

THE MIDDLE OF YESTERDAY

A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS

By Ken Jones

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THE MIDDLE OF YESTERDAY

By Ken Jones

CAST OF CHARACTERS (FOUR MEN, THREE WOMEN)

- KILBY FLEMING A man in his eighties. Kilby is suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. He is desperately trying to decipher the past from the present. He was once a man full of piss and vinegar, but he has now fallen prey to confusion.
- STEPHEN FLEMING A man in his late forties or early fifties. Stephen is Kilby's son. He is a staunch, hardworking businessman. The past and its events prevent him from getting too close to anyone especially his father.
- NURSE A registered Naval nurse. She is tough but compassionate. She deals with Alzheimer patients every day, and she struggles to keep a smile on her face.
- LEANNA The memory of Kilby's wife. She appears to Kilby as though she were still in the 1940's. She is beautiful, understanding, but ultimately beaten by Fate.
- YOUNG STEPHEN The memory of Stephen in his late teens. He is also captured in the early forties. He is a teenager trying to break away from his strict father.
- LACY The memory of Kilby's daughter. She is a young teenage girl captured in the mid-1930's. She died a young girl in a car crash, and she never had the chance to experience life. She dreams of heroes and ballerinas.
- SOLDIER The memory of Kilby himself. Dressed in the uniform of a Chief Warrant Officer of the U.S.N., the soldier appears to Kilby like a physical manifestation of his conscience.

The action of the play occurs in the early 1990's at a Naval Hospital in Virginia and also in the mind of Kilby Fleming.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE: The scenes flow between the mind of Kilby and a Naval Hospital.

ACT TWO: Same as ACT ONE, a day later.

EPILOGUE: Same location. Three days later.

SETTING

A large willow tree sweeps from stage left over the playing area. From the branches of the tree, hang items from the past and from Kilby's memory: children's skates, a garden hoe, a mechanic's wrench, a coke bottle, a phonograph, a guitar, a rifle, a military helmet, a bean pot, a crutch, and other odds and ends. The tree and the items are muted in color, faded, lost in time.

Beneath the tree branches are various small levels representing planes within his brain. The largest of the levels is the hospital room in the present. A hospital bed, reclining chair, and hospital cart represent the room. NOTE: The people of the memories should freely move in and out of the action of the play. Lights can add to the distortion of space and angles when the present turns to past.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

KILBY, an elderly man, is sitting in a blue-recliner hospital chair. A steel guitar is resting on his lap. HE is staring at his right hand as if he were trying to will it to play the instrument. Slowly, his left hand begins to move the steel bar up and down the neck of the guitar in definite patterns. In short, his left hand is moving through a song, but his right hand is unable to join in. This painful war of the mind begins to show in body tremors. KILBY, flushed, begins gasping for air. His right hand falls to the guitar as though someone has cut the supporting cables.

KILBY: Huh! (Gasp.) Plu -- (Gasp.) plu -- (Gasp.) plu! (HE sucks air into his lungs as though he were suffocating.) Huh (Gasp.) huh (Gasp.) huh! Plu -- (Gasp.) plu -- (Gasp.) plu! (More air.) Please!! Huh (Gasp.) huh (Gasp.) huh! (HE begins to pant.) Please! (Gasp.) Play! (Gasp.) huh (Gasp.) Play! (Gasp.) Play! (His breathing becomes more irregular.) Why -- (Gasp.) -- I -- (Gasp.) -- play? (HE strums the strings with his right hand.) Make -- (Gasp.) huh (Gasp.) -- please --

KILBY gulps for air, and then slouches forward in his chair. The scene moves into KILBY'S mind. LEANNA enters. SHE is a young woman dressed in a flowing dress of the early 1940's. SHE is KILBY'S memory of his wife.

LEANNA: Kilby! Don't feel alone.

KILBY: What?

LEANNA: Kilby.

KILBY: Yes.

LEANNA: You're not all that you've got.

KILBY: No?

LEANNA: Not when we're together.

KILBY: Together.

LEANNA: Don't feel alone.

KILBY: I do.

LEANNA: Remember --

KILBY: -- I can't.

LEANNA: Try.

KILBY: I get lost.

LEANNA: Winding and twisting.

KILBY: -- up and down --

LEANNA: -- and all around!

KILBY: My thoughts move further and further away. Leaving me.

LEANNA: Not when we're together.

KILBY: No.

LEANNA: Think of the days - -

KILBY: - - oh, I do - -

LEANNA: - - and all the nights.

KILBY: Oh, I remember.

LEANNA: The river?

KILBY: I remember.

LEANNA: The shore.

KILBY: Yes.

LEANNA: Hear it running?

KILBY: No.

LEANNA: Then listen - - it goes on and on and on - -

KILBY: I think I hear it.

LEANNA: Listen to it flow away from the things that we've done.

KILBY: Yes.

LEANNA: Follow it.

KILBY: I can remember.

LEANNA: Kilby, you're not alone - - I'm here.

KILBY: I can see - -

LEANNA: Remembering the old willow tree.

KILBY: Yes, it seems so bent, so sad.

LEANNA: The dog in the field.

KILBY: When I was a kid.

LEANNA: Hoot owls on winter nights.

KILBY: Outside my window.

LEANNA: You were a soldier.

KILBY: The navy.

LEANNA: So handsome in your uniform.

KILBY: You thought so - -

LEANNA: And that's what matters.

KILBY: I loved coming home.

LEANNA: Play a song.

KILBY: I try to play.

LEANNA: But we're together, Kilby.

KILBY: You're right.

LEANNA: Listen to the river and play me a song.

KILBY lowers his hand to the guitar and gently, a song emerges. A simple song, RED RIVER VALLEY. LEANNA moves swaying back and forth around the room.

WON'T YOU THINK OF THE VALLEY YOU'RE LEAVING
OH, HOW LONELY HOW SAD IT WILL BE

OH, THINK OF THE FOND HEART YOU'RE BREAKING
AND THE GRIEF YOU ARE CAUSING ME TO SEE.

KILBY: I can play

LEANNA: You always could.

KILBY: Then why do I feel so lost?

LEANNA: Not when we're together.

KILBY: Leanna, I don't know what to do.

LEANNA: Dance with me.

KILBY: What if I can't remember how?

LEANNA: You're with me. You'll remember. I promise.

KILBY rises. He places his guitar on the chair. HE moves to LEANNA. Music is heard. They begin to dance.

KILBY: Nothing is the same.

LEANNA: Should it be?

KILBY: I'm always falling and I can never grab a hold of anything. Jesus, I just want to hold on for a moment. A thought. A word. It passes by so quickly. I can hear. I can see. But it's always moving by me.

LEANNA: You're dancing.

KILBY: I'm with you.

LEANNA: That's the way it should be.

KILBY: But you're not always here. There are too many times when I'm alone. Moving around inside a huge, empty space. You're gone. People are gone. Sometimes even I'm gone.

LEANNA: When you're in this place, you should feel free. No worries. No concerns. For the first time in your life, you have nothing to weigh you down. No thoughts. No memories.

KILBY: But soon the memories come, and they move by so quickly. And they surround me and push me and push me - - until I'm to the edge. It's either over the side and fall, or I'll suffocate.

LEANNA: Take a deep breath.

KILBY: I'll suffocate. *(Then LEANNA begins to move off-stage.)*

LEANNA: Breathe. Breathe. *(KILBY gasps!)*

KILBY: I have to jump. I can't breathe. I'm too crowded! *(KILBY sits in the chair. HE moves the guitar onto his lap.)* Huh *(Gasp.)* huh *(Gasp.)* huh *(Gasp.)* plu *(Gasp.)* plu! *(The scene is back to reality. LEANNA has disappeared. KILBY is still supporting the guitar on his lap. His hands are hovering just above the strings.)* Huh *(Gasp.)* wha! Wha *(Gasp.)* what? *(HE lowers his hands to the keys and begins to play. However, the gentle song of before is not heard, only the strumming of someone who cannot*

remember how to play. HE stops.) Remember. (HE tries again, but again he fails.) Why - - I - - play? (HE holds his arms in the air, staring at them.) I - - (Gasp.) - - I - - (HE sits quietly.)

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

STEPHEN, KILBY'S son, enters. STEPHEN is in his mid-fifties. HE is a successful businessman living stressfully but happily in the world.

STEPHEN: Pop.

KILBY: Play.

STEPHEN: Pop, it's me. Stephen.

KILBY: Play.

STEPHEN: You've been playing some music?

KILBY: Stephen, listen to this song.

STEPHEN: All right. Entertain me. *(KILBY does not move.)* Pop, are you going to play me a song?

KILBY: The river.

STEPHEN: What about the river?

KILBY: Got to go to the river.

STEPHEN: Why don't we go to the river another day? Let's just stay at the hospital for now.

KILBY: Hoot owls.

STEPHEN: No! I pay good money for you to be here, and I will not have hoot owls in your room.

KILBY: My window.

STEPHEN: Feathers in the operating room. I won't have it.

KILBY: Where's the dog?

STEPHEN: What dog, Pop? We never had a dog.

KILBY: On the farm. Had plenty of dogs.

STEPHEN: When you were a kid, your father had dogs, but you never let us have a dog.

KILBY: Feed the dogs.

STEPHEN: All right, Dad. I'll feed the dogs. Here Fido, Rover! Eat your bones. There you go, Pop. The dogs have been fed.

KILBY: Stephen.

STEPHEN: Yeah, Pop, it's me.

KILBY: Where have you been?

STEPHEN: At work. That's where I always am when I'm not visiting you.

KILBY: How was school?

STEPHEN: I graduated forty years ago.

KILBY: You're late.

STEPHEN: Oh, I'm so sorry. I should just quit my job and live here with you?

KILBY: I can't play.

STEPHEN: All right. Then let's put the guitar away.

KILBY: Let's put the guitar away.

STEPHEN: Oh, no. Why don't we put the guitar away?

KILBY: Let's put the guitar away.

STEPHEN: How many times can we repeat the same thing?

KILBY: Many times.

STEPHEN: That's right, Pop. (*STEPHEN lifts the guitar off of KILBY'S lap and places it in the case.*) You look good today. Did they give you your medicine?

KILBY: Didn't want it.

STEPHEN: But you took it.

KILBY: Forced me.

STEPHEN: The nurse?

KILBY: Nazis.

STEPHEN: Pop, you can't call the nurses Nazis. None of them will want to help you.

KILBY: Too many pills.

STEPHEN: You need those pills. Don't you? (*Silence.*) Don't you?

KILBY: They have mustaches.

STEPHEN: Who?

KILBY: The Nazis.

STEPHEN: The nurses do not have mustaches. I've seen your nurses. They're very nice looking.

KILBY: Disguises. They wait for me to turn my back. I know these kinds of people.

STEPHEN: You're out of your mind.

KILBY: It's the pills.

STEPHEN: It's not the pills. Now you're going to take your medicine, and I don't want to hear anymore about it.

KILBY: I was on the Omaha when we saw this freighter.

STEPHEN: Broken record.

KILBY: The captain told the radioman to hail the vessel, but they didn't respond.

STEPHEN: And they were flying the British insignia.

KILBY: Under British colors.

STEPHEN: Pop, I've heard the story.

KILBY: Finally the code came in, but it was a week old - -

STEPHEN: - - The Captain said, "We're moving in—"

KILBY: - - The freighter started to run - -

STEPHEN: - - but you caught up.

KILBY: The demolition team boarded the ship - -

STEPHEN: - - and stopped the self-destruct mechanism.

KILBY: What?

STEPHEN: And your ship had captured the first German warship of World War II.

KILBY: I was in the Navy. Do you remember?

STEPHEN: Yes.

KILBY: The Navy kept me busy.

STEPHEN: The Navy kept you away from me. That's what I remember.

KILBY: Maybe I should have retired early.

STEPHEN: It's too late to worry about that now.

KILBY: You wrote me that letter.

STEPHEN: I wrote you many letters.

KILBY: You said I was never there for you.

STEPHEN: Pop, those days are in the past. Why don't you get in bed?

KILBY: Stephen?

STEPHEN: Come on. Into bed. (*STEPHEN helps KILBY into the bed. The NURSE enters.*)

NURSE: Hello, Stephen.

STEPHEN: How are you?

NURSE: You're here early today.

STEPHEN: I won't be able to come this evening. I have a dinner meeting.

NURSE: That means Kilby will start getting angry at about six o'clock.

STEPHEN: I was hoping if I came earlier he wouldn't get so upset. I mean it's not that easy to come here every day. Traffic is always bad. I usually end up leaving work early. Parking is a problem. I would be here if I could. But my Dad cannot expect me to be here every day. That's just not fair.

NURSE: I don't think he expects it. He probably won't even remember.

STEPHEN: Probably not.

NURSE: And how is he today?

STEPHEN: Same.

NURSE: We've been trying some new medication that his doctor recommended. Your father doesn't like our new nurse - -George.

STEPHEN: That makes sense. He was talking about a mustache.

NURSE: Kilby seems to prefer the ladies.

KILBY: He tried to pull my teeth out.

NURSE: Really.

STEPHEN: Pop!

KILBY: My teeth.

NURSE: Well, I'll tell George not to pull your teeth out.

STEPHEN: I'm sorry. Pop, I get very embarrassed when you say these things. The nurses are very nice to you. Aren't they? Don't they get you your snacks? Didn't they find your guitar picks last week when you lost them?

NURSE: We know he doesn't mean it. He can't help it. Can you, Mr. Fleming?

KILBY: I don't trust a one of you!

STEPHEN: I took him to McDonalds on Saturday so he could get his McMuffin, and he took the table apart while I was in the restroom.

NURSE: Did he put it back together?

STEPHEN: Are you kidding? He not only put it back together, but he gave the manager tips on how to improve it.

NURSE: At least he was able to remember how to put it back together.

STEPHEN: He thinks he's working on a '65 Buick Le Sabre.

KILBY: Best car on the road.

NURSE: I believe you, Kilby.

KILBY: Bad garage. No tools.

STEPHEN: Dad, you were in a restaurant.

KILBY: Restaurant.

STEPHEN: McDonalds.

KILBY: Saturday? Today's Saturday?

STEPHEN: No, Pop. Today is not Saturday.

KILBY: But you said it was Saturday.

STEPHEN: No, you said it was Saturday.

KILBY: I heard you.

NURSE: Speaking of this Saturday, the doctor is going to run some tests.

STEPHEN: More tests?

NURSE: He wants to see how much further along Kilby is. He'd like to know at what pace the disease is moving.

KILBY: You said it.

STEPHEN: But he'll never get better. Right?

NURSE: That's right.

KILBY: Clear as a bell.

STEPHEN: What's the point? Why more tests?

KILBY: Saturday.

NURSE: With Alzheimer's, the progression of the disease is often affected by the medication. The Doctor hopes to slow down the

degeneration. He's trying to help your father hold on to a little more.

KILBY: Leanna?

STEPHEN: Wait a minute, Dad.

NURSE: We hope the new medication is slowing down the memory loss, but truthfully, I've seen so many patients - --Well, it doesn't usually improve. Some do - - some don't.

STEPHEN: I think he's worse. He can only speak in fragments. Pieces of sentences.

NURSE: But he still remembers Saturdays.

KILBY: Leanna.

STEPHEN: Leanna is not here, Pop.

NURSE: Kilby, do you feel like talking?

KILBY: Stephen.

NURSE: I'm going to ask Stephen to step outside.

KILBY: Leanna, where's Stephen?

STEPHEN: Pop, Mom's not here. She's gone. Remember?

KILBY: Remember.

STEPHEN: Mom died. (*KILBY lies back on the bed.*) Are you all right? (*Silence.*)

NURSE: He'll be all right. I just want to talk with him. See how coherent he is today. We want to see if he can answer the questions with the same answers he gave last week.

STEPHEN: I'll be outside.

NURSE: Don't worry.

STEPHEN: I just wish I knew what he was thinking.

NURSE: We all do.

STEPHEN: If I could just see inside his head - --what keeps him going. Does he remember the faces that go with the names?

NURSE: I think he does.

STEPHEN: You're going to be okay, Dad? (*Silence.*) Okay. I'm outside.

(*STEPHEN exits.*)

NURSE: Kilby. (*Silence.*) Kilby.

KILBY: Got to go.

NURSE: Go where, Kilby?

KILBY: McMuffin.

NURSE: Not today. Today we're going to talk.

KILBY: Our demolition crew boarded the ship - - to disconnect the self-destruct mechanism.

NURSE: Self-destruct?

KILBY: We had captured the first German warship of the war.

NURSE: World War II?

KILBY: America had been neutral.

NURSE: Kilby, I'm confused.

KILBY: Are you sick?

NURSE: I'm lost.

KILBY: What?

NURSE: I'm lost, Kilby.

KILBY: We're lost. *(LEANNA, KILBY'S wife, enters. SHE is only a memory. The NURSE cannot see or hear her.)*

LEANNA: Honey!

NURSE: I don't know what you're talking about anymore.

LEANNA: Too much time.

KILBY: Retirement.

NURSE: That's not what I wanted to know.

KILBY: Why?

NURSE: Kilby, please, try to concentrate this time.

LEANNA: Leave the garden be and eat your lunch.

KILBY: Lunch time. Isn't it lunch time?

NURSE: You just ate breakfast. Are you hungry?

LEANNA: Wash up outside.

KILBY: Lunch time.

NURSE: Kilby, you just ate. ALL right. *(Pause.)* All right?

KILBY: Yes.

NURSE: Now, do you know where you are?

LEANNA: Don't forget, you have an appointment.

KILBY: At the hospital.

NURSE: Exactly. That's correct.

KILBY: Yes.

NURSE: All right, Kilby. Why don't you tell me about the Navy?

(YOUNG STEPHEN enters. This is a memory of KILBY'S son at seventeen.)

YOUNG STEPHEN: Dad, you're not leaving again?

KILBY: The Navy tells me what to do.

NURSE: And you did it?

KILBY: I had to do it. Orders.

YOUNG STEPHEN: Don't order me around!

KILBY: Stephen!

NURSE: Your son.

KILBY: Yes!

NURSE: Stephen wanted you to stay home?

KILBY: Yes.

YOUNG STEPHEN: We had to follow you.

KILBY: Leanna wanted to follow me.

NURSE: During the war?

KILBY: When my ship would come in, she wanted to be there.
YOUNG STEPHEN: We had to follow!
LEANNA: Now, Stephen --
KILBY: They didn't have to move around so much,
LEANNA: -- I want to be there when your father comes home.
KILBY: Leanna insisted.
LEANNA: I insist.
NURSE: It's perfectly understandable.
YOUNG STEPHEN: She was only a little girl.
KILBY: She was our baby.
NURSE: Who?
KILBY: Lacy.
NURSE: You have a daughter, too?
LEANNA: Kilby, I'm driving there to meet you!
KILBY: Don't come. It's too far to drive.
LEANNA: I insist.
NURSE: Driving from where?
KILBY: San Diego to North Carolina.
NURSE: That's a long trip.
KILBY: Too long.
YOUNG STEPHEN: You made us drive all that way!
KILBY: I didn't want you --
LEANNA: C'mon, kids, we're going to meet your father in Carolina.
KILBY: The roads were so bad back then.
NURSE: Is this during the war?
KILBY: Yes.
YOUNG STEPHEN: Mom, why can't we live in one place for more than a month?
LEANNA: Your father wants to share his leave with us.
KILBY: I loved her.
NURSE: Your wife?
KILBY: Leanna.
LEANNA: I love you, too. The operator says we have to hang up --
KILBY: I loved them.
LEANNA: -- so we have to say, 'good-bye.'
KILBY: Good-bye.
YOUNG STEPHEN: I tried to hold on to her.
KILBY: It wasn't your fault.
LEANNA: Is there something in our lane?
KILBY: The roads are so bad in the country.
NURSE: Kilby.
LEANNA: I think that something's in our lane!

KILBY: She was so tiny. (*LACY, KILBY'S daughter, enters. SHE is a young girl dressed in a wrinkled, yellow dress.*)

LACY: (*SHE sings.*) AMAZING GRACE! HOW SWEET THE SOUND --

KILBY: The funeral is at the old house.

LACY: -- THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE ME!

NURSE: Kilby, I'm lost.

YOUNG STEPHEN: If you hadn't made us -- (*YOUNG STEPHEN exits.*)

LACY: I ONCE WAS LOST --

KILBY: Lacy, I'm sorry.

LACY: -- BUT NOW AM FOUND --

NURSE: Kilby, help me out.

KILBY: Leanna forgave me.

LACY: WAS BLIND --

LEANNA: Kilby, leave that garden be!

LACY: -- BUT NOW I SEE. (*LACY exits.*)

NURSE: I don't know what you're talking about!

KILBY: Retirement.

NURSE: No. We were not talking about your retirement!

LEANNA: Too much time. (*SHE exits.*)

NURSE: Let's try to really concentrate this time. All right?

KILBY: All right.

NURSE: Ready?

KILBY: Yes.

NURSE: All right, Kilby. Where are you?

KILBY: Hospital?

NURSE: Great.

KILBY: Great.

NURSE: Do you know why you're here?

KILBY: I must be sick.

NURSE: Do you feel sick?

KILBY: Do I look sick?

NURSE: You look great.

KILBY: I look awful.

NURSE: Well, does anything hurt?

KILBY: Darn near everything hurts when you're my age.

NURSE: Anything specific?

KILBY: My shoulder's achin' a bit.

NURSE: Let me see. (*SHE examines KILBY'S shoulder.*) How high can you raise it?

KILBY: High enough to wash the dish --but not enough to put it away.

NURSE: Did you fall on this shoulder, Kilby?

KILBY: Yes.

NURSE: When?

KILBY: More times than I want to recall.

NURSE: Well, it could be a tear in the muscle or a tendon. We'll have to get some x-rays and have the doctor look at it.

KILBY: The first time I fell I was in the Army.

NURSE: I thought you were in the navy?

KILBY: I spent two years in the Army learning I wanted to be in the navy.

NURSE: I see. Well, I'm going to tell the doctor about your shoulder.

KILBY: 1922. I was just sixteen.

NURSE: Will you be all right in here while I'm gone?

KILBY: The second time I fell on it - -

NURSE: I'm going to step outside for a few minutes, Kilby.

KILBY: Outside?

NURSE: Yes.

KILBY: Don't leave the door open. You'll let the cold air in. *(The NURSE exits. KILBY is confused for a moment. HE climbs from the bed.)* I'm outside. *(LEANNA is heard.)*

LEANNA: Lunch.

KILBY: I'm in the middle of lunch!

LEANNA: Well, I'm in the middle of lunch.

KILBY: Leanna, can you bring it out here? I'm trying to work.

LEANNA: I can, but I don't want to.

KILBY: I've got to finish this car. *(HE slides beneath the bed as if it were an automobile.)* Damn! I never will get used to these foreign cars. I should have told Mrs. Crawley that I just don't work on foreign cars. This thing isn't worth the metal it's made of. *(LEANNA enters carrying a dish towel.)*

LEANNA: What would you like to drink?

KILBY: Depends on what we're having?

LEANNA: Left-over ham, pole beans, fried potatoes and cornbread.

KILBY: Coca-Cola.

LEANNA: Bottle or glass?

KILBY: Just give me the bottle.

LEANNA: Please.

KILBY: What?

LEANNA: You could throw in a please every once in a while.

KILBY: Please.

LEANNA: Your welcome.

KILBY: Where the hell is Stephen? He's never home when I need him.

LEANNA: School.

KILBY: It's darn near two o'clock.

LEANNA: He doesn't get out until three.

KILBY: I thought he got out at two?

LEANNA: Wrong city. Wrong state. Wrong school.

KILBY: Really?

LEANNA: Losing your memory at such a young age. How sad.

KILBY: Well, I seem to remember a Coca-Cola that I was promised.

LEANNA: I'll get it for you.

KILBY: Could you hand me a crescent wrench?

LEANNA: What does it look like?

KILBY: Like a crescent wrench! Never mind. I'll get it myself.

LEANNA exits. KILBY gets to his feet and starts going through the tools and instruments. The NURSE enters.

NURSE: Kilby!

KILBY: What?

NURSE: Don't touch those!

KILBY: I need it.

NURSE: You're lucky you didn't cut yourself. It's my fault. I should never have left those in here with you.

KILBY: I needed a crescent wrench.

NURSE: Don't have one here. I usually just tighten peoples' bolts by hand.

KILBY: Coke.

NURSE: Coke?

KILBY: My Coca-Cola.

NURSE: Sure. We can arrange that. Do you want it in the can or a cup?

KILBY: I told you already.

NURSE: Fine. We'll get you a can. And I'll just take these outta here.

SHE gathers up the instruments and exits. LEANNA enters.

LEANNA: Out of Coca-Cola.

KILBY: Stephen.

LEANNA: The boy can drink more cola than a person should be allowed. He loves the stuff.

KILBY: He'll be home soon. I need him here.

LEANNA: Half-an-hour.

KILBY: I want him to help.

LEANNA: He's too young.

KILBY: You're never too young to learn. He needs to know how to fix a car. He needs to be able to work on an engine.

LEANNA: He loses interest so quickly.

KILBY: He needs help. There are priorities in life. I was taught that by my father early on - -

LEANNA: With a strap.

KILBY: You're damn right with a strap. I knew what was waiting for me at the other end of a bad decision.

LEANNA: And that made you a better person.

KILBY: It made me a person with priorities.

LEANNA: Let him grow up.

KILBY: And then it will be too late.

LEANNA: Kilby, where do you get these ideas?

KILBY: From growing up.

LEANNA: So you're all grown up, and now it's your turn to inflict your knowledge on your son.

KILBY: Exactly.

LEANNA: What happened to the fun?

KILBY: I left it in the war. You don't have time to play in a boiler room. You don't have time to think. Keep the pressure up. Check the batteries. Keep the turbines clear. *(Pause.)* I want to have fun. I really do, but I know that in a couple of weeks I'll be back out there. And it's better if I don't have the memory - -then I don't know what I'm missing. *(LEANNA moves to him.)*

LEANNA: I know what you're missing.

KILBY: I have to work.

LEANNA: Come here.

KILBY: In the garage?

LEANNA: Right here with the oil stains.

KILBY: Leanna!

LEANNA: More room.

KILBY: On Mrs. Crawley's car?

LEANNA: Like she hasn't done it here herself?

KILBY: She's ninety-two!

LEANNA: What a woman!

KILBY: What if Stephen comes home?

LEANNA: Keep the steam up!

KILBY: Leanna!

LEANNA: Keep those turbines clear! *(HE gently takes her face in his hands.)*

KILBY: You're the most alive person I know. I envy you.

LEANNA: I love you.

KILBY: Nothing will keep you down for long.

LEANNA: Now you're talking, sailor.

KILBY: I love you so much.

LEANNA: Incoming! *(She kisses him.)* You'd better get below deck.

KILBY: What if our son comes home?

LEANNA: He won't. Now climb up here. *(THEY fall back on the table.)*

KILBY: Mrs. Crawley would die.

LEANNA: I love foreign cars. *(As their passion builds, they slip off the table.)* Kilby!

KILBY: Damn.

LEANNA: Are you all right?

KILBY: No.

LEANNA: *(Laughing.)* I guess I swept you off your feet.

KILBY: Right on to my ass!

LEANNA: I'm sorry I'm laughing, but you look silly down there.

KILBY: Well, I think I'm dying.

LEANNA: You're not dying.

KILBY: My shoulder.

LEANNA: Can you move it?

KILBY: Well I think push ups are out of the question.

LEANNA: Is it broken?

KILBY: I don't know.

LEANNA: Move it.

KILBY: It hurts! I can't move it! It hurts!

NURSE enters.

NURSE: Oh my Lord! It's going to be all right.

KILBY: I can't move it.

NURSE: Don't. Just leave it be.

LEANNA: I suppose the mood has been broken?

KILBY: Definitely broken.

NURSE: Now, I don't think so, but we'll x-ray it to be safe.

KILBY: Where's Stephen? Why is he never here when I need him?

NURSE: He's waiting.

KILBY: When he gets home, he'll help me up.

LEANNA: I'll help you up.

NURSE: I'm going to need some help!

KILBY: Stephen! *(Older STEPHEN enters.)*

STEPHEN: Dad!

NURSE: Can you help me lift him up?

LEANNA: I'll help you up.

KILBY: Get away.

LEANNA: Then I'll get some ice. (*LEANNA exits.*)

STEPHEN: What happened?

KILBY: Ice.

STEPHEN: Dad, you didn't fall on the ice. Now what the hell happened?

NURSE: His legs must have given out on him. It could be a combination of medicines. He just won't stay in this bed.

KILBY: My shoulder.

STEPHEN: How is it?

NURSE: Nothing feels broken. I'll get a doctor to make sure. (*THEY help KILBY back into bed.*) He was just telling me about his shoulder, and then he goes and falls on it.

STEPHEN: See. This is why --

NURSE: -- he's here?

STEPHEN: I can't take care of him at home.

NURSE: Well, by the looks of things, we're not doing much better here.

STEPHEN: My wife can't watch over him all the time.

NURSE: You can't be upset about putting him in here.

STEPHEN: He's like a kid.

NURSE: Don't worry. We'll take care of him -- and a lot better than you've seen today.

KILBY: What happened?

NURSE: Did you roll out of bed, Kilby?

KILBY: Mrs. Crawley's going to be fightin' mad.

STEPHEN: Crawley?

KILBY: Couldn't fix that damn foreign car of hers.

STEPHEN: Old lady Crawley's been dead for twenty years.

NURSE: We'll need a complete series. I'll call down the doctor.

STEPHEN: Years ago he fell on the same shoulder. He was working on a car, and he slipped in the garage. He had to wait until I got home to help him up. My mother couldn't move him. Wouldn't you know it? I was late that day, and he was furious. He gave me hell. Acted like it was my fault that he had fallen in the first place.

NURSE: Why don't you go on back to work. We're going to be keeping your dad busy for the rest of the afternoon.

KILBY: I heard that.

STEPHEN: He'll be all right?

KILBY: A few more needles. Another quart of blood. A garden hose up my Mr. Willy. I'll be fine.

NURSE: Kilby, we do those things for your own good.

KILBY: What?

NURSE: Don't be telling your son here that we're treating you badly.

KILBY: (*Confused.*) No. I don't know - -

NURSE: Okay. Well, I'll leave you two alone, and when you leave I'll get someone to watch over him.

STEPHEN: Thanks.

NURSE: And don't get too upset with him. He doesn't know he's causing any trouble.

STEPHEN: Causing trouble is not a new thing for my dad.

NURSE: Old habits.

SHE exits.

STEPHEN: Well, Pop, you're a mess. Falling out of bed. Talking to people who have been dead for years. Why? What happened to the man who for twenty-four hours a day had an opinion on everything. Don't pump the gas on a new car before turning the ignition. You'll flood it. Don't use credit cards. Never saw sense in using credit. Never had problems. A dollar bill pays for a dollars worth of stuff. Save the coffee grinds. Put them in the baggie by the sink. Good for the garden. Don't let the water run while you're doing the dishes. You'll drain the state. (*Pause.*) God, I actually miss it. I miss your Listerined breath breathing down on my shoulder. Watching my every move. Caring - - worrying about me so much that you never had time to just stop and talk about - - whatever. Lord, how could I miss that?

KILBY: Stephen?

STEPHEN: Yeah, Pop?

KILBY: My shoulder hurts.

STEPHEN: You fell on it, Pop. You fell on your bad shoulder.

KILBY: Stephen?

STEPHEN: I'm still here.

KILBY: My shoulder hurts.

STEPHEN: Try not to think about it.

KILBY: But I've got to think about something.

STEPHEN: Good point. (*Silence.*)

KILBY: How's Susie?

STEPHEN: I imagine she's fine.

KILBY: Don't even know how your own wife is doing?

STEPHEN: My wife is not Susie, Pop. I went out with Susie in junior high school. Once. To a dance. I haven't seen her in 40 years.

KILBY: How is she?

STEPHEN: If you mean Maggie, my wife, then she's fine.

KILBY: I always liked her.

STEPHEN: Then it would be really nice if you didn't call her by the names of all my old girlfriends.

KILBY: You didn't have that many.

STEPHEN: Well, you've managed to remember one important fact.

KILBY: Is Susie coming over today?

STEPHEN: Maggie is coming to see you tomorrow, and she is bringing you a sweet potato pie.

KILBY: Where is she?

STEPHEN: At home. Her father's been sick too. She's going to talk with her sister about putting him into a home.

KILBY: That's sad.

STEPHEN: Yes - - it is.

KILBY: Poor old guy.

STEPHEN: Yep.

KILBY: Don't put me in a home.

STEPHEN: No. I'll leave you right here.

KILBY: It's a good home.

STEPHEN: You bet.

KILBY: A fine house. Leanna loves that kitchen.

STEPHEN: I know, pop.

KILBY: Plenty of room.

STEPHEN: It's a lovely kitchen.

KILBY: Designed it myself.

STEPHEN: I was there. Remember?

KILBY: You helped me lay down the foundation.

STEPHEN: It took a long time.

KILBY: It was a strong foundation.

STEPHEN: That's what you wanted. One that would hold up no matter what.

KILBY: No matter what!

STEPHEN: Most miserable summer of my teenage life.

KILBY: We finished it - - together.

STEPHEN: I had managed to hit every one of my fingers with the hammer before we finished that house.

KILBY: And when we were done - -

STEPHEN: - - we went for barbecue.

KILBY: I remember that.

STEPHEN: It's funny that you do.

KILBY: Shredded pork barbecue.

STEPHEN: On a thick bun.

KILBY: And cole slaw - -

STEPHEN AND KILBY: - - piled to the sky! *(THEY laugh.)*

KILBY: You could barely hold your sandwich with all those bandages on your fingers.

STEPHEN: We had a good time that day. You gave me a beer. My first beer.

KILBY: We talked.

STEPHEN: Actually, we didn't talk very much, but on that day, it didn't matter.

KILBY: Stephen?

STEPHEN: Yeah, Pop?

KILBY: Susie -- I mean Maggie --

STEPHEN: Pop.

KILBY: Tell her I love sweet potato pie. *(There is a long silence. STEPHEN removes a tiny wooden ring box.)*

STEPHEN: I brought you a present.

KILBY: A beer?

STEPHEN: No, but I will next time if you want one. I brought you Mom's ring box.

KILBY: Leanna's?

STEPHEN: The one you made for her.

KILBY: That's a long time ago.

STEPHEN: You mentioned it last week, so I thought you might like to have it.

KILBY: I made that box.

STEPHEN: I know. So here it is. You need to hold onto it. Don't lose it. *(KILBY takes the box.)*

KILBY: Stephen.

STEPHEN: I've got to go. I need to go. I won't be back tonight. I'm sorry, but I have a business dinner. My boss is in town, and well, he wants to talk. There might be some changes in the air. Who can say with business today?

KILBY: Steve.

STEPHEN: Do you hear me? I won't be back tonight. You'll have to eat your dinner by yourself.

KILBY: Stevie --

STEPHEN: Maybe they'll let you eat in the dining room. You could sit with some of your friends.

KILBY: My friends are old.

STEPHEN: Yes. That's true.

KILBY: They don't have any idea of what they're talking about --

STEPHEN: Imagine that.

KILBY: I don't want to eat in the mess hall.

STEPHEN: I know you don't like the dining room, but I just thought you might like the company.

KILBY: Everyone talks about the same things.

STEPHEN: At least, they're talking.

KILBY: Crappin' and dyin'. That's all I hear.

STEPHEN: Mr. Jenkins just had half his colon taken out. Give him a break, Pop.

KILBY: Crappin' and dyin' is what you want to hear about while you're eating your dinner?

STEPHEN: No.

KILBY: I didn't think so.

STEPHEN: There's Miss Peterson.

KILBY: No.

STEPHEN: She's nice.

KILBY: She's after my money.

STEPHEN: She's 97, blind and in a wheelchair. What would she want with anyone's money?

KILBY: She doesn't need that wheelchair.

STEPHEN: Now how do you know that?

KILBY: And I've seen her looking up at the clock. She ain't blind.

STEPHEN: Dad! She has palsy in her neck. Her head is permanently aimed that way. She isn't looking at the clock.

KILBY: Drop a few dollars on the floor and watch a not-so-blind woman jump out of that wheelchair.

STEPHEN: Good idea. I'll try to ensnare a few widows before I leave tonight. Fine. Eat alone in your room. But I will not be back here for dinner! (*STEPHEN moves to the exit.*)

KILBY: I can order up two meals.

STEPHEN: Dad, I won't be back.

KILBY: Collard greens? Butter beans? Fresh from the garden.

STEPHEN: Good bye.

KILBY: Are you leaving?

STEPHEN: I told you.

KILBY: Go home.

STEPHEN: Good idea.

KILBY: Look in my closet.

STEPHEN: Your closet?

KILBY: My uniform.

STEPHEN: Your uniform is in the attic.

KILBY: No. My uniform is in my closet.

STEPHEN: It hasn't been in your closet since Truman was President.

KILBY: Stephen bring me my uniform.

STEPHEN: What?

KILBY: My uniform.

STEPHEN: Why do you want it?

KILBY: I need it for the funeral.

STEPHEN: Whose funeral?

KILBY: Mine.

STEPHEN: Dad!

KILBY: I need to wear it. When I'm buried.

STEPHEN: You're not dying.

KILBY: Bring the uniform.

STEPHEN: All right, pop.

STEPHEN exits.

KILBY: STEPHEN! Stephen! Steve! (*KILBY seems upset.*) Steve (*Gasp.*) Steve (*Gasp.*) Stephen! (*KILBY breathes heavily. HE sits for a moment looking at the wooden box.*)

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