

"STUFF"

A new play in two acts
By Jim Reyland

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The cast

Milton Stack:

Mid 40's, intelligent, rough around the edges, cigarette smoking, blue-collar, physically strong, caring and famous for offering amazing insights and spinning giant yarns about relatives real and imagined. He's subject to random outburst both vocal and physical. A nurturing soul, friends are important to him, things are not. He likes words that begin with G, the color crimson and a good joke.

Bobby Warren:

Late 40's, black and unmarried, Bobby lives alone in a trailer and collects things. He's a protector, troublemaker and hot head. At first you think he's smarter than Milton. But just as Milton surprises with flashes of brilliance, Bobby amazes with his cerebral deficiencies. He likes the three stooges, the color orange and management by intimidation.

PROP REQUIREMENTS

A large wardrobe, a baseball bat, a trash cart, a small antique case with confederate money, an antique radio, a chrome car mirror, two envelopes with letters, a fancy lamp, a red wig and some string, boxes of books, a large clock that runs four times the normal speed and plenty of other stuff.

ACT ONE**PLACE:**

It's a 1930's era theater.

AT RISING:

Stuff fills a darkened stage. A large wardrobe, a fancy antique lamp, a large clock reads nine o'clock runs four times speed. An old radio sitting on a shelf turns itself on broadcasting a Billy Graham sermon. MILTON and BOBBY enter and the radio turns itself off.

MILTON

Shit! Who put that there?

BOBBY

Stay where you're at I'm coming.

MILTON

You don't have to come for me.

BOBBY

Don't have to do nothing, I told you about feeling sorry for yourself.

BOBBY runs into the wardrobe.

Shit! Who put that there? Milton stand still!

BOBBY finally finds MILTON.

I've been looking all over for you, where you been?

MILTON

Taking a leak...

BOBBY

I didn't see no bathroom.

MILTON

I started one.

(Pause)

Don't tell me I can't piss!

BOBBY

Can't tell you nothing...

MILTON

They got some hot in here Bobby.

BOBBY

Son of a bitch Gary...

MILTON

Son of a bitch Gary!

BOBBY

Sending us single file into the shit again...

MILTON

Who's Gary?

BOBBY

The man on the truck what hired us for this job? I bet we walked a mile pushing this cart.

MILTON

We walked a mile in the rain.

BOBBY

You're thinking about last week.

MILTON

That was last week.

BOBBY

And the sister at the soup kitchen didn't give us no breakfast because she said we smelled.

MILTON

We do.

BOBBY

That's right, dragging a shovel tired and hot, hotter than hell's hinges...

MILTON

Oh Mrs. Do-mar it's hot.

BOBBY finds a baseball bat and poses.

BOBBY

When I get drafted by the Columbia Mules baseball team, I'm gonna find me a fan with nothing to do but cool me off.

MILTON

Every winter they don't call and every spring you're another year too old.

BOBBY

Rod Carew played at forty and he's in the hall of fame.

MILTON

He started when he was eighteen you haven't started yet.

BOBBY

But I got the look! You know I got the look!

BOBBY poses with the baseball bat.

MILTON trips the light panel; the full stage lights come up. **MILTON** double takes looking at the massive junk.

MILTON

Bobby? I wouldn't turn around if I were you.

BOBBY stands frozen in mid pose.

BOBBY

You got something back there you don't want me to see; don't tell me not to look when you know I got the look.

Bobby turns slowly.

Holy Shit! That ain't nothing; I seen worse piles of junk on "The Price Is Right!"

MILTON

Bob Barker was a sloppy bastard. We did one worse in, in?

BOBBY

In the United States Army, every damn day...

MILTON

...With one hand in my pocket...

MILTON puts his hand deep into his pocket.

BOBBY

(Amused)

Milton, I do believe you like that too much.

BOBBY speaks to the audience then realizes there are actual people in the theater.

BOBBY

Before the army had that don't ask don't tell, Milton was going around telling everybody.

(Pause)

Hey Gilligan, we got a situation.

MILTON

What?

BOBBY

They got people in here man.

MILTON

Where?

BOBBY

Out there, in them seats, in the dark...

MILTON

It's a theater, that's what they do.

BOBBY

Well I don't like nobody watching me.

MILTON

Do what I do, ignore em.

BOBBY steps forward.

BOBBY

No. I'm gonna make friends with em.

MILTON

Get to work.

BOBBY

How you all doing?

MILTON pulls BOBBY back from the edge of the stage.

MILTON

Gary's coming back...

BOBBY

Fuck Gary! I didn't sign up for this shit. They got too much hot and too much stuff to fool with here.

(To audience)

All you mother fuckers can come up here and take what you want because we're leaving.

BOBBY blusters off then stops when **MILTON** calls to him. **MILTON** holds a manila envelope with MULES written in large block letters.

MILTON

This came for you.

MILTON gives the envelope to **BOBBY**; he looks at it and hands it back to **MILTON** who hands it back to **BOBBY**.

Somebody took the time to write it, maybe you should read it?

BOBBY rips open the envelope looks at it and then hands it back to **MILTON**.

BOBBY

What it says?

MILTON

Dear Mules.

BOBBY

Now it don't say dear mules!

MILTON shows the letter to **BOBBY**.

MILTON

What's it say then?

BOBBY

A mule is a lazy, greasy, four-legged smelly bag a shit!

MILTON

Stubborn too...

BOBBY

Should we take that as a compliment?

MILTON

The man on the truck, Gary, he called us mules this morning.

BOBBY

Milton how many times I told you to get your head out of your butt and quit listening to an asshole?

(Loud)

What else?

MILTON

It say's we're working for a man named Mr. Price who wants us to clear all the stuff off this stage so he can "renovate".

BOBBY

What's that renovate?

MILTON

Fix up; he wants it cleared out by six o'clock tonight so he can "renovate" tomorrow.

BOBBY

(Amused)

Well that ain't gonna happen.

MILTON

Says here if it does, we can keep all this stuff.

BOBBY

No shit? It says that?

(Excited)

Well you can smell us and tell us and send us to the store, we'll just spank ya and thank ya and carry out some more.

MILTON

Roses are red violets are violet, Andy's from Mayberry not from Mt. Pilot.

BOBBY

I got a pocket full posies and a ring around my ass. The girls call me long fellow!

BOBBY spots some stuff.

Damn, what do we got here? No sir, don't have one. I sure could use this.

MILTON

There's more...

BOBBY

I done heard all I want to hear; don't want to hear no more.

(Loud)

What else?

MILTON

Mr. Price left a family heirloom down here and Gary wants us to keep it safe for him.

MILTON points to the lamp.

There it is over yonder.

BOBBY

Where?

MILTON

When you're someplace, everywhere you ain't is over yonder.

BOBBY

If I'm here and you're there, which one of us is over yonder?

MILTON

That's easy, I'm over yonder here and you're over yonder there. And over yonder over there is Mr. Price's fancy lamp.

BOBBY

Is that right?

MILTON

It's been that way since Moses.

BOBBY

Milton, what do you suppose is so fancy bout this lamp?

MILTON

Maybe it belonged to his grandmother.

BOBBY

She had her-a whorehouse then.

(Loud)

What else?

MILTON

If we finish by six, Gary gets a bonus from Mr. Price. He says he's coming down to collect it and if we ain't done he'll know the reason why. What's the reason why Bobby?

BOBBY

We'll be done, it don't matter what's on his mind.

BOBBY checks out stuff.

MILTON

OK.

(Pause)

But where are we going to put all this stuff?

BOBBY

In my trailer

MILTON

That won't work.

BOBBY

I got a big trailer.

MILTON

It's nice but it's only twenty-five by fifty, about eight feet high. That's ten thousand cubic feet by volume. You got a hundred thousand cubic feet of stuff in here; it won't fit in your trailer.

BOBBY

(Audience)

I already thought of that; I'm gonna put my TV outside.

MILTON

My cousin Janie Lynn Wallace got a whole pile of stuff real quick one time after that her life sucked.

BOBBY

I ain't gonna let nothing happen to you Milton.

MILTON

It started after she bought some of those plastic "Appliqués," you know the round ones with sunflowers on them from the Walgreen's?

BOBBY

Well what do we got here?

MILTON

Janie Lynn got the idea to glue those "appliqués" to the seats of some wooden chairs from the Wal-Mart.

BOBBY

I ain't got one of these.

MILTON

She was gluing and applying, gluing and applying and then she gets tired and sits herself down. I know what you're thinking. Now don't ask me how but some of that glue also spilled on the floor. So now that chair was stuck to her butt and to the floor.

BOBBY

I could sure use this.

MILTON

The good news was she was pointed at the TV and it was on.

(Upset)

Butt stuck to a chair stuck to the floor when all of a sudden there come up a bad cloud; a big bad ball busting cloud! The kind of scary bastard where if you weren't already stuck to a chair you might want to be stuck under a table with your knees knocking and your head in a wash bucket! Bobby, Bobby! A storm so fierce a grown man might want to call out for his momma, momma; even if his momma was dead.

BOBBY

Milton, don't go there.

MILTON

And because of that storm, instead of getting a hundred and forty seven channels on the cable, she only got one.

BOBBY

(To audience)

One of those twenty-four hour shopping channels...

MILTON

It was all chiffon robes and socket wrenches till Clark got home.

BOBBY

Who the hell is Clark?

MILTON

Her husband...

BOBBY

I told you, you got to let me know when you go introducing new characters.

MILTON

It's my episode.

BOBBY

I can't keep up with you boy.

MILTON

Don't get mad, it's my, it's my story.

BOBBY

You're making me look bad.

MILTON blanks out and mumbles, dazed.

MILTON

I'm the one that knows how it goes Bobby.

BOBBY

What's wrong with you? We got company.

(Audience)

This happens; when Milton gets upset...he's real smart though, everybody in our unit called him genius. He could say back what he read from a book. Add big numbers together. Tell you what happened a long time ago; until the accident but he won't tell you about that. Truth is he don't remember nothing except what I tell him. It wasn't nobodies fault, none of us could see up or down we was sideways from the rain and the night and the fog, climbing a wall, a wall Milton had tried to climb a million times before, only this time he comes down on his head.

MILTON

(Singing)

It's raining, it's pouring the old man is snoring.

BOBBY

Milton!

MILTON

He bumped his head, went to bed and didn't get up till morning.

BOBBY picks up the baseball bat and makes a menacing move toward MILTON.

BOBBY

Come here Dummy!

(Audience)

You notice anything else funny about Milton? You know the gay thing? Some people won't tell you but they'd rather he not be that way. They don't understand that thing, makes em uncomfortable. And some people if they was to get sideways, was having a bad day, they might try and hurt that thing.

(Pause)

I said come here!

BOBBY crosses speaks into MILTON'S ear.

Check this out...you know she was butt stuck to a chair, stuck to the floor with only the shopping channel... when she got a fancy letter saying congratulations, here's your shiny new gold card with...

MILTON speaks along with BOBBY.

MILTON

...When she got a fancy letter saying congratulations, here's your shiny new gold card with no credit limit and twelve months to pay.

BOBBY

(Deadpan)

What did she do then Milton?

MILTON

For a while everything was alright because they were having a show on Star Trek shit and Janie Lynn hated that damn show. But then came out the "Nick-Knacks," and before Janie Lynn knew it she was covered up with them damn little clay children from every nation. She just sat there and bought and bought and bought some more, she was hooked!

BOBBY

They have a twelve-step program for that now.

MILTON

Well it was lucky they didn't have them twelve steps on the shopping channel cause she would have bought every one of them and the house that goes with em!

BOBBY

The UPS man...

MILTON

The UPS man made so many trips to her house that her youngest started calling him Daddy.

BOBBY

And he was.

MILTON

According to some members of the neighborhood watch...

(Slows)

Her house got so full Clark moved to Foley with his secretary. It took Janie Lynn three years to pay back her credit card. It just goes to show you having stuff don't always make you happy.

BOBBY

Is that what we learned today? Let me teach you something son, you keep telling them weak ass stories, letting your hair down; somebody's gonna beat you down!

MILTON

You don't have to worry about me.

BOBBY

Did you say that I ain't got to worry about you?

MILTON

Huh huh.

BOBBY

Then tell me who the hell I got to worry about?

MILTON

You ain't got to get mad either; you're always getting mad.

BOBBY

No I don't! What about it Milton?

MILTON slaps BOBBY on the back of his head. BOBBY turns slowly, calmly.

You want to keep this stuff or not?

MILTON

What if we don't get finished? What if Gary comes down here with the reason why?

BOBBY

Fuck him, let him come. Now get this stuff gone, figure out what you want because I'm getting mine.

BOBBY spots a car mirror and shows MILTON his reflection. MILTON finds a Polaroid camera takes it from the box and meticulously sets it up. MILTON reads about then sets the auto timer as BOBBY talks about his dad's car.

BOBBY

Look at you, pure chrome born on a sixty-two Belair; my daddy had that car for making deliveries from his bakery. It smelled like cinnamon sugar, cherry red, white leather seats, smooth as vanilla icing.

MILTON

Really, my Uncle Small liked cars too. He sold used ones in Fairhope Alabama.

BOBBY

A car like that would stop you. Even if you were just riding down the road thinking about nothing, you'd stop yourself when you realized you were sitting in such a fine car.

MILTON

If you're daddy still had his car my uncle would sell it for him.

BOBBY

He's got nothing; he's dead. And the day the bank came to get his car, I drove it into the Mississippi river. It was a damn shame drowning that Belair, except I got the mirror now.

BOBBY notices the camera.

What you got there? You gonna keep that?

MILTON

It's a camera, with film in it. Come on; we'll take a picture with the trash.

BOBBY

How they gonna tell which is which?

MILTON

It has a micro automatic timer clock on it. The book says you wind it, stand back and it takes your picture, no charge. Smile big now.

**MILTON winds the camera they pose.
They wait and the camera doesn't fire.**

BOBBY

How long I got to stand here?

MILTON

Until the micro automatic timer goes off

BOBBY

How long?

MILTON

A minute...

BOBBY

A whole minute!

BOBBY tries to get away.

A minute feels like an hour when you're hugging a man.

The camera flashes as BOBBY makes a fist.

MILTON

One more...

**BOBBY mugs for the camera. It flashes.
MILTON retrieves the camera.**

BOBBY

Let me see that.

MILTON

Wait; pictures are like friendships, they take time to develop. And sometimes you wait and wait for it and you think it's going to be a good one, and it's just not.

MILTON posts the picture to a box and drags more stuff off stage.

BOBBY

(Audience)

Milton's father moved the whole family to Alabama when he was seven. He said there were too many black people in South Carolina. Like they ain't no black people in Alabama? After they got down there a train come and killed his daddy and his momma, just sitting in their car. Milton went to live with his aunt and uncle who lived in Fairhope.

MILTON

Roll tide!

BOBBY

Big Orange you crimson redneck! Milton what's our plan?

MILTON

What plan?

BOBBY

Our take all the shit we don't want and you throw it outside plan.

MILTON

OK.

BOBBY

Then we take all the shit I want and put it in this pile here.

BOBBY miss-spells BOBY on a cardboard box

MILTON

That's not how you spell Bobby.

MILTON shows BOBBY the picture.

BOBBY

Look at you genius.

MILTON

There you are.

BOBBY

I'm right next to you.

MILTON

I look good.

BOBBY

Ugly as a bull dog backing up!

MILTON

Least I know what's wrong with me.

BOBBY

But you ain't sure are you?

MILTON

Momma said if you don't have anything nice to say shut up!

BOBBY finds an antique box.

BOBBY

I wonder what I got here. No, don't have one.

(Pause)

Milton come quick, I could sure this!

MILTON

What is it?

BOBBY

I thought you might tell me.

MILTON

You saw it first.

BOBBY

Now I'm showing it to you.

MILTON and BOBBY stop and look in the box then at each other - jump for joy.

MILTON & BOBBY

We're rich we're rich . . . We're rich we're rich.

BOBBY

You're the rich one.

MILTON

Don't stare at me because I got money.

MILTON puts on his glasses and looks inside the box. His face saddens.

BOBBY

The man's got him some money over yonder.

MILTON

I got it, I got money; I got.

BOBBY

What's the matter Milton?

MILTON

Well.

BOBBY

That's a box full of money ain't it?

MILTON

Yeah.

BOBBY

We're rich we're rich . . . we're rich we're rich.

MILTON

You better look.

BOBBY

No I won't.

MILTON

It's not...

BOBBY

Hold it right there! Let's think about this. Right now, at least one of us still believes he's rich; that right?

MILTON

One of us...

BOBBY

Well don't you think that he should go on thinking that for a little while longer?

MILTON

But

BOBBY

Huh? OK, now what you going to do with your half?

MILTON

I need some new shoes.

BOBBY

Shoes? How much money we talking about? You got big money in that box right?

MILTON looks at a bill.

MILTON

It's kind of big.

BOBBY

I told you. Big Money! We can name a tennis shoe after you; call it the Milton. You know how much money Shack gets for a tennis shoe, a hundred dollars, each. Come on now let me here you, we're rich we're rich!

BOBBY celebrates; MILTON goes through the motions. MILTON holds up a bill, showing it to BOBBY.

MILTON

Bobby there's a mule and a guy who looks like Hank Williams on here; these are Confederate bills, they're worthless.

BOBBY

Let me see that. Are you sure?

MILTON

You can take them over to the Mapco and see what they say.

BOBBY

Damn. I thought I was rich. We should save them though; them Confederates might make a comeback.

MILTON looks closer at the bill.

MILTON

"Confederate Dry Cleaning, we go to war on your stains, ten percent off."

(Pause)

I think I recognize this mule on here.

BOBBY

Lazy, four-legged bag a shit...

MILTON

My Uncle had a picture of my great grand daddy standing by a mule like this, during the Civil War; they were working his land down on the Alabama coast.

BOBBY

Probably had slaves working it too...

MILTON

Probably; he was gray Bobby.

BOBBY

Not uh, they didn't have no gay Confederates!

MILTON

Gray Bobby, gray as a man could get.

BOBBY

Well you get too much gray and then you got black!

MILTON

He didn't know any better.

BOBBY

Didn't want to know? My family lived as slaves.

MILTON

Under his roof

BOBBY

Covered by an angry sky...

MILTON

It was right to own one.

BOBBY

But it weren't right to be one.

MILTON

Get away from me man.

BOBBY

You're afraid to admit you done shit you ain't proud of.

MILTON

I didn't do anything.

BOBBY

Come on let me hear you say you're sorry.

MILTON

What for?

BOBBY

Apologize to that black family for putting them up on blocks and selling them in the square.

MILTON

It wasn't me selling anymore than it was you up on that block.

(Pause)

Come on, things are better for you since that war; you got forty acres and a mule.

BOBBY

(Audience)

Oh yeah, it was good for old Bobby Warren that they had that Civil War. Yes sir, otherwise all these years later I might just be a poor, illiterate black man living in a trailer, never knowing nothing but lifting this, hauling that. If it weren't for that war I might not have any future. Spending my whole life doing dirty, nasty, filthy backbreaking hard degrading work, work nobody else wants to do.

(Pause)

The only difference between them slaves and me is that they're dead and I'm just dying, taking the long way home.

MILTON

Everybody knows you don't mess with a mule once he gets going in that rut. Your problem is you don't see the big picture.

BOBBY

Why should I, I ain't in it.

MILTON

They got poor white folks too! I came up in stinking mill town South Carolina, the houses all looked the same, the people too, tired, worn down by modern day slavery; grandfather, father and son all making sheets for the Klan!

BOBBY

Say man!

MILTON

Just checking to see if you were paying attention...

BOBBY

I'm paying attention but I ain't buying anymore of your Bullshit! You and your daddy, living in your white mans world.

MILTON

Excuse me but six out of ten people on the planet are Asian; so statistically, it's a yellow mans world.

BOBBY

Keep it up and I'll kick your ass!

MILTON

(Afraid)

Oh Mrs. Do-mar, lend me a penny because I don't have no sense.

BOBBY

Shut up!

Angry, BOBBY throws something in his pile.

What do I got here? No, don't have one, I could use this.

MILTON

You would have liked my Uncle Small; he lived in Alabama and he didn't have slaves.

BOBBY

Milton you don't have no Uncle Small; you ain't got no Aunt Tiny or Cousin Jumbo neither.

MILTON

I don't?

BOBBY

No.

MILTON

Then who paved granddaddy's land on Magnolia Street and put up a used car lot?

BOBBY

How long I know you?

MILTON

Fifty years?

BOBBY

That's right eleven years. Six in the army on the outside five and how many times I tell you your stupid things and silly stories are what get you in trouble?

MILTON

Did I ever tell you about the time my Aunt Mini took the train to visit her sister Ruth in Mobile? Well no sooner had that train turned the corner to a memory than my Uncle Small had him a white lightning brainstorm.

BOBBY nips at his flask.

BOBBY

A drinking man is a thinking man.

MILTON

He took some water paint and spelled out 333-C.A.R.S in big white letters on both doors of my Aunt's red '63 Rambler.

BOBBY

I told you don't talk Milton.

MILTON tells his story avoiding BOBBY who chases him around the piles of stuff.

MILTON

Then he goes and borrows Wade Simpson's monster crane and hoisted it up to the top of a fifty-foot pole! He said it was so people once they got over the shock of seeing that rambler up on top of a fifty-foot pole might call my Uncle and see about buying a used car.

BOBBY

I'm talking to you Mr. Green Jeans.

MILTON

After about a month, my Aunt was coming home and my uncle went to hoist that car back down, but Mr. Simpson's crane got stuck. Old man Simpson went on to explain that there were times he couldn't get it up but never the other way around.

MILTON gets tickled with himself.

BOBBY

(Audience)

When you go around acting stupid, fucking with people and what they believe, you're bound to attract attention. People get scared; they worry about what others think and they don't think it's funny.

MILTON

Mr. Simpson called down to Atlanta to get the part but it was six weeks on back order. By then my Aunt Mini came home from her sisters and figured something was up when my uncle picked her up in a city bus.

BOBBY

Come here you silly bastard.

MILTON

Since my aunt's rambler had spent a month fifty feet up in the Alabama summertime, by the time they got it down the sun had faded the paint everywhere except where the numbers were.

BOBBY

You're supposed to be helping me.

MILTON

When they washed off the paint there it was, 333-C.A.R.S.

BOBBY grabs MILTON by the neck.

BOBBY

What's wrong with you man?

MILTON

I'm trying to tell you.

(Pause)

It was the first portable billboard in the history of Fairhope.

BOBBY

What are you telling me I don't already know?

BOBBY lets MILTON go.

MILTON

Nothing...

BOBBY

You and your sissy ass family lies...

MILTON

Relatives can be strange animals?

BOBBY

Like a polecat with a face from a razorback hog?

MILTON

No, it's a figure of speech. Where you take an image of something and you exaggerate it.

BOBBY

That's what you do.

MILTON

You make it bigger than it is.

BOBBY spots an old dress rack.

BOBBY

No, don't have one.

MILTON

Because you don't understand it; or you're afraid of it.

BOBBY holds a dress up to himself.

BOBBY

Check it out Milton. How do I look?

MILTON

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate."

BOBBY

Fuck you.

MILTON

No, fuck Shakespeare. "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, and summers lease has all to short a date."

BOBBY

(Audience)

I took my girlfriend Aphelia, who is big in parts, to one of them fancy uptown shopping stores in Memphis, and you know what that tight-ass, lily lipped, sissy fellah sales clerk walking two feet from the ground said to my girl? I think we can get your size, if we sew two together. I picked up a wire hanger and I cracked his majesty across his melon head! From now on that queer is gonna be sharpening pencils for a living.

MILTON makes a face then picks up a large heavy box.

Don't make that face.

MILTON

How come you're not working?

BOBBY

Because I'm the supervisor

MILTON

How come you're the supervisor?

BOBBY

Because I have a vast knowledge of moving shit; rule number one don't pick up stuff leaning over like that, no wonder your backs screwed up, bend at your knees then lift with your legs.

BOBBY demonstrates on a small box.

See? It's common sense. Like closing your eyes before you sneeze so your eyeballs don't pop out of your head. Don't open a beer bottle with your teeth or stand behind no mule. Chew your food a hundred times and no matter what, never run with the scissors. There are a lot of them; I ain't got time to tell them all to you right now.

MILTON

Why do they call it common sense?

BOBBY

Because everybody knows it, everybody but you!

MILTON

I'm sorry Bobby.

BOBBY

(Softer)

Milton listen to me; remember what I say, about being careful, with your stories, telling folks details about yourself, you know what I'm talking about?

MILTON

Yes.

BOBBY

You never know what they got in their hearts. People make hard judgments about you, it ain't right but we do it.

MILTON

Can I tell them I'm from Alabama?

BOBBY

Sure, but when somebody goes to shake your hand, you shake it real firm, look em in the eye and don't be afraid to give it a good grip. You never know when a person is looking to see if you're strong; so it's best to be strong all the time. Watch out for yourself, because it could be nobody else is watching.

MILTON

OK. Paul Bear Bryant, the football coach at the University of Alabama said, "When you got trouble, don't hide behind anything or anybody, trouble will find you anyway."

BOBBY

If you can't count on your friends what you gonna do?

MILTON

When the Bear was a football player at Alabama, he won a whole game against Tennessee with a broken leg!

BOBBY

The Bear was a big damn liar too! Alabama don't beat Tennessee with every limb working!

MILTON

Excuse me but; that's Bullshit!

BOBBY

That's right, Bullshit!

MILTON

Roll Tide! You want to see what I got? I'll show you what I got?

MILTON shows a large "BAMA" tattoo.

Alabama college football, the greatest program in the history of athletics...

BOBBY shows a large T tattoo.

BOBBY

What about Tennessee and the mighty Volunteer nation!

MILTON

I'm talking about "Professional" college football!

BOBBY

Me too! At the University of Tennessee football is more important than real life.

MILTON

You know what they say about rednecks, they all turn orange come the fall.

BOBBY

From the tip of my toes all the way up to my rocky top...

MILTON

You can't wear orange with anything else except more orange. After a while that can be very frightening.

BOBBY

Three hundred and sixty four days a year we can be friends Milton, but on the third Saturday in October, colors collide!

MILTON

Orange and Crimson will never go together.

BOBBY

Big Orange!

MILTON

Damn pumpkin heads!

BOBBY and MILTON break off and storm in separate directions then calm down.

BOBBY

My daddy used to paint me orange and make me watch Tennessee football every Saturday; re-runs in the summertime.

(Pause)

What happen to you?

MILTON

After we moved to Alabama, there I was not even thinking about it, I found out that I liked Alabama football and that I was a homosexual all at the same time.

BOBBY

How did you find that out?

MILTON

My uncle told me. He said if I liked Alabama football I should like Alabama Cheerleaders in their tight white cotton sweaters, I didn't. As it turned out I was the only admitted homosexual in Fairhope. Folks mostly just stayed away from me, so I went to Mobile and joined the army. I was doing fine till I fell.

MILTON gets upset and begins to wander, mumbling around the room.

MILTON

(Chants)

I don't know but I've been told men like us are getting old
 . . . Sound off... three four... sound off...

BOBBY

(Audience)

It's a damn shame how it turned out, Milton had potential.

MILTON

(Chants)

Sound off; bring it on down, three four...

BOBBY

(Audience)

Him and me, we've been traveling around since we got out,
 living here and there doing odd jobs. I like to practice my
 baseball for when the Columbia Mules baseball team come and
 asked about me; Milton, he's been working on remembering stuff.

MILTON

(Chants)

Slaking off will get you killed in a great big muddy field.

BOBBY

(Audience)

Just this morning we went down to labor source; got there
 late, they didn't have nothing. Then we heard they might be
 hiring day workers downtown on Broadway near the arena.

MILTON

(Chants)

In the army we all know different ain't a way to go.

BOBBY

(Audience)

We got down there, there was a few men, one hard looking
 woman and a man yelling from the back of a red pick-up
 truck, "I got work, you want to work let's go!" Milton and
 me seen lots of pick-up trucks but this morning the man
 yelling from this one was Gary. Milton didn't remember him
 but I knew. In the army we called him Sergeant. When he saw
 me he said it was lucky I was still so strong cause there
 wasn't nothing waiting for me outside the army other than a
 hard days work.

MILTON, agitated, begins marching.

MILTON

(Chants)

Sound off, one two three four . . .

BOBBY

(Audience)

Can you believe that shit? We hadn't seen that bastard since we got out and there he was, on Broadway.

MILTON

(Chants)

Left, left, left, right, left . . .

BOBBY

(Audience)

Gary used to call me and Milton, "Black Judas and the Rain Man!" In a small way I was glad to see him.

MILTON

(Upset)

My mules eat dirt and piss mud and thank me! My mules do what I tell them or I'll be forced to tell the truth! You aren't smart enough to move your mouths and your muscles!

BOBBY

(Audience)

Sergeant Gary, he's not a day different today than the first time we laid eyes on him. He's still got a devil in his heart and a hole in his soul.

MILTON snaps to attention.

MILTON

Attention!

BOBBY

(Audience)

Somebody should whip his ass with his own arm. If Sergeant Gary didn't like you for nature or for color you couldn't hide from the fear; couldn't run from the threat. All you could do was take it or fight.

MILTON breaks walks up behind BOBBY, slapping him in the back of the head.

Son of a bitch!

BOBBY turns in anger sees MILTON standing passive and is defused.

MILTON

I'm hungry, you hungry? I could eat.

MILTON grabs something and exits. BOBBY calls after him. BOBBY discovers a large wardrobe.

BOBBY

Is that all you think about? You don't want this stuff do you?

MILTON

OK.

BOBBY

Don't lie to me! I'm damn sure I ain't got one of these.

BOBBY focuses on the wardrobe and climbs in, the door locks behind him.

Milton! Can you hear me? Milton!

BOBBY is knocking frantically.

Get me out of here!

MILTON re-enters calls out for BOBBY.

MILTON

Bobby? Where are you?

BOBBY

Get me the hell out of here! I'm scared. It's dark and I can't see nothing.

Milton pounds on the door.

MILTON

Bobby is that you in the box?

BOBBY

You know it's me!

MILTON

It doesn't sound like you.

BOBBY

This is no time to be messing with me!

The shaking stops, BOBBY is quieter.

Milton I think all the air is gone.

MILTON

Alright, I'll see you in a minute then.

BOBBY breaks down the door and rolls out on the floor. MILTON helps him.

BOBBY

Get away from me.

MILTON

I'm sorry, are you OK?

BOBBY

Bobby's not home right now, at the sound of the tone leave a message, asshole.

MILTON

I said I was sorry.

BOBBY

Yeah, well let's see how you like it!

MILTON

No! Don't do that Bobby! Ahhhh! Ahhhhhh!

BOBBY

I'll teach you to fuck with me!

BOBBY pushes MILTON into the wardrobe. MILTON, truly terrified, bangs and screams. Then like a tired baby he stops. BOBBY opens the door and MILTON is sitting in the fetal position. BOBBY helps MILTON out and hands MILTON a cigarette. MILTON, stunned, shuffles to a box of stuff, picks up the end of a string and pulls.

MILTON

This is nice. What do we have here? No, don't have one. I could sure use this. This is nice. I wonder where it goes. This is nice. How long have you been smoking?

BOBBY

Twelve, I got started young.

MILTON

Twelve, that's nothing, I was three.

BOBBY

Three!

MILTON

So help me Mrs. Do-mar.

BOBBY

That's too damn young!

MILTON

Tell my Uncle Dinky.

BOBBY

You don't have no Uncle Dinky.

MILTON

He was my mother's half brother on her father's side. Uncle Dinky would stand me up on a table, light up what he called a "Tobacco tootsie roll," and make me puff on that lucky for a room full of his stupid friends. Smoke was coming out of my ears; they called me, "The Incredible Smoking Baby."

BOBBY

Damn.

MILTON

By the time I was eight I had a pack a day habit and could blow a smoke ring clear across the room. I could spit too!

BOBBY

What do you suppose your uncle was trying to teach a little boy with shit like that?

MILTON

That we're all alone?

MILTON is pulling BOBBY takes it away.

BOBBY

What you doing? You ain't getting nowhere with that. Stand aside, could be Moby's Dick on the line.

MILTON

That's what I like about you Bobby, when you set your mind to something it gets done.

BOBBY

Is that a half a mind or a whole mind?

MILTON

With most people it's half a mind, but you got such a big head, I bet you're bringing the whole damn thing.

BOBBY keeps pulling on the string.

BOBBY

This bitch is mean.

MILTON

If you listen to your mind it'll talk to you.

BOBBY

Oh yeah? What does it say?

MILTON

Catch up with a cheeseburger because your ass is hungry.

BOBBY

Your mind said that? I thought that was your stomach talking?

MILTON

Who do you think tells your stomach? It's not your liver; it's your mind.

BOBBY

Yours is awful quiet.

MILTON

You can't hear it, only me.

BOBBY

How come?

MILTON

Cause it's my mind. You ever heard the expression "They got a mind of their own?" A mind is a terrible thing to waste?"

BOBBY hits a snag.

BOBBY

I've been busy. Oh shit, she's fighting back! Hold on baby, Daddy's got a frying pan!

MILTON holds the box and BOBBY fights the string like a deep-sea fisherman.

MILTON

Give em hell Bobby! You got her now!

BOBBY

I ain't got shit! Get my knife! She's pissing me off.

MILTON

If you cut her loose you won't get to the end, could be something good there, I bet you ain't got one.

BOBBY

Oh shit!

BOBBY gives a mighty tug the string breaks sending him to the floor. MILTON checks on him.

MILTON

Are you OK?

BOBBY

Milton why is it that every time you help me it hurts?

MILTON pulls a wad of tangled string attached to a red wig from the junk.

Don't help me no more.

MILTON

I'm sorry. See, I told you; you don't have one of these.

MILTON poses with the wig. BOBBY gets up and dusts himself off.

Hey, does this remind you of anything?

BOBBY

A gay man going to a gay party; get away from me.

MILTON

That isn't it, come on think about it.

BOBBY

No I won't!

MILTON

Come on Bobby.

(Pause)

The "Amazing Maureen"

BOBBY

Shit!

MILTON

Saturday night we'd all go to town on a pass. Get a good meal, get a good feel.

BOBBY

Milton of all the shit you forgot you remembered that freak?

MILTON

Hang out at that carnival with the Amazing Maureen.

BOBBY gets into the memory.

BOBBY

The bitch would take your money.

MILTON

Read your mind and guess your weight.

BOBBY

The hard way..

MILTON

You had a crush on her too.

BOBBY

Could be? She did have an ass that belonged in a museum.

MILTON

Red hair and green eyes; an anchor tattoo, starboard side..

BOBBY

Four color. The first time I saw her I said that is fine as wine and I need a drink.

MILTON

See, your mind told you that.

BOBBY

My mind told my dick, my dick told me.

BOBBY steps on the string. MILTON walks away the wig pops off MILTON'S head.

What else do you remember about the Amazing Maureen?

MILTON

That's all.

BOBBY

Are you sure about that?

MILTON

I think so.

BOBBY throws small boxes of books to MILTON who throws them off stage.

BOBBY

That's good.

MILTON

Except when you came back to the base and told us that the Amazing Maureen was really...

BOBBY

That was unfortunate.

MILTON

The Amazing Mike!

BOBBY

I never saw that coming. How long did the two of you date?

MILTON

Not long, we were so different.

BOBBY

We sure have gotten into to some stuff.

MILTON drops a box and it breaks open, he pulls out a book and reads it.

MILTON

I wish I remembered more of it.

BOBBY

I think you remember what you care to.

MILTON

Look here, Dr. Zip Rogers's world famous psychologist has helped one million Americans overcome their fear of inadequate adequacies, insufficient sufficiency's and unsuitable suitability's.

BOBBY

Where does it say that?

MILTON

It's just like you and me, right here in black and white.

(Reading)

"Pull the sun right up over your covers and make a new day out of an old tomorrow."

BOBBY

That's bullshit. Daddy used to start fires with that stuff.

MILTON

(Reading)

"When life gets complicated, don't simplify your dreams."

BOBBY

He couldn't abide folks needing help. That's why when he needed some; he just went ahead and died.

MILTON

"Meet the dawn with unlimited potential and the promise of never ending opportunities."

MILTON tosses the book to Bobby.

BOBBY

What's this for?

MILTON

Start a fire, learn how to read it. I'll help you.

BOBBY

Don't need to.

BOBBY tosses it back to MILTON.

BOBBY

I'll watch it on TV.

(Audience)

On Oprah they had some doctors hypnotizing the audience way back to their childhoods. You know what they found out; that the parents had screwed em up. Then on the next show they brought in some lawyers and sued the parents for malpractice. If they hypnotized me I'd tell some good and bad, some funny and some sad. Some fat lies, fat as the pigs on my uncle's farm. My uncle had pigs and cows and chickens and shit on that farm, lots of shit, I think it was a shit farm. I was stepping in it everywhere I went; everything I did there was no making him happy. "Daddy I'm sorry I didn't mean to mess up the barn, I'll clean it up, don't hit me sir." He was angry that we had to live off my uncle when his Bakery went broke. All I ever wanted was to be his little man, his son, his boy. He couldn't see me through his pride and his pain. "I didn't mean to break your medicine bottle. Momma will get you another one."

MILTON walks up behind BOBBY raises his hand to slap the back of his head. BOBBY catches MILTON'S hand.

Please don't hit me no more.

MILTON

In Alabama we had everything but I'd have given it all back for a whipping or a hug.

BOBBY

You don't know... what you don't know.

There's a loud commotion in the hall.

PIZZA MAN

(Off stage)

Hello, anybody home? Pizza delivery...

BOBBY yells out to them.

BOBBY

What do you want?

PIZZA MAN

(Off stage)

Is this the Alexander residence?

BOBBY

Can't you see we're having a damn epiphany in here? We didn't order no . . .

MILTON

Wait Bobby, I'm hungry?

BOBBY looks around picks up the Civil War coupons and exits to the wings.

BOBBY

Cold pizza, we ordered a hot pizza!

(Loud from the wings)

How you doing, Bobby Alexander nice to meet you, here you go; and a little extra for your Momma and your sister and your brother and one, two, three for you from me.

BOBBY enters with some pizza boxes.

MILTON

Hurry up.

BOBBY

I'm coming genius. Man, somebody is stupid.

MILTON

I could have that job. Did you know that when you deliver pizza you get Thanksgiving off? I know because my cousin Jimmy Narrow delivered pizza till he was fifty-one; it killed his momma.

BOBBY

She die of disappointment?

MILTON

No, high cholesterol!

BOBBY and **MILTON** share a laugh and dig into the pizza real fast. As they get full they slow down.

BOBBY

Give me some of that.

MILTON

I'll take some too.

BOBBY

Milton, you think all them TV doctors was right?

MILTON

What about?

BOBBY

That maybe our parents left us with more than just their names to carry around with us.

MILTON

You mean like if your momma was a worrier?

BOBBY

You'd be a worrier too.

MILTON

Or if your daddy had a quick temper, could be.

BOBBY

What if your momma liked to tell stories?

MILTON

Yeah. And your daddy liked shopping at department stores. At Christmas time with all those red and green decorations.

BOBBY

Momma said you get all kind of stuff you don't need when you go shopping with your dad.

MILTON

At a store was so big it had three levels with a fountain all the way to the top.

BOBBY

One of those stores with everything and nothing; Momma said stores like that had everything and nothing.

MILTON

He took me with him, past the drunken Santa Clause to the ladies at the perfume counter. He bent down to me and said, "You stay here son, I'll be right back."

BOBBY

Were you scared?

MILTON

A little, when they came in it was late. There's no place on earth any darker than those barracks in the middle of the night. You know what I'm talking about?

BOBBY

Were you scared?

MILTON

I was drunk, I'd been out with the Amazing Maureen, came back by myself. The rain and the wind were blowing; you could feel that storm coming in your bones. "Hey guys, what are you doing here? I'm dog tired, I gotta hit it man."

BOBBY

(Audience)

Sometimes people don't know why they do what they do.

MILTON

There were two, maybe three of them. I just saw there outlines when the lightning flashed through the window.

BOBBY

(Audience)

In the dark, you can't see what you're looking at.

MILTON

"You guys have been drinking? I've had enough, let's go to bed." They laughed. They were yelling and pushing me, mad at something. "Why are you doing this? What did I do?"

BOBBY

Milton the department store; what about your daddy?

MILTON

(Calm)

After a while a tall man in a suit came up and asked my name. "My name is Milton, Milton Stack, I'm eight years old. Where's my daddy?" He said, "Your daddy is busy son," and he was taking me to see my momma. We walked through the store, then down a long hallway, the kind of hallway when you say your name it comes back to you - Milton, Milton. At the end of it was a large gray metal door with a sign that spelled "S.E.C.U.R.I.T.Y." We went inside a small room and there was my momma, sitting on a wooden chair under a clock.

BOBBY

What time was it?

MILTON

Three thirty. She looked sad. When she saw me she got up real fast but took my hand real slow and said softly, "come on son we're going home now." She looked down at me with those big brown eyes, tears flowing on her cheeks; I had never seen my momma cry before.

MILTON changes his tone to fright.

I couldn't figure it out, I never hurt anyone, never said nothing, they were swearing, calling me names. Slapping me in the face, the thunder was raging outside! "No! I don't know why I'm like this, you tell me!" They put duck tape over my mouth, shoved me in my locker with smoke and fire; with explosions. They said I didn't belong in a man's army!

BOBBY

(Audience)

When it gets rolling on that hill it's hard to stop.

MILTON

(Calm)

My momma wiped my eyes with her white cotton dress, she pulled me out of that room through that metal door; we left daddy behind and went home.

BOBBY

What happened to him?

MILTON

My uncle told me the same day he told me he thought I was a queer. He said it didn't surprise him one bit when he heard about it.

BOBBY

Told you what?

MILTON

About my father exposing himself to a stranger in a bathroom stall...

BOBBY

He just walked into the ladies room and gave some woman a free look?

MILTON

No.

BOBBY

Good, cause that kind of shit could really mess a little boy up.

MILTON

It was the men's room.

BOBBY

It could mess him up real good.

MILTON

You know Bobby; since I fell I haven't remembered some things?

BOBBY

It's better for some stuff to be left gone.

MILTON

Some stuff better left unsaid.

BOBBY

Better lost until you're dead...

The clock reads one-thirty.

LIGHTS

ACT TWO**AT RISING:**

The same theater space it's now mid afternoon.

Stuff fills half the stage. MILTON naps with pizza boxes scattered around. BOBBY sits mumbling to himself. The large clock on the wall now reads three o'clock. MILTON jumps up.

MILTON

Three o'clock, shit!

BOBBY

"I swear I never heard him I looked up and there he stood, a large man with many pizzas, so I ate them and they were good." I'll have my own book one day.

MILTON

Better learn to read one first so you'll know what they look like. Get up Bobby; you're late.

BOBBY

Just because I never learned to read don't make me dumb.

MILTON

I never said you were dumb, I said you were late.

MILTON picks up the fancy lamp.

BOBBY

Back away from the fancy lamp!

MILTON

Aunt Tiny had a better one than this. The University of Alabama shinning through rose colored chiffon with brass platted hard pieces. It was like a sunset.

BOBBY

If you break that lamp we got nothing. Give it to me, nice and slow.

MILTON

I don't see your name on it.

BOBBY chases MILTON around the boxes.

BOBBY

I'll show you what's mine. If you don't give me that lamp, I will show what I got!

MILTON comes out the other side picks up a broom and chases **BOBBY**.

MILTON

I'll spear your ass.

BOBBY

Oh yeah! Well I'll set the plague on your butt and watch your ass shrivel up and blow away.

MILTON

Then I'll put your ass in my trash compactor and push your ass side to side till there's nothing left of your ass but a square ass.

BOBBY

Are you talking about my ass?

MILTON

Your ass...

BOBBY

OK. I got a steamroller in my trailer and I will flatten your ass out, roll you up and smoke your ass.

MILTON

No you won't. Because I'll get some electric lines and plug your butt in and fry your ass up.

BOBBY

Then you must not know about that pack of Pitt-bulls I got? I'll sick em on your ass till there ain't nothing left but a Fart.

MILTON

Oh yeah!

BOBBY

You bet your ass!

MILTON

My ass!

BOBBY

Retard!

MILTON

Sambo!

BOBBY

Gay boy!

MILTON

Fuck you Negro man...

MILTON and BOBBY wrestle.

BOBBY

Fuck me? Fuck you! Cause if you can't find the crack in your ass then you better drill a hole cause I ain't gonna listen to no more of that crap coming out of your mouth!

MILTON

I know I am but what are you?

BOBBY

I'm strong!

BOBBY wins pinning MILTON to the floor.

People don't mess with you if they know you're strong! In the army strength was power.

MILTON

In the army, the strong would push you down.

BOBBY

In the army, the powerful made sure you stayed there. You shouldn't have gotten up Milton. I told you not to get up!

MILTON makes a face as BOBBY helps him to his feet. MILTON grabs his back.

Don't make that face. You got to suck it up and go.

MILTON

It's not easy getting old.

BOBBY

We all got problems.

MILTON

You and everybody else are causing my problems.

BOBBY

Shit.

MILTON

When you're different, people treat you different.

BOBBY

It ain't any easier being black and you don't catch me crying.

MILTON

No. But I'm not there with you in the middle of the night when your heart is pounding and your mind is flying so I can't say; besides I don't see color.

BOBBY

Everybody sees color! Prejudice is like a bad itch in the middle of your back, you know it's there but you can't see it. It's hard to reach and annoying as hell.

MILTON

Are you saying I got it in me, and I got it on me?

BOBBY

I see prejudice in the kindest faces.

MILTON

Who's talking shit now?

BOBBY

Being uptight around somebody different from you, all the time smiling, thinking, wondering why ain't they like me? What should I do? What should I say?

MILTON

There's a lot more of that about gay people than blacks.

BOBBY

What planet are you from man?

MILTON

Everybody knows gay people are more oppressed than blacks.

BOBBY

Who said that?

MILTON

Truman Capote!

BOBBY

No kidding, the great civil rights leader?

MILTON

That's the one.

BOBBY

Then why are blacks cleaning up boardrooms but they ain't none of em sitting round the table? Everybody else in there is gay!

MILTON

That's cause nobody knows which ones we are.

BOBBY

Unless you come out and tell em

MILTON

Otherwise they just guess.

BOBBY

When was the last time a gay person had to use separate bathrooms and drinking fountains, sit at the back of the bus?

MILTON

It's coming.

BOBBY

How many gay people living with drugs in public housing?

MILTON

Gays got their own neighborhoods too.

BOBBY

OK Milton you're walking down the street and a group of young black kids are coming down the sidewalk the other way, what do you do?

MILTON

I cross the street before I get to em.

BOBBY

You don't even know those kids.

MILTON

That's right so I'd do the same thing if they were Asian or Mexican or from Chicago, in my world I'm careful.

BOBBY

What class of people coming the other way wouldn't threaten you?

MILTON

A ballet class..

BOBBY

So it's different that scares you?

MILTON

It's my daddy that scares me, my uncle that scares me; it's you that scare me Bobby!

BOBBY

Congratulations Milton, everybody you're so damn scared of you is just like em.

MILTON

I'm not feeling too good.

BOBBY

You think I don't know you? Hell I am you genius. I'm your hurt and your fear; your everything lost and your never had a chance. Why do you think we ended up here together? Of all the people in all the armies, why do you think it's me holding you up?

MILTON

It's been on my mind.

MILTON pulls away from BOBBY and retreats into the stuff. BOBBY calls after him. The rain begins to fall.

BOBBY

It's a trick Milton; the truth is I'm leaning on you. And we ain't going nowhere unless we get there together.

(Audience)

Ever had a friend you'd trust with your life and when the day comes you end up dead? Nobody is safe from the fear, that's just the way we're made. And when the storm gets here, they'll be no place to hide, that's just how it is.

BOBBY calls out to MILTON.

Milton! Come and help me with this big boy.

MILTON

This one...

BOBBY

Yeah.

MILTON picks up then drops his end of a heavy box cutting his hand.

What you drop it for?

MILTON

Damn Mrs. Do-mar I cut myself.

BOBBY

Dumb shit...

MILTON

This old hand's been cut so many times it forgets to bleed.

BOBBY backs away from **MILTON**.

There it goes. What are you doing over there?

BOBBY

I was just thinking they got that blood sickness going around killing people in, in your category.

MILTON

HIV; you thought I might be HIV because of the gay thing?

BOBBY

You can't blame me for thinking.

MILTON

I see prejudice in the kindest faces.

MILTON uses his knees to pick up the same crate and drag it outside. **BOBBY** calls after him then discussed kicks stuff and discovers an antique radio.

BOBBY

We need to get you some gloves. I know his heart's in the right place even if his hormones ain't. Look at you. Sergeant Gary would like you. Fuck him I'm keeping it.

BOBBY bangs and shakes the radio but can't get it to work. **MILTON** enters slightly wet. **BOBBY** hides the radio.

MILTON

I told you it was going to rain.

BOBBY

Nothing I can do about that.

MILTON

Nobodies asking you to...

BOBBY

Wouldn't do it if I could...

MILTON

Well you can't.

BOBBY

You don't know what I can do.

MILTON

I know you can't stop the rain.

BOBBY

I could if I wanted to.

MILTON

Shit, you don't even know what makes it rain brainiac?

BOBBY

I know it does. That's all I need to know.

(Loud)

What else?

MILTON

(Slowly)

Well, when it's hot like today, and quiet like now, the stuff that's been accumulating in the air for a long time, all the secrets and the whispers they evaporate up into the clouds; you with me so far?

BOBBY

No.

MILTON

Then one day, like today, the clouds get so full of reality that they can't hold it anymore. They get big and black and loud and they start talking. They finally let it all out, all of it, everything. And the truth rains down on us.

BOBBY

I got ya, like piss.

MILTON

You could look at it that way.

BOBBY

No I won't. What about when there's a storm coming?

MILTON

The clouds are angry.

BOBBY

Who they mad at?

MILTON

Me.

MILTON steps to BOBBY to slap BOBBY on the back of the head but stops, instead rubbing BOBBY'S head.

It was my fault, that's what you said.

BOBBY

It's your fault you keep hitting me retard.

MILTON

I fell, falling is my fault; nobody can fall for you.

BOBBY

What you talking about?

MILTON

If the army says it's true it must be.

BOBBY

Shit Milton.

MILTON

We couldn't see up or down from the rain and the night and the fog.

BOBBY

Why you want to bring that up for? Get away from me man.
(Audience)

I tried to help him. He may not know that but I did.

MILTON

I was trying to climb a wall. That's what happened right?

BOBBY

That's right. OK? Are we done here?

MILTON

OK.

BOBBY

(Audience)

He should have stayed on his own side of that wall; People get upset, him showing who he was. I couldn't protect him from everybody. I thought he knew what he was doing, like I said, he was real smart.

(Pause)

Come on cheer up Milton, look what I found. We'll play you some music; they got God tunes on here. You can pray for yourself or something.

BOBBY kills a fly on his arm then bangs on the radio till it comes on. Billy Graham plays on every channel as he tunes the dial. MILTON puts on his glasses and looks at it closely.

I can tune in Heaven on every channel of this bad boy.

MILTON

Then be careful with it, hold it like an angel.

The radio stops playing.

BOBBY

Shit!

BOBBY reaches over and hits it again.

MILTON

Stop that! It's fragile. It's really old. It looks like a Kennedy model 220 TRF receivers, two stages, regenerative.

BOBBY

How much money can we get for it?

MILTON

I don't know book value is maybe three hundred.

BOBBY

Three hundred! You're talking about dollars right?

MILTON

Dollars

BOBBY

We're rich we're rich. We are rich!

MILTON

They have one of these at the museum of broadcasting in St. Louis; cost you ten bucks just to get in to see it.

BOBBY

Maybe it's a PHILCO. Grandma Warren had her PHILCO for listening to her serial shows.

MILTON

That's impossible; PHILCO didn't start making radio receivers till 1927.

BOBBY

You sure, it looks like a PHILCO to me.

MILTON

I'm sure; this Kennedy was manufactured in 1922. The first official radio broadcast was on KDKA in Pittsburgh also in 1922. Actually inventor Lee de Forest probably engineered the first broadcast much earlier in 1910. Even though there weren't any radio receivers to pick it up. It featured a live musical presentation of Pagliacci, featuring Enrico Caruso from the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.

BOBBY

What the hell was that?

MILTON

What?

BOBBY

Do it again.

MILTON

Do what?

BOBBY

Talk smart like that, about the radio.

MILTON

This thing, it must be a thousand years old. It doesn't even work.

MILTON hits the radio BOBBY protects it.

BOBBY

It's worth three hundred dollars!

**BOBBY tunes the radio and it plays
Billy Graham on every station.**

And it's got heaven on every channel.

MILTON

No kidding? Let me see that. Well I say we buy it. You know what Bobby; no kidding, it would be worth it for us to keep this so we could find out.

BOBBY

Not till I get my three hundred dollars.

MILTON

If we really could tune in Heaven on this radio, then we might hear something, something it would be good to know.

BOBBY

Good shit like that, might be worth four hundred dollars.

MILTON

Stuff they don't tell us till we get up there.

BOBBY

Like what?

MILTON

Well, like animal hearing.

BOBBY

Animal hearing? Hearing what?

MILTON

Everything we say and understanding every word.

BOBBY

Who they gonna tell?

MILTON

What if we find out on this radio that my dog Buddy is really an Einstein?

BOBBY

Shit!

MILTON

Or Saint Peter tells us that God made us to fly like birds only we ate too many potatoes and screwed it all up?

BOBBY

Damn!

MILTON

Or Carol Channing

BOBBY

Uh Oh...

MILTON

Is really a nice looking man!

BOBBY

Shit! The Amazing Maureen!

MILTON

How about every time you use a cuss word your Dick gets shorter?

BOBBY grabs his crotch.

BOBBY

Son of a bitch!

MILTON

Not a lot, just a little bit so you can't tell for a while, it could be, we don't know.

BOBBY

I don't want to know.

MILTON

Oh yes you do.

BOBBY

No I don't!

MILTON

What if it comes over the heavenly loud speaker that you lost a day of your life for every orgasm you had?

BOBBY

Damn!

MILTON

Now that's something I'd a liked to known about.

BOBBY

Turn that radio back on.

MILTON

What if we were supposed to live till we're a hundred, only there was that one little piece of information they forgot to tell us?

BOBBY

Hey! Women don't like sex and they live longer than men do.

MILTON

Now you're with me.

BOBBY

It's something to think about genius.

MILTON

OK. But what are you going to do about it?

BOBBY

Well.

(Pause)

I'll just have to die a young man!

MILTON

With a short Dick! I hope you get to heaven and find out if I was right.

BOBBY

Down at the "We all fall down" Mystic Temple, we believe in what they call Reincarnation. I'll get there eventually.

MILTON

Rein-what?

BOBBY

Reincarnation; it's like recycling. Say if you die right now, you being a good man you might come back in a hundred years as the Mayor of an intergalactic space colony.

MILTON

Do I get to wear a fancy uniform?

BOBBY

You the Mayor! You could have been on earth for lots of past lives, each time you come back you move up.

MILTON

If that's true, I'm not doing to good.

BOBBY

It's got nothing to do with how much money you got, it's what you're like inside. Do ya have a good heart? Help people, little old ladies, like that.

MILTON

I try.

BOBBY

The harder you try the closer you get, to that place..

MILTON

How will I know that place when I get there?

BOBBY

You'll know it all right. It looks like a big white house at the end of a long road. Inside it's cool as a breeze and toasty warm all at the same time. And there's plenty to eat and your Momma's there smiling and singing in the kitchen.

MILTON

(MILTON sings)

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee...

BOBBY

It's a place where your daddy's says "good job son" and plays catch with you after supper. And in the summertime, the sun just hangs in the sky and waits for you till you get tired of running. It's where you go to bed happy every night and wake up knowing there ain't nothing you can't do.

MILTON

There is no such place.

BOBBY

Got to be; I'm counting on it.

MILTON

That's where I want to go.

BOBBY

I suspect they got plenty of room and plenty of forgiveness.

MILTON

I bet they got a baseball team too; like the Columbia mules.

BOBBY

It's going on six; Gary's coming back, let's round third and bring it on home.

Thunder rumbles in the distance with rain. MILTON starts to get nervous, making a face.

MILTON

I want to go home.

BOBBY

It's just a little rain; nothing to worry about, I got you. Don't make that face. Well, I wonder what we got here.

BOBBY looks at stuff carefully tossing it into the trash.

MILTON

What did you do that for?

BOBBY

I already got one of those.

(Pause)

I got two of everything by now; Milton, I've been thinking, if I give all my stuff to you, I could be like the Worm Digger.

MILTON

You said digger right?

BOBBY

Yeah the Worm Digger, his broken down truck was his living room and his backyard.

MILTON

I see him in my mind, tall, jet black hair, like Lancer.

BOBBY

No man, he was all bent over and shit, hair on his back clothes tore up. Like Ed Asner on a big ole bender.

MILTON

OK, I see him now.

BOBBY

Everybody made fun of him, all the usual stuff.

MILTON

People are mean.

BOBBY

Then one summer Mazy Tate got heart sick, six years old. Her parents were poor, couldn't pay a doctor to get her well.

MILTON gets a big smile on his face.

MILTON

And the Worm Digger was a secret millionaire who paid for an operation?

BOBBY

Well somebody left ten thousand dollars on the Tate's back porch in rusted out coffee cans. Do you know who had rusted coffee cans on his old truck?

MILTON

The Worm Digger...

BOBBY

Spent his whole life throwing away and giving away, didn't have two dimes for the dryer but he knew one thing most of us piled high won't ever know. The Worm Digger knew what his stuff was for.

MILTON checks his pocket for a smoke and can't find one.

MILTON

That story gives me the free willies Bobby. Can I use it?

BOBBY

It's my gift to you.

MILTON

Alright, give me a cigarette too.

BOBBY

Do I look like Phillip Morris?

MILTON

The Worm Digger would have given me one.

BOBBY

Shut up, I ain't had one since lunch.

MILTON

You're always mooching off me. When I ask you for one, you cry like you've never seen a smoke come out of your own pocket before...

BOBBY interrupts MILTON as he spots a cigarette butt on the floor and bends down to get it.

BOBBY

Hold on now, it may be our lucky day Milton. I found us a butt, a big boy too. Come to papa, come here butt.

MILTON

Do you really like a big boy butt Bobby?

BOBBY turns to MILTON in anger.

BOBBY

In my neighborhood they kill you for saying shit like that! I was talking bout the cigarette butt I found.

MILTON

My hearing isn't as good as it used to be.

BOBBY

What you say that for man?

MILTON takes the butt from BOBBY puts on his glasses and examines it.

MILTON

This here is a mighty fine butt, but this isn't an ordinary butt. I know what this is, this butt look funny to you?

BOBBY

I ain't talking to you, you done give me the Hee-bee-gee-bees.

MILTON

My cousin Feeble had a butt like this; rolled at both ends, fat in the middle, smelled like burnt shit on its best day.

BOBBY tries to take it back, MILTON runs away and BOBBY follows.

He walked around with a fist full of Slim Jim's and a smile.

BOBBY

Feeble ain't a nickname.

MILTON

No, his Christian name was "Feeble," cause when he was born he was so small and sick looking. His nickname was "Rhino" because he turned out to be six foot four, 350 pounds, with a darn near perfect point at the end of his nose.

BOBBY

Let me see that.

BOBBY grabs the butt from MILTON.

I know what this is; let's light it up.

MILTON

(Nervous)

But I haven't blown a reefer in a long time.

BOBBY

How old are you?

MILTON

I'm not sure.

BOBBY

Don't make that face.

The thunder rumbles MILTON gets scared and starts to squirm.

MILTON

What if I OD? Or suck bong water up my nose?

MILTON and BOBBY light the roach and pass it. They sit quietly and ponder.

BOBBY

You don't hallucinate Jerry Garcia till the third or fourth time. See, no effect at all.

MILTON

I don't feel a thing.

BOBBY

You know what the world needs Milton? Love; we should just love each other. We should do what love would do.

MILTON

That's cool.

(Sings)

"If you're going to San Francisco, be sure to wear flowers in your hair."

BOBBY

(Sings)

"Up up and away in my beautiful balloon."

MILTON

Any of that pizza left?

BOBBY

No we ate it all you ate most of it.

MILTON

I'm hungry. Mrs. Do-mar fixed me a strawberry-rhubarb pie one time that was illegal in ten states. She also did what love would do; that was illegal in every state.

BOBBY

You mean there really was a Mrs. Do-mar?

MILTON

Oh yeah, have you ever seen that movie "The Graduate?"

BOBBY

Oh yeah.

MILTON

It was kind of like that.

BOBBY

Milton I thought you were a gay man? Come on now.

MILTON

She was a widow lady...

BOBBY

Check you player...

MILTON

Lived across the alley from us in Fairhope; she came to the fence and introduced herself. We talked about books and movies, you know.

BOBBY

Did she see "The Summer of 42'?"

MILTON

It turns out she had. At first all I could see was her face and her ankles where the dog had chewed away the bottom of the fence. She sure had pretty ankles.

BOBBY

How did it happen? You know, what else did she show you?

MILTON

Let's just say that on one steamy night in the summer of 1967' there was more than one moon shinning over Mobile.

BOBBY

Mobile? I thought you said she lived in Fairhope?

MILTON

Did you want to know where she lived or where we had sex?

BOBBY

I already know where she lived.

MILTON starts slow and speeds up.

MILTON

Well then for your information we did it on white leather seats by the light of a Stuckey's billboard in the back seat of a red 58' Pontiac after I enlisted in the US Army Mobile Alabama July 3rd 1967 from 8:25 to 8:39 PM central and it rained! No it stormed!

BOBBY

Damn Milton, that's too fast, I didn't get all that.

MILTON

That's all right; I missed it the first time too.

BOBBY

It sounds like she took you on as her personal project.

MILTON

And I liked to never get off.

(Pause)

She changed me forever, after that I knew.

BOBBY

What?

MILTON

Not to get involved with no more widow ladies. I mean what the hell was I doing, I'm a gay man!

BOBBY

Are you sure? I saw a TV minister got himself completely cured of homosexuality in three weeks.

MILTON

I have to stay strong, pick up stuff from my knees.

**The thunder, wind and rain grow louder
as MILTON begins his panic attack.**

BOBBY

You don't have to do that right now.

MILTON

Oh man I am so wasted. I feel- everything.

BOBBY

Don't think, just breath.

MILTON

I'm looking through a merry-go-round. Everything is moving.

(Pause)

Who are you?

BOBBY

Bobby.

MILTON

I should watch what I say, who I talk to.

(Upset)

That storm isn't coming its here.

BOBBY races around checking the
perimeter, then the side door...

BOBBY

Relax; I'll get the door. Be cool now keep it together.

MILTON

Don't leave me!

MILTON runs, hides disappearing.

BOBBY

Its just rain, ain't no big thing, the door's locked. You
don't have to worry about nothing, your old pal Bobby's here.

BOBBY returns. **MILTON** is standing at
attention holding the bat like a rifle.

MILTON

Private Warren!

BOBBY

You ain't called me that in a while. That's a good one, is
this one of your new stories?

MILTON

Suck it up soldier or I'll send you on a one-way trip to the
end of the line.

BOBBY

Milton?

MILTON

Since when do you call a superior by his first name Private?

BOBBY

I'm sorry. Corporal Stack is that you?

MILTON

Check that fly, boy. Stand up straight.

BOBBY

You haven't been around in a while Corporal Stack.

MILTON

I've been busy Private, important work to be done regarding removal of private property from the public premises.

BOBBY

You left without telling us where you were going.

MILTON

No time son, duty calls.

BOBBY

Did it have to do with your accident?

MILTON

Accident, what accident?

BOBBY

You hurt your head.

MILTON

I don't remember any accident boy. Now stand up straight and don't give me any lip or I'll call your Momma. You want me to call your Momma boy?

BOBBY

My Momma's dead.

MILTON

Just as well, I don't believe I have her number. What's your name again son?

BOBBY

Warren, Private Bobby Warren. We served together at Fort Campbell. Do you remember me?

MILTON

Warren? I remember now, you couldn't read a lick. How does a man get into the army not reading a lick?

BOBBY

You helped me; you covered for me.

MILTON

Why the hell would I do that?

BOBBY

We were friends.

MILTON

If I was your friend, I would have taught you how to read. Attention! Back in line! So, how's your momma Warren? I heard she wasn't feeling well?

BOBBY

She's still dead Corporal.

MILTON

Sorry to hear that.

BOBBY

Corporal Stack, there's something you outta know.

MILTON

I don't want to hear about no naked women son, I'm tired.

BOBBY

This is important.

MILTON

At ease soldier...

BOBBY

You should know the truth.

MILTON

I loved the army.

BOBBY

I know but you got hurt real bad.

MILTON

That's old news. Everybody knows I fell.

BOBBY

You didn't fall. It wasn't your fault.

MILTON

Were you there?

BOBBY

Yes I was.

Thunder, rain and wind increase.

MILTON

If I didn't fall then what the hell happened to me? Because everybody knows I'm not right.

MILTON drops the bat and drops to his knees crying. Hail hits the roof.

In coming! Take cover private, the enemy is approaching.

BOBBY covers MILTON with his body.

BOBBY

They're coming up the walk. You can't be out here. Cover your face with your hands. I can't fight em all by myself. Lie right here and don't get up. Can you hear me Milton? Do what I say.

The storm builds. As BOBBY rises, MILTON jumps up and runs away.

I said don't get up!

BOBBY steps to center stage with the bat snapping to attention.

Private first class Robert Warren, good evening sir, it sure is a fine night for a walk. Yes sir it is fucking raining. No I'm not stupid, not at all Sergeant Gary.

(Pause)

Corporal Stack isn't in the barracks right now, I haven't seen him. No sir he'd never dishonor his uniform, he's doesn't even know anyone named Maureen; a transvestite? No! Please leave him alone sir Milton ain't bothering nobody, he's different than some but you wouldn't even know it to look at him; he's just like you and me.

(Pause)

Sir I didn't mean that he was like you! Yes sir, I know I'm black. No sir, we're not what's wrong with your army. I love the Army! No, I'm not his private prick I'm not like that, that's not me. You can ask anybody that knows Bobby Warren and they'll tell you he don't do that, he ain't no queer!

(Pause)

If I'm not like him, then I must be like you? Yes sir, its six o'clock sir.

BOBBY puts the bat from his shoulders behind is back. MILTON walks out holding the fancy lamp. BOBBY moves toward MILTON as if pushed.

MILTON

Hey Bobby, look what I got ain't it nice.

BOBBY swings the bat knocking MILTON down. The fancy lamp hits the ground. BOBBY cries his monologue, throwing stuff off stage while hitting and kicking MILTON. Finally overwhelmed, BOBBY drops to his knees.

BOBBY

You can't take a chance on people getting the wrong idea. Milton's careful what he tells folks, he don't know what they got in their hearts. Some people make judgments, it ain't right but we do it! When somebody shakes your hand, shake it strong. You never know when a person is looking to see if you're strong! Prejudice is like a bad itch in the middle of your back, you know it's there but you can't see it; it's hard to reach and annoying as hell. My mules eat dirt and piss mud and thank me! Why don't you go out and play with the other girls? You ain't right! You ain't natural! You don't belong! That ain't me! But I ain't you.

BOBBY gets up and angrily pushes imaginary attackers away with his bat.

That's enough! Get away from him! I said get back! Enough!

BOBBY breaks down drops the bat and crawls to MILTON crumpled on the floor. Bobby covers MILTON to protect him.

Stay down; no one's gonna hurt you again, ever. If you can't count on your friends what are you going to do?
It's you're old pal Bobby; I'm here for you Milton.

BOBBY gets up an emotional wreck and dusts himself off as the storm fades. MILTON wakes, spots the broken lamp.

MILTON

Who broke Mr. Price's fancy lamp? I'm not paying for that.

BOBBY

I didn't mean for it to happen.

MILTON

Bullshit, you never liked that lamp.

BOBBY

It was a terrible mistake.

MILTON

A mistake?

BOBBY

That's right.

BOBBY picks up the pieces of the lamp and hands them to MILTON.

MILTON

If it was a mistake then all you have to do is tell the truth.

BOBBY

I'm sorry Milton.

MILTON takes the lamp pieces and puts them back together. MILTON lights the lamp.

MILTON

And give someone a chance to forgive you. You see; good as new.

The radio comes on by itself.

RADIO

Many people ask me if I know the reason why an innocent father of two is dragged to his death behind a pickup truck simply because he is black. They want to know why an innocent young man like PFC Barry Winchell from Fort Campbell Kentucky was bludgeoned to death with a baseball bat by two of his fellow soldiers for the crime of being gay. Is it because of ignorance or hate, politics or religion, is it because of fear? Yes. There they are. Write them down. Try and do better and tune in tomorrow for more stuff it would be good to know before you get here. Goodnight.

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