



# LAST GAS

BY JOHN CARIANI



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LAST GAS was produced by Geva Theatre Center (Mark Cuddy, Artistic Director; Tom Parrish, Executive Director) in Rochester, New York, on January 7, 2014. The play was directed by Skip Greer; the set design was by Rob Koharchik; the lighting design was by Ken Smith; the sound design was by Dan Roach; the costume design was by B. Modern; the assistant director was Teresa Campbell; the dramaturg was Jean Ryon. The production stage manager was Frank Cavallo, and the assistant stage manager was Jenny Daniels. The cast was as follows:

NAT PARADIS ..... David Mason  
TROY PARADIS-PULCIFER ..... Nick Erkelens  
GUY GAGNON ..... Aaron Muñoz  
DWIGHT PARADIS ..... John Pribyl  
CHERRY-TRACY PULCIFER ..... Gabra Zackman  
LURENE LEGASSEY SOLOWAY ..... Brenda Withers

LAST GAS was produced by Opera House Arts (Judith Jerome, Artistic Director; Linda Nelson, Executive Director) in Stonington, Maine, on February 7, 2013. The play was directed by Judith Jerome; the costume design was by Joan Mather; the set design was by Tom Gleeson; the lighting and sound designs were by Shannon Zura; and the production stage manager was Hope Rose Kelly. The cast was as follows:

NAT PARADIS ..... Bruch Reed  
TROY PARADIS-PULCIFER ..... Tommy Heleringer  
GUY GAGNON ..... Rich Price  
DWIGHT PARADIS ..... Robert Burke  
CHERRY-TRACY PULCIFER ..... Aimee Phelan-Deconinck  
LURENE LEGASSEY SOLOWAY ..... Katie Cunningham

LAST GAS received its world premiere production at the Portland Stage Company (Anita Stewart, Artistic Director; Cami Barrantes, Managing Director) in Portland, Maine, on November 5, 2010. The play was directed by Sally Wood; the assistant director was Kristin McCarthy Parker; the set and costume designs were by Anita Stewart; the lighting design was by Gregg Carville; the sound design was by Shannon Zura; the incidental music was by Julian Fleisher; the dramaturg was Dan Burson; the assistant dramaturg was Kristin McCarthy Parker; the production stage manager was Shane Van Vliet; and the assistant stage manager was Brittney Kuehm. The cast was as follows:

NAT PARADIS ..... David Mason  
TROY PARADIS-PULCIFER ..... David Register  
GUY GAGNON ..... Mike Houston  
DWIGHT PARADIS ..... Tom Bloom  
CHERRY-TRACY PULCIFER ..... Moira Driscoll  
LURENE LEGASSEY SOLOWAY ..... Kathy McCafferty

LAST GAS was commissioned by and developed at The Cape Cod Theatre Project (Andy Polk, Artistic Director) in 2008.

## CHARACTERS

NAT PARADIS,  
a slight, seemingly harmless man. Nearly 41 but may be boyish.  
A charming loser. Good at seeming happy. Passionate Red Sox fan.

TROY PARADIS-PULCIFER,  
Nat's son, 16. A substantial, impressive young man;  
bigger and stronger than his dad.

DWIGHT PARADIS,  
Nat's father, 63. A larger-than-life kind of guy, rough  
around the edges, substantial, loves a good time.

GUY GAGNON,  
Nat's best friend, 41. Loyal, stoic, and fat. Passionate Red Sox fan.

CHERRY-TRACY PULCIFER,  
Troy's mother, 41. A smart, ambitious, substantial woman.

LURENE LEGASSEY SOLOWAY,  
a visitor, 40.

### NOTE

The name Paradis is pronounced like “parody” — the “s” is silent.

Nat runs Paradis' Last Convenient Store. In the possessive, Paradis' is pronounced like the word “parodies.”

The name Guy is pronounced like the word “guy.”

Please refer to the glossary on page 98 for correct pronunciations of other names, places, and terms.

## **PLACE**

Paradis' Last Convenient Store,  
a convenience/general store in Township 16, Range 8,  
an unincorporated township in far northern Maine  
that sits on the edge of what's wild and what's not.

The action of the play takes place in the store,  
in the apartment above the store, and  
in the parking lot that abuts the store's main entrance.

Note: The apartment can be accessed by way of an  
entrance adjoining the store, and also by way of a private  
(and unseen) entrance in the back that leads directly  
to the apartment.

## **TIME**

May 18 and 19, 2013.

### **ACT ONE**

Scene 1: About 6:30 on Saturday evening, May 18, 2013.

Scene 2: A few minutes later.

### **ACT TWO**

Scene 1: A few hours later, late Saturday night.

Scene 2: Sunday, May 19, late afternoon.

## CASTING NOTE

*Last Gas* is about people from rural northern Maine who don't have a lot of money. Keep in mind that economic diversity is in play here. The Paradis family is lower middle class at best; Guy is unemployed; and Lurene works for a not-for-profit foundation and lives in New York City. Cherry-Tracy is probably the best off (financially) of anyone.

Please also keep in mind that actors of any background can be in this play. Cast actors who are good for the roles and who will tell the story effectively.

If you want to remain authentic to the place, consider Native American actors. Northern Maine has a large Native population. For example, it would be really interesting if Guy and/or Cherry-Tracy (and therefore Troy) were of Micmac descent.

## ON PRESENTING *LAST GAS*

If you are involved in a production of *Last Gas*, please refer to the Notes for Actors, Directors, and Designers in the back of this volume. Here are some preliminary notes to guide you through reading this play:

People from northern Maine do not have a “Maine accent.”

You will see some unusual punctuation in the text:

> will appear at the end of a line. It just means the actor who is talking should keep talking and not wait for the other actor's line.

// will appear inside an actor's line and is a signal to the next actor who speaks that s/he should begin speaking.

A dash (—) at the end of a speech means that the next speaker cuts off the current speaker.

An ellipsis (...) at the end of a speech means that the character speaking trails off into thought. The next speaker should not interrupt but should respond to the trailing off.

Commas after end-punctuation are to encourage pace.

Dialogue in brackets [ ] is not to be spoken — it is a guide to what is not said.

# LAST GAS

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*Lights up on Paradis' Last Convenient Store, a gas station/ convenience store in a remote township in far northern Maine. Paradis' sells everything and is known for its sign, which reads: "Paradis' Last Convenient Store: Last Gas, Last Food, Last Phone Before Canada."*

*At rise, Nat Paradis is watching the Boston Red Sox pre-game show on the New England Sports Network while he works the counter at the store. He wears a worn Red Sox cap.*

*In the apartment above, Dwight Paradis and Troy Paradis-Pulcifer are getting ready for their respective nights out. They also have the TV on the New England Sports Network.*

TV. *(In the store and in the apartment.)* ... as the Red Sox take on the Yankees, second game in a three-game home stand against the Bombers, first pitch: 7:05, about a half-hour away. You're watching the New England Sports Network, your home for Boston Red Sox baseball. *(We now only hear the TV in the store. Nat starts flipping through the channels with a remote, finally settling on the end of the local news broadcast.)*

And that's our report for Saturday, May 18th, 2013. I'm Sue Clukey, and you're watching NewsSource 8, your home for breaking news in northern Maine and western New Brunswick. Thank you for joining us. Stay warm out there! Spring's comin'. *(The news goes*

to commercial — we hear somber music and a woman's voice, warm and comforting.)

We all experience days that are difficult to get through. But I was beginning to feel like every day was difficult to get through. I lost interest in things I used to enjoy; I lacked energy; I had trouble concentrating and sleeping. But then I asked my doctor about Elatra (*ee-LAY-tra, sounds like "elate"*). (*The music becomes celebratory and we hear a man's voice.*) Elatra works naturally with your body to find the chemical and hormonal balance that's right for you. (*Rapidly disclaiming:*) Tell your doctor right away if you experience unusual changes in mood or behavior when taking Elatra. Elatra may cause a rise in blood pressure, high cholesterol, and glaucoma. If you experience an increase in heart rate, see your doctor immediately. Do not take Elatra if you have poor circulation, heart disease, a calcium deficiency, or are more than fifty pounds overweight. Side effects include dry mouth, occasional nausea, tongue swelling, and light-headedness. (*Back to the woman's voice, warm and comforting.*) If you're tired of feeling deflated and ready to feel elated again, ask your doctor if Elatra is right for you. Elatra: Get back to happy. (*Nat flips back to the Red Sox game.*)

Jerry, talk to me about these Red Sox, huh? Picked to finish last in the division in this, the 2013 season, here they are in first place, 24 and 12. It's only May 18th — but can they keep this up? (*Nat mutes the TV, picks up the phone, hesitates, and dials.*)

NAT. Hello, um, Willie? Hi, Nat, here. Paradis. No problem, how ya — ? Good, thanks, you? Good, good, um, sorry to bother you on a Saturday evenin', but — ... Yeah — ... Yeah — ... Yeah, I'm doin' all right, I just got a question for ya. Um, well, I was just watchin' the news, and there was an ad on, and ... well, I just wanted to ask you about Elatra. Um, Elatra. I was just wonderin' if it was right for me. Elatra, yeah. Well, I'm just interested in gettin' back to happy, that's what it says can happen if you take it, and, well, they tell you on the ad to ask your doctor if it's right for you, and I just thought I'd ask you if it was right for — ... Why is that so funny? What? Well — what do you mean? It says — huh? Oh. Oh, jeez. No, I guess I couldn't tell that from the ad. Hard to tell what they're sellin' or who they're sellin' it to on those things. Yeah! Oh, yeah, I'm all right! You just said call if it gets bad again, and I think it might be gettin' bad again. Naw, I don't need to come in, I just wanted to know if — .

Yeah, it just sounded like it might be right for me. Yeah, obviously not. Yeah, yeah, I'm good! Yeah, I know. I do. I got lots to be happy about. Yup. Yup. All right. I will. *(Troy has made his way downstairs into the store unbeknownst to his father. He wears a New York Yankees cap. He hears enough to know that his dad is talking to Willie.)* I will. Yeah, thanks, Willie. Bye. *(Nat hangs up. He cries simply and quietly. Beat. We hear the ding of a truck rolling over the alert bell — someone is buying gas. Nat collects himself a little to prepare for a potential customer. Troy makes like he just entered and wasn't listening.)*

TROY. Hey, Dad.

NAT. *(Covering.)* Huh? Oh — Troy, hey, I didn't know you // were —

TROY. Who were you talkin' to?

NAT. Nobody. What're you up to tonight?

TROY. What's goin' on, you okay?

NAT. Yeah, yeah, // what're [you up to tonight] — ?

TROY. You sure?

NAT. Yeah.

TROY. You gettin' sad again? >

NAT. No, no —

TROY. 'Cause Mom won't let me stay here if you're gettin' sad again, you know, // so ...

NAT. No — I know, I'm not, I'm good.

TROY. Well, then what were you talkin' to Willie for?

NAT. I wasn't.

TROY. Yeah you were, I heard you.

NAT. Well, you shouldn't eavesdrop. I just ... wanted to ask him somethin'.

TROY. What [did you want to ask him]?

NAT. Nothin', // what're you [doin' tonight] — ?

TROY. What'd you wanna ask him?

NAT. Just ... if somethin' was right for me., // What're —

TROY. What?

NAT. Nothin' — what're y//ou doin' tonight?

TROY. If what was right for you?

NAT. Nothin' —

TROY. Dad.

NAT. Just ... Elatra, they call it, // nothin' —

TROY. What? Why?

NAT. 'Cause — they tell you to ask your doctor if it's right for you, and // so I did.

TROY. What?!? You *did* that?!? You actually “asked your doctor about it”?

NAT. Yeah, that's what they tell // you to do!

TROY. (*Amused.*) Oh, Dad.

NAT. What?

TROY. And what'd Willie say? Is it right for you, Dad? Is Elatra “right for you”?

NAT. Um ... nope, // nope, not quite.

TROY. No, it's not!, Who's it right for?

NAT. Um ... other people.

TROY. Like who?

NAT. Like ... women.

TROY. Yeah. What kind of women?

NAT. Menopausal women.

TROY. Yeah, premenopausal women, Dad, >

NAT. How did you know that?

TROY. to help 'em with their moods, like Mom.

NAT. What? She's not old enough to be premen//opausal.

TROY. Yeah, she is. Why do you think she's never cold?

NAT. Wait —

TROY. Willie said she's got it early or somethin', >

NAT. Wha — ?

TROY. God, you couldn't tell that from the ad?! // That it was for women?

NAT. No! It's hard to tell who those ads are for, it's just smiles and shapes and colors.

TROY. Those were old women, smiling.

NAT. Those were women?

TROY. God, why did you *do* that, call Willie about that?

NAT. 'Cause they say it can help you feel better and get back to happy.

TROY. Well how can you get back to bein' somethin' you've never been? (*Beat. He crossed the line and makes up for it by teasing.*) I mean, you're a Red Sox fan. You're not happy people.

NAT. We are now! >

TROY. You people don't know how to *be* happy!

NAT. We are now! Hey! Who's in first place right now, >

TROY. It's only *May*, who cares!

NAT. and who's got two championships this century, // huh!?:

TROY. The St. Louis Cardinals, the San Francisco Giants, and the New York Yankees!

NAT. And the Boston Red Sox!! And — no! — Yankees in 2000 doesn't count, 'cause 2000's part of the *twentieth* century, and this is the *twenty-first* century — that's a fact — so only 2009 counts for the twenty-first century, // so *you* only have *one*!

TROY. Whatever — who collapsed at the end of 2011, and who lost ninety-three games last season and >

NAT. Well — who's in first place in the division right now?

TROY. finished last in the division? The Red Sox! You're back to bein' the sad losers you've always been, scared you're never gonna win another one! >

NAT. No! —

TROY. (*Teasing.*) Maybe that's why you were cryin', >

NAT. I wasn't cryin'!

TROY. askin' your doctor about Elatra, 'cause you know it's never gonna happen again!

NAT. I wasn't cryin'! (*Little beat. Troy pushed too far.*) And if I was, it's 'cause of that! (*Nat points to Troy's Yankees cap.*) Now take that thing off.

TROY. No. It's my hat. It's my team.

NAT. Yeah, well, I'm your father and I'm tellin' you not to wear that friggin' hat in this house.

TROY. I'm not in the house, I'm in the store.

NAT. Troy! Take it off. It's disrespectful.

TROY. (*Playfully challenging.*) Make me.

NAT. What?

TROY. Make me.

NAT. No. Troy ... No. I'm not gonna [play this game with you] — (*Suddenly, Nat springs into action and tries to get that hat off his son's head.*) Take it off! (*Troy easily wrestles his dad to the ground, keeping the hat safe.*) Troy!

TROY. What?

NAT. Come on, cut it out! Let me go, seriously, it's not funny! Come on, I can't breathe.

TROY. (*Playfully.*) What's the matter, Dad?

NAT. Troy —

TROY. Come on! Make me take it off!

NAT. Troy ...

# LAST GAS

by John Cariani

4M, 2W

Nat Paradis is a Red Sox-loving part-time dad who manages Paradis' Last Convenient Store, the last convenient place to get gas — or anything — before the Canadian border to the north and the North Maine Woods to the west. When an old flame returns to town, Nat gets a chance to rekindle a romance he gave up on years ago. But sparks fly as he's forced to choose between new love and old. LAST GAS takes a hilarious and heartbreakingly hard look at love lost and found, and at what it means to “get back to happy.”

*“Peppered with poignant characters [and] sharp writing, nicely bridging humor and seriousness.”* —**The Portland Phoenix (Portland, ME)**

*“LAST GAS [is] a full tank of unfulfilled desires. Very funny and surprisingly thought-provoking.”* —**Portland Press Herald (Portland, ME)**

*“A warm and genuinely moving evening. Very funny, and there's definitely romance in it, [but] if this a romantic comedy, then so is Chekhov.”*  
—**CITY Newspaper (Rochester, NY)**

*“A bittersweet romance. An undeniable winner.”*  
—**Democrat & Chronicle (Rochester, NY)**

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