we kept coming back to - for all of our years together - was the distinction between being a strategist versus being a purist.

COOPER: *With conviction.*
For sure, that has both set us apart and brought us together.

Phillip strokes his chin and looks away, as if trying to remember. He walks to pool table.

PHILLIP: You would say that I only cared about the means - doing things the right way - at least as I defined it.

COOPER: Like in scrabble, you were always looking to make the longest word – even though a three-letter word might score more points.

PHILLIP: *Puts both hands on the pool table.*
It may have started with playing pool or pool may have just been an illustration.

Cooper joins Phillip at pool table.

COOPER: Exactly. For you, purity in pool meant using the traditional or classic closed bridge.

Cooper picks up pool cue and demonstrates the closed bridge.

COOPER: *Continuing.*
While I cared about the ends - about doing what it took to win - and that was using the easier open bridge.

Cooper demonstrates the open bridge on the pool table.

Phillip leans on the table and looks at Cooper defiantly.

PHILLIP: Emphasis on "easier," if you please.

Cooper puts the pool cue down on pool table and looks across the table at Phillip and gestures emphatically.

COOPER: But more than that, for you, strategy was the antithesis of purity. You couldn't be both. So, you chose your purity and lost to me almost all the time. You had your honor but did not win any honors.

Phillip folds his arms.

PHILLIP: *Defiantly.*
Form over results. Fashion over utility.

COOPER: Yes, but you have been only about means not end. In a competition, the goal is the end, not the means.

PHILLIP: Yes, we had fun with the comparisons, but it was a very real difference between us.

COOPER: I always wondered if it was just a cop out on your part, a defense mechanism, if you will. If you lost - when you lost - you could claim it was because you lost to a strategist. Not to someone like you, who was playing for the sake of the game itself, but to someone like me, who was playing to win. Which was the reason for playing in the first place.

Phillip picks up his drink from the table, takes a sip, and turns back to Cooper with drink still in his hand.

PHILLIP: For you, maybe.

COOPER: For everybody.

Phillip and Cooper both sit down at high top table.

PHILLIP: Another difference between us was the value I placed on consciousness. For me, as Socrates said, "the unexamined life is not worth living."

COOPER: Didn't he say that at his trial where he was sentenced to death?

PHILLIP: Yes, he chose death over exile. And for him, an unexamined life was one without philosophy or the study of wisdom.

COOPER: I think that he also said that he knew that he knew nothing.

PHILLIP: That was after the Oracle at Delphi called him the wisest man in Athens. Socrates then said that nobody knew anything, and that he was only wiser than others because he was the only person who recognized his own ignorance.

COOPER: Anyway, I would argue that the overly examined life is also a waste of time.

Phillip takes another sip of his drink.

PHILLIP: And I believe that I am the center of my universe and that without my consciousness the universe ends. Without me nothing exists. When Descartes wrote his famous statement, "I think therefore I am," he meant that he could be certain that he existed because he thinks.

COOPER: But for you, it is more like "I am, therefore I think."

PHILLIP: You, sir, may be the second wisest - as well as the most dead - person in this bar.

COOPER: *Animated.*

I, on the other hand, allowed myself the luxury of not thinking as much as thinking. Just doing. My love of sports - tennis, wrestling, basketball. They involved sweating and exertion without thought.

Points to Phillip.

You on the other hand kept thinking while playing. It got in your way. And not just in sports either.

PHILLIP: *Solemnly.*

Examined or not, your life was of your own making: an interesting man who lived an uninteresting life.

Phillip raises his glass as a toast to Cooper.

PHILLIP: A nobody that everyone remembers.

Cooper stands and bows.

COOPER: If it mattered, which it doesn't, I would be humbled by your words, which I am not.

PHILLIP: *Respectfully.*

But despite your self-mythology, your life was a full one, with real accomplishments. High school athlete of some renown. Attended a prestigious university where you were a member of several honor societies. Worked at several decent jobs, with considerable success. Got married and had a daughter. Put your daughter through college and then saw her on into marriage and her own successes.

COOPER: Just so you know, children are not something you put on your resume.

PHILLIP: Still, you liked to say that the people in your life transcended your worthless existence and that you did nothing for humanity and left no legacy.

COOPER: *Sarcastically.*
I said it better than that, but I will let it stand ...
Pauses and looks around.
... given my circumstances.

PHILLIP: And then, later in life, you did something I didn't see coming. You connected with a casting director and got into a couple of movies as an extra. You even had some lines of dialogue.

COOPER: *Gestures dismissively.*
A diversion.

PHILLIP: An amusement.

COOPER: A diversion.

PHILLIP: A distraction.

COOPER: A diversion.

PHILLIP: *With emphasis.*
You travelled to more than sixty countries across the globe - a year dedicated to yourself and your self-indulgences. You rarely spoke of it, except to say that it was something you did just for you and entirely by you.

Cooper shakes his head in agreement.

PHILLIP: You admitted that your wanderings had some adventures but that they were meaningless and why should anyone else care anyway.

COOPER: *Almost singing.*
Sweet, sweet memories are made of this.
Turns to the audience.
Sorry, I can carry a piano better than I can carry a tune.

Phillip sits at table and opens his notebook. He picks up the pen and taps it on table. He starts to write something and then stops.

PHILLIP: Our exchange of letters during that journey focused on you traveling physically from place to place while I travelled intellectually staying in one place.

COOPER: Well, I wouldn't call what you were doing travelling exactly. And, for the record, here we are again. Me moving on. You staying where you are. Must be some deeper meaning, huh?

PHILLIP: Speaking of meaning, one of your favorite literary references is Siddhartha, the Hermann Hesse novel, whose name means "he who has found the meaning of existence."

COOPER: *Interrupting.*
One of my many favorites, anyway.

PHILLIP: *Continuing.*
A wandering monk-like beggar, he learns that enlightenment only comes from within, not through teachers or worldly possessions. He learns to find meaning in simple moments, and gains self-awareness through introspection. He spends his final years by a river, a wise ferryman, a guide for both the river and the path to enlightenment.

COOPER: You make too much of it - as usual. Mostly I think I liked the simplicity of being a ferryman in an otherwise chaotic world. Sittin' on the dock of the bay, you might say.

PHILLIP: So, tell your Portugal story. It explains a lot.

Cooper turns to the audience. Phillip sets down his drink and watches with arms folded.

COOPER: When I was traveling in Portugal I stayed at a farmer's home. He had moved back home after a successful career and was happy just to plant some vegetables, make some wine and slaughter a chicken or two when guests came by. He had no internet, no television, no radio. His only communication with the world was the two-week-old newspapers that a friend delivered.

Cooper pauses to remember.

His explanation was simple. If I read the news, he said, I get upset. If I am not planning to do something about it, then why do I care what is happening? Keeping up with all the details of a world that is so far removed from me, he said, is an act of absurdity. What is the value of these irrelevant pieces of fact? I get up, plow my fields, pick my fruits and vegetables, water my garden, eat my meals, read a bit and then go to bed when I am ready. It is a simple life, he told me, but not a confused one.

Cooper looks at Phillip and nods.

PHILLIP: A big issue for us was our mutual disconnect between self-awareness and the awareness of others. Public persona versus real person, as we would say.

COOPER: You're right. I lived in my own world of "otherness" that was with me all my life. How others saw me is what I never understood. Yes, people liked me, but why? Certainly, I did not try to be liked.

PHILLIP: Over the years, I developed a theory about what we think about ourselves and what others think about us. Would you like to hear it?

Cooper cups his hands behind his ears.

COOPER: I'm all ears.

PHILLIP: Here's what I have come up with:
I am who I see myself to be is a reflection.
I am who others see me to be is a representation.
I am who I believe others see me to be is a delusion.
What do you think of my distinctions?

COOPER: You really want to hear my opinion?

PHILLIP: Of course, what are friends for?

COOPER: It's worthless.

PHILLIP: I know, but I still want to hear it.

COOPER: Your jokes aren't getting us anywhere.

PHILLIP: So, have you got something better?

COOPER: I do. Here's my new, improved version:
I am who I think I am is consciousness.
I am who others think I am is reputation.
I am who I think others think I am is delusion.

They walk around each other, as if examining each other.

PHILLIP: *Solemnly.*
As the years passed, the more we realized that we were not as special as we once thought we were. Perhaps it was the death of free will or the eventual discovery of our universal nothingness. It took us a lifetime ...
To Cooper.
... no offense ...

Cooper waves him off.

PHILLIP: *Continuing.*
... to appreciate and understand that everything we did, thought, and said amounts to a huge pile of irrelevant nothing.

Cooper turns to Phillip.

COOPER: But we lived it well, didn't we?

Cooper and Phillip look at each other and smile.

PHILLIP: Man, I'm going to miss these conversations.

COOPER: Me too. Me too.

Silence.

Both look forward to the audience.

PHILLIP: *Wistfully.*

If it's true that we all leave a legacy, that the world is different even in small ways for our having been in it.

Frustrated.

So, what then was your ...

Looks at Cooper.

... legacy?

Cooper shrugs.

COOPER: Not my thing, if you want to know the truth.

PHILLIP: How can his eulogy convey that the world has lost a being of heightened essence who will truly be missed?

COOPER: How about what Hemingway said: "There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow men. True nobility lies in being superior to yourself."

Phillip waves him away. Cooper shrugs again.

Phillip writes in the notebook. Stares at what he has written and crosses it out. He scribbles some more. He starts to pick up his drink but instead returns to his writing. He looks at Cooper, who is looking back at the entrance of the bar as if he is expecting someone.

The man at the back of the bar points to the door of the bar.

PHILLIP: *Distressed.*

What shall I say of him? What is there to say?

The door to the bar opens and closes as Reverend Shaw enters. She is dressed in a skirt and blouse with blazer-like jacket over her clerical collar. Her hair is tied back.

Matthew returns to the front of bar, nods his head at the new arrival and then at Phillip.

MATTHEW: *Calls to Phillip.*

Here is someone who may be able to help you.

Phillip turns and groans.

Cooper watches with interest. He looks at the man at the end of the bar and raises his hands.

MATTHEW: *Continuing to Phillip.*

Reverend Shaw is the minister at the church around the corner. Kind of a regular here. She comes in every night for a glass of wine. She may be able to provide some professional help, so to speak.

PHILLIP: *Sarcastically.*

Religion? Now? At the end of life?

Reverend Shaw walks up to the bar. She ignores the man at the back of the bar.

Rev. SHAW: Good evening, Matthew.

Matthew puts a glass of wine in front of her.

MATTHEW: Good evening, Reverend. Save many souls today?

Reverend Shaw picks up her drink and takes a sip.

Rev. SHAW: Signed, sealed and delivered. Except for yours, that is.

MATTHEW: Isn't patience a virtue in your line of work?

Rev. SHAW: Down, boy.

Looks at Phillip.

What's happening here?

Matthew nods to Phillip sitting at his table hunched over his notebook.

MATTHEW: Our friend here ...

Gestures toward Phillip.

... is drinking his way through a eulogy for a dead college buddy.

PHILLIP: *Turns to Matthew.*

Easy now, tender may not be the night, but it is your job. Regardless, you can bring me another drink.

Matthew makes another drink.

Reverend Shaw picks up her wine glass, walks toward Phillip and sits at the open table.

Cooper walks to pool table and starts rolling the cue ball on the table.

Rev. SHAW: Good evening. Welcome to this little bit of heaven on earth - or at least in the neighborhood. I'm just here for a glass of wine before my evening prayers. But it is in my job description to see for the blind, hear for the deaf, think for the thoughtless, that kind of thing. If I can be of service, please let me know.

PHILLIP: I thought service was his ...
Gestures to Matthew.
... job.

Matthew walks over, puts a new drink in front of Phillip, looks conspiratorially at Reverend Shaw and moves to the back end of bar.
Cooper looks up from pool table.

COOPER: *To the audience.*
I'm staying out of this.
Looks around.
Given the sensitive nature of my situation.

Man nods in agreement.

PHILLIP: Anyway, I think between this ...
Holds up his drink.
... and that ...
Gestures to Cooper.
... I have all the help I need.

Cooper waves to Reverend Shaw.

Reverend Shaw looks in the direction of Cooper and then back to Phillip.

Rev. SHAW: It has been my experience that every time I have heard someone say those words it has not ended well.

Phillip pauses mid drink and waves his glass at her.

PHILLIP: Okay, mother superior or whatever, be my pipeline, maybe even my lifeline. What do I say in a eulogy?

Rev. SHAW: Ah, reflections on death.

She takes a sip of her wine.

Phillip puts his drink on the table and gestures with his hand for her to go on.

PHILLIP: And ...

Rev. SHAW: The dead do not hear the eulogy. Those are words that we speak to remember them - and perhaps to honor them. Those words are only for the living, the mourners, if you will.

COOPER: We'll see about that.

Rev. SHAW: It has been my experience that those words end up being mostly for the person saying them.

Pauses and sips her wine.

Which, I take it, in this case, is you.

Cooper rubs his hands together.

COOPER: Oh boy, now she's done it.

Phillip looks over at Cooper and frowns. Reverend Shaw again follows his gaze without reaction.

PHILLIP: My words, as you call them, are intended to honor him, not to distinguish me.

Rev. SHAW: So you say.

PHILLIP: So it is.

Caustically

And if you call me, my son, I will end this conversation immediately.

Rev. SHAW: *Calmly.*

Your eulogy is not yours. It is his.

COOPER: Not this time, anyway. But thank you, church lady.

Rev. SHAW: Your words may change how he is remembered but they certainly cannot change his life or his death. So, the words you choose now are not nearly as important as those you chose when he was alive.

Reverend Shaw watches Phillip intently as he looks down at his drink.

Rev. SHAW: If you don't mind my asking, is there anything that you regret that you said or didn't say to him?

COOPER: Check and mate.

PHILLIP: *As if thinking aloud.*

You know, I never thanked him for asking me to be his big brother in our college fraternity, whatever the reason was.

Pauses reflectively.
It changed my life in so many ways.

COOPER: Set and match.

PHILLIP: *Softly.*
It gave me a connection to others, an outlet for my thoughts, an affirmation of who I was - or at least who I thought I was.

COOPER: And I thought it was all about the parties.

Rev. SHAW: *Raises her glass to Phillip.*
There you are. I am sure that you will find it in your heart - or in your drinks ...
Nods toward his glass.
... to say what will bring comfort to your audience and to you. If you don't mind my asking, how did he die?

PHILLIP: *Stares into his drink.*
He died answering my call.
Pauses.
Literally, tragically, ironically.

COOPER: A bit melodramatic, don't you think?

Rev. SHAW: You mean literally literally, I presume.

PHILLIP: *Continues to stare into his drink.*
Yes, I do. You see, I never called him. Never. Not in the 50 years since college. He always called me.

COOPER: That's true. For him, communication was a one-way street.

PHILLIP: A dead end.

COOPER: A cul de sac.

PHILLIP: A dead end.

PHILLIP: But just that one time, I called him.
Looks up at Reverend Shaw.
He was on one of his long daily walks, saw it was me calling, tried to answer the call, and was sent down an embankment by a car - whose driver, it turns out, was also on his phone.

Rev. SHAW: Again, if you don't mind, why were you calling?

Phillip stares into his drink again. Picks up the glass and takes a full swallow.

PHILLIP: To tell him that I had just been diagnosed with late-stage prostate cancer.

Cooper stiffens. He gets up and walks around shaking his head and rubbing the back of his neck.

COOPER: Now that I did not know.

PHILLIP: *Sighs.*

So, my potential death sentence caused his actual death. I didn't leave a message - in case you were going to ask if I minded.

Takes another long sip of his drink and continues under his breath.

Causa latet vis est notissima.

Rev. SHAW: I recognize that bit of Latin from the seminary. The cause is hidden but the result is well known.

PHILLIP: It was our fraternity's motto. Prophetic, don't you think?

Phillip finishes his drink and gestures to Matthew for another.

COOPER: *Sarcastically.*

Except that it only took more than fifty years to make any sense to us.

Rev. SHAW: You have much to deal with, not the least of which is to say goodbye to your friend.

Reverend Shaw takes a sip of wine.

PHILLIP: Oh, I get that I must say goodbye. But when exactly?

Rev. SHAW: *Nods in Cooper's direction.*
You mean now or later?

PHILLIP: *Gasps.*

You can see him too?

Rev. SHAW: No, but I can sense that you do see and hear him.

Cooper puts his hands on his hips.

COOPER: *Haughtily*

It's nice to be noticed.

PHILLIP: Is he like in limbo? You know, between life and death?

Matthew brings Phillip another drink and takes away the empty glass.

Rev. SHAW: Most likely, he's here not because of his relationship to God but because of his relationship with you.

PHILLIP: *Puzzled.*
How's that?

COOPER: How's what?

Rev. SHAW: Protestantism doesn't recognize the concept of limbo. In medieval Catholic theology, it referred to the place between heaven and hell where souls who, though not condemned to punishment, were deprived of the joy of eternal existence with God in heaven.

Phillip sips his new drink. He looks at the liquid in the glass and sips again.

PHILLIP: Sorry to make you work so hard on your time off.

Rev. SHAW: The important thing ...
Sips her wine.
... is not what my religion or any religion tells you. Your friend is here for a reason. My guess is that it is the eulogy you are writing about him. He wants you to get it right - for him and for you.

COOPER: *Raises his fist.*
Bingo, bango, bongo.

PHILLIP: *Looks to Cooper and then back at Reverend Shaw.*
You know, the chapters of our college fraternity had Greek letter designations, assigned in order of their founding, but no chapter was designated Omega, the last letter of the Greek alphabet. Instead, when a brother passes away, we say that he enters the Omega Chapter, where he will be a brother forever.

COOPER: And so I am.

Rev. SHAW: I have also heard it called The Chapter Eternal. It is a way for organizations to recognize and honor the impact that the deceased have had on our lives.

PHILLIP: *Looks at Cooper.*
I wonder...
To Reverend Shaw.
Excuse me for a minute.

Phillip stands and stares intently at Cooper.

COOPER: Hey, I'm supposed to be the spooky one here.

PHILLIP: I know that we used to make fun of the idea of "omega," the final chapter as it were. But now here you are - a full-fledged member.

COOPER: I don't know about the full-fledged part, but it seems that I am. I guess you were right after all. We do "mock the things we are to be."

PHILLIP: *Pauses.*
Regardless, I think that we should mark your acceptance into this sacred chapter by exchanging our fraternity's ceremonial handshake. This time, however, instead of just mocking it, let's give it some serious meaning - finally.
Holds out his hand.
Shall we?

COOPER: This kind of stuff always meant more to you than to me. But, yes, let's do it.

Cooper reaches his right hand toward Phillip and takes Phillip 's outstretched hand.

Phillip puts his left hand over their joined hands.

PHILLIP: When I join you in that chapter, maybe this time I will be your little brother.

COOPER: Yes, I would like that. When that happens.

PHILLIP: Thanks for showing up. Here and now.

COOPER: Of course. I'm sure that you would do the same.

They end their handshake.

Cooper stares at his hand and returns it to his side.

Phillip takes his right hand into his left as if to feel again what he just felt. He walks back to his table, looking at his hand. He sits and looks at Reverend Shaw.

Rev. SHAW: May you find strength and peace. You are lucky - I won't say blessed - to have this opportunity to pay tribute to your friend.

COOPER: About time, too, if you ask me. Which you aren't.

Rev. SHAW: If it will help, I will say a prayer for you ...
Nods to Cooper.
... both of you. I know it will help me. Good night.

Reverend Shaw finishes her wine, stands, waves at Matthew.

Rev. SHAW: Good night and God bless, Matthew.

Matthew waves back.

MATTHEW: Same to you, ma'am.

Reverend Shaw leaves the bar.

Matthew cleans up the table where Reverend Shaw was sitting.

MATTHEW: *To Phillip.*
So, was she any help?

Phillip looks down at his notebook. He picks up his glass to drink but sets it down again. Then he picks up his pen and begins to write with urgency. After a few moments he sits back and puts down his pen.

PHILLIP: It's not Beckett, but it's not nothing either.

Phillip stands, walks to front of stage and faces the audience.

Cooper walks to the front of the stage and faces Phillip.

Spotlights on each.

PHILLIP: *Reads from his notebook.*
I know he wasn't afraid of where he was going
and I'm sure he wasn't ashamed of where he had been.
He may have paid a little piece of his soul
for every seed that he sowed along the way,
but he made his own rules for both love and friends
and in the end that's all that mattered to him - and to me.
Turns to Cooper.
Goodbye, my friend.

Stage left slowly goes dark. Spotlight stays on Phillip standing alone on stage, looking into the emptiness of stage left.

Lights fade to black.

*"ESTRAGON: I sometimes wonder if we wouldn't have been better off alone,
each one for himself. We weren't made for the same road.*

VLADIMIR: It's not certain.

ESTRAGON: No, nothing is certain."

— Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot

ACT TWO

SCENE

Same bar. Same pool table. Another time.

The elderly man sitting at the end of the bar is now wearing a Los Angeles Angels baseball cap.

The couple is now sitting at one of the high-top tables with drinks in front of them.

Cooper enters the bar. He is in his later years, has a full head of grey hair, wears eyeglasses and has an athletic build. He is carefree and animated.

He looks around and walks toward the bar. He takes a seat at the corner of the bar closest to the audience.

Matthew, the bartender, approaches him.

COOPER: What kind of bourbon do you have?

Matthew holds out his hand.

MATTHEW: First things first. My name is Matthew.

Cooper looks quizzically at Matthew and shakes his hand.

COOPER: I'm Coop.

MATTHEW: Pleased to meet you, Coop.

Here's a list of our spirits ... *winking* ... at least the ones in bottles.

Matthew puts a cocktail list on the bar in front of Cooper.

Copper pushes his glasses on to his forehead and looks closely – his nose against the paper - at the cocktail list.

COOPER: You have a good selection. Top shelf, too. I will have Angel's Envy - one large cube, please.

MATTHEW: You got it.

Matthew makes drink.

VOICE: *Offstage.*
It's the night before your big speech and you're tasting bourbons. Why am I not surprised?

Cooper puts his glasses back on and turns to the voice.

COOPER: You again?

Phillip enters the bar.

Phillip is about the same age as Cooper, and well groomed. His hair is streaked with grey. He appears distinguished - or at least respectable. He seems tense and anxious.

Phillip looks around, waves at the man at the end of the bar who tips his cap. He walks to the pool table, touches the felt, and looks back at Cooper.

PHILLIP: When life has no value, then death has no meaning.

COOPER: Life, death. What's the difference?

PHILLIP: Well, for starters, only you can hear or see me.

Cooper turns back to the bar. Matthew places a drink in front of Cooper.

MATTHEW: Enjoy.

COOPER: Oh, I will. I will.

Matthew busies himself in the middle of the bar.

Phillip walks toward Cooper.

PHILLIP: *Eagerly.*
So, is it done? Is it in your pocket? What words did you choose?

Cooper leans on the bar as he turns to Phillip.

COOPER: Does it never end?

PHILLIP: Oh, believe me, it has ended, my friend.

COOPER: Couldn't stay away, could you?

PHILLIP: No way. What are friends for?

Phillip looks at Matthew at the bar.

PHILLIP: Did Matthew make you shake his hand before taking your order? First things first, as he likes to say.

COOPER: Yes, he did. What was that all about? Kinda creepy, if you ask me.

PHILLIP: First, no one is asking you. Especially me. And second, that's just for newcomers. If you ever come in again, he will remember your name.

COOPER: *Doubtfully.*
Good to know.... I guess.

PHILLIP: Anyway, I wouldn't have missed this for the ...well, I couldn't miss it. I am on a sort of mission. *Glances at man at end of bar.* But please, pretend I'm not here. *Walks back to pool table and picks up the cue ball.*
Just like you always did.

Cooper nods, picks up his drink and walks to the empty high-top table. He sits and turns and smiles to the couple at the neighboring table.

They look over at him and nod in welcome.

Phillip picks up a cue and pretends to take a shot.

COOPER: *To couple, in a friendly tone.*
This is my first time in this place, but everything seems so familiar. And so do you.

KATE: Well, welcome. We do come here quite often.

COOPER: I came here tonight because someone I knew had mentioned the place a long time ago and I never managed to get here. I thought that this would be the right time to show up.

Cooper raises his glass and smirks in the direction of Phillip.

Phillip throws his hands up and casts an annoyed look at Cooper.

PHILLIP: *Frustrated.*
And so it begins.

BILL: Sounds like you are paying a debt.

Cooper swirls the bourbon in his glass.

COOPER: Yes ...
 Sips his drink.
 ... you could say that.

Phillip walks over and leans on the table where the couple is sitting and looks longingly at the drink in Cooper's hand.

KATE: And that sounds like there is a story behind all this.

COOPER: *Nods.*
 Oh, for sure, there is a story.
 Looks toward Phillip.
 There are always stories.

Phillip continues to cast an annoyed look at Cooper.

PHILLIP: I could say that too, but would you hear me? Did you ever really hear me?

COOPER: *Still to couple.*
 So, a college buddy of mine just died and he always wanted me to say something at his memorial service. I guess that I probably knew him better than anyone else did.

KATE: We're so sorry for your loss.

COOPER: Thanks, but what you should really be sorry for is that I have to come up with something to say about him.

BILL: You mean, you have to give the eulogy?

COOPER: Yes, that's what it's called. But truth be told I don't really know what a eulogy is supposed to be. Anyway ...
 Waves his hand.
 ... it doesn't matter.

Phillip turns abruptly to Cooper. He is still annoyed.

PHILLIP: My truth is what is being told. And for you what doesn't matter is anything that is not yours.

KATE: How long did you know him?

Cooper takes a sip of his drink as Phillip instinctively reaches out toward the glass.

COOPER: More than 50 years, actually. He - Phillip - was a year ahead of me in college and when I joined the same fraternity he became my big brother. Actually, we both went on to be the president of the house.

PHILLIP: Now that you mention it ...
Rubs his chin.
... the characters in Godot discuss how long they have been together. One says "I don't know. Fifty years maybe."

Phillip gestures to the audience pointing back and forth between Cooper and him.

BILL: So, you were in the same fraternity - and the rest is history, huh?

COOPER: You know, I'm not even sure how that happened. I always joked that the only reason I joined was because I thought that any fraternity that would accept someone like him had to have a place for me too.

PHILLIP: *Grumbles.*
Someone like me? Give me a break.

KATE: What about him? Do you know why he had joined?

COOPER: Not really. Maybe he was attracted by the pool table that was there.
Points to pool table.
He had played quite a bit in the pool halls in his hometown apparently. So he was probably more connected with that table in the house than with the brothers who lived there.

PHILLIP: I did love that table. I brushed it down pretty much every night. Like it was my favorite horse, really. And I got the house to buy a cover for it so people wouldn't spill drinks on it. Or worse. *Cringes.*

COOPER: Fraternities were Greek, of course, but ours had a Latin motto and he loved Latin, so I've always suspected that the motto somehow had attracted him.

PHILLIP: *Wistful.*
Ah, yes, Latin. In vino veritas.

COOPER: Veni. Vidi. Vinci.

PHILLIP: Non disputandum de gustibus.

KATE: Do you remember it? My husband ...
Nods at Bill.
... studied Latin. He might know it.

COOPER: I didn't pay as much attention to that kind of stuff as Phil did, but I think that the translation was something like: The cause is hidden but the result is well known.

BILL: I do know that one: Causa latet vis est notissima.

COOPER: That sounds about right.

PHILLIP: *Scowls at Cooper.*
More right than you know...
Sarcastically.
... grasshopper.

Bill signals to Matthew for another round.

Matthew prepares their drinks.

BILL: So how did you two become friends?

COOPER: We did not have that much in common really. Yes, we played a lot of pool.
Points to pool table.
And basketball. But I played bridge, he played hearts. I was a high school athlete, and he was not. I had girlfriends, him not so much. He drank way more than me.
Pauses and takes a sip of his drink.
What really brought us together - and kept us together over the years - was our way of thinking.

PHILLIP: Is that what we were doing?
Turns to the audience.
Go figure.

KATE: What do you mean?

COOPER: We both thought of ourselves differently than how the rest of the world saw us. And we saw the world differently, too. For example, when either of us found ourselves at odds with the world, we always took our own side. We were right and the rest of the world was wrong. It wasn't just confidence. It was certainty. For each of us.

BILL: In other words, you thought otherwise.

COOPER: Yes, exactly. We were seeking the real truth instead of the perceived truth.

PHILLIP: *To the audience. Impressed.*
Well, well. He may actually be able to pull off my eulogy after all.

Matthew serves drinks to the couple and puts a second drink in front of Cooper, without him asking for another.

Cooper acknowledges the new drink.

PHILLIP: *Gestures to the audience.*
See that. His highness gets a drink without asking for it. I would have to wave like a madman ...
Waves like a madman.
... to get served.

KATE: So obviously, the two of you had a real connection. In a eulogy aren't you supposed to tell your favorite stories about the deceased?

COOPER: We spent three years at the same university, never lived together and never took a class together. However, we did spend one fateful night at the campus library.

BILL: I am guessing that this is not one of your favorite stories.

COOPER: Not really. Coming home from the campus library, he was driving a carful of us back to the fraternity and skidded on some wet leaves crashing into a tree at the edge of the college's infamous gorge of death. A few feet either way and we all would have "gorged out." I went through the windshield. Spent the night in the infirmary. Almost lost sight in one eye. I still have the scar.

Cooper touches his forehead, making a point not to look at Phillip.

PHILLIP: *Looks into the audience. Emotionally.*
Man, I still miss that car. '67 Chevy Impala. Two tone, red and white. A real beauty.

KATE: But you must have many stories from all your years together. So how about one with a happier ending?

COOPER: He loved Beckett's Waiting for Godot. He saw the play about twenty times, whenever or wherever it was being performed, including a couple of times on Broadway, once in a farm field, and once performed by women.

PHILLIP: Contrary to Beckett's expressed wishes, by the way.

COOPER: *Ignores Cooper's interruption.*
Perhaps he identified with one of the characters, perhaps he loved the futile existential non-activity of it, or perhaps he too was waiting. But in his case, life did not imitate art, because unlike Godot, death actually showed up.

PHILLIP: *Turns to the audience and shrugs.*
Whatever - no more waiting for me.

COOPER: *To couple.*

But, yes, you're right.
Pauses to sip his drink.
There are lots of stories. Like how I got him jobs.

PHILLIP: *To the audience.*
I took employment more seriously than he did, so I didn't handle being unemployed very well. Maybe he saw that, or maybe he just wanted to fill the empty spaces in my life.

COOPER: One summer I was on the road selling portable toilets of all things. I let him spend a few weeks with me. Mostly for the company and to give him something to do.

PHILLIP: *Back to Cooper.*
You, me and the toilets. What a blast.

COOPER: Sometime later he and I both ended up in New York City. He was looking for work and I was wearing a shirt and tie for one of the few times in my life, working for a headhunter firm. I added "distributor" to his job history based on his toilet time with me and - voila - the term matched an open position in the garment district.

PHILLIP: And I got the job, thank you very much.

COOPER: And then, several years later I had moved to Florida and had a job with a large corporation. Phil visited me and stayed in my apartment while I helped get him a job with that company, too.

PHILLIP: Not exactly luxury accommodation, I must say.

COOPER: And yet again, years after that, I was doing consultant work with a former coworker of ours - we called him Mr. T - and I was able to get Phil some assignments with him, too.

Cooper takes another sip of his drink.

PHILLIP: Don't leave out the important fact that in all these instances, I worked for each of those jobs long after you had left for other - or no - pursuits.

Phillip looks at Cooper in anticipation of what might be coming next.

KATE: I guess you could say that this eulogy will be helping him again to get to his next assignment.

Cooper looks into his drink and then over at Phillip.

COOPER: I don't know about that. But because of all these stories - and so many more - I am now his designated hitter and it is the bottom of the ninth with the bases loaded.

PHILLIP: Self-awareness does not become you.

COOPER: For example, there's how I was involved in some way in all of his relationships with the women in his life.

PHILLIP: Oh boy, here it comes

COOPER: At that job in Florida, for example, I introduced him to the woman he would marry and they would raise two sons together.

PHILLIP: And when we got divorced twenty-five years later, he didn't criticize or blame me, even though he said that he saw the end coming - even before the wedding.

COOPER: Somehow, I always seemed to call him when he was in the throes you might say. Almost like I knew something was happening.
Smiles.
Like I, too, could feel the earth move.

PHILLIP: *To the audience.*
He never met the last woman I was serious about, but he called me - out of the blue - as she and I were taking a day trip to Maine. I pulled into a rest area and took his call, while the woman I was then calling "the love of my life," waited patiently in the parking area. A few months later, even without her meeting him, the relationship was over.

COOPER: *Still to couple.*
But I honestly think that this eulogy should not be what I want to say about him but what he would want me to say about him.

BILL: *Curious.*
And what would he want you to say about him?

Cooper pauses and stares into his drink.

Phillip leans in to hear the answer.

COOPER: It's one of the big differences between us actually.
Takes a sip of his drink.
He wanted to be better than everybody else, while I wanted to be just enough of everybody so that I could be a nobody.

Phillip stands and strikes the pose of a Shakespearean actor.

PHILLIP: *To the audience.*
Me thinks he comes not to praise me but just to bury me.

COOPER: I don't mean that he was a snob or conceited in the way he acted. For him, his egotism wasn't just a self-opinion; it was a belief system.
Pauses.
Mostly, he believed that he was better than himself.

PHILLIP: Is that even possible?

COOPER: He thought he was a better pool player than he was, a better card player than he was, and especially that he was a better basketball player. He was good at all of these and other much more important things ...

PHILLIP: Thank you very much.

COOPER: ... but he lived his life as if he were, as he said many times ...
Makes air quotes.
... the best.

Phillip strikes another theatrical pose.

PHILLIP: *Still to the audience.*
By George, I think he's got it.

COOPER: As he aged, his regrets grew to outnumber his dreams. One after another those alternative lives fell away and his life became limited mostly just to what could – he might have said should - have happened in those dreams.

BILL: *Confused.*
Isn't the purpose of a eulogy to convey a sense of reverence and loss? What you're saying sounds more like a critical appraisal.

Phillip turns to the man and gestures.

PHILLIP: That's because you don't know who you're talking to. Wait, there's more.

COOPER: But that's what we did. You might say that's all we did. Certainly all we did well. And it's why I am sitting here now, talking about him. And why tomorrow I will stand in front of a room full of people and talk some more about him.

Phillip raises his fist and cheers.

PHILLIP: That's the ticket.

COOPER: Critical appraisal - of others, of ourselves, of life itself. In that regard, we were masters of the universe. At least our universe. So, I might not be able to say that I mourn his passing on, but I can certainly say that I remember his passing through.

Cooper looks at Phillip and reverently raises his glass.

PHILLIP: *Nods.*
We did have our moments.

Cooper takes a long drink from his glass. Phillip watches him intently.

KATE: What about including in his eulogy some of your friend's favorite things?

COOPER: Well, he liked to say that his three favorite things were a good martini, a good meal, and another good martini.

PHILLIP: *Singing.*
Those are a few of my favorite things.

COOPER: He gave that answer to a lady friend once. I think she was expecting to be on that list, maybe even at the top of it. She dumped him soon after.

PHILLIP: I blame the vermouth.

BILL: *Raises glass.*
Well, whatever you end up saying about him, may he rest in peace.

COOPER: See, I'm not even sure about that. Actually, he was probably already resting in life. And it is we who are at peace now.

PHILLIP: Enjoy it while you can.

Cooper picks up his glass to take a drink.

COOPER: But somehow, I have to celebrate his life without mourning his death ...
Sets his drink down with authority as Phillip winces.
And still, I have to tell the truth. But what is the truth? My impression? His presentation? What others thought? He's dead and I'm alive. Do we - the living - define him according to our own ...

Phillip looks at the audience and grins as he interrupts.

PHILLIP: Did he say divine? Now we're talking.

COOPER: *Ignores interruption.*
Instead of what we know - or I know - about him, perhaps what's more important is what we don't know.

KATE: As close as you were, it's hard to believe that you didn't know everything about each other.

COOPER: Oh no. Distance is what kept us close. And self-knowledge was its own reward. We had no need to share.

BILL: Well, it seems to me that a eulogy is exactly the time and place to share.

COOPER: *Pensively sips his drink.*
Speaking of time and place, he and I were children of the '60s. Freedom was in our faces all the time. In movies, music, politics, everywhere. My freedom - then and now - is doing pretty much what I want to do. His was pretty much not doing what he did not want to do.

Cooper turns to Phillip and waits for a response.

Phillip leans toward Cooper and nods.

PHILLIP: *Emphatically.*
"Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose."

Cooper continues to look at Phillip who smiles in satisfaction of a deed well done.

BILL: Well, good luck with ... whatever.

KATE: I'm sure you will do just fine.

Couple stand to leave. They wave to Matthew.

BILL: Good night, Matthew.

MATTHEW: Have a nice evening, folks. Thanks for stopping in.

Cooper nods and raises a glass to them as they leave. Phillip imitates him.

COOPER: Nice meeting you.

Kate and Bill walk to the door and leave the bar.

Matthew comes over and cleans their table. He nods at Cooper.

MATTHEW: Can I get you anything else?

COOPER: Words, if you have them.

MATTHEW: Sorry, I can't help you there. But if I think of something, I will let you know.

Matthew returns to the bar.

Cooper stands and looks at Phillip. He pushes his glasses up onto his forehead and squints into audience. Phillip takes a pair of reading glasses out of his pocket and does the same – pushes them onto his forehead and squints into audience. Cooper takes his glasses off and holds them up looking through the lenses. Phillip does the same. Cooper hands his glasses to Phillip who gives his glasses to Cooper. They each put on their new glasses. Cooper pushes the new glasses up onto his forehead and squints again. Phillip mimics him. They give each other back their original glasses and repeat the pantomime one more time.

They stand still and look at each other.

Cooper returns to the table and sits.

PHILLIP: Ahem, I'm waiting.

COOPER: Waiting for what?

PHILLIP: For a eulogy.

Cooper groans.

COOPER: *Changing the subject.*
You know, our friendship was a curious one. I wonder sometimes if it had no other purpose, no other reason, than to show us how utterly unlike we were.

PHILLIP: *Folds his arms.*
And utterly unlikely, too.

COOPER: Did we recognize ourselves in each other? Did we share the same truth?

PHILLIP: Or did we just end up in the same place at the same time?

COOPER: To be honest, a lot of things you said over the years, things you apparently found important or funny, I didn't get. You probably didn't really expect me to.
Pauses to think.
For example, I never understood why you participated in the anti-war movement in college ...
Agitated.
... You went to rallies, burned your draft card, marched and protested. For what? You didn't really give a shit about any of that.

Phillip remains standing with arms folded and lowers his head in thought.

PHILLIP: It's true. I wasn't just a child of the '60s. I was its victim.
Raises his head and looks at the audience.

I went to college to be a lawyer. I had studied Latin for four years in high school - wrote it and spoke it. By the end of my freshman year in college, however, I traded translations for demonstrations. Like so many others, I wanted to change the world ...

Pauses.

... or at least see it more clearly.

COOPER: This isn't our long-standing purist versus strategist argument. There is a difference between a purist and an idealist. An idealist is a strategist searching for a means to an end, but a purist is content with the means. You may have wanted to be an idealist, but your hold on yourself was too strong. You couldn't let go for some higher purpose. You were your own higher purpose.

PHILLIP: *Wistfully.*
Send in the clowns ...
Gestures to Cooper.
... Don't bother, they're here.

COOPER: *Turns to the audience.*
I always said that he was a spectator to life. Sitting in the stands, instead of being on the playing field. A watcher instead of a participant. Certainly not a competitor.
Turns to Phillip.
Maybe that's why you spent so many years in school. Two Master's degrees. PhD work. Was that so you could avoid engaging in the real world?

PHILLIP: Or maybe I just liked the homework.

COOPER: One of your literary influences - obsessions really - was Colin Wilson, author of The Outsider. I think you must have identified with the authors and characters in literature that Wilson presented as examples of people who were at odds with society. Those who had a sense of dislocation, and then had insightful moments of lucidity.

PHILLIP: Thank God for the cliff notes.

COOPER: No, really, you took all of life so personally. Because you believed that you were ill-suited for the world of everyday existence, of regular people and so-called bourgeois society.

Cooper takes a sip of his drink.

PHILLIP: *Remembering.*
I always said that I was not a part of anything but that I was apart from everything.

COOPER: Whatever. It's the delta between self-interpretation and external manifestations.

PHILLIP: You speak as if you are saying something and yet - as always – you are saying nothing. At least, not anything new.

Matthew returns to the front of the bar and calls to Cooper.

MATTHEW: Let me know if you need anything.

Cooper nods.

COOPER: I'm okay for now.

Matthew walks to the end of bar.

Cooper puts down his drink and turns to Phillip.

COOPER: Think about it. You were a good student... top of your high school class. Won scholarships and earned several college degrees, did research and published articles. You were married for 25 years, had two sons and stayed active and healthy. You were even a local celebrity of sorts ... elected to several public offices and served on lots of civic boards. That's a decent life resume, I would say.

PHILLIP: I always thought so.

COOPER: But were you happy?

PHILLIP: I did not think in those terms. Instead, as the Stoics believed, the first and most important thing we can do is take ownership of who we are and of the state of our lives. Only then can we become the people we want to be and find fulfillment and happiness in our lives.

Cooper scratches his chin.

COOPER: I guess I could use a line from one of our favorite references,
Richard Cory - the song not the poem ...
Pauses before reciting.
"He had the common touch.
And they were grateful for his patronage.
And they thanked him very much.
Oh, he surely must be happy with everything he's got."

Phillip and Cooper both nod their heads solemnly.

PHILLIP: Seems hard to dance to, though, if you ask me.

COOPER: *Ignores Phillip's comment.*
One might say that yours was an interesting life lived by an uninteresting man.

PHILLIP: *Sarcastically to the audience.*
I wonder where he heard that one.

COOPER: Actually, I think you were very interesting to yourself. I am guessing that some of your best interactions were with yourself. But you were never just lost in thought. Instead, I think, you found yourself when you were in some sort of creative consciousness. An intersection between the cosmic and human dimensions, between timelessness and time. This was your life-force, really.

PHILLIP: And it's not like the old joke - talking to someone who knows you best, someone you don't have to explain yourself to. Because for me, it wasn't really a conversation.

COOPER: *Looks directly at Phillip.*
I know. It was you. Not just you. Only you.

PHILLIP: *Raises an imaginary glass.*
Here's looking at me, kid.

COOPER: *Turns to the audience.*
He was asked once, after repeatedly declining the company of others, if he had ever found someone whose company he preferred to his own. Although offered as ridicule, he accepted this assessment as praise. I think that he liked what it said about him.

PHILLIP: *Solemnly.*
If drinking alone is the only thing I've ever done well, then my life had meaning. At least for me.

COOPER: *Looks at Phillip.*
You know that expression: if you are your own lawyer, you have a fool for a client. Well, just maybe, if you are your own best friend, then you are your own worst enemy.

PHILLIP: Oh, believe me, I know.

COOPER: For a man who was alone so much, however, I never knew you to be lonely.

PHILLIP: *Shrugs.*
Splendid isolation has its joys, but companionship has its pleasures.

COOPER: To be continued. I've got to hit the john.

Cooper looks to Matthew who points him offstage. He leaves the stage.

Phillip watches Cooper leave and then steps forward and talks directly to audience.

PHILLIP: Looking back, I don't remember any contact I had with him when he was a pledge in our fraternity, before I was informed that I would be his big brother. I must have, right, I just don't remember.
But the incident was sort of history repeating itself because a year earlier I had picked someone to be my big brother who was totally uninterested in and unsuited for the role. At the very least, however, he served as a role model for my drinking. Our man with the weak bladder ...
Points offstage.
... has a favorite self-defining moment, or at least a story he likes to tell. A woman he had just met once told him "You don't need anyone." He beams with pride when he tells that one.
For me, women were either missed opportunities or those that told me that I was "an acquired taste."

Cooper returns to his table, looks at Phillip, and takes a sip from his drink.

COOPER: Let's play a game, shall we?

PHILLIP: What did you have in mind?

COOPER: Rotten Tomatoes. Let's review each other as if we were movies. You go first.

PHILLIP: Okay, I would give you four out of five stars for audience approval - a lot of mindless action and low brow entertainment. But from a critical evaluation, only three stars since your narrative is uneven and the essence of your being has little merit.

COOPER: Hah, pretty good. I would give you three stars for audience approval since on the surface you pursued the mundane with some success - family, job and so forth - but with little entertainment value. And four stars for critical review since you attempted to maintain a social relevancy through your civic involvements and of course your commitment to Waiting For Godot.

PHILLIP: Not bad. Now let's review ourselves as movies. This time you go first.

COOPER: Let's see. Certainly mine has been an independent production with very little special effects. My supporting cast has had most of the best lines of dialogue. Most people say that they can't really figure out what the movie is about.

PHILLIP: My life as a movie would be called The Three Faces of Phil. It contained a standout performance by the lead actor whose character had several possible ways of being: One, he didn't really care about anything. Two, he cared that he didn't care about anything. And three, he really did care about everything. In other words, it's a fantasy.

COOPER: Or maybe a horror film.

They both laugh.

PHILLIP: One thing is for sure, though. We enjoyed making our movies much more than the people who had to watch them.

Cooper looks around as if he is a bit lost.

COOPER: Now what do we do?

PHILLIP: You mean while we wait?

COOPER: Wait? For what?

PHILLIP: My eulogy.

Cooper groans.

COOPER: Okay, how about this. Some people believe that the term “guru” comes from “gu” meaning darkness and “ru” meaning “light that dispels it” so a guru is the light that dispels the darkness. If so, then laughter might have been your guru. I have never met anyone who laughed harder and louder than you. Laughter is pure, egoless, even mindless. You could laugh with complete abandon and yet in the moments before and after you were your usual self-indulgent dark self.

PHILLIP: And you and I laughed at the same things, too. And at the same time. When I was on the phone with you, my family always knew who I was talking to. Because I laughed so much.

COOPER: I know. Same here.

PHILLIP: We laughed so much together that people felt we were leaving them out of some private joke. Instead, I think, the joke was on us. Or maybe we were the joke.

COOPER: Yes, but I laugh out of joy and you laughed out of despair. My joy is that nothing matters so I am free to enjoy it all. Because you understood that nothing matters you felt despair.

PHILLIP: Speaking of laughing at despair. I read something once - probably on a bathroom wall. Someone had written "In the Beginning There was Nothing, and the Lord said, Let there be Light. And there was Light. There was still Nothing...but you could see it better."

They look at each other and both laugh uproariously.

COOPER: Man, I'm going to miss these conversations.

PHILLIP: Me too. Me too.

COOPER: All of this is good stuff. For drinks beforehand or afterward, maybe, but not in the eulogy itself. But what does belong?
Tilts his head up and looks into the audience.
What to leave in? What to leave out?

He looks at Phillip, who is looking back at the entrance of the bar as if he is expecting someone.

The man at the back of the bar points to the door of the bar.

The door to the bar opens as Reverend Shaw enters. She is dressed in a skirt and blouse with blazer-like jacket over her clerical collar. Her hair is tied back.

Matthew waves at her as she walks up to the bar.

MATTHEW: Good evening, Ma'am. Is it that time already?

Reverend Shaw takes the seat at the front elbow of the bar.

Rev. SHAW: And none too soon, Mathew.

Matthew puts a glass of red wine in front of her.

MATTHEW: And how was your day?

Rev. SHAW: *Takes a sip of wine.*
What's the expression? As good as it gets.

MATTHEW: As you so often remind me ...
Holds his hands in prayer.
... doing our best is the best we can do.

Reverend Shaw glances toward Cooper, who is staring at the audience.

Rev. SHAW: Is something happening here?

MATTHEW: The fellow at the table is working on a eulogy for a buddy of his who just died. He may be in need of spiritual guidance.

Reverend Shaw nods, stands and carries her wine to the open table next to Cooper. She turns to Cooper and smiles pleasantly.

Rev. SHAW: Hello, sir. I have not seen you in our friendly establishment before.

Cooper looks over at Phillip and then at Reverend Shaw who follows his gaze.

Matthew brings a bowl of nuts to Reverend Shaw's table and turns to Cooper.

MATTHEW: Can I get you another?

COOPER: *Holds up glass.*
 I'm still good, thanks.

Matthew nods slightly to Reverend Shaw.

MATTHEW: This is Reverend Shaw, the pastor from the church around the corner. Maybe she can help you find those words that you're looking for.

Cooper smiles weakly and sips his drink.

Rev. SHAW: I hope you don't mind. Matthew likes to think of himself as my personal representative. But I am happy to be of service, if you'd like.

COOPER: Well, as Matthew probably told you. I have to speak at a memorial service for a college buddy of mine. His name was Phillip.

Phillip waves at Reverend Shaw.

PHILLIP: Actually, that's still my name.

COOPER: People call what I am writing a eulogy, but I see the exercise as just "remembrance of things past." Also, just so you know, there will be no religious aspect. He didn't want any and I wouldn't know how to do that stuff anyway.

Reverend Shaw sips her wine. As she sets down her glass and gazes at the audience.

Rev. SHAW: Doubt is a great deadener.

Phillip rubs his hands together.

PHILLIP: Oh, this is going to be good.

Cooper acknowledges Phillip with a smirk and responds to Reverend Shaw.

COOPER: You're kidding me, right? A popular line in Waiting For Godot just happens to be "habit is a great deadener." But, given your profession ...
 Points to her clerical collar.
 ... I guess that doesn't work for you.

Rev. SHAW: Ah, so you know Beckett? I studied him in graduate school. Most people aren't even aware of where that quote comes from let alone be bothered by my little word play.

COOPER: But I think that I am.

Rev. SHAW: Oh, really. I think too much is made of that quote. Did you know that Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act, but a habit."

COOPER: Crazy is as crazy does, I guess.

Rev. SHAW: So, you and your buddy, as you call him, were fans of Godot, then?

PHILLIP: More like fan-atics at least in my case.

Cooper gives Phillip a scolding look.

Reverend Shaw notices Cooper's interaction with Phillip without acknowledgement.

COOPER: Yes, we were, but Godot is not God. And nobody dies in the play.

Rev. SHAW: True. Still, the point remains that words matter - and not just the ones in that play. What you say in the eulogy matters - to you and for him. What doesn't matter is how many times you mention God or Jesus - or any other deity.

COOPER: The closest we ever really got to religion was quoting the famous Zen koan: "If you meet the Buddha, kill him."

Rev. SHAW: *Nods.*
Yes, I am familiar with that saying.

COOPER: For us, the meaning was that if we think that we have found all the answers in religion then we must look deeper and question the beliefs that we may have learned. And then we are supposed to return to the true Buddha that dwells within us.

PHILLIP: *Reverently.*
And what a role model he was. No one ever accused the Buddha of doing nothing while he sat under a tree - seemingly doing nothing.

COOPER: You know, my buddy did have some religious inclinations. He was a lay minister in his church. He even got ordained on the Internet. I called the organization the Ministry of the Matchbook Holy Rollers. But for him, I think, mostly he was his own religion.

Rev. SHAW: *Ignores this remark.*

And what matters most - what is really the point of what you are doing with his eulogy - is to put into words what you feel, what he meant to you, not what he meant to himself or to the world at large. And that will be religion enough to get him where he's going.

PHILLIP: *Sarcastically.*
Can I get an amen.

COOPER: This wouldn't be the first time he ...
Looks at Phillip.
... got somewhere because of me. But I guess this would be the last.

Reverend Shaw also looks toward Phillip.

Rev. SHAW: If you don't mind my asking, how did he die?

COOPER: In his sleep. Like he wanted to. But what's important is not so much how but why.

Rev. SHAW: Again, if you don't mind, what do you mean?

COOPER: I cannot help thinking that death came to him because he wanted it. Maybe he even willed it. Sort of an assisted suicide, if you will.

Rev. SHAW: In my line of work, that is not how death works.

COOPER: Maybe, but he told me in a telephone call a few days before he died that just before going to sleep at night, he would close his eyes and say aloud "It's okay." Like he was ready. Maybe he was expressing a wish or a hope.

Rev. SHAW: *Gazes upward.*
Or a prayer.

COOPER: Oh, I don't think he ever prayed.

Phillip puts hand to chin as if trying to remember.

Rev. SHAW: Prayer takes many forms. It's not just a petition to a higher power or as Beckett calls it in Godot - "a vague supplication." Prayer lifts us up not lowers us - even if it is sometimes done on our knees.

COOPER: He ...
Nods to Phillip.
... probably thought of prayer more as a conversation.

Phillip nods back at Cooper.

Rev. SHAW: Even so, what is important is with whom he was having that conversation. It wasn't you. It was God.

PHILLIP: Well, generally speaking.

COOPER: You know, he used to talk a lot about suicide. So much so, that he would refer to it only as "e" - the last letter of both of the words: suicide and goodbye. It was a sort of shorthand, or secret language, between us, really. If he wrote me a letter, he would end it not with his name but with "e" - just to let me know that the letter might be his last. It was like his death was defining his life.

PHILLIP: Or least the letters that I was writing to you.

Rev. SHAW: Hypothetically speaking, why would he want to end his life? Did he believe in a cause greater than himself?

PHILLIP: Is that even possible?

Cooper looks over to Phillip.

COOPER: Maybe the absurdity of life got the most of him. And he opted out of the rest of his life.

PHILLIP: *To the audience.*
For the characters in Godot, suicide was "a way to pass the time." It was also a way to prove that they existed. Killing themselves was an absurd response to an absurd reality. Plus, they believed it would give them an erection.
Pauses and winks.
A win, win if you ask me.

Rev. SHAW: Or maybe, for him, life had become less absurd. Were there any recent events, any health issues?

COOPER: Not that I knew of. But he did say that there was something he wanted to tell me. He never got the chance, so I guess I will never know what that was. I guess that does not matter now.

PHILLIP: *To Cooper.*
Or maybe that time did matter.

COOPER: Still, I keep thinking that - somehow - his life ended because he wanted it to. I honestly believe that he wanted to die before he got old - you know, like an athlete retiring in his prime.

PHILLIP: *To the audience.*
Did I want what I got? Did I get what I wanted?
Shrugs.

Rev. SHAW: *Nods toward Phillip.*
Is that why you think he is here now?

COOPER: *Stammers.*
How? Can you

Rev. SHAW: See him or hear him? No. But I can see and hear that you do.

COOPER: Is he a ghost? Lost between life and death?

PHILLIP: I beg your pardon.

Rev. SHAW: Neither if you ask me. Not a ghost and certainly not lost.

COOPER: But then what?

Rev. SHAW: Edgar Allen Poe wrote that "The boundaries which divide life from death are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where the one ends, and where the other begins?"

They both take a sip of their drinks.

Rev. SHAW: *Continues.*
Remember in A Christmas Carol, when Scrooge says to the spirit who visits him "there's more of gravy than of grave in you"? Well, whether imagined or dreamed or actually experienced, those spirits caused very real things to happen.

PHILLIP: Please do not compare me to fictional characters.

Rev. SHAW: I think he is here for you - for the eulogy you are going to give. I suggest that you honor his presence and not grieve his absence.

Cooper looks at Phillip.

COOPER: Couldn't let me do this by myself, huh?

PHILLIP: You weren't going to do it at all. Remember?

COOPER: *To Reverend Shaw again.*
He was the one who always enjoyed and excelled at words - written and spoken.
He called himself a word smith.

Rev. SHAW: So, let what is happening here - with him - inspire your words about his life here in this world with you.

PHILLIP: I'm worth it, good buddy.

COOPER: We played a lot of pool together, especially in college.

Looks over at pool table.

The pool room in our fraternity was where we shared our thoughts and exchanged ideas that would stay with us when we entered the larger world.

Sips drink.

You know, I just remembered, in our fraternity when a brother died, we would say that he entered the Omega Chapter, where he would be a brother forever.

Rev. SHAW: Ah, yes, the Chapter Eternal.

COOPER: *Looks at Phillip.*

I am going to try something.

To Reverend Shaw.

Excuse me for a minute.

Cooper stares intently at Phillip.

PHILLIP: Don't get too interested.

COOPER: Remember how we used to make fun of the idea of "omega?" We treated the end like a joke. Now here you are - a member of the final chapter.

PHILLIP: I guess so. I just hope that there's a pool table there.

COOPER: I would be fine with just a fist bump, but I was thinking that you might want to mark this occasion by exchanging our fraternity's ceremonial handshake.

Holds out his hand.

Shall we?

PHILLIP: Yes. And this time let's do the handshake properly, with some reverence.

Phillip reaches his right hand toward Cooper, and he takes Cooper's hand. Cooper puts his left hand over their joined hands.

COOPER: When my time comes and I join that chapter, maybe you will still be my big brother.

PHILLIP: When that happens. I wouldn't have it any other way.

COOPER: Thanks for showing up. Here and now.

PHILLIP: Of course. I'm sure that you would do the same.

They end their handshake.

Phillip looks at his hand and returns it to his side.

Cooper takes his right hand into his left as if to feel again what he just felt and returns to his table. He sits and looks at Reverend Shaw.

Rev. SHAW: Well, I will get out of your way. You - both of you ...

Nods to Phillip.

... have a lot to get to and through. Just remember - a eulogy is the tribute that is given to honor someone's life - not their death. If you keep that in mind, you will do just fine.

Finishes her wine.

If it will help, I will say a prayer for you - both of you.

Nods again to Phillip.

God knows it will help me. Good night.

Stands up to leave.

Good night, Matthew. See you tomorrow. God willing, of course.

MATTHEW: *Smiles.*

And the creek don't rise. Good night, ma'am. Thanks for stopping in.

Reverend Shaw leaves the bar through the door. She looks back at the man at the back of the bar who watches her leave.

Cooper remains seated at the table and watches her leave.

Phillip takes a few steps towards Cooper and rubs his hands together in anticipation.

PHILLIP: Okay, so now that you have God on your side, let's end the charade. I know you've got a piece of paper in your pocket. Let's see it.

Cooper remains seated, leans forward toward the audience.

COOPER: So, I could tell funny little stories, share some special moments. I could quote his favorite writers - of both words and music. I could quote himself. God knows I heard plenty.

PHILLIP: Got that right.

COOPER: But those would just be my memories of him. What about his legacy? What is still living because he lived? It's just possible that his greatest achievement is not doing what he knew he could have done. Maybe that's true for both of us.

PHILLIP: Maybe. But for you the result was not intentional.

COOPER: Not just the road less traveled, but the road not traveled.

PHILLIP: And now you're alone on that long lonesome highway, good buddy.

COOPER: *Turns to Phillip.*

Maybe instead of having flowers at the service we could give everybody a bobble head doll with your face on it.

PHILLIP: A nice gesture for sure. But you are avoiding the issue.

Cooper continues to ruminate.

COOPER: I never understood the expression that someone is gone before their time. Or gone too soon. Or that one's time has come.

Phillip looks at his wrist and taps an imaginary watch.

PHILLIP: *Impatient.*
Speaking of time. We're waiting.

COOPER: For your eulogy, I know.

PHILLIP: So, what have you got?

COOPER: *Turns to Phillip. Hesitates.*
So, no, I have nothing prepared.
Back to the audience.
But words must be said.
Pauses.
I am not sure what death meant to him other than the end of being him. To the rest of us it just means living without him, which is pretty much what we were doing anyway. Still ...
Another pause.
... words must be said.

Cooper stands, walks to the front of stage and faces the audience.

Phillip stands, walks to front of the stage and faces Cooper.

Spotlights on each.

COOPER: I have only this....
He was a friend of mine.
Whether his life had meaning or purpose is not for me to say.
But I knew him - perhaps more than anyone did or could -
and still ...
Laughs.
... he was a friend of mine.
And because of that, my life has been filled with remarkable conversations
and much laughter. It will certainly be a lot less interesting without
him.

*Turns to Phillip.
Goodbye, my friend.*

Stage left slowly goes dark. Spotlight stays on Cooper standing alone, looking into the emptiness of stage left.

Lights fade to black.

*"VLADIMIR: That passed the time.
ESTRAGON: It would have passed in any case.
VLADIMIR: Yes, but not so rapidly."
— Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot*

EPILOGUE

*"ESTRAGON: In the meantime, let us try and converse calmly,
since we are incapable of keeping silent.
VLADIMIR: You're right, we're inexhaustible."
— Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot*

SCENE

*Same bar. Another time.
Behind the bar, Matthew is wearing a black armband.
Kate and Bill sit at the middle of the bar.
The same solitary figure sits at the back of the bar. He is wearing a hat that says Let's Party and spinning a large gold coin on the bar in front of him.*

The door to the bar opens and closes as Reverend Shaw enters. She is dressed more formally, as if she is coming from a service. The man watches her as she walks up to the bar.

Matthew nods at her.

MATTHEW: Good evening, Reverend Shaw.

Rev. SHAW: *Nods.*
Good evening, Matthew.

Reverend Shaw sits at the front corner of the bar.

Matthew puts a glass of wine in front of her.

MATTHEW: Excellent service today, Ma'am. It's nice when one of our regulars gets recognized – honored really.

Rev. SHAW: Thank you.
Pauses. Looks upward.
Lord knows it was a tough one.

MATTHEW: Why is that?

Rev. SHAW: He may have been a regular to you, but he had always left by the time I would get here.
Pauses.
Except that once.

MATTHEW: You mean that night when he went all Beetlejuice on us, talking to the empty room and all.

Rev. SHAW: It was Beckett, my friend, not Beetlejuice. And the room wasn't empty to him. And maybe not at all.

The man nods in agreement.

KATE: We were here that night. You mean he died?

MATTHEW: Yes, the service was today.

BILL: He seemed like a man possessed, at least that night.

MATTHEW: He was writing something to say at his friend's memorial service - like a eulogy.

Rev. SHAW: Yes, he was struggling to write a eulogy. For his friend, which I presume he delivered as promised. But there wasn't one for him today. I guess their deal was only between themselves. Not to be disrespectful, but - at least in their case - dying first had its advantages.

KATE: Oh, that's too bad.

Rev. SHAW: I remember that night so clearly.
Glances upward.
He made a real connection with his friend.

BILL: Even though his friend was dead?

Rev. SHAW: Maybe because he was dead.

The man nods again.

Reverend Shaw takes a sip of wine and gazes at where she had sat and talked with Phillip.

Phillip and Cooper enter the bar together. They mimic the characters from Waiting For Godot as they greet each other.

PHILLIP: There you are again.

COOPER: There we are again.

TOGETHER: Here I am again.

PHILLIP: Together again at last.

They gesture to the man at the end of the bar who tips his hat. They walk to the pool table and turn its overhead light on. The rest of the bar goes dark.

COOPER: I believe, however, that we were ...
Makes air quotes.
... "together" for more than fifty years before this.

PHILLIP: None of that matters now.

COOPER: Is this more of your "nothing matters" shtick?

PHILLIP: Not at all. Don't you see, grasshopper? It all ends where it all began.
Gestures to pool table.

COOPER: *Unconvinced.*
I don't know about endings and beginnings, but I do know that we each have travelled many roads.

PHILLIP: And luckily for us most of them were paved.

COOPER: And ...
Looks around.
... they brought us here.

PHILLIP: If there are gods. *Looks at man at the end of the bar.* They certainly have been easy on us. So, why then were we so hard on ourselves?

Man looks up at the heavens and shakes his head.

COOPER: Speak for yourself.

PHILLIP: Faith is the acceptance of that which we imagine to be true, that which we cannot prove.

COOPER: A little late for that isn't it?

PHILLIP: Sometimes I think that - despite all the places that I have been and all the people whom I have met - I was always the same feckless fraternity brother we told stories about.

COOPER: Feckless?

PHILLIP: Yes, the state of being without feck.

COOPER: *Shakes his head.*
On a more serious note, it was a very nice service today.

PHILLIP: Ah, of course, you would have been there. It was lacking one very important element, though, don't you think?

COOPER: Well, as you know, I never wrote anything down for your eulogy so I had nothing to pass along to someone who could actually present it.

PHILLIP: Thanks for nothing, good buddy.

COOPER: Hey, nothing is my something. Always has been.

PHILLIP: You know, I did say some words at your service.

COOPER: Thank you for keeping your promise and saving my ass – for once - by staying alive longer than me.

PHILLIP: Staying alive may have been all I did.

COOPER: Ah, having some postmortem depression, are you?

PHILLIP: *Sighs.*
Wanting to not live is not the same as not wanting to live.

COOPER: You did it, didn't you? Died because you wanted to. Not unexpectedly like it says in so many obituaries. Maybe not expectantly, but certainly expectedly.

PHILLIP: There were so many things that I wanted to do in my life that I didn't do. Why would you think that I would be able to do that?

COOPER: You are right. Both living and not living were beyond you.

PHILLIP: *Pauses.*
It's too late to answer the why question, I suppose.

COOPER: Why us, you mean?

PHILLIP: Yes. Why us? We didn't share much, had little in common, and yet we connected in a bubble that we jokingly called friendship.

COOPER: Please continue, oh great wise one.

PHILLIP: I think that what connected us was that we each allowed the other to not change, to continue being ...
Makes air quotes.
... "the way we were." I believe that modern psychology calls it enabling.

COOPER: And that means that writing each other's eulogy was a way for us to describe that nexus to others.

PHILLIP: But mostly, I think, it reinforced our singularity, because the story we tell about ourselves is unique and unknown - at least to others.

COOPER: And there you have it. Or should I say, we have it.

PHILLIP: Looking back, I lived with too few dreams and died with too few memories. Not exactly eulogy material, huh?

COOPER: Me, I slept the sleep of dreamers, grasshopper, while others dreamed of sleep that was just that.

PHILLIP: *Looks around.*
Do you think that this is the last time we will get to do this?

COOPER: Actually, this is the last time we will get to do anything. The last time for all things.

COOPER: Either way, we have time for one more game of eight ball. I'll break.

They pick up the pool cues.

PHILLIP: Of course you will.

COOPER: Don't forget the rules.

PHILLIP: The rules?

COOPER: No singing. No farting. And ...

PHILLIP: Let's just play, okay?

The man who has been sitting alone at the back end of the bar pushes himself up noisily from his chair. He walks over to them and leans on the pool table under its overhead light.

MAN: You know, this is the third time you two guys have been here. And each time you talk some crazy nonsense about ...
Makes air quotes.
... "life, the universe and everything."
Reaches into his pocket.
Now, are you going to just shoot off your mouths or are you going to shoot some pool. Because I've got next game.
Puts large gold coin on the table.

Phillip and Cooper look at each other and smile.

Cooper sets up to break, using the table as his bridge. He pushes his glasses up onto his forehead. He looks over the top of his cue, past the end of the table, into the audience.

COOPER: *Laughs.*
Almost heaven.

Cooper breaks. All the balls scatter across the table except the black eight ball which never moves.

*"VLADIMIR: Well? Shall we go?
ESTRAGON: Yes, let's go."*
— Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot

END