

# **'The End is Dear'**

by Mark Stanley

## *Chapter 25: Dear Georgia*

*How I wish for some rain, but the rain was not mine, not just for me, it was ours to enjoy. We made an agreement, when the rain fell on our first dinner together, that the rain was ours. It would not symbolise misery and discontentment, but ambition and achievement. It would not profess a sense of foreboding, but a promise of everlasting fortune.*

*The rain was ours.*

*When I first saw you, it was a glimmering August day; not a drop fell, quite like this moment now, and near this very spot where I stand, unsteady and lost...*

\*\*\*

The home of Thomas Hayes was an ungodly behemoth, not due to any disgrace or heretical ugliness on its appearance. No, this house was not a profane insult to the holiness of nature and religion, but an insult to civilisation and all that was institutionalised.

The building exhibited architecture of the Victorian persuasion and also a bit of Tudor, medieval, some classical influence, with a slight peppering of modernity and almost a resemblance to that of an alpine chalet. One could not tell you how many floors it held, with seemingly countless disorganised stained-glass windows and hard oak, turret-like balconies weaving in unlevelled anarchy. Vines straggled the walls with wild grandeur while bushes, weeds and untamed grass reigned over the thorny gardens. The discord of this man's dwelling place was as much a caricature of he himself as it was a conscious rebellion against the picturesque perfection of the conservative neighbourhood it rooted itself upon.

Thomas Hayes: writer, romantic, preacher, poet, philosopher, philanthropist, prophet and playwright, showered with all the fame, fortune, deity-definition and dividends the literary world could offer him. And this home was his shrine to it all; it most definitely had the perplexity of a writer, the insubordination of a romantic, the statement of a preacher, the irony of a poet, the outrageousness of a philosopher, the magnificence of a philanthropist, the ambiguity of a prophet and, of course, the gaiety of a playwright.

In simpler terms, this man and his home were nothing but odd. Brilliant, but odd nonetheless.

Not a soul knew that, to a greater extent, than Thomas' good friend, a man truly opposite to the extravagant recluse, blonde-haired to Hayes' auburn, brown-eyed to Hayes's olive, plump to Hayes' slender, and clean-shaven to Hayes' tight, forest-like beardedness. The writer's passionate magnificence was in contrast to the relative passive and stoic nature of his friend, the man who knew him like no other yet barely knew him at all. That friend was Robert Smith, dubbed "Robert Smithers" by the flamboyant Thomas, as if to try and spice up their greetings.

Robert was often irritated by the restlessness of his friend, but then, Tom Hayes would do something, whether it was just something he said or an irregular emotion that would appear on his face that would revitalise the perplexing feeling of intoxication Robert held towards the man. It wasn't any sort of emotional attachment but merely an intrigue. The mind of Thomas Hayes' was like a drug; trying to unearth his thoughts and motivations was an impossible yet enthralling task. In a manner not dissimilar to the decapitation of the mythical Hydra, with every pondered query regarding that brain, two more would sprout in its place in an endless multiplication of confusion. Despite this, Robert was hooked.

With nearly every new day for the last several years he would visit the writer to see what new insight he could uncover. However, as the years went on and Hayes' career began to fade and it seemed, even though only thirty-eight, his prime years were behind him, Robert began to visit more due to the fondness he held for him, and that feeling was certainly mutual between the two.

This August day was like all other days. Robert traversed the untamed gardens, reached the grand oak door and rattled it with a knock, a knock and another knock. But instead of the usual clamour he would hear as Thomas wrestled towards the door to let him in, he didn't hear a thing. He waited a few moments then shook the door once again with his knuckles... not a sound. He waited another several seconds until he impatiently began to fiddle with the handle to see if it was unlocked, to his surprise it was. Thomas, being a paranoid man, would always insist the door was to be kept locked and would ensure it would remain so after anyone entered or left.

Robert, feeling somewhat like an intruder, entered the home and passed through the entrance hall, making a knowing effort to make as much noise as he could with his footsteps in order to not alert Thomas if he suddenly rounded a corner on him.

The walls of the corridors displayed the many achievements of their owner. Esteemed novels authored by Hayes stood proudly on the shelves, pictures of him shaking palms with popes and presidents, and framed, award-winning poems, many of them subtitled with the familiar “Dear Georgia” synonymous with Thomas’ work.

Robert, even as the closest person to Thomas, hadn’t the faintest idea who “Georgia” was. The subject of this mysterious figure, that countless renowned works of this man were dedicated to, was constant fuel for both Robert’s and the public’s curiosity. Regardless, he had learned long ago that inquisitions into this matter would yield no results; Robert would only ever get an evasive smirk from his friend when the question was asked.

He now awaited when Thomas’ autobiography, (that he had long promised would arrive shortly), was completed and open for his reading and maybe there he would find some answers. However, unfortunately, although he would never admit it, it seemed that Thomas may have been suffering from a most terrible, unutterable plight... writer’s block. Regardless, Robert would not think of such things at this moment.

He turned into the main living room and kitchen, Thomas was nowhere to be seen. After calling out a couple times and searching the surrounding rooms, it was surmised that the writer must be up in his bedroom. And so, Robert made towards the hall and the grand carpeted staircase. However, he was stopped by a white-pigmented object on the stone-grey kitchen counter, quickly realising it was a sheet of paper. This was odd as usually, work items such as documents were banned from where Thomas ate. “Eating is not to be distracted by occupation,” he would often say. Curious, Robert slid toward the page. Lifting it and scanning it, the first thing that caught his eye was a scribbled note on the top right corner of the typed page:

**It’s finished, the final chapter,  
pass it on to the publishers for me**

Robert’s gaze then darted to the title: *Chapter 25: Dear Georgia*. He read on, past the first paragraph and onto the second.

\*\*\*

*...When I first saw you, it was a glimmering August day; not a drop fell, quite like this moment now, and near this very spot where I stand, unsteady and lost. That day when I saw your face for the first time, you did not see mine, nor did you the next day, nor the next. You became my life, my muse, my aspiration. I tried to release your grip over my mind through rationality, but there is no logic*

*in longing, no deductions in desire, no thesis in temptation.*

*Dear Georgia, I am scared for what I am about to do, but I know, despite reason, I must. A poetic life with a poetic end, and all this poetry has been for you. And so, I stand unsteady and lost on this feudal bridge we rode underneath everyday on that school-bus where I first saw you, ready to end it all for you...*

\*\*\*

Robert stopped reading, stuffed the page forcefully into his coat and sprinted out of the house. He found his way to the bridge within thirty minutes. By that time, the sun had dropped nearer to an orange dusk; sons, fathers, mothers and daughters began to return from a day of labour, and heavy clouds filled the sky, dropping their tears. There was not the faintest sound on the empty streets apart from distant damp drifts of travelling cars and the pitter-patter of the rain.

Shop windows displayed cold “Closed” signs and apartment curtains were drawn shut. To Robert it appeared the whole world, apart from the rain, had ceased.

As he approached the bridge all was still; on its edge stood Thomas Hayes, statuesque and cold, his eyes fixed downward to the drop. If the wind did not flutter his coat one would think him a fixture on the bridge.

“Thomas!” Robert cried shakily as he shuffled closer to the bridge. The Statue turned slowly. When his stone-like olive eyes met Robert’s, he lit up, a wide smiled parted his face.

“Hello Smithers!” He exclaimed cheerfully and playfully over the whistle of the wind. He said it almost like the two were merely at his home, by a grand fire, with grand libations set out on a grand dining table, instead of on this dreary overpass. Robert peered over the edge into the abyss. He directed his gaze back to the smiling man.

“What are you doing here?” He whispered avoiding provocation.

“Ending a story.” Thomas spoke softly, still with a slight smirk.

“Why?” Robert asked with a desperate sigh.

“Because it’s the only ending there is Robert.” He swept his drenched hair away from his eyes.

“What are you talking about?”

Thomas looked as though he was going to give another smile, but couldn’t bring himself to.

“My life Smithers, it needs an ending, a proper ending, not me growing old comfortably in a cosy home, an ending that means something Robert.” He hung his head towards the drop once again.

“Thomas... You...”

“Now Robert, I appreciate you coming to wish me adieu, but I’d rather be alone if you don’t mind, makes it more meaningful you see.”

“Thomas!” ... no response.

“Thomas!” Robert pleaded, no response.

“Thomas please!” no response.

Robert didn’t know what to say, what does one say? And so, with no other option, he chose to ask the only question in his mind, the only possible motive behind all of this.

“Is it Georgia?... is it her?” The Statue seemed to be released from some of its stiffness by the question. “Who is she Thomas? We can talk about it.”

He turned to Robert, took a moment, then looked to his feet and chuckled slightly.

“There is no Georgia, Robert.” Robert could not bring any sound from his throat.

“Well, that’s not entirely true. There was a girl, in my school. I saw her everyday on the bus to school, a bus that passed under this very bridge in fact. She was very nice and sweet and so I wanted to speak to her. But I never could, she paid no mind to me whenever I called for her attention, she never even gave me her name and so I just procured “Georgia” from an old film I once watched. I began to write poetry and produce finely written passages in order to gain approval from her. Alas, it was to no avail.”

He looked at Robert like he had never looked at him before, as if they had been long estranged, as if he was seeing light for the first time after an eternity of darkness.

“I vowed to myself that day, Robert. I vowed I would never feel so belittled again, I would not be seen, I would not fade into the shadows of irrelevancy. I would be praised, remembered, adored.”

“Thomas...” Robert muttered with disbelief.

The look in Thomas’ eyes died, he returned to his vigilance over the edge.

“The rain, its sound, it’s like applause.” He took a deep frosty breath in and out. “As if the world is all clapping together, swiftly and with astonishment.”

“Thomas... please.”

The romantic’s head rotated to Robert a final time.

“Read the chapter, it’s one hell of a conclusion, the best I’ve ever written.” Thomas spoke proudly. “And please, don’t tell them what I told you today... Let them believe in Georgia.”

The world stood still, Robert could not move, the animals, the plants, the buildings and the people all committed their attention as the poet took his final step, over the edge of the feudal bridge, into the depths of legend.

\*\*\*

*...A poetic life with a poetic end, and all this poetry has been for you.*

*And so, I stand unsteady and lost on this feudal bridge we rode underneath*

*everyday on that school-bus where I first saw you, ready to end it all for you. I know my dear Georgia, I will be with you forever, under your gaze. And I will know that with you, I will be free of all desire, all longing. There will be no need for logic, no pledge to rationality, regret or truth.*

*There will be only rain.*

*By Mark J Stanley*