

I'd like to thank Jim McFarlin and the board for asking me to speak today -- everyone who helped coordinate things -- and I'd also like to thank all of you for being here -- a roomful of writers -- my favorite people on earth -- over the years I've worked with extremely talented people -- actors -- great -- musicians -- great -- directors -- great -- but writers -- the best of the best. We're the smartest -- the most creative of talents -- it all starts with what we put down on paper -- everything that follows is simply interpretation.

A bit of background -- I've been a professional writer since I was nineteen years old -- I was a reporter on my college paper -- the phone rang -- it was the sports editor of the town's daily newspaper -- he'd read some of my articles and offered me a part-time job on the rewrite desk -- my salary was a dollar an hour -- I've never made one cent since as anything other than a writer. I mention this only to set the table for what I'd like to discuss today -- the big hurt -- the roller coaster -- ups and downs -- acceptance and rejection -- one day they think you're a genius, the next day a dunce -- one day they're going to publish your book, the next day you phone them, "Gary who?" It takes sensitivity and compassion to be a good writer -- and nerves of steel to put your work out there. It takes logic and order to produce an intelligent manuscript -- and a sense of madness to deal with the insanity of the writing business.

Whenever I'm asked to submit a career bio -- it always makes me laugh -- in black and white, my professional life seems so planned -- so orderly -- nothing could be further from the truth -- what you see here before you is a survivor of one train wreck after another -- some caused by "them" -- others by my own lunkhead mistakes -- I'm a person who drove straight toward a target mounted on a giant telephone pole -- only to make a last-second emergency left turn to avoid a collision. The only thing I can say on my behalf is that I had the wherewithal to remain flexible, to roll with the punches -- and, most important, I always kept writing.

Sometimes things rolled my way. My first boss at the advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather tried to fire me because, quote, “He writes like people talk.” Another boss in another group said, “I’ll take him.” Five years later I was promoted to Vice President/Creative Director. I was thirty years old -- the next youngest Creative Director was forty-eight -- my boss explained the reason for my success, quote, “He writes like people talk.”

Wish I had the same luck in the publishing industry -- lots of telephone poles here -- crash -- splat -- a supreme irony since that's the area of writing I was supposed to succeed at. In college, I wrote a short story that the Creative Writing teacher liked so much, he pulled me aside and said, "Gary, I want you to stop writing short pieces and write me a book. You're a natural-born novelist." His words burned a hole in my brain -- I'm a novelist, I'm a novelist. A few years later the teacher seemed clairvoyant -- while working at the ad agency I wrote a novel at nights and on weekends -- it was called "Noose" -- it was about a group of twisted gamblers that locked innocent victims in hanging rooms then bet on who would live and who would die. The book was demented to say the least -- a real sicko -- but it was very original and darkly humorous. I was twenty-five years old -- one of New York's top literary agents signed me to a contract -- his client list was filled

with famous authors -- and I was invited to the Christmas party. The agent would refer to me as, "The next Vonnegut." "Joseph Heller's heir-apparent."

Unfortunately, publishers in New York had different names for me -- "No-way Jose" -- "Hit-the-road Jack."

What nobody expected -- not me, not my agent, not anyone -- Noose would lead to a left turn towards Hollywood.

Now is a good time to bring up a sub-topic not spoken about too often among writers -- the consolation prize. Most of us etch into our fantasies the results of our latest epic -- this book will be published by Random House or at worst Scribner's -- my screenplay will be directed by Martin Scorsese or at worst Steven Spielberg -- (we writers are big thinkers, our self-aggrandizement knows no bounds). Sometimes, however, our creations take left turns of their own. Noose caught the attention of some Hollywood bigwigs -- they dangled carrots of fame and fortune -- I took the bait. Along the way I met some TV comedy writers -- they couldn't care less about my novel but thought I was funny and encouraged me to write a spec comedy script. I was never a big TV watcher -- but I took a stab at one during my lunch hours at the ad agency. The reviews were mixed -- this guy can really write comedy -- he's no Mel Brooks -- but the overall reactions were strong

**enough to encourage me to write another spec script --
then another.**

Along the way, one person thought I'd be able to write a good hour-length TV script -- the man was the head writer of a new show called The White Shadow -- he called one morning and told me to be at CBS studios on Radford Street by one o'clock in the afternoon -- I was Creative Director of Ogilvy in L.A. and had a big pre-production meeting for a shoot of fast-food commercials -- I mulled it over -- hmm -- I could play it safe and stay in advertising for the rest of my life -- or I could jump off the ledge and toss my hat into the scriptwriting ring. I hopped in my car and hurried over to the studio on Radford Street. Bruce Paltrow -- the show's Executive Producer -- Gwyneth's Dad -- stared at me in contempt -- he was furious at his head writer for hiring me -- the show had a network commitment of only five scripts and here they were giving one to a complete unknown -- my god, they had people like Steven Bochco writing for them -- tried and true veteran

scriptwriters -- and now I was in the hot seat with no experience whatsoever -- to make matters worse The White Shadow was written in standard screenplay form -- I'd never even read a screenplay -- luckily, I'd stopped by a bookstore and picked up a copy of a book called "Sid Fields' How to Write a Screenplay" -- an assistant producer showed me to my office, and asked me if I wanted the door opened or closed -- "Closed," I said with a panicked smile -- the minute the door shut I opened my briefcase and pulled out my copy of How to Write a Screenplay -- I flipped to the part that showed the correct format -- I typed the words FADE IN -- and embarked on a scriptwriting career that lasted many years -- and lead to many more left turns.

**By the way -- that's what I mean by "consolation prize" --
Noose was never published but it did lead to unexpected
avenues for success and income. There were other
consolation prizes waiting ahead - - I wrote a spec
screenplay called "Back Door Man" -- it was never
produced but it led to movie deals at Universal and
Warner Bros. -- a TV pilot I wrote was killed -- but one of
the executives and I developed a new show and sold it to
Henry Winkler -- a Western I was writing for was abruptly
cancelled -- but the producer was hired by a new mystery
show called Remington Steele -- and he dragged me along
as a writer.**

**Left turns, left turns, left turns -- keep making them -- and,
most important, keep writing -- it could lead to a very nice
consolation prize.**

Here's a consolation prize that I get a kick out of. I was hired to write on a comedy at 20th Century Fox called "Goodbye Charlie" -- it was based on a movie shot years earlier starring Tony Curtis and Debbie Reynolds -- it was about a womanizing leech that dies and comes back with his misogynistic mind in the body of a beautiful female -- the pilot starred Suzanne Somers and she was very funny - - the new season hadn't been announced yet -- but the network was so sure about this show that they ordered what was known as back-up scripts -- the producers were given a budget to hire writers to begin work so that when Goodbye Charlie was picked up they'd have a nice head start -- on the writing staff with me was a very funny comedy writer named Carmen Finestra -- Carmen and I had worked together on several other shows -- I was stunned when he came in one day and asked the producers to let him out of his contract -- he'd been offered

a chance to move to New York and work on a new family sitcom called The Cosby Show -- the producer couldn't hold him back since Goodbye Charlie wasn't officially picked up yet -- I thought Carmen was nuts -- he was passing up a chance to write for a surefire hit show -- Goodbye Charlie -- for what? -- an eight o'clock kids' show - - nonetheless, Carmen left -- a month later he called me from New York -- The Cosby Show was off to a good start but Bill Cosby was firing all the writers -- did I want to work on the show -- he felt certain Bill would like me -- I stifled a laugh -- "Thanks, Carmen, but no thanks. The networks are ready to announce their new fall line-up. I'm about to work on a colossal hit -- turn down Goodbye Charlie for The Cosby Show? -- you've got to be kidding -- a week later the networks announced their fall line-ups -- I scoured the trades -- no mention of Goodbye Charlie -- this couldn't be -- I called the Executive Producer -- she was

very upset -- the network passed on Goodbye Charlie -- no explanation -- no second chances -- we were all out of work -- an hour later the phone rang -- it was Carmen Finestra -- “Still no interest in The Cosby Show?” -- I leaped at the consolation prize.

A caveat to anyone in the audience that might think that just because I’ve worked on giant hits that I can smell them coming -- warning -- don’t ask me to read your manuscript -- I’d probably have said to Tolstoy, “Nah, I don’t see anything here.”

So far I've concentrated on my main strategy for dealing with the ups and downs of professional writing -- turn left, keep writing -- now I'd like to add a few more that might be of help to you when the chips are down.

I'll start with the number one way to avoid criticism, rejection, or humiliation -- possess supreme talent -- the talent of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Dickens -- I've never met any of these fellows -- and I know I'm certainly not one of them -- I'm in the category of normal writers that have good days and bad days -- flashes of brilliance then flub-a-dub-dub -- I get praised sometimes for my efforts then soundly booed -- Chaucer, Dickens -- great geniuses -- but could they write a punch line for Punky Brewster?

Number two -- practice skin-thickening exercises -- call the meanest people you know and have them hurl insults at you -- “You stink.” -- “You’re a hack.” -- “My third-grader writes better than you.”

Three -- a bold way for writers to protect themselves against pain -- clear away your self-doubts and develop an unwavering conviction in your talents -- work on your arrogance to the point of hubris -- look in the mirror and repeat over and over that you're the greatest writer that ever lived. Here's where things get tricky -- when you write for Hollywood, people throw rocks at you -- producers, directors, studio executives -- "Who wrote this bleep?" "This scene makes no sense at all." "Let's bring in someone who really knows how to write." The old arrogance really takes a beating in Hollywood -- but, unfortunately, the rock-throwing doesn't stop at the studio. During my time on the Cosby Show, I kept a car in a parking garage in Manhattan for much-needed mental escapes -- the garage attendant was very proud to know the writer and producer of such a fine television show -- he gave me exceptional service -- no waiting for my car no

matter how busy the garage -- one day I called ahead for the car -- I was especially exhausted and needed to get out of town badly -- my car wasn't there when I arrived -- the attendant was standing there scowling -- "Mr. Kott, did you write last week's episode -- the one about the pregnant men?" -- I said, "yes." -- his scowl turned to pure contempt -

- "I hated it. Pregnant men. Not funny. Not good. That episode was bleep." -- I apologized to the garage attendant for letting him down then said, "Now can I get my car." -- He scowled once more at me and then stormed away, "As soon as I can get to it. There are ten people ahead of you. Pregnant men. Pure bleep."

Here's something that worked well for me in braving the trials and tribulations of professional writing -- abject poverty -- for much of my writing career I was -- how you say -- financially challenged -- no money in the bank -- mounting bills -- simply put, I had no choice as a writer but to plow forward into the fires of hell -- I had no back-up position -- no other way to make a living. Several years ago a college back east was mounting stage plays I'd written -- they asked for a complete list of my credits for their publicity department -- I normally included just a few -- the ones that were produced or recognizable -- I never included the screenplays I wrote that were never made, the pilots that were scrapped, the back-up scripts, the cancelled shows, the options, the development deals -- this one time at the request of the college I wrote down everything -- all the hits, all the misses -- my complete credit list went on for many pages -- Paramount -- MGM --

Disney -- NBC -- CBS -- ABC -- the college loved it -- they wanted to include it in the Playbill -- I agreed under one condition -- at the end of my long credit list I wrote, "Don't be impressed. I was broke. I needed the money." A side note to anyone out there thinking of making a run at selling screenplays -- an old-timer once passed down to me these words of wisdom, "Hollywood is not a place to make a living, it's a place to make a killing."

Here's a trap to avoid for protection against painful emotional upheaval -- don't place unreal expectations on yourself or your writing -- easier said than done -- most of us are guilty of committing one fatal crime -- imagining reviews in our heads -- before we've finished writing a piece we're reading in the New York Times -- "A stunning triumph. Brilliant. Genius. It's the book Ernest Hemingway would have written if he had half the talent." -- then the rejection letters start coming in -- some personal, most form letters -- "Sorry" -- "No thanks" -- "Not our cup of tea." -- I was once devastated over a rejection letter from the renowned editor of Knopf, Robert Gottlieb -- it was a personal letter -- and somewhat flattering -- but in the end the book wasn't quite right for them -- a man I knew -- who'd published five novels -- read the letter and said, "You think that's a bad rejection letter? Let me read you a bad rejection letter. An editor sent this to my agent three

weeks ago. 'Dear Henry, Yuck.' The man didn't seem one bit ruffled by the crude rejection letter -- in fact he was bemused by it. He then gave me some advice that's stayed with me to this day, "Gary, the fact that your agent would even send your book to Robert Gottlieb is a major triumph. Loosen up, kid, writing's a great adventure -- enjoy the ride."

One thing that might help in the department of unrealistic expectations -- be logical about what you've written -- make sure that the genre you've chosen matches up with what you'd like to achieve -- for example, if it's money you're after, it's probably not a wise idea to write a volume of poetry -- poems are good for the soul, not for paying the rent. If lyrical descriptive passages are what you enjoy writing -- elegant odes to trees and nature -- don't be disappointed if your screenplay is soundly rejected. Perhaps developing interesting characters is not your strong point -- or you lack the skill of story-weaving -- don't be crushed if your new novel never makes it past the slush pile. Over the years I've developed a pretty good sense for picking the appropriate genre before I start writing. For sheer entertainment, I choose television -- for ideas that lend themselves to visual story-telling I write a screenplay -- for flawed, twisted characters I write novels

in order to convey what they're thinking, what they're feeling -- and for exploring the nooks and crannies of my troubled psyche I write stage plays because playwriting presents absolutely no restrictions on form. Here's an example of how choosing the right genre really helped me. I came up with an idea -- three brothers that hate each other inherit their father's business and are forced to run it together -- at first I thought it would make a funny sitcom -- clever jokes about sibling rivalry -- then the more I tossed it around in my head -- I started realizing that it would be more powerful as a stage play -- I saw these brothers really going at it -- venting their pent up rage -- exorcising the demons that split them apart -- I wrote the play and submitted it to a man I'd met -- a well known playwright who'd won a Tony Award -- it was nerve-racking waiting for his response -- finally, it came -- "Dear Gary, I thought you might write a good play, I never

thought you'd write an important play. It's what we strive for as writers but rarely achieve." Another side note -- if you ever receive a letter like this -- don't tuck it away inside a drawer -- frame it -- hang it on the wall -- breath in the love.

It's clear that placing unreal expectations on ourselves is a one way ticket to Palookaville -- god, if only I could write like Budd Schulberg -- however, sometimes it's other people that put unreal expectations on us -- agents -- publishers -- the press. One of the negatives of writing for The Cosby Show is that people expect that everything I write will be sweet and adorable -- I call it the Cosby Curse. Several years ago I wrote a stage play called "& Sons" -- it explored the devastating consequences of bad fatherhood -- it was dark -- it was brutal -- the play had a staged reading at the Actors Studio in New York -- Jerry Stiller played the lead character -- the father -- he gave a frightening, vicious performance -- people were horrified that the same person that wrote for the tender, loving Cosby Show could have written something so harsh, so disturbing. A year later I wrote a companion play -- it was called "As Is The Mother" -- it explored the devastating

consequences of bad motherhood -- the play opens on a scene of a young woman handcuffed to a chair as a police officer tries to mediate a ferocious battle between the daughter and the mother -- I was sitting in the back of the theatre during the performance -- nobody knew me from Adam -- seated in front of me were two women -- one turned to the other in shock and said, "Well, these certainly aren't the Huxtables." I leaned over and sympathized with them, "I know, it's absolutely frightful."

Then there are the financial expectations other people place on you once you've worked on a hit show -- agents, business managers, entertainment attorneys -- they all seem to think that the cash register should always go ka-ching. I told you before that my stage plays tend to explore the nooks and crannies of my troubled psyche -- they're the kind of plays that work beautifully in ninety-nine seat Equity Waiver houses -- definitely not Broadway box office smashes -- these plays are very satisfying for me to write -- and for small audiences of theatre buffs to watch -- with that, I'll tell a story about other people's expectations -- my accountant in New York handled big-name show business hit-makers such as Billy Crystal -- my accountant also looked at me as a show business hit-maker -- a decade ago I spent close to a year working on a stage play called Him And His Last Night Of Sanity -- the title alone can tell you that this is not The Pajama Game -- nevertheless, my

accountant said he was attending opening night -- I warned him that the play was a strange piece, existential in nature, not a boffo Broadway musical -- he insisted on coming anyway -- and dragged his partners along with him. The play was staged at an Off-Broadway theatre in Greenwich Village called The Grove Street Playhouse -- the audience seemed riveted by the Beckett-like machinations of a tortured soul examining and re-examining the core of his existence -- then there was my accountant -- during intermission I came from back stage into the lobby -- there, alone on a bench, head buried deep in his hands, sat my accountant -- forlorn, troubled, crestfallen -- he looked up when he saw me coming -- the only words out of his mouth were these, "Gary," he said mournfully, shaking his head, "I don't see a nickel in this one."

At this point I'd like to drop a few names -- here are some of the big stars I wrote for in Hollywood -- Bill Cosby, Danny Kaye, Sammy Davis Jr., Stevie Wonder, Pierce Brosnan, Ken Howard, Jayne Meadows, Placido Domingo, Rita Moreno, Doris Roberts, Debbie Allen, Robert Culp, Christopher Plummer, Anthony Quinn -- I mentioned these names because I thought they'd add a little zest to my speech -- they have nothing to do with writing -- oh -- I also wrote the first script for Adam Sandler -- he was just starting out in the business -- he clearly went on to big stardom -- but does he ever call me to say hi -- no.

Back to turn left, keep writing. I had a strange thing happen to me several years ago. I was signed to a two-year, quote, “indie-prod” deal at the famed Warner Bros. Studio -- basically, I was given a parking place with my name on it and a huge office not far from Clint Eastwood’s (see, I slipped in another big name). I’d just left The Cosby Show after writing and producing one hundred and twenty six episodes -- five straight years of number one ratings -- Peabody Award -- Writers Guild of America Award -- Emmy nomination -- suddenly I was the Hollywood flavor of the week -- networks were actually soliciting me as opposed to vice versa. Whereas early in my career I had to jump through hoops to get a pilot deal -- scripts I wrote needed to be read and approved by countless levels of executives -- now network executives were buying ideas of mine without so much as asking to see a sample of my writing. Then one day it actually happened. The President

of ABC called and said, "I know your reputation. I know the success you've had. But I've never read a word you've written. Would you mind sending me something?" I said of course not, and, frankly, respected the man for asking -- after all, you wouldn't hire a house painter without first making sure he won't splatter paint all over your nice furniture. Problem was, I'd been under contract for so long writing other people's scripts, it had been years since I'd written anything original of my own. The best I could come up with was my ace in the hole spec movie script -- Back Door Man -- the one that was never produced but lead to numerous consolation prizes. Fortunately, Back Door Man served me well one more time -- the President of ABC loved the script -- and approved me to write a pilot for the network.

Yet the experience left me shaken -- in short, I had no body of work -- nothing I could point to and say, "Those are my characters. My stories. That's my voice." Horrified, I made an emergency left turn and pledged to write nothing in the future but my own material. I put that pledge to the test when my development deal was coming to an end and I had lunch with my agent -- he asked me what I wanted to do next -- sign another development deal, new studio, new parking place -- be the Executive Producer of a show on the air -- or take a year off from TV and sign a movie contract. He was a bit stunned by my answer, "I don't want any of the above. I want to go home and be a writer." A week later, I put my dog Fido in the car, literally made a left turn on Barham Boulevard, drove past the Warner Bros. Studio, and said, "Dabeeya, dabeeya, dabeeya, that's all folks." I spent the next several years back east writing and writing and writing and writing -- stage plays, novels,

short stories, long stories -- one after another after another after another. Two of my novels were signed by a Senior Vice President in the book division at the William Morris Agency -- a good omen for publication -- but neither book has found a home yet. Undeterred, I keep on writing -- stockpiling manuscripts -- reveling in the fact that I finally have a true body of work. My characters. My stories. My voice. The best years of my writer's life.

Ironically, though I'd ditched the idea of being a professional writer, people continued to ask me questions about, quote, "The Biz" -- how can I get an agent -- who should I send my script to -- do you still get residuals -- ah, residuals -- the magic question lurking in the back of curious minds -- okay -- here goes -- residuals are payments for television episodes that continue to run after the show ends production -- these re-runs appear either in syndication, on cable, DVDs, or, today, on certain Internet websites -- the payments are collected by the Writers Guild of America then mailed out to the writer of that episode -- the only way to qualify for a residual payment is to have the following credit -- written by -- co-written by -- story by -- if you were part of the writing staff that contributed to that episode you don't qualify for a residual payment -- if you had any other title on that episode you don't qualify for a residual payment -- for example, on The

Cosby Show I had many titles throughout the years -- Story Editor -- Executive Story Consultant -- Co-Producer -- Producer -- Co-Supervising Producer -- Supervising Producer -- on two episodes I was even listed as Guest Star when Bill decided it would be humorous to see me on camera -- I receive no residual payments from the Writers Guild of America for those various titles -- only the episodes that say written by or co-written by Gary Kott -- if anyone out there is planning on rushing to L.A. to write for a TV show -- I hope this cleared things up.

Other questions people ask me about professional writing

I have no idea how to answer -- should I knock down the doors of established publishing companies -- should I self-publish -- how about e-books -- should I shoot my own movie -- start my own production company -- launch my own network on YouTube -- I'm not sure if anyone today has the answers any more -- agents, publishers, heads of studios -- even the best of them are hopelessly confused -- the writing world has been turned upside down -- everything's so different -- the only piece of advise I can give is the same advise that I give to myself -- aim for a target -- then be ready to turn left -- and, most important, keep writing.

Here's my newest target -- Cyberspace -- I've recently launched my own website -- Gary Kott's Creative Warehouse -- it's crammed with many of those stories and stage plays I stockpiled over the years -- and a bunch of folk art that I've done on the side -- my wife Karen said to me one day, "Why not give people a chance to see it." Being an obedient husband I said, "Yes, dear." I created the website for two other reasons -- one -- the Internet is clearly a new medium for entertainment and communication -- like TV once was -- like movies were once -- like cave drawings way before that -- in my lifetime, the Internet was the only modern medium that I never wrote for -- now I have.

Two -- I've been saying for years that Cyberspace is the future of entertainment and communication -- I believe that personal computers will one day replace every other

gadget in our house -- the TV set of today will be the radio of yesterday -- an obsolete oddity -- relegated to antique shops and museums -- some day people will look curiously at photographs of families sitting around the living room staring at a television set -- it will be hard for them to believe that audiences were forced to be home exactly at eight o'clock on Thursday nights -- even to watch something as great as The Cosby Show.

It was fun and interesting creating the website -- I've worked for years with technical people -- film editors, cameramen, special effects -- but teaming up with computer programmers was far different -- more confusing -- much slower -- but ultimately rewarding. I had this idea that my website should look like an old warehouse -- complete with crates -- there'd be a crate for stories -- a crate for plays -- a crate for paintings -- a crate for sculpture -- lo and behold, if someone clicks "Stories" on a crate they're directed instantly to several stories I've written -- I've added blurbs of information about everything found on the website -- and made most of it available for purchase.

Building Gary Kott's Creative Warehouse did something for me that years ago I could never have imagined possible -- I'm now my own publisher -- and my own bookstore --

how great is that -- I'll never have to submit anything to anyone again -- or rewrite anything I don't want to -- or call an agent to find out if there's another contract waiting for me -- I'm also set up for automatic feedback -- visitors to my website can post comments -- tell me what they like - - what they don't like -- what they want to see more of -- or less of -- I never have to wait for reviews -- visitors are only too eager to give me immediate thumbs up or thumbs down -- in short -- I'm having a ball with my latest left turn.

Here's a left turn within the left turn. Before I started developing my website I knew very little about the Internet -- other than Google and email. My programmers thought it was about time I entered the modern world -- they hooked me up with something called a Webinar -- it's an online seminar that you sign up for and some expert comes on your computer to give you a lecture -- mine was about social media -- Facebook, LinkedIn -- stuff that kids know about but not me -- I listened with great interest to the Webinar -- and when it was over I thought -- hmm -- if people will listen to computer gibberish what would happen if I recorded a fun story and put it on my website -- I could call my Webinar a Storynar -- so I wrote a story then called my cousin Dana to record it -- he's a former radio disc jockey with a fabulous voice -- the story's called "The Last Free Man On Earth" -- it's a wonderful tale about New York's most successful panhandler -- who makes so

much money on the street that he leads a double life as a successful uptown bon vivant. The story is approximately two hours long -- but it's broken into four segments -- there's no charge to listen -- just go to the website and click play.

Today I'm introducing my latest addition to Gary Kott's Creative Warehouse -- it's called, "The J. Rockett Darling 19-Minute Mystery Series" -- it's perfect for people who want to hear a good story but don't want to invest more than -- well -- nineteen minutes. The first episode is called Neck And Neck -- no deep literature here -- just a good, old-fashioned murder mystery -- revolved around an eccentric Private Investigator that's strangely recognizable to anybody who knows -- me -- it opens on a dead body that's found in the desert wearing nothing but -- wait, I don't want to give too much away -- I want you to listen to it -- and I want you to tell me what you think -- the story is free -- all you have to do is go to my website and click play -- www.garykottscreativewarehouse.com -- I've printed up some fliers and left them on the table -- pick one up and give me a visit -- you all have first crack at giving me

thumbs up or thumbs down -- I'd really like to read your review.

Anyway, I have no idea where my website will lead me -- but wherever it decides to go I'm prepared to make an emergency left turn -- and no matter what happens, I'll definitely keep writing.

One closing thought -- we've all been on different paths that led us to writing -- most of us can trace the time in our life when we knew that this was what we wanted to do -- some of us -- like me -- can pinpoint the precise day. I was a sophomore in college. Floundering in confusion and underachievement. My grades were poor. My outlook dim. I hadn't a clue what I wanted to do in the future. There was an upperclassman named Pete Myers. He was the complete opposite of me -- an honors student -- class officer -- pre-law whiz kid. Why Pete took an interest in me I have no idea -- we weren't great friends -- we'd only had a few conversations. Nonetheless, Pete found me one day at the local pool hall and asked me if I'd like to write an article for the school newspaper. I looked at him horrified, "The school newspaper. Isn't that an extra-curricular activity?" Pete said yes -- and I informed him, "I've never joined one extra-curricular activity in my life,

and I'm not about to start now." Pete shrugged, "Too bad. I really thought you'd be good at writing." I corrected his hunch, "In high school I got a 'D' in English. So far in college I'll be lucky to match that grade." Pete seemed undeterred, "I know you like sports. There's nobody available to cover the basketball game this Saturday. You'll sit in the Press Box. You'll watch the game with the other reporters. They'll give you a free hot dog." Stunned, I asked Pete, "A free hot dog?" He assured, "It's a perk for all sports writers." My mind boggled at this overwhelming stroke of good fortune -- a free hot dog -- me -- Gary Kott -- without hesitating, I found myself asking, "Where exactly is this newspaper office?" Pete instructed, "Go into the Student Union -- walk past the snack bar -- past the ping pong tables -- past the juke box -- when you get to the hallway go straight -- midway up you'll come to the mailboxes -- keep walking until you reach a set of double

**doors -- stop -- make sure nobody's rushing out -- then
turn left."**

I thank you again for having me here...