

THE WALL

A Drama in Two Acts

by

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(THE WALL)

THE WALL

CAST OF CHARACTERS (6 men, 4 women)

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Will Powers..... | 40, a living casualty of the Vietnam war |
| Alyssa McCafferty Powers..... | 40, Will's wife and Mac's widow |
| "Mac" McCafferty..... | 20, Will's best friend and Alyssa's first husband |
| Megan McCafferty..... | 19, Alyssa's daughter |
| Hector Sanchez..... | 19, a young Hispanic soldier of misfortune |
| Joseph Nobel..... | 17, a young Mormon soldier of misfortune |
| Mason Washington..... | 18, a young African-American soldier of misfortune |
| Angel Houston..... | 44, an African-American nurse and Vietnam veteran |
| Madison McCabe..... | 22, an African-American National Park Ranger |
| LBJ..... | 64, Commander-in-Chief |

The Setting

Most of the play takes place at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC, also known simply as "The Wall." One scene is set in the kitchen of a private home somewhere in the Heartland; however only the suggestion of a kitchen need be communicated; realism is not important, and this scene can be played in front of The Wall with no problem. In those scenes when the Squad appears, it important that these casualties of the Vietnam war somehow "emerge" from The Wall itself to continue their endless vigil.

The Time

1992—20 years after the main characters in the play became Vietnam casualties.

The Wall is the second play in my Vietnam trilogy that also includes *American Pies*, *Happy Lives*, *Blue Skies and Other Lies* and *Bui-Doi: The Dust of Life*. In sequence, these plays take place 10, 20, and 30 years "after" the war. *The Wall* is fully protected under existing international copyright laws. Production rights for these plays must be obtained from the playwright or his authorized representative.

For Donald Earl Bear of Mountain View, Oklahoma,
Lewis P. Puller, Jr.
And
All the Rest

THE WALL

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ACT I, SCENE I

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on The Wall in the wee hours of the morning, sometime around 3:00 AM. The Wall dominates the stage with its apex set center stage reaching a height of 10.1 feet and then tapering off slightly as it extends to the wings stage left and right. Even in the dim illumination, the black marble shines and reflects what little light there is. Low, barely audible, there is the SOUND OF WEeping, soft crying in the background. Also, FAINT at first and then BUILDING, are the SOUNDS OF THE VIETNAM WAR—artillery and small arms fire, screaming, yelling, and then finally the SOUND OF A HELICOPTER in the distance. It builds until it sounds as if the Huey is on stage. And the "wind" from the blades blows papers, etc. across the set. Then the SOUND DIES AWAY and the "wind" stops.

MADISON MCCABE, 22, a young African American National Park Ranger enters stage left and begins crossing slowly to stage right making her nightly rounds. She stops, shines her flashlight on The Wall and finds a name.

MADISON

There you are—Mason Washington . . . how you doing, tonight? Everything okay? That's good. You got enough troubles without anymore from *this* world to fret over. Now I know you're in there. I know you're *all* in there, and some day—not today—somebody's

THE WALL

MADISON (continuing)

going to explain to you why it is that you're in there and we're all still out here. (A beat.) But not tonight, and it sure won't be me to do the explaining. But maybe it'll be somebody *like* me, 'cause the so called "best and brightest" sure did a sorry ass job of trying to explain it.

(She starts on her way again.)

Madison

I'll be moving on now, but you call if you need something. You know I'm never far off, and I'm here to serve you . . . jist like you were there for me.

(She moves on and disappears from view stage right. As soon as she moves we HEAR VOICES and a portion of the wall begins to come alive as four figures emerge from it. Four young infantry men—MAC, SANCHEZ, NOBEL, and WASHINGTON—come out of The Wall. With the exception of Mac, they are all dressed in the combat fatigues they died in and are carrying M-16's and a full array of combat gear for a reconnaissance patrol. Their uniforms are all torn and stained with blood where each received a mortal wound from mortar fire. Sanchez has a head wound; Washington has hole in his upper abdomen near his liver, and Nobel has a gaping cavity in his chest. Mac, however, is dressed for inspection and shows no apparent wound. Unlike the others, he is also wearing a dickey as part of his uniform.)

SANCHEZ

You think she really knows we're in here?

WASHINGTON

She don't know nothin'! Madison McCabe! What kinda name is that for a sister anyway?

SANCHEZ

Irish . . . *Black* Irish.

NOBEL

How do you know her name?

WASHINGTON

THE WALL

Name tag.

SANCHEZ

Which happens to be jist above her tits.

WASHINGTON

I can look, man; it's been a loooooog time. Don't hurt none to look. (A beat.) You know how long it's been since I felt one of those?

MAC

Not as long as it's gonna be.

WASHINGTON

Don't remind me. I ain't gonna be gittin' any either.

SANCHEZ

Roger that, Bro.

(The four sit down and Sanchez breaks out a deck of cards.)

SANCHEZ

You know how many times I got laid before I got . . . laid out?

WASHINGTON

Zero. Nada. Zilch. Never. None.

SANCHEZ

Kiss my ass!

MAC

Hey! Watch your mouth—the kid. (A beat.) You talkin' about gittin' laid in Nam or back in the world?

WASHINGTON

Has to be in Nam, man. Ain't no woman in her right mind gonna crawl in the sack with his sorry ass.

SANCHEZ

Washington, my man, if you wasn't already dead, I'd waste your ass right here and never give it a second thought.

NOBEL

If you gotta pay for it, it don't count anyway—in Nam or in the world.

THE WALL

SANCHEZ

Jist for the record—I ain't *never* had to pay for it.

NOBEL

Yeah, right, and your sister's a virgin.

SACHEZ

Speakin' of virgins, Nobel. How many times you been laid?

NOBEL

None of your damn business!

WASHINGTON

Yeah, man, let he who has not cast the first stone . . . how's that shit go?

SANCHEZ

Let he who has not been laid cast the first stone . . . or some shit.

MAC

Now hear this! I want you two to clean up your act around the kid—you got that?

WASHINGTON

I saw this *kid* waste to NVA regulars in the Valley, man. We ain't gonna be a bad influence on his ass.

MAC

Then how 'bout I write home and tell your Mama 'bout the trash you talk.

WASHINGTON

Okay, man. Don't havta git sore.

NOBEL

Let he who has not sinned cast the first stone.

SANCHEZ

What?

NOBEL

That's the sayin' you're trying to remember. It's from the Bible.

WASHINGTON

Don't be a smart ass white boy! We know where it comes from. And what'd you know 'bout gittin' laid anyway?

MAC

THE WALL

Leave the kid be. Don't matter if he's been laid or not. None of your business.

WASHINGTON

Don't matter. Don't matter! His country sends 'em over here to get wasted without ever gittin' laid. That sure as hell matters!

SANCHEZ

I'm with ya on that one, Bro. (A beat.) Nobel?

NOBEL (not sure)

It's no big deal. Where I came from, there were about two girls in the whole school that did it, and believe me . . . you wouldn't of wanted to do it with either of them.

WASHINGTON

What kinda backwater state you come from, boy?

NOBEL

Utah.

SANCHEZ

You one of them Normans?

NOBEL

Mormons.

SANCHEZ

Yeah, Bro, one of them.

NOBEL

I was—not sure what I am now.

WASHINGTON

And you never been laid—no shit?

NOBEL

It's not a crime, Washington.

WASHINGTON

Well, it's some sorry shit—crime or not. Huh, Mac?

MAC

Yeah.

SANCHEZ

That sucks the *polla Grande*.

THE WALL

NOBEL

I'm not *even* going to ask what that means.

WASHINGTON

Don't start with that Spic talk, Sanchez.

SANCHEZ

Spic talk! (A beat.) It's what we Spics refer to as Spanish, Professor Einstein.

MAC

Don't start you two. You wanna get pissed off, get pissed off at me—your Anglo oppressor.

WASHINGTON

Wasted Anglo oppressor. (Slaps Sanchez a high five.) Shit, Mac, you must be missin' it more than any of us . . . gittin' it steady like that with a wife and all.

MAC

For three weeks I was getting it steady before they shipped my ass over here. And, look, I miss *her* —not it!

WASHINGTON

Okay, Jesus. Don't havta git all pissy about it.

MAC

I'm not gittin' pissy!

WASHINGTON

Whatever you say, Mac.

MAC

Nobel, am I gittin' pissy?

NOBEL

Seems like you might be getting a little pissy, Mac.

MAC

Christ! I didn't expect that from you, Kid.

SANCHEZ

You're gittin' pissy, Mac, definitely gittin' pissy.

WASHINGTON

THE WALL

We're all gittin' pissy 'cause we ain't gittin' laid. It's simple as that. (A beat.) Now we gonna play some poker or what? (A beat.) Sanchez?

SANCHEZ

Play with the kid.

NOBEL

I can't play poker.

SANCHEZ

Won't! Not can't. (A beat.) Hey, Kid, it don't make a shit now; you're already dead. If you was goin' to hell, you'd already been there. So, you can do whatever you want.

NOBEL

Or what I don't want.

WASHINGTON

Christ! Come on Sanchez.

SANCHEZ

I'm tired of poker; I'm sick to death of poker; I don't give a shit for poker, and I ain't playin'.

WASHINGTON

How 'bout some gin?

SANCHEZ

Hell no! I do want to play. I do not want to pay. You will not deal. You will not steal. Or I'll take my knife. And end your life.

WASHINGTON

LBJ and the boys already beat you to it. (A beat.) Christ, Mac, how long we gotta keep this up?

MAC

Until he shows up.

SANCHEZ

He ain't gonna show, Mac.

MAC

He'll show.

WASHINGTON

Mac, it's been 20 years!

THE WALL

MAC

But we only been here *ten*. Before that he didn't know where to find us. Now that he knows where we are, he'll show.

WASHINGTON

Okay, ten years we been here every night . . . waitin', and he don't show. He's got a life to live—probably a wife, a family, all that baggage. He don't remember us.

MAC

He'll show. (A beat.) Tell 'em, Kid.

NOBEL

I don't know, Mac. (A beat.) Sometimes I get this feeling like we're waiting for Godot.

SANCHEZ

Oh fine! Who the hell is Godot?

WASHINGTON

Hell with this Godot, man! I ain't waitin' on nobody else!

NOBEL

No, no. You don't have to wait for Godot. It's a *play*—about these guys who are waiting for this dude, Godot.

SANCHEZ

Waitin' for 'em for what?

NOBEL

To show up.

WASHINGTON

Sounds screwed up to me.

SANCHEZ

So what happens?

NOBEL

Nothing. Nothing happens because he never shows.

WASHINGTON

Godot?

NOBEL

Yeah.

SANCHEZ

THE WALL

Godot never shows?

NOBEL

No.

SANCHEZ

That most definitely is screwed up.

WASHINGTON

How long they wait, man?

NOBEL

Until he showed.

WASHINGTON

But he didn't.

NOBEL

That's the point.

WASHINGTON

Of what?

SANCHEZ

The point of no friggin' return!

NOBEL

That's not what it's the point of! It's like this—

WASHINGTON

We don't wanna hear none of your white high-brow bullshit explanations, Kid!

NOBEL

I'm 17 years old. I don't *know* any high-brow bullshit.

SANCHEZ

The hell ya say! You been to some white public school with gobs of money in friggin' Salt Lake City, I bet. Bet you never seen a brother or gook before your ass got shipped to Nam.

WASHINGTON

Or Spic?

NOBEL

Oh, yeah we got plenty of—people of Spanish descent in Salt Lake.

THE WALL

WASHINGTON (to Sanchez)

Hey, Bro, you one of them people of—Spanish decent?

SANCHEZ

I guess I am . . . migrated to Salt Lake City to get a good job in one of the *service* industries, servicing them white lilly of the valley Mormons.

NOBEL

I didn't mean anything. I just . . .

SANCHEZ

Yeah, I know how it is, Kid. You don't havta tell me.

MAC

Leave the kid alone. He wasn't around long enough to know what he knows from what he don't.

WASHINGTON

Plus, he ain't never been laid.

NOBEL

Except to rest.

WASHINGTON

Jist like the rest of us.

MAC

Except for Will.

SANCHEZ

This is a crock, Mac! How long we gonna wait?

MAC

I told ya—three maybe four thousands times already. For as long as it takes!

SANCHEZ

Christ!

MAC

He'll show. I know him.

WASHINGTON

Knew him! Twenty years ago you *knew* him.

THE WALL

MAC

People don't change.

WASHINGTON

Dead people don't. Live ones sure as hell do. You don't know shit now, and Will . . . he probably don't even remember us.

MAC

He remembers. Take my word for it, he remembers. And he'll show.

NOBEL

It's not like we got anywhere else to go anyway.

SANCHEZ

I read ya five by on that one, Bro. Fire for effect!

WASHINGTON

Okay then, so we might jist as well sit back and play some poker.

SANCHEZ

Oh hell with it . . . deal!

WASHINGTON

Seven card stud. The Joker, Black Ladies and one-eyed Jacks wild.

SANCHEZ

Oh, for god's sake!

MAC

Deal me in. You got the watch, Kid.

(LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY as Washington starts to deal. Mac sits down to play.)

THE WALL

ACT I SCENE II

LIGHTS COME UP on MEGAN MAC-CAFFERTY, 18, sitting at the kitchen table where she is writing a paper for her freshmen history class. She is attractive, intelligent, and rebellious. Mac was killed before she was born. She has never accepted Will or forgiven him for surviving the ambush that killed Mac. She continues to have the idealized Mac serve in the role of her father. The set need not be realistic; just the idea of a kitchen is sufficient for the scene to work. Lights will direct attention to the scene, but The Wall is there, looming over them even in the privacy of their own home—many miles away from The Wall. After a moment, WILL POWERS, 40, enters a little reluctantly. He is a handsome and athletic, but is a little battle-weary after a 20 year fight with drugs, booze, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

WILL

Hi . . . what's up? (No response.) Your mom said I might be able to help. . . with your project—maybe.

MEGAN

Really?

WILL

That's what she said.

MEGAN

Shows what she knows.

WILL (thinks, then)

I'm willing to give it a go.

THE WALL

MEGAN
How do you know?

WILL
How do I know . . . ?

MEGAN
That you're willing to help? You don't even know what I'm working on.

WILL
Okay . . . I don't *know* what you're working on, but assuming it doesn't involve the overthrow of our duly elected government, I think I'd be willing to lend a hand . . . if you need it.

MEGAN
And if it does?

WILL
Does it involve the overthrow of our duly elected government?

MEGAN
No.

WILL
What does it involve?

MEGAN
The overthrow of some other duly elected government.

WILL
I know a little something about that.

MEGAN
I know you do, but . . . I don't need any help.

WILL
Wonder why you mom said you did?

MEGAN
Beats me.

(She goes back to work.)

WILL (after a moment)
History?

MEGAN

What?

WILL

History. Are you still having trouble with history?

MEGAN

Who says I'm having trouble with history?

WILL

You did . . . at least I thought you did . . . a few days ago.

MEGAN

Nothing I can't handle.

WILL

Great! (A few beats.) One of my strong points—history.

MEGAN

One of your *many*.

WILL

One of my few actually. And I really would be willing to help, Megan.

MEGAN

I doubt it.

WILL

Why? (A few beats.) What are fathers for?

MEGAN

Fathers are *supposed* to “know best” from what I understand, but then—you're not my father, so I don't really know.

WILL

Okay, so I'm your step-father.

MEGAN

Well I have *no* idea what they're for!

WILL

To tell you the truth—neither do I, but if we cooperate—maybe we can find something useful for me to do. Don't want you to get into the deep serious.

THE WALL

MEGAN

The *what*?

WILL

Deep serious. It's just an expression from . . . somewhere in my past.

MEGAN

Well, it sounds fitting here because—if you *must* know—I'm very close to . . . not successfully completing my history course this semester.

WILL

You're flunking history?

MEGAN

That's a rather blunt way to put it.

WILL

Consider yourself lucky—your mother can seldom make out what I'm talking about.

MEGAN

I know. (A beat.) Anyway . . . I suppose my whole semester is riding on this course and this course is riding on this paper. I think I'm off to a decent start, but . . . I'm kind of stuck.

WILL

So let me help!

MEGAN (thinks, then)

Okay!

WILL

Okay! Fine! (A beat.) So what's the paper about?

MEGAN (measured)

Vietnam—the war in Vietnam.

(Will is stunned.)

MEGAN (continuing)

You must remember Vietnam.

WILL

Hard thing to forget.

THE WALL

MEGAN

Still want to help?

WILL (quietly, unsure)

Sure. I'll . . . do what I can.

MEGAN

Great! So . . . what's it like to kill someone?

(Will flinches as if struck.)

WILL (ignoring her question)

What—aspect of the war are you writing about?

MEGAN

The *personal* aspect. I want to chronicle how the war influenced the lives of people who participated in it both directly and indirectly—the participants and their families—or what's left of them.

WILL (woodenly)

What's left of the participants or their families?

MEGAN

Both.

WILL (thinks, then)

Why are you doing this Megan?

MEGAN

Because as you so eloquently expressed it, I'm, "flunking history." I plan on interviewing a number of veterans.

WILL

I bet. (A beat.) How many have you interviewed so far?

MEGAN

You're number one.

WILL

Maybe you should talk to someone else first then.

MEGAN

I thought you wanted to help.

THE WALL

WILL

Yeah, I did too. I . . . just . . . didn't know that . . .

MEGAN

Okay. So—what's it like? (Silence.) Will? (A beat or two.) If this is too difficult . . .

WILL

I don't understand why you're doing this.

MEGAN

To pass history—to stay in school.

WILL

Yeah, right.

MEGAN

I didn't ask for your help, Will. (A beat.) You walked in here and volunteered it.

WILL (thinks, then)

Yeah, I walked in here all right—to a damn ambush! That's what I walked in to. You're mother knows all about this, right?

MEGAN

About what?

WILL

The subject matter of your paper!

MEGAN

Mother and I don't have any secrets, Will.

WILL

And I do!

MEGAN

Maybe not secrets, but you know—*things*.

WILL

What things, Megan? What things do I know?

MEGAN

I don't know! That's what I want to find out.

THE WALL

WILL

And that's why you're writing this paper—to discover these things that you don't—things that you think you need to know, things you think I've withheld from you.

MEGAN

I just know that you know more about my father than you've told me.

WILL

Megan, I've told you everything there is to tell.

MEGAN

But that's not everything.

WILL

Yes, it *is* everything! There's *nothing* else to tell.

MEGAN

Well I know about those things that you can't tell. And I know where I can go to find out more.

WILL

More what?

MEGAN

More of what you won't or can't tell me. I'm going to the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

WILL

Jesus!

MEGAN

I'm going to The Wall. I can go during Spring break and find out everything I want to know.

WILL

You're not going to any wall!

MEGAN

You can't stop me!

WILL

The hell I can't!

(Alyssa Powers enters. She is 40, engaging, bright, but troubled. She's overheard Megan and Will fighting and is clearly distressed.)

THE WALL

This is evidently a road that has been much traveled.)

ALYSSA

What is going on?

WILL

You know what's going on!

MEGAN

I told you he wouldn't help.

WILL (throwing Megan's books off the table)

I'll help! I just won't . . . Christ!

(Megan rushes under Alyssa's outstretched arm.)

ALYSSA

Will, for God's sake!

WILL

You knew all about this, didn't you?

ALYSSA

No! About what?

WILL

Her goddamn paper! You knew she was writing about Vietnam.

ALYSSA

What if I did?

WILL

Then you know what!

ALYSSA

No, I don't know what. What are you talking about?

WILL

You set me up!

ALYSSA

You told me it was over for you. Just last week . . . didn't you tell me it was over . . . finally.

THE WALL

MEGAN

I heard you too, Will. You told her it was over.

WILL (breaking)

It'll never be over.

ALYSSA (goes to him)

Not as long as you keep it bottled up inside. (A few beats.) Megan, leave us alone.

MEGAN

I *have* to do this paper mom.

ALYSSA

This isn't about your paper.

MEGAN

I know what it's about.

ALYSSA

I know you do.

MEGAN

I'll go to The Wall by myself if I have to.

ALYSSA (thinks, then)

You won't have to go by yourself.

WILL

Yes, she will.

ALYSSA

I'll go with her.

WILL

I'll be right here.

ALYSSA

Yeah, just like always, except you're not really *here* at all. You've never been here. You've been back there, lost somewhere in something that neither of us can comprehend. Lost somewhere in something that you refuse for whatever reasons to acknowledge. (A beat.) You're just not available, Will; some part of you is missing in action . . . back there.

WILL

I'm okay.

ALYSSA

But I'm *not* okay. And Megan's not okay. She's questioning who she is because she doesn't know her father, and she doesn't know who you are.

WILL

Maybe I don't know myself.

ALYSSA

Well, that's the point, now isn't it?

WILL

Maybe I don't want to know; maybe neither of you do either.

ALYSSA

There's only one way to find out about that.

WILL

But then there's no turning back.

MEGAN

Or maybe nothing to turn back to.

WILL

Can't this wait?

ALYSSA

Another 20 years? (A few beats.) It won't go away, Will. You can never forget those things you don't want to remember.

WILL

Not if you keep dredging them up!

ALYSSA (breaking)

I don't know if I love you anymore, Will. And I don't know if you've ever really loved me . . . or if . . .

WILL

Or if what?

ALYSSA

You know what?

WILL

THE WALL

I married you, Alyssa because I loved you.

ALYSSA

Loved?

WILL

Love!

ALYSSA

Well now I need something more.

MEGAN

So do I.

WILL

You just—don't know. Neither of you knows.

ALYSSA (breaking)

We know we *don't* know, Will, but we *want* to know. We have to know or we're not going to make it.

MEGAN (to Will)

Look what you're doing to her?

ALYSSA

He didn't do anything, Honey.

MEGAN

Then why are you crying?

ALYSSA

Because it hurts.

MEGAN

You're hurting her.

WILL

It's not just me that's causing the hurt.

MEGAN

But you can stop it.

WILL (also referring to the war)

I didn't start it.

THE WALL

MEGAN

It doesn't matter who started it. You can help.

WILL

How?

MEGAN

By trying. But at least trying.

ALYSSA (to Megan)

It's no use, Honey. He can't . . .

MEGAN

She needs your help, Will.

WILL

I thought it was you that needed my help.

MEGAN

I don't need anything from you.

WILL

Fine.

MEGAN

Fine?

WILL

Yeah. Fine. Fine. Fine. Fine. Fine.

MEGAN

Okay, fine. I'll send a post card. Do you want me to do a rubbing of any of your war buddies names' and send them too?

WILL

So you think all the answers are going to be etched into the black marble of The Wall?

MEGAN

Some. Maybe not all.

ALYSSA

I'm going with her, Will.

WILL

THE WALL

Good for you. You two can do a little mother and daughter bonding.

ALYSSA

Don't be cruel, Will. I've run out of places to look for answers.

WILL (a little frightened)

Neither of you has *any* idea of what that Wall might reveal.

ALLYSA

But you do.

MEGAN

Which is why he's frightened; my father wasn't frightened.

WILL (hard)

Megan, we were *all* scared shitless most of the time—Mac included!

ALYSSA

Will! For god's sake!

MEGAN (back at him)

I'm not afraid of what I'll find there. Why are you?

WILL

Because I have no idea of what I'll find there. That—thing in *me*—that thing that I was, born of terror and nurtured in carnage and tested by fire—has with the help of you two, been driven out of me. And I don't want to—see again what I once was.

ALYSSA

But what's left isn't whole, Will, which means our lives aren't whole.

WILL

And you think The Wall will make us whole again? You think The Wall can heal what 20 years of therapy and booze and drugs and work haven't?

ALYSSA

I don't know if it will or not. But I do know, short of leaving you, I'm running out of options.

WILL (thinks, then)

I can't go there alone.

ALYSSA

You won't be alone.

THE WALL

WILL
That's not what I mean. I'll need some . . . ground support.

MEGAN
What?

ALYSSA
No!

WILL (to Alyssa)
She needs to be there.

ALYSSA
Why?

MEGAN
Who?

ALYSSA
A woman . . . from back there—the war.

MEGAN
What woman?

ALYSSA
A woman he met in Vietnam; I believe her name is . . . Angel.

WILL
I'll call her.

ALLYSA
No you won't! (A beat.) They're all dead; everyone else who loved this Angel is dead. But not you, and you've kept that love alive all these years—letters, cards, calls. Now you want to *see* her!

WILL
No, I want you to see her. You and Megan.

ALLYSA
I don't want to see her!

WILL
If any of us are to make any sense of what happened over there, Angel needs to be there.

Why?
ALLYSA

Because she knows—things.
WILL

Where is she?
MEGAN

Seattle.
WILL

And she'll drop everything and come to The Wall to meet you?
ALLYSA

If I need her.
WILL

Just like that?
ALLYSA

Just like that.
WILL

Then she *does* love you.
MEGAN

I'm just one of her many loves, Megan. (A beat.) Your father was another. And she no doubt has an army of new loves now.
WILL

Mom . . . if this it what it takes . . . I think we have to go with it.
MEGAN

Fine. Just don't expect me to . . .
ALLYSA

To what?
MEGAN

I don't know.
ALLYSA

WILL

THE WALL

I don't expect that any of us knows what we expect to find there . . . other than pain.

MEGAN

The truth will be enough for me.

WILL

Maybe too much.

MEGAN

I'll take my chances.

ALLYSA

So, when do we start this mission of—great expectations?

WILL

The sooner the better. I'll call Angel.

ALLYSA

You do that. We'll start packing and start early tomorrow.

MEGAN

Then there's nothing to keep us from going?

WILL

Nothing at all.

(LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY to end
the scene.)

THE WALL

ACT I SCENE III

LIGHTS COME UP on The Squad at 3:00 AM. Sanchez and Washington are seated on a couple of ammunition boxes playing cards; Nobel is looking at a copy of *Playboy*, and Mac is pacing, studying what's out there in the darkness as if on watch. The Wall looms over them in the background.

SANCHEZ

Mac, you gotta sit in for me. Washington is cheatin' my ass, but I can't catch 'im at it.

WASHINGTON

I'm not cheatin', Bro.

SANCHEZ

I know you're cheatin' sure as I know I'll never take another breath. Come on, Mac!

MAC (distracted)

In a minute.

SANCHEZ

Hey, Kid, you want some of this action?

WASHINGTON

Leave 'im be. He's gittin hisself a education.

SANCHEZ

Hey, Kid, how come you can read *Playboy*, but can't play some cards?

WASHINGTON

You jist readin' the articles huh, Kid?

NOBEL (unfolding centerfold)

What articles?

THE WALL

SANCHEZ

When did *Playboy* start havin' articles?

NOBEL

The Mormons never taught me this stuff, so I figure I need to become self-educated in the area of human sexual response.

WASHINGTON

Mac there can tell ya everything you need to know 'bout sex. Right, Mac?

MAC

That's right—*all* I know, if you got about 30 seconds to spare.

SANCHEZ

Didn't your old man tell you nothin' 'bout sex, Kid?

NOBLE

No, but he told me about everything else though.

WASHINGTON

Now jist how does he know so damn much?

NOBEL

He's a teacher. I already told you.

WASHINGTON

Teacher? No way!

SANCHEZ

What kinda shit does he teach?

MAC

It ain't *all* shit, Hector.

NOBEL

English literature in my school, and he was an adjunct professor at BYU.

WASHINGTON

What the hell is that?

NOBEL

Adjunct professor or BYU?

SANCHEZ

Both.

NOBEL

Well—an adjunct professor is like a teacher at a college that’s not really part of the faculty. My dad would fill in at BYU sometimes for special lectures or if someone was sick, but he wasn’t in a paid position.

WASHINGTON

Yeah, Bro, I got the idea. It’s like all the brothers that worked the cotton fields in the antebellum South—that the right word for it?—they weren’t *slaves*—they was—adjunct professors! That right, boy?

NOBEL

No!

SANCHEZ

What’s this BYU shit?

MAC

Brigham Young University.

WASHINGTON

Brigham Young?

NOBEL

Yeah, that’s right.

WASHINGTON

I heard of that dude. He be the one that say it's okay for a man to have as many wives as he wanted—brigham young, brigham old, he don't care as long as you bring 'em.

SANCHEZ

All right! I readin’ ya five by on that, Bro.

MAC

It wasn’t as many as he *wanted*.

SANCHEZ

How many was it?

NOBEL

It was more like as many as he could . . . manage.

WASHINGTON

Manage! That sucks! Man's lucky if he can manage *one* wife.

THE WALL

NOBEL

No, it's more like how many a man can keep . . . content.

SANCHEZ

You mean . . . *sexually* satisfied?

NOBEL (thinks, then)

I don't know if that's what I mean or not.

SANCHEZ

Now say a man's got three wives; now how's it work. Do they all get together and watch and take turns or what? Does one of the wives say, "Cuse me, Brigham honey, I believe it's my turn now. So, if you'd be so kind to roll off of Christine, I got some of the *good* stuff here for ya." How's that go down, man? Explain it to me.

NOBEL

Mac, you got any idea how that works?

MAC (To Sanchez)

Don't matter how it works. It's against the law now anyway. Leave the kid alone, Sanchez! Don't make me tell you again.

SANCHEZ

Hey, didn't mean nothin', man. Sorry.

WASHINGTON

Hey, Mac, you're a little pissy again tonight. (A beat.) What's up?

MAC

I got a feelin'.

SANCHEZ

Fine! You got a feelin' so that gives you the right to start raggin' on my ass.

WASHINGTON

Mac, what kinda feelin'? Good? Bad?

MAC

Can't tell yet. Jist a feelin'.

SANCHEZ

Maybe this Godot dude is gonna show us his ass!

NOBEL

Don't count on it. He'd have to cross an ocean to get here.

WASHINGTON

My people crossed an ocean to git here.

SANCHEZ

What people?

WASHINGTON

My African brothers.

SANCHEZ

What ocean?

WASHINGTON

The bad ass Atlantic!

SANCHEZ

So what? My people had to cross an ocean to git here too.

WASHINGTON

What people?

SANCHEZ

My Spanish brothers.

WASHINGTON

Thought you came from Texas?

NOBEL

He means before that.

MAC

Don't git in the middle of that, Kid!

SANCHEZ

I know where I'm from, but my people originally came here from Spain.

WASHINGTON

Spain?

SANCHEZ

Right, Bro. Spain! That dude Christopher Columbus brought 'em over.

WASHINGTON

That dude weren't no Spic. He was a Wop!

SANCHEZ

That right, Nobel?

NOBEL

Yeah, I think that maybe Christopher Columbus was of . . . Italian descent.

SANCHEZ

Okay! So this Wop, Columbus, has this—agreement with this Isabella broad in Spain. She's the Queen ya see, and she does this deal with Columbus—she calls his Wop ass "Colombo"—to go git all this gold from the Aztecs down in Mexico.

WASHINGTON

They didn't know nothin' 'bout no *Aztecs*!

SANCHEZ

Like hell they didn't!

WASHINGTON

They didn't even know 'bout Mexico.

SANCHEZ

You wanna hear the story of my people or do you want Nobel there to give you the white-washed version outta some damn book he read in Mormonville?

WASHINGTON

Go ahead, Man, but you most definitely is screwed up.

SANCHEZ

Okay. So, this Queen—Isabella—did I tell ya she was a virgin? And a Catholic.

WASHINGTON

What the hell difference does that make?

SANCHEZ

Makes all the difference in the world. Cause if she been gittin' it good and steady at home, maybe she wouldn't of felt so driven to git the gold from Mexico.

WASHINGTON (thinks, then)

I don't think it would of mattered. Anyway, it was *Mary* was the virgin.

SANCHEZ

But she weren't no Catholic.

NOBEL

You're thinking of *Elizabeth*.

THE WALL

SANCHEZ AND WASHINGTON

Now jist who the hell is Elizabeth?

NOBEL

The virgin queen!

WASHINGTON

Jist let my man Sanchez tell the story. I heard enough white-washed versions of history back in Mississippi.

MAC

I told ya, Kid. Stay out of it!

NOBEL

Go ahead then. I don't give a shit.

MAC

Watch your mouth!

SANCHEZ

Okay. (A beat.) So—this Queen Isabella, who may or may not have been a virgin, says to this dude Colombo—

WASHINGTON (getting into it)

She *says* to 'im!

SANCHEZ

Colombo, my man, she says, "I got ya three good ships—

WASHINGTON

Three *good* ships! Amen!

SANCHEZ (thinking)

The Ninja. The Margarita, and the—Pina Colada.

WASHINGTON

You sure 'bout that, man?

SANCHEZ

Somethin' like that, and she says to 'im, "Now get your Wop ass out there—"

WASHINGTON (into it)

Git your Wop ass out there—*right now!*

SANCHEZ

THE WALL

"On to one of them fine ships, and go for the gold."

WASHINGTON

Amen, Bro! *Go* for that friggin' gold!

SANCHEZ

She didn't talk that trash, Bro. She's was the friggin' queen.

WASHINGTON

Sorry—your *highnass*.

SANCHEZ

So that's jist what he done. Lit out 'cross the bad ass Atlantic ocean to git the virgin gold for the Queen of Spain.

NOBEL

I thought you said the Queen was the virgin?

SANCHEZ

Shut up, Kid. Don't matter.

WASHINGTON (waits, then)

That's it?

SANCHEZ

Hell no, that ain't *all* of it. It takes 'em years to *sail* over; didn't have no damn diesel engines, or internal combustion engines or nuclear powered engines. Had to *sail* over. Then—they had to discover Mexico, find the gold, kill the Aztecs and haul their tired asses back home.

WASHINGTON

Your people killed the Aztecs?

SANCHEZ

They killed a few. But remember: they was *both* my people—the Spanish and the Aztecs. And the Spanish didn't kill 'em all 'cause they needed a bunch of 'em back home to work in the—service industries, if ya know what I mean.

WASHINGTON

Yeah, Bro, I got the idea. They probably kept a few to work in—what shall I call it, Kid?

NOBEL

Agrarian pursuits.

THE WALL

SANCHEZ

Yeah, right, to work in the fields as—adjunct professors.

WASHINGTON

That's sucks, man. You come from slave holders.

SANCHEZ

And slaves.

WASHINGTON

Still, I don't know if I can trust your ass or not. *Slave holder!*

MAC

You can trust every man—and boy—in this squad, Washington, and you know it.

WASHINGTON

Still, it jist pisses me off the way the Spanish and Frogs and the English go in somewhere and git whatever they want jist 'cause they got more money or more guns or more ships or more education. Same thing happened in Nam, man. Frogs come in git all the goodies and make domestics or worse out of the people livin' there. Jist pisses me off to no end!

NOBEL

You know, Washington, it pisses a lot of people off.

SANCHEZ

Not enough!

(Mac moves center stage and suddenly raises his hand; the others freeze in place and watch for a moment. Then Mac makes a motion for them to fan out to positions along the wall. Without making a sound, the members of the squad pick up their weapons and move to positions along the wall, almost merging into it. They wait with their weapons at the ready. After a few moments, we HEAR FOOT- STEPS, and Madison enters from stage left, making her rounds. She moves to a position near Washington, but she is totally unaware of the squad's physical presence.)

MADISON

Mason Washington, how are you doing tonight? Good I hope. I'm feeling some sadness over on this side, but that doesn't concern you. (A few beats.) I hope you don't mind, but I

THE WALL

looked you up in the register, and even got this picture of you sent to me from your high school yearbook. Should have told you before I guess, but I was a little shy about it.

(She moves downstage, sits on a bench and takes a photograph out of her pocket. She looks at the photo and continues her monologue.)

MADISON (continuing)

You were a fine looking young man from Oxford, Mississippi. And just 18 when your country sent you off to Vietnam to . . . sacrifice yourself for . . . I'm not sure what. (A few beats.) Anyway, I took the liberty of calling your folks down there; yeah, they're still there

(Washington looks over at Mac and makes a signal asking if he can move to her. Mac nods affirmatively. Washington moves to the bench and sits beside her, but she is never aware of his presence.)

MADISON (continuing)

—living in Oxford. Your brother and sister are all grown up now. Albert played football for Bear Bryant over at Alabama; that caused quite a stir. He's a teacher now. And Velma's married to a lawyer for the NAACP here in Washington and has four kids of her own, two of them practically grown. I told your mama that I was watching over you here every night—rain or shine, and that you hadn't been forgotten.

(She puts the picture back in her pocket and stands. Washington wants her to stay, but he can't do anything about it. She moves to The Wall, says her final line and then moves offstage.)

MADISON (continuing)

Your mama said to tell you . . . "that not a day goes by without her missin' you something awful."

(As the LIGHTS BEGIN TO COME DOWN SLOWLY, we HEAR A FAINT WEEPING coming from The Wall. It grows louder and then dies away to complete silence as the LIGHTS BEGIN TO COME DOWN SLOWLY.)

MAC

THE WALL

Washington?

WASHINGTON

Yeah, Mac.

MAC

You okay with that?

WASHINGTON (breaking)

Far from it, Bro. Far from it.

(LIGHTS FADE TO COMPLETE
DARKNESS to end the scene.)

THE WALL

ACT I SCENE IV

LIGHTS COME UP on The Wall in the early morning, around 6:00 AM. The light is soft, and The Wall is wet, apparently from a morning dew. Madison is seated on the bench in front of The Wall writing in a notebook. Off stage we HEAR VOICES.

Can't we go to the hotel?

MEGAN (off)

Will, we've been driving all night!

ALYSSA (off)

Just a quick look, then we'll go.

WILL (off)

I don't want a "quick look"! I want spend some time.

MEGAN (off)

We'll be back.

WILL (off)

(Megan, Will, and Alyssa enter; Megan is in a huff; the other are close behind her. When Megan really "sees" The Wall, she stops and catches her breath. She just stares but can't speak. Will and Alyssa react in a similar fashion. Megan finally walks up slowly and touches it, feeling the moisture. Will is wearing a light army jacket embroidered with the crest of the Americal Division.)

It's all wet.

MEGAN

It's from the morning dew.

ALYSSA

Some say it's from condensation. Others believe it's tears.

MADISON (getting up)

I'm sorry.

ALYSSA

Oh, we're all sorry . . . now.

MADISON

Mom, I didn't know it would be so . . .

MEGAN (lost, breaking)

Come here, baby.

ALYSSA (going to her)

(Alyssa wraps Megan in her arms.)

You folks are early.

MADISON

Not as early as you.

WILL

Night shift. Been here since midnight. Still got a couple of hours to go.

MADISON

My god don't you get lonely?

ALYSSA

Oh, no. I've got plenty of company. (A beat.) First time here?

MADISON

(Will nods.)

Yes.

ALYSSA

My father is here.

MEGAN

I'm sorry.

MADISON

THE WALL

MEGAN

I never even saw him.

MADISON

There's a directory up there at the start. It will tell you—where you can find him.

(They turn to go. Then Alyssa turns back.)

ALYSSA

Are you coming?

WILL

You go ahead. I'll find the other guys; I have a list of the panels Angel sent me years ago.

ALYSSA

Of course.

(They move up The Wall and disappear off stage right. Madison moves over to Will and notices his jacket.)

MADISON

Americal Division?

WILL

Yeah, you know it?

MADISON

Twenty-third Infantry Division operating in I Corps for pretty much the whole war. (A beat.) Mind if I have a look at that list?

(He hands her the list; she reads it and they move to The Wall.)

MADISON

Mason Washington is right there.

(She takes his hands and moves it over the etched letters on The Wall. Then she steps away. Will reaches out and touches the names with both hands, running his hands across the names as if reading Braille. Then he shakes his head and turns away.)

THE WALL

You can cry if you want.

MADISON

(Will can't make any kind of response. He finally manages just to shake his head.)

MADISON

Scream. Yell. Thrown something. Fall down in a heap. Whatever helps.

WILL

Nothing helps!

MADISON

Maybe this will.

WILL (turning to her)

Maybe.

MADISON

You know Mason Washington well?

WILL

We were—brothers in adversity. Went with him through boot camp, recon training, and then spent nine months with him in country before . . .

MADISON

I know.

WILL

Washington, Sanchez, the Kid, Mac—they were my life then, my squad. Mac and I grew up together, knew him my whole life.

MADISON

His whole life.

WILL

Thought you were here to help.

MADISON

First thing you gotta do is face the facts.

WILL

Okay. I knew him *his* whole life. (A beat.) So how do *you* know Mason Washington?

MADISON

Well, I spend about five nights a week with him. And I have this picture of him in my mind—maybe it's just some kind of a romantic notion.

WILL

And you want me to tell you whether you're right or not?

MADISON

Actually, I want you to tell me I'm right—whether I am or not.

WILL

Thought we were facing the facts here.

MADISON

That's just for you. I can have all the fantasies I want.

WILL

Then I'll make it real simple for you—

MADISON

Madison McCabe.

WILL

Whatever you think is good and decent about Mason Washington, you multiply it ten fold. (A few beats.) And he was looker too, and that's a fact.

MADISON (breaking a little)

Oh, I know that. I got this picture of him from his high school, and I've even talked with him mama down in Oxford.

WILL (wrapping an arm around her)

I do believe you're smitten, Madison McCabe.

MADISON

Hey, I've been trained to do that kind of thing for you.

WILL

And you're doing fine.

MADISON

How come it took you so long to get here? I've got this feeling your friends been have been waiting for you.

THE WALL

WILL (thinks, then)
Things are—not like they should be on the home front.

MADISON
How bad?

WILL
Deep serious.

MADISON
The War rages on.

WILL
And on and on.

MADISON
That your wife and daughter?

WILL
Step-daughter. She . . .

MADISON
You gotta finish what you start here—even a simple sentence.

WILL
She's Mac's daughter, my friend, and—

MADISON
The woman, her mother—let me guess—was Mac's wife? (Will nods.) Now she's your wife?

WILL
That's right.

MADISON
And the girl, Mac's daughter, has never accepted you—or forgiven either of you for—you'll have to explain this part to me.

WILL
She never forgiven us for what she views as a betrayal on our parts—me for betraying my best friend and Alyssa for betraying her husband.

MADISON
But he was dead.

THE WALL

WILL (distantly)

That's right, dead, but not gone.

MADISON

And even after all this time she hasn't forgiven either of you?

WILL

It didn't matter for a while—when she was a kid. But since she's grown up—she's struggling to find some kind of identity for herself—it's an old story. She blames me for his loss.

MADISON

Tough spot.

WILL

So, that's what I'm doing here—seeking redemption and reconciliation from the writing on the wall.

MADISON

R&R.

WILL

That's what I said.

MADISON

Maybe you need to read between the lines of what's written on The Wall.

WILL

Maybe. (A beat.) I'm not sure what I'm doing here to tell you the truth—I came for them hoping—

MADISON

To finish that sentence?

WILL

I think it's more complicated than a single sentence.

MADISON

Unless it's a life sentence.

WILL

And if it is?

THE WALL

MADISON (thinks, then)
What happened to your squad?

WILL
You get right to the point, don't you?

MADISON
Liberated Black woman.

WILL (thinks, then with difficulty)
Ambush . . . mortar attack . . . moving down a mountain—

MADISON
I got the idea; you don't have to go on.

WILL
We made a mistake; went down the mountain on the same trail we went up; VC showed themselves where we intended to go down on a new route, so we went back the way we came in. It was a set-up. We should have known. (A few beats.) I was on the point—

MADISON
Point's usually the first to get it.

WILL
They wanted the squad so they waited for me to pass, then put the mortars in a kill zone on the trail When I got back to them—they were all dead but Mac.

MADISON
You got him out?

WILL
Yeah, but . . . he died a couple of days later. I just—don't know what—to do with it.

MADISON
You the squad leader?

WILL
No, Mac.

MADISON
Nothing you could have done.

WILL
Still don't know what to do with it.

MADISON (lowers her voice)
I'll tell you something. (A few beats.) Things—happen here.

THE WALL

WILL

What kinds of things?

MADISON

All kinds. At night in the wee hours of the morning—2:00-3:00 AM. People have told me that—things have happened. That—they're here.

WILL

Who?

MADISON (nods to The Wall)

Them. (He cocks his head.) Don't know if it's true; never seen a thing myself. I think you have to be connected; maybe have some unfinished business.

WILL

So if I come back—

MADISON

About 3:00 o'clock—can't hurt anything.

WILL

I don't understand.

MADISON

I don't either. But why don't you come back—in the morning early, real early.

WILL (not sure)

Okay.

MADISON

And I want you to do something for me.

WILL

All right.

MADISON (tearing a page from notebook)

If you should—happen to see Mason Washington, give this to him. Would you do that for me?

(Will takes the paper, but is confused.)

MADISON

If you see him.

THE WALL

WILL

Sure. (A beat.) If I see him.

MADISON

Okay. (A beat.) Now, I'll go up and see if your family needs any help. Sometimes they're worse off than you guys, but they don't know it until they get here.

WILL

Go ahead. I'm okay now.

(Madison exits. Will walks back to The Wall and traces the letters of a dead soldier's name. ANGEL HOUSTON, 44, a tall, confident African American woman enters behind him and watches him for a moment before speaking.)

ANGEL

William Powers.

(Will turns, looks at her for a moment then he goes to her and they embrace.)

ANGEL (holding him away)

Will Powers. Let me look at you.

WILL

God, it's good to see you!

ANGEL

Roger that. (A beat.) My God, you look 20 years older.

WILL

Just 20? (A beat.) And you—

ANGEL

Be careful now—

WILL

—will always be the Angel that saved us all.

ANGEL (nods to The Wall)

Not all. Not by a long shot. (A beat.) You look like hell.

WILL

THE WALL

Drove all night to get here. Haven't even been to the hotel.

ANGEL

Just got in myself. I had to come here first too.

WILL

God it's good to actually *see* you, Angel! Touch you.

ANGEL

Been a long time. (A few beats.) This is where you say, "Too long."

WILL

Too long. Too *damn* long!

ANGEL

That almost sounded like you meant it.

WILL

You know I did.

ANGEL

Finally had to come, huh?

WILL

Yeah, with an emphasis on the word "had." We're in some deep serious at home.

ANGEL

You told me.

WILL

Marriage is falling apart.

ANGEL

And Megan detests you. (A beat.) Now whose fault is that?

WILL

I know. I know.

ANGEL

You never told her —the way it really was?

WILL

I told her what I thought she needed to hear.

ANGEL

THE WALL

Your wife?

WILL

I never—gave her a reason to believe anything other than what I told Megan.

ANGEL

You really know how to stack a deck. But you missed the part about who's supposed to benefit from it.

WILL

For a long time, it seemed like—the right thing to do.

ANGEL

Oh, yeah, lying is right up there at the top of Angel's list of the right things to do.

WILL

I did it for them!

ANGEL

Of course you did. (A beat.) And look where it got you.

(He motions to The Wall.)

WILL

Look where it got both of us.

ANGEL

I guess if everybody concerned had told the truth about this war, maybe none of us would be here right now.

WILL

I need your help, Angel.

ANGEL

You know you'll always have my support.

WILL

I need more than that.

(She looks at him then gets up and walks away.)

ANGEL

I hope you didn't ask me here to do your dirty laundry, Will.

THE WALL

WILL

She won't believe me, Angel; she doesn't want to believe anything good about me.

ANGEL

Have you given her anything good to believe in?

WILL (thinks, then)

Very little.

ANGEL

Then you need more help that I can give you.

WILL

Angel, I'm turning a corner by being here, but I can't do it by myself. I'm off the booze, drug-free. I finished school. Now I've got a decent job offer from a contractor in Tulsa—another Vet—who believes in me. He's seen what I can do with my hands. I can do what I need to do now, but not if I lose my family; they're my bedrock. Without them . . .

ANGEL

We made a promise.

WILL

To a dead man.

ANGEL

A promise is a promise. You're going to have to do your own laundry.

WILL

Jesus! You don't have to tell her about Mac; just tell her about me!

ANGEL

You need to tell her. It's the only way you'll heal.

WILL (angry)

Heal thyself! Is that the drill?

ANGEL

Love is the true healer, Will. You have to love enough to tell both of them the truth, and that means loving yourself enough to forgive yourself for surviving.

WILL

And for marrying my best friend's wife?

ANGEL

THE WALL

Widow.

WILL

Yeah, widow.

ANGEL

Feed the love, Will. Give it something to grow on. What you did—for Mac, for Alyssa, for Megan—you did out of love.

WILL

Angel, in this place we're surrounded by love—but this love is for the perfect image of a lost love. I am living and imperfect, and to tell you the truth, I don't know that I'm all that loveable, even to myself. I'm begging for your help.

ANGEL

And you're getting it.

(Will just shakes his head, lost.)

ANGEL

Let's have a look at that shoulder.

(She crosses to him, strips off his jacket unbuttons his shirt and pulls down one side. His shoulder is scarred. She probes and feels and rotates his arm. He begins to weep quietly.)

ANGEL

See there, you heal up just fine.

WILL

The pain never stops.

ANGEL

That's the part you have to live with.

(She embraces him just as Alyssa and Megan enter stage right.)

ALYSSA

Will?

(They don't move.)

THE WALL

Excuse me, but—

ALYSSA

I know. This is your husband.

ANGEL

And you are—?

ALYSSA

Helping.

ANGEL

I see that you are. May I ask how embracing my half-dressed husband is helping ?

ALYSSA

(Will and Angel break apart.)

Ask him.

ANGEL

Will?

ALYSSA

(He doesn't answer.)

You must be—this *Angel* person.

ALYSSA

Some people call me that. (A beat.) You must be Will's wife and daughter.

ANGEL

Step-daughter.

MEGAN

Sorry. Didn't mean to step on your toes.

ANGEL

Did you know my father—Sergeant Sean McCafferty? I just found his name on The Wall—that and a few pictures are all I ever saw of him. Can you tell me anything about him?

MEGAN

(Angel looks at Will.)

ANGEL

No.

MEGAN

You can't or—won't?

ANGEL

There were just so many of them.

MEGAN (desperately)

You must know something!

ANGEL (extending her arms)

Come here child.

ALYSSA (clutches her)

Megan, you stay right here.

MEGAN

Mom!

WILL

Alyssa for god's sake, let her go!

MEGAN

I just want to hear something about my father.

ALYSSA

I'll tell you!

MEGAN (breaking away)

You don't know everything.

ANGEL (taking her in)

I don't know everything either, child, but I know what I know.

ALYSSA

You already have my husband, what else do you want?

ANGEL

Understanding. Compassion.

ALYSSA

Will, I want to leave now.

THE WALL

MEGAN

I'm going to stay a while.

ANGEL

I'll bring her to your hotel. You go ahead.

WILL (wrapping his arm around Alyssa)

Let's go honey. There's nothing else we can do here.

(They begin to move off with Alyssa casting worried looks back at Megan. The LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY to end the act.)

END ACT I

THE WALL

THE WALL

by

David W. Christner

ACT II SCENE I

LIGHTS COME UP ON The Wall at 2:00 AM where The Squad is assembled for inspection. Nobel, Washington and Sanchez look about as good as they can under the circumstances. Their fatigues are burnt, ragged and stained with blood as before; their boots are caked with mud, and every accessory is slightly askew. Washington, Sanchez and Nobel form a line not quite perpendicular to The Wall. Mac paces in front of them. He is all spit and polish. The Squad is standing at Parade Rest.

Ten—hut!

MAC

(They snap to attention.)

Parade—rest!

MAC

(They go back to Parade Rest.)

Snap it up, now. Snap it up. Ten—hut!

MAC

(They snap to in unison.)

MAC

THE WALL

Present—harms!

(The Squad presents their arms.)

That's more like it.

MAC

(Mac moves down the line.)

How we look, Mac?

WASHINGTON

You look like hell!

MAC

There's a reason for that.

SANCHEZ

Been there.

WASHINGTON

And back.

NOBEL

But not all the way back.

SANCHEZ

Unfortunately.

WASHINGTON

Knock off the grab assin'! (A beat.) Order—harms! At ease.

MAC

You men—are probably wondering—why I called you here.

MAC (like John Wayne)

Not me, Bro.

WASHINGTON

Not after twenty years, we ain't.

SANCHEZ

Button that lip, soldier. (A beat.) Tonight is different.

MAC

THE WALL

NOBEL
What's going on, Mac?

MAC
Tonight I won't be conducting the inspection.

SANCHEZ
Oh, no . . . who is it this time?

MAC
Got the brass comin' in tonight. *Big* brass.

WASHINGTON
Westmoreland?

MAC
Bigger than that. Civilian brass.

SANCHEZ
McNamara?

MAC
Bigger!

WASHINGTON
Don't tell me Henry Kissinger is dragging his white ass down here to inspect us!

MAC
Nope. It's the Old Man himself.

WASHINGTON
My man, Tricky Dick!

MAC
Nope—not that tricky, but a big dick all right. Ya got one more guess.

NOBEL
LBJ?

MAC (nods)
The one, and thank God, the only. Our Commander-in-Chief.

SANCHEZ
LB—friggin'—J. I can't believe it.

THE WALL

MAC

So I want you to look sharp.

SANCHEZ

Feel sharp!

WASHINGTON

Be sharp!

MAC

Knock it off.

(A few beats while Mac listens. We HEAR a FEW BARS OF "Hail to the Chief" and "The Yellow Rose of Texas.")

MAC

He's coming now.

SANCHEZ

Don't worry 'bout nothin', Mac. We'll give 'im all the respect he deserves. He *is* the President.

NOBEL

You bet! If it weren't for him, we might not even be here.

WASHINGTON

Maybe I'll offer up a little toast to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

(LBJ emerges from the center of The Wall. He is wearing chinos, a white shirt open at the collar, a tie pulled own, a leather flight jacket and baseball cap.)

MAC

Ten—hut!

(The Squad snaps to attention.)

MAC

Mr. President, 2nd Platoon, 1st Squad, Bravo Company, 14th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Division reporting for inspection, Sir!

LBJ

THE WALL

Very well, Sergeant. With your permission, I'd like to make a few comments before we begin the inspection—just a few personal observations.

MAC

As you wish, Sir. You *are* the Commander-in-Chief.

LBJ

That's the point, Sergeant. I don't want to talk *at* you as Commander-in-Chief, but . . . *with* you—man to man.

MAC

As you wish, Sir! Man to man. However, I should point out, Sir, that most of these men are little more than boys, Sir!

LBJ (nodding)

Fair enough, Sergeant. (A beat.) Feel free to express yourself, men, all of you.

NOBEL

I have no expression, Sir, and nothing to express.

LBJ

What's that, Son?

NOBEL

Robert Frost, Sir. *Desert Places*. I'm paraphrasing.

LBJ

Good for you, Son. Nothing wrong with a little culture to keep the mind alive. Keep it up.

NOBEL

I will, Sir.

SANCHEZ

The kid never had a chance to git it up, Sir!

LBJ

That's some sorry shit, son. You missed out on a damn good thing. (A beat.) All you boys—did everything I asked of you. And I do appreciate it.

SANCHEZ

All the way with LBJ, Sir! Our squadron motto.

WASHINGTON

And look where it got us.

THE WALL

NOBEL

We got this nice view of the reflecting pool—year 'round.

WASHINGTON

Yes Sir, and those Cherry blossoms are quite a sight in April.

SANCHEZ

Right, Bro. Every April we're reminded of the fall—of Saigon, by these Cherry trees that were a gift of the Japanese whose asses *we* ran outta Saigon fifty years earlier.

WASHINGTON

What's the sense in that, Mr. President?

LBJ (thinks, then)

You boys have every right to feel . . . disenfranchised.

SANCHEZ

I don't feel—disenfranchised, Sir! I feel pissed off.

WASHINGTON

And I feel pissed *on!* Sir!

LBJ

I don't know what to tell you boys.

MAC

Nobody else does either, Sir!

LBJ

You have to understand that it was all so very complicated—geo-political stability, national security, global economics, our prestige as a world leader. And I was trying my damnest to get that Great Society thing off the ground. Shit—what a nightmare!

MAC

An apology wouldn't hurt anything, Sir.

LBJ

I inherited the entire mess from that fornicator Kennedy, and he got it from that nitwit Eisenhower. They're both still thought of as *heroes!* And me—hell I couldn't even run for a second term, things were so screwed up. And my Great Society did more for this country than—

MAC

A simple apology will go a long way, Sir!

THE WALL

LBJ (breaking)

God knows if I could give just one of you boys back what I took, I swear I'd give up everything I ever accomplished in politics or my personal life. I swear I would.

MAC

We'll take that, Sir. (A beat.) Now these troops are ready for your inspection.

LBJ

Very well, Sergeant. Carry on.

MAC

Squadron—ten—hut!

(The Squad snaps to attention. LBJ and Mac start down the line. First they stop in front of Washington. LBJ looks him over.)

LBJ

You look like hell, Son.

WASHINGTON

Been dead 'bout 20 years, Sir!

LBJ

Hell, I've been dead for 19, and I had a lot more miles than you, Son.

WASHINGTON

Don't remind me.

(They move on to Sanchez. LBJ examines the hole in Sanchez's temple and gets some blood on his hands.)

LBJ

That's a nasty wound, Son—and still bleeding after all these years.

SANCHEZ

This blood's for you, Sir.

LBJ (reads name tag)

Where you from—Sanchez?

SANCHEZ

El Paso, Sir.

THE WALL

LBJ

I thought you might be a Texan.

SANCHEZ

Texan first. American second. Child of God third, Sir.

LBJ

That's as it should be. (A beat.) You know—I have a *special* affinity for citizens of Spanish descent.

SANCHEZ

Is that a fact, Sir?

LBJ

Would I lie to you?

SANCHEZ

How many people for which you have this “special” affinity did you have in your Cabinet, Sir?

LBJ

Son I said, “*special*” affinity not “*actual*” affinity. I didn’t have any of your people in my Cabinet, however, I did have a first class cook of Spanish descent in the White House.

SANCHEZ

I respect you for that, Sir. Cooking for the President of the United States of America is no small matter, and if Cook was so fortunate as to be able to take home a few leftovers, I’m sure he dined like a king Sir!

LBJ

Hell, he didn’t cook just for *me*. There was Lady Bird and the girls—that goddamn pretty boy Linda married, diplomats, statesmen, ambassadors. Hell, you think I would have trusted that job to a Chinaman?

SANCHEZ

Not on your life, Sir!

LBJ

Damn straight I wouldn't have! (A beat.) Hell, everybody would of been hungry 30 minutes later!

(He moves on to Nobel.)

LBJ (to Nobel)

THE WALL

How 'bout you, Son?

NOBEL

How 'bout me, Sir.

LBJ

Where you from?

NOBEL

Salt Lake City, Sir!

LBJ (examining the wound)

What's this hole in your chest here?

NOBEL

Caught a piece of shrapnel, Sir. Severed my aorta and penetrated my lungs; lungs filled up and I drowned in my own blood.

LBJ

That's some sorry shit!

MAC

He's jist a kid, Sir. We try—not be a bad influence.

LBJ

Hell he's dead ain't he?

MAC

Nevertheless . . .

LBJ

Sorry, Son. (A beat.) How old were you when—you got it?

NOBEL

Seventeen, Sir.

LBJ

That's a pity.

(LBJ stares at his blood stained hands.)

NOBEL

Tell me about it! (A beat.) How old were you, Sir—when—it got you?

THE WALL

Sixty-four.

LBJ

That's a pity.

NOBEL

You ought to do somethin' about that.

LBJ (looking at his bloody hands)

Just won't seem to heal, Sir. Here you are. Rinse with this.

NOBEL (hands LBJ his canteen)

(Nobel takes the canteen, twists off the top and tips it over LBJ's outstretched hands. Blood instead of water pours out, covering LBJ's hands completely. LBJ jerks his hands away, grabs a handkerchief from his rear pocket and tries to wipe his hands clean.)

NOBEL

Sorry, Sir. Must have picked up a piece of shrapnel in my canteen too.

MAC

Shall I have the men pass in review now, Mr. President?

LBJ (frantically wiping his hands)

Yes. Yes!

MAC

Squadron, shoulder—harms!

(They snap their M-16s to their shoulders. Faint at first and then BUILDING, we HEAR THE STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER as the Squad begin to march in place and execute all of Mac's commands. Mac "marches" alongside his men.)

MAC

Forward—harsh!

WASHINGTON (calling cadence)

Your left. Your left. Your left. Right. Right. Right. Your left.

MAC

THE WALL

To the left flank—harch! (A few beats.) To the right flank—harch! To the rear—harch!
To the rear—harch!

I gotta gal in Salt Lake City! WASHINGTON

I gotta gal in Salt Lake City! SQUAD

She got a mole on her left titty! NOBEL

SANCHEZ (slapping Nobel a high five)

She got a mole on her left titty! SQUAD

Your left. Your left. Your left. Right. Right. Right. Your left. WASHINGTON (calling cadence)

Met this woman in Chapel Hill! NOBEL

Met this woman in Chapel Hill! SQUAD

She won't do it but her sister will. WASHINGTON

She won't do it but her sister will. SQUAD

Sound Off! MAC

One. Two. SQUAD

Sound off! MAC

Three. Four. SQUAD

MAC

THE WALL

Sound off. One. Two. Three. Four.

Sound off!

SQUAD

(LBJ is staring at his hands and backing towards The Wall, trembling. He throws the handkerchief aside and looks at the Squad. Mac maneuvers the Squad to a position directly in front of LBJ and has them “march” by.)

Eyes—right!

MAC (saluting as they pass)

(LBJ manages to right himself long enough to return their salute, then he falls apart and disappears into The Wall.)

Squadron, ready—halt!

MAC

(They stop marching. THE MUSIC CONTINUES TO BLAST AWAY, growing even louder.)

Squadron, dis—missed!

MAC

(BLACK OUT with the MUSIC CONTINUING TO BLAST AWAY AS IT IS NOW MIXED WITH THE SOUNDS OF COMBAT—HELOS, GUNFIRE, ROCKETS, BOMBS, SCREAMING, ETC.)

THE WALL

ACT II SCENE II

LIGHTS COME UP on The Wall a few minutes later. The Squad is sitting around, playing cards and reading. Mac is "on watch."

WASHINGTON

The way I figure it, they ought ta call this here wall: The Tomb of the *Known* Soldiers—58, 214 known soldiers. I know 'cause I counted up all the names.

SANCHEZ

Where'd you learn to count that far, Washington.

WASHINGTON

Oh, I get plenty of practice. I spent a good bit of time jist countin' the days.

NOBEL

Until what?

SANCHEZ

Till their time comes, Kid. I'm countin' too.

NOBEL

Well, I'm countin' too—that you two will tell the brothers—when the time comes—that this white-ass Mormon had nothin' but the highest regard for both of my ethnic brothers.

WASHINGTON

Don't you worry, Kid. You got nothin' to worry 'bout. Fact is, if we wasn't both dead, I'd introduce you to one of the sisters.

NOBEL

You would?

SANCHEZ

Yeah, he would, long as you don't know any more about what to do with 'em than you know now. (A beat.) Hey, Bro, where's your girl Madison McCabe? Haven't seen nothin' of her tonight.

THE WALL

WASHINGTON

She'll be by, but since she's comin' to see me instead of you, you can't see her all the time.

NOBEL

I saw her, Bro. I think she's coming by for all of us. Don't you, Mac?

MAC (signaling)

Shhhh! Someone's comin'.

(The squad takes up a defensive position as before. Will and Angel enter.)

ANGEL

Are you sure about this?

WILL

No, I'm not sure about it. *She* wasn't even sure about it. She just said that . . . "things happen."

ANGEL

What things?

WILL

That's what we're here to find out.

(As Will and Angel draw nearer and nearer to The Wall, the members of the squad rise one by one and drop their weapons. They stare at Will and Angel in disbelief.)

NOBEL

It's Will, Mac. He came back—just like you said he would.

(Will and Angel are suddenly hit with a cold chill as the Squad begins to move toward them.)

WILL

What time is it?

ANGEL

Zero three one five.

THE WALL

I'm a civilian, Angel!

WILL

Three-fifteen. Sorry.

ANGEL

(The squad moves closer. Mac reaches out to touch them. Will and Angel feel another chill.)

WILL

Did you feel that?

ANGEL

It's just a breeze.

WILL

I don't think so.

ANGEL

Maybe we should go.

WILL

Yeah.

(They turn to go.)

MAC

No! Don't go.

ANGEL

What?

WILL

I didn't say that.

ANGEL

Then who did?

WILL

I know that voice.

ANGEL

I *really* think we should go.

MAC

THE WALL

No, Angel, you're needed here.

Mac?

ANGEL

It can't be! What the hell?

WILL

Don't be afraid. We've been waitin' for you a long time.

MAC

For us?

ANGEL

Yes, we've been waiting a long time. The whole squad is here.

MAC

(LIGHTS BRIGHTEN around the Squad so they become visible to Will and Angel.)

Oh my God! You're all still bleeding. (To Mac) Let me help you.

ANGEL

(She moves Nobel upstage next to The Wall and begins dressing his wounds using a first aid kit from his pack.)

Long time, Will.

MAC

Give me a minute, Mac. I don't know what's happening.

WILL

It's not happening, Bro. It just is. Don't try to understand it.

SANCHEZ

(Sanchez moves back to The Wall near Nobel so Angel can dress his wound.)

It's like this, Will. This is the place where those who were killed in the war but didn't die can meet those who died but weren't killed. I don't know if that means this ground is hallowed or sacred or if it's just dirt, but it's the place we've been meeting every since this Wall was built.

MAC

THE WALL

WILL

Okay, I'll accept that. I don't understand it, but I'll accept it.

WASHINGTON

I don't know if it's hallowed ground or not either, Bro. But I know this much about it: it's stained with a lot of innocent blood.

WILL

That you, Mason?

WASHINGTON

The one and lonely.

WILL

Yeah, I guess you are.

(Will moves to embrace his friends, but he doesn't know if it's possible.)

WILL

Look, can we . . .

WASHINGTON (grabbing him)

Hell yes!

(Group hug.)

WILL

You don't know how I've missed you guys!

MAC

Had a hell of a way of showin' it—avoidin' us for twenty years.

WILL

I didn't know you were here.

WASHINGTON

Where the hell you think we were?

WILL

I don't know that I knew what to think. I just didn't know if I could come here or not. (A beat, then to Nobel.) Hey, Kid, they treating you okay?

NOBEL

Hell no! I can't even swear without getting my butt kicked.

THE WALL

(Sanchez kicks his butt.)

NOBEL

See!

WILL

Sanchez, I've missed you even though I know you'd screw my sister if given half a chance.

SANCHEZ

Where is your sister now?

WILL

Where you can't get to her.

SANCHEZ

Don't remind me.

ANGEL

Lie down, Hector. I've got to stop this bleeding.

SANCHEZ

Later, Bro.

ANGEL

Mason you get over here too; I want have a look at that liver of yours.

(Mason goes to The Wall and lies down next to Sanchez.)

MAC

So, Will, you gotta catch me up. I don't know anything, *can't* know anything except for what you tell me. None of us knows anything beyond what someone tells us directly—like the Parks Ranger.

WILL

Madison McCabe.

MAC

Yeah, she talks to us, and we listen, but she doesn't know the things I want to know. (A beat.) That's just the way it is. So fill me in.

WILL

It's been twenty years.

THE WALL

MAC

So you'd better hurry. We can't stay out indefinitely.

WILL

Jesus, Mac, I don't know where to begin.

MAC

Sure you do—with Alyssa.

WILL

Of course—Alyssa.

MAC

You ever see her?

WILL

Mac—

MAC

Mac what? (A beat.) Mac—unfinished sentence? Mac—silence on the other end of the line? Do you ever see her or not?

WILL

I see her every day.

(The others look up.)

MAC

That so? (A beat.) Hear that guys? My best friend Will here sees my wife every day.

ANGEL

She's your widow, Mac.

MAC

Right. Damn nearly forget. *Did* forget—my widow.

SANCHEZ

You must live close by, huh Will?

MAC (a little desperately)

Is that it, Will? You live close by?

WILL

No. I mean, yeah I do live close by.

THE WALL

MAC
How close?

WILL
This isn't easy, Mac.

MAC
Jesus, Will! Are you living with my wife?

WILL
No, I'm living with my wife.

MAC
Jesus Christ! (A beat.) How long?

WILL
Eighteen years.

MAC
Son-of-a-bitch! Had I even been dead a year?

WASHINGTON
What were you thinkin', Man?

WILL
What was I thinking! I'll tell you what I was thinking. I was thinking there's this 19-year-old widow, with a baby, scared half to death, alone, with nobody in sight to give her a hand. Half the people in the country didn't care—figured her husband got what he deserved, and she could damn well starve as far as they were concerned. That's what I was thinking.

MAC
So I should be grateful?

WILL
She sure as hell was! And it wasn't like I couldn't have found somebody else. I—

MAC
You what?

WILL
Doesn't matter.

(Mac grabs him by the collar.)

THE WALL

MAC

It might by god!

ANGEL

Mac . . . stop it! Will did the right thing. The right thing for her—for you, and maybe even for himself.

MAC (breaking, releasing Will)

Jesus, I know that . . . it's just so damn hard to think of what I've missed. I was crazy in love with that girl.

WILL

And she was nuts about you, man. But you couldn't have expected her to—

ANGEL

Stop living!

MAC

Just because I did?

WILL

I've been kind to her, Mac. I'm still a little screwed up from—all this, but I've always been kind to her.

MAC

I know. I know. I'm just having a—

SANCHEZ

Normal reaction, Bro. Don't sweat it.

WASHINGTON

I'm havin' a normal reaction to, Bro. Cause I'm seriously considerin' blowin' you away.

WILL

Could you do that—in your present state?

WASHINGTON

Don't know. Don't matter either. It's the thought that counts.

MAC

So, I got a kid or what?

WILL

A kid. Yeah.

THE WALL

MAC

Hear that? I'm a father! (A beat.) Son? Daughter?

WILL

A daughter named Megan.

MAC

Oh my god! Hear that? I have a little girl!

WILL

She's nineteen years old, Mac.

MAC

Nineteen! My god I don't know what to do.

WILL

Join the club.

MAC

What do you mean?

WILL

It's been hard, Mac. She's still havin' a hard time with—you know. You're her hero. (A beat.) She's never—accepted me.

MAC (quietly)

That must be hard. (A beat.) Then—she doesn't know about—

WILL

She only knows what I told her—that her father was a hero.

(Mac grabs him now and hugs him with great affection and jubilation.)

MAC

All right! (A few beats.) I told you he'd come. Didn't I tell you Will would come back? That he wouldn't forget?

NOBEL

You told us, Mac.

WILL

And here I am. (A beat.) What do you say, Kid?

THE WALL

NOBEL

Long time no see, Bro.

WILL

Roger that. Too damn long!

NOBEL

You know anything about my family, Will?

WILL

Yeah, I still exchange Christmas cards with them. Your dad got on at BYU about 10 years ago as an Associate Professor.

NOBEL

Hear that, guys. A position at BYU. No more adjunct professor labor for him.

WASHINGTON AND SANCHEZ

All right!

WILL

Your mom is fine; still trying to convert me.

NOBEL

Sure sign she's feeling good.

WILL

She misses you, Kid.

NOBEL

Yeah, I miss her too.

(Angel gets up from dressing the others' wounds and moves to Mac.)

ANGEL

Okay, Sergeant, off with the pants. I want to have a look at that back.

MAC

It's nothing.

ANGEL

If I remember correctly—that nothing did a job on your spinal cord. Let me have a look.

(Mac reluctantly begins to drop his pants so Angel can inspect his wound.)

THE WALL

SANCHEZ
Hey, Angel, am I gonna make it?

ANGEL
Not with me, Private.

SANCHEZ
With anyone?

ANGEL
Not this time around.

SANCHEZ
That sucks the *polla Grande*.

(Washington wanders over and inspects Mac's wound with Angel.)

WASHINGTON
Hell, ya can't even tell you was hit, Mac. Hardly any blood at all, and jist a little tear in the back of your shirt. And here I gotta keep pushing my liver back in to keep it from droppin' on the ground where some dog might come along and eat the thing.

SANCHEZ
Hey, Bro, could you be a little more graphic; I'm havin' a hard time visualizing all that—the dog and all.

NOBEL
Yeah, Bro, what kinda dog?

WASHINGTON
What kind you think: bloodhound. (A beat.) Hell, you had it easy, Sanchez. Damn bullet in the head; you never felt any pain.

SANCHEZ
That's right, Bro—no pain and no gain, jist this unending sense of loss.

ANGEL (to Mac)
Looks like a surgeon made an incision. You're going to be—

MAC
Fine?

ANGEL

THE WALL

I'm sorry, Mac. I wasn't thinking.

(Mac pulls up his pants and tucks in his shirt.
Angel reaches up to look under the dickey.)

ANGEL

Now let me see—

MAC (pulling away)

That's fine.

WASHINGTON

What's fine?

WILL

He caught a piece of shrapnel in the neck too.

SANCHEZ

I never heard that, Bro.

WASHINGTON

Where's the blood?

MAC

Ran out the hole in my back where the shrapnel went in. But the piece in my back did all the damage.

WASHINGTON

That right, Angel?

ANGEL

His spinal injury was severe; there is no doubt of that.

WILL (to divert attention from Mac)

Hey, Washington, do you know of a young woman name Madison McCabe?

WASHINGTON

I might. What's it to ya?

WILL

It's nothing to me, Bro. I just met her, but she did give me this letter.

WASHINGTON

What letter's that?

THE WALL

WILL

I don't know, but this Madison McCabe asked me to deliver it to you—if—I should see you.

WASHINGTON

Well, you're seein' me.

(Will gives him the letter. Washington moves upstage to read the letter by himself.)

SANCHEZ

What's she say, Bro?

NOBEL

She got the hots for ya?

WASHINGTON

Kid, you don't even know what the hots is!

NOBEL

No, but I bet she does.

WASHINGTON

Jist let me read my letter in peace.

NOBEL

How long you and Angel gonna stay, Will?

ANGEL

He'll stay for as long as it takes.

WILL

Maybe another day or two.

ANGEL

And night. This one's almost over. I have to get back—I've got fifty more in worse shape than any of you back in Seattle.

MAC

Wish you could stay, but—I know how much they're countin' on you. (A beat.) Will?

WILL

I'll stay another night for sure.

MAC

THE WALL

Will, would you do something for me?

WILL

You know it, Bro.

MAC

Bring them here—for me to see.

WILL

Alyssa and Megan?

(Mac nods.)

MAC

I gotta see 'em!

WILL

But—what about them?

MAC

They won't be able to see me; they won't even know I'm here unless you tell them. Do it for me, Will. Do this one thing for me.

ANGEL

He's already done a great deal for you, Mac.

WILL (nodding)

I'll bring them. I'll do that for you.

MAC

Tomorrow morning—early, *real* early.

WILL

Same time. Same place.

MAC

Okay then. It's settled.

(Washington suddenly lets out a scream of pure pain and falls against The Wall weeping. The squad starts for him.)

MAC

I was afraid that might happen. You two better go while it's still dark. We'll take care of our own. (A beat.) This kind of thing happens all the time.

THE WALL

(Angel starts for Washington, but Mac stops her.)

MAC

You can't help him with this, Angel.

ANGEL

I can try.

MAC

This is way out of your league. (A beat) There's no way you can understand the pain that comes for mourning a life not lived.

(Mac goes back with the squad and helps move Washington back into The Wall.
BLACKOUT to end the scene.)

THE WALL

ACT II SCENE III

LIGHTS COME UP on Will and Angel an hour later. They are seated next to each other on the bench; Angel has her arm around Will. The sun is coming up, and a heavy mist covers The Wall. The morning light is soft, inviting introspection and serenity.

ANGEL

What do you think, Will? Is this ground hallowed?

WILL

I think wherever innocent blood is shed, the ground is hallowed.

ANGEL

Your blood was shed.

WILL

But it wasn't innocent.

ANGEL

Because you survived?

WILL

Shedding blood is the easy part, Angel. You have to do that to survive; nobody's asking who's right or who's wrong when there's incoming. Trying to make some sense of it afterwards is what's hard. (A few beats.) In another hour this place is going to start filling with people, and just like those guys on the other side, they're going to be asking why. Why did my husband or son or brother or father or lover die? Why?

ANGEL

I don't know. I just try to repair the damage once it's done. Why is for politicians and philosophers.

WILL

Or fools. (A beat.) I know why Mac did what he did!

THE WALL

ANGEL

Don't talk of that!

WILL

Sometimes I wish I had the guts to do the same thing.

(She turns and slaps him hard.)

ANGEL

Don't you say that. Don't you *ever* say that! Mac took the easy way out, and I can't forgive him for it. And you! You have everything to live for; you can honor Mac with your *life*.

WILL

As well as his *wife*!

ANGEL

His widow. We've been all through that.

WILL

Not *all* through it. (A beat.) I can't honor, Mac.

ANGEL

What haven't you told me?

WILL

Doesn't matter now. I can't undo it.

ANGEL

Undo what? (A beat.) You might as well get it out while we're here.

WILL (shaking his head)

Three weeks after we shipped out—my dad died.

ANGEL

Okay, your father died . . . so the Army sent you home on emergency leave for the funeral.

WILL

That's right, home to Tulsa where the three of us grew up—me, Mac, and Alyssa. You have to understand, I'd always loved Alyssa, but she was Mac's girl. I could never let her know. But that night—

ANGEL

Oh, Jesus . . .

THE WALL

WILL

Shall I go on?

ANGEL

Yeah, but for your sake, not mine. I know the story.

WILL

No, not all of it. They'd hardly been married a month. I stood up for Mac at his wedding; he wanted to get married before he shipped out so they could start a family. (A few beats.) I don't know how it happened. I drove her home after the funeral; we had some coffee. She wanted to know about Nam—how bad it was—if we were going to make it. I gave her the sugar coated version, but she didn't buy it. She was scared, and I was scared. I didn't think I'd ever see her again.

ANGEL

That's enough.

WILL

No, it wasn't like that.

ANGEL

What was it like?

WILL

She had no idea I loved her; because of Mac I kept it inside myself from the time we were kids. I think Mac knew it; he never said anything because he knew there was no way out of it, but he felt for me because there was no way we could both have her. What neither of us knew, was that Alyssa really wanted me . . . but she didn't want to hurt Mac either.

ANGEL

She married him knowing she loved you?

WILL

No, she married him knowing she was more attracted to me, but she had no reason to love me or to suspect that I loved her. My feelings for her were somehow lost in love that I showed for our mutual friend. I think I gave the love I felt for Alyssa to Mac so *neither* of them would be aware of it.

ANGEL

But you told her that night.

WILL

Only because I didn't think I'd be coming back. (A few beats.) Then she told me--that' if things were different, if she'd known . . . how I felt about her—

THE WALL

Nobody else knows? ANGEL

We swore never to speak of it. WILL

And you never have? ANGEL

No. I doubt if Alyssa will even acknowledge to herself that we had those feelings. WILL

When did you marry her? ANGEL

A year after I got home. Mac had been dead for 15 months. WILL

What about Megan? ANGEL

What about her? WILL

Do the math. ANGEL

We didn't make love, Angel. We cried and I went home. Alyssa was already pregnant with Megan. WILL

How do you know? ANGEL

She told me. WILL

So—what did you feel when Mac died? ANGEL

I was feeling a lot of things—mostly guilt. WILL

THE WALL

ANGEL
Was one of them love?

WILL
I told you; I'd always loved her.

ANGEL (looking up)
Then you'd better tell her again. Because I'm not sure she knows it.

(Alyssa enters.)

ALYSSA
Will, for God's sake! What are you doing here?

ANGEL
I'd better go.

(Angel places Will's hand over his heart.)

ANGEL
Tell your wife what's in there, Will. Tell her what's in your heart. Tell her what she needs to know.

(Angel exits.)

ALYSSA
Will, what is going on? I wake up in the middle of the night and you're not there!

WILL
I'm on my way back, Alyssa.

ALYSSA
Then I find you here with—*her*!

WILL
She's helping.

ALYSSA
By spending the night with you?

WILL
Yeah, right here with me—and Mac and Sanchez and Washington and the Kid. They were all here.

THE WALL

Will, don't.

ALYSSA

I saw him, Alyssa. Spoke with him.

WILL

Mac?

ALYSSA

Sit down.

WILL

No, I don't want to hear this.

ALYSSA

(He reaches for her hand and pulls her down beside him gently.)

WILL

He was here. They were all here in the middle of the night.

ALYSSA

I thought she was helping!

WILL

There's something of all of them here—in this place, and if you listen you can hear them.

ALYSSA

You're serious.

WILL

He wants to see you and Megan.

ALYSSA

Let's go home, Will. I want to go home.

WILL

No, we have to finish this now.

ALYSSA

Will, I'm afraid. I don't want you to go back to that—dark place. It's so awful; you aren't yourself.

WILL

THE WALL

I have to go back there to get through it!

ALYSSA

No, we'll be okay, if we just go home. I won't make any more demands of you.

WILL

Alyssa, we can finish this now—here tonight. We can! (A beat.) And I told Mac I'd bring you here.

ALYSSA

Will, this is crazy.

WILL

You don't have to be afraid.

ALYSSA

I'm not *afraid*! I'm . . .

WILL

Ashamed?

ALYSSA

I don't want to talk about it.

WILL

He knows we're married. He's okay with that.

ALYSSA

What about—the other?

WILL

That's for us to deal with. He just knows he has a daughter and he wants to see her. I told him I'd bring her here for him to see. I have to do this for him.

ALYSSA

But he doesn't know everything.

WILL

He doesn't have to know everything.

ALYSSA

Why can't we just go?

WILL

THE WALL

Because things would be just like they were before; because we would split up; because I want to heal so I can care for you. (A few beats.) I want you to understand something Alyssa, just this one simple and god awful complicated thing: I love you—for you. For

WILL (continuing)

your own unique individual being. I love you for your patience, your kindness, your commitment to us and your tremendous grit. And most of all for your faith in me—the faith that I can come back. Now—I think I can, but we have to finish it here.

ALYSSA (breaking)

You have no idea how long I've waited for you to say that.

WILL

Too long. And I want you to know in your heart that what I feel for you has nothing to do with obligation or guilt or pity. It has nothing to do with Mac or what we felt for each other before he died. It has to do with the pain I feel even at the thought of waking up and not finding you next to me.

(She begins to cry quietly and reaches for him.)

ALYSSA

I think we're going to make it, Will.

WILL

I do too, but there's more. There's something else I need to tell you.

ALYSSA

Please no. Not now.

WILL

Yes, now, in this place. And I'll need your help with this because it involves Megan and it's going to cause some pain. But she has to know too.

ALYSSA

Something about Mac?

WILL

And me.

ALYSSA

And me? No, Will, you promised never to speak of that. Please!

WILL

THE WALL

No, it's something else. It's about me and Mac. And you and Megan. And how I lied to you about things that happened over there.

ALYSSA

Go on.

WILL

I wanted Angel to tell you because she knows, but she won't break her promise to Mac. I didn't want to tell Megan because I didn't think she would believe me.

ALYSSA

You lied to us about Mac?

WILL

Yes. I lied about the circumstances surrounding Mac's death and my survival. (A beat.) Understand, there is no dishonor in what happened to either of us, but the events just didn't unfold in the way I told Megan—or you.

ALYSSA

How *did* the events unfold?

WILL

I just reversed our roles. Mac was wounded very badly, and I carried him out.

ALYSSA

But you were wounded too.

WILL

My wounds were minor.

ALYSSA

So you carried him down the mountain—while you were wounded. (A beat.) So—you made *him* the hero.

WILL

He was a hero! He saved my life more than once.

ALYSSA

What about the medals?

WILL

We both have a drawer full.

ALYSSA

THE WALL

The Silver Star? (He doesn't respond.) Will?

WILL

They were passing them out in Cracker Jack boxes. If you took a hit in a firefight and survived, you got the Star.

ALYSSA

Then it's yours?

WILL (hurting)

It belongs to my squad. I just happened to be the only one left with a chest to hang it on!

ALYSSA

You risked your life and saved his life.

WILL

Not for very long. Alyssa, I did everything in my power to keep Mac alive. Something very ugly and deep inside me wanted to see him die, so I could have you. To kill that thing inside me, I tried to keep Mac alive. I always walked the point; I went into tunnels; I stood his watches. And he died and I got you anyway; that's what we've *both* had such trouble living with all these years.

ALYSSA

That night . . . after you left, that thought crossed my mind: If Mack died I could have you, and then . . .

WILL

It wasn't us, Alyssa. It had nothing to do with us.

ALYSSA

I prayed for him to come back every night after that.

WILL

And I did everything I could to send him home to you.

ALYSSA

Jesus, Will. Megan hates you because she thinks Mac died trying to save you. (A beat.) Why? Why the lie?

WILL

Because I wanted her to think there was something noble in this war; I didn't want her to think his life was totally wasted.

ALYSSA (thinks, then)

That makes some sense for her. But—why didn't you tell *me*?

THE WALL

WILL

I was afraid in an attempt to protect me you might tell Megan the truth.

ALYSSA

The truth—

WILL

Always hurts. (A beat.) Somebody said that.

ALYSSA

Somebody else said, "the truth shall make you free."

WILL

Yeah, if you ever get over the hurt.

ALYSSA

Will . . .

WILL

What?

ALYSSA

I understand that what you did, you did for Megan and for me. I don't know if it was right or wrong, but I do understand. And I understand something more about you—the kind of man you are.

WILL

I hope Megan will.

ALYSSA

She will, but it will take some time. Don't expect her to leap into your arms for making Mac seem a little more human.

WILL

I know better than to expect that.

ALYSSA

There's something I don't understand.

WILL

What?

ALYSSA

THE WALL

If you got Mac out of the bush alive—then when did he die?

WILL

Two days later in Da Nang.

ALYSSA

Were you there?

WILL

Yes.

ALYSSA

Angel? She was there too?

WILL

Yeah, she was the Duty Nurse, but we all knew her before that. She treated us a few weeks before for some minor cuts and bruises we got when Sanchez—had little accident with some C4.

ALYSSA

What kind of *accident* can you have with plastic explosives?

WILL

Cooking.

ALYSSA

Cooking?

WILL

Not dinner.

ALYSSA

Oh. (A few beats.) Did Mac—die peacefully?

WILL

He wasn't burned to death or blown to bits, but nobody died peacefully in Vietnam.

ALYSSA (taking his hand)

Thank you, Will—for what you did. For what you did for Megan, for me, and for Mac.

WILL

I think that maybe I did it for myself, and the play backfired. This guilt I feel for surviving and having you is exactly what I wanted to avoid. (A beat.) I love you Alyssa. I've loved you for as long as I've know what love is. And I loved Mac.

THE WALL

ALYSSA

We both loved him; we just—

WILL

Didn't want to hurt him.

ALYSSA

Right, we didn't want to hurt him.

(They embrace.)

ALYSSA

And we didn't—really. (A few beats.) Are we through here now?

WILL

Not yet. I promised Mac I'd bring you and Megan by for him to see. (Alyssa catches her breath.) Are you all right with that?

ALYSSA

I am if you'll tell her the truth about what happened over there.

WILL

I'll tell her, but I don't expect her to believe me. She doesn't trust me.

ALYSSA

She'll learn to trust. It will just take some time. Just tell her the truth.

WILL

And the truth shall make us free?

ALYSSA

If not this wall will come tumbling down around us.

(BLACKOUT to end the scene. BATTLE
SOUNDS IN BACKGROUND.)

THE WALL

ACT II SCENE IV

LIGHTS COME UP on The Wall early the next morning, around 2:00 AM. The Squad is assembled downstage getting ready for inspection, wiping the dirt from their weapons and assisting one another with a “tuck.” Mac, as usual, is all “spit and polish.”

MAC

All right, you grunts! Fall in!

WASHINGTON

Oh, hell, what for?

NOBEL

Inspection!

SANCHEZ

He knows that.

WASHINGTON

Yeah, Bro. It was one of those—rhetorical—questions.

SANCHEZ

And what he meant was: why the hell are we fallin’ in for inspection at all?

NOBEL

We’re just following orders.

SANCHEZ

Mac, why the hell do we keep doin’ this?

MAC

Tradition.

THE WALL

WASHINGTON

We had enough tradition! Besides, you never havta git inspected, and you're the only one of us that could even come close to passin'. The kid there's got no heart.

NOBEL

I have—had one.

WASHINGTON

My insides is all messed up, and Sanchez got a friggin' hole in his head.

MAC

Private, I'm not nearly so concerned with how you look as I am with how you go about executing orders from your squad leader. Now I say again: Fall in!

(They begin to assemble.)

SANCHEZ (grumbling under his breath)

Hell, Mac, you couldn't pass any inspection I'd give.

MAC

What? (A beat.) Speak up, Private. You're breakin' up.

NOBEL

He said you couldn't pass any inspection of his.

SANCHEZ

Thanks, Kid.

MAC

Is that right, Sanchez. That what you said?

WASHINGTON

He didn't mean nothin', Mac.

MAC

Let him speak for himself! (A beat.) Sanchez, you got somethin' to say to me?

SANCHEZ

Yeah, I got somethin' to say. I'm tired of this Mickey Mouse Army horseshit—sorry, Kid—and I'm tired of you dishing it out but never takin' it. I'm sick to death of the fact that the *only* thing I'm gitting 'round here is inspected?

WASHINGTON

Roger that, Bro.

THE WALL

NOBEL

Roger that, Bro.

MAC

Shut up, Kid.

SANCHEZ

So what I said was: *you* couldn't pass inspection if we gave you one!

MAC

Is that so?

SANCHEZ

Jist expressin' my opinion, Bro. Free country—so I'm told. So, I have a right to one of them, don't I?

MAC

How 'bout you, Washington? You think I can pass muster?

WASHINGTON

One sure way to find out.

MAC

Oh, right, like I'm gonna let you grunts inspect me!

NOBEL

Don't you think you could pass, Mac?

MAC

Look, Kid—

SANCHEZ

Is that it, Mac? You think a little of the spit and polish is wearin' off?

MAC

Sanchez, you must of forgotten who graduated number one in our company in boot camp. Number one, numero uno, Bro!

WASHINGTON

Then you got nothin' to worry about.

MAC

You ground pounders are not in any way, shape, or form even qualified to inspect my dirty skivvies. Look at you; you look like a bunch of—I don't know.

THE WALL

SANCHEZ

Corpses? (A beat.) You're lucky man; you took a clean hit. There's not a drop of blood on you anywhere.

NOBEL

Mac, if you let us inspect you, maybe we'll get a better idea of what you want us to look like.

WASHINGTON

Kid, this ain't about no inspection.

MAC

Fine! You wanna inspect me. I'm ready. I'm *always* ready! (A few beats.) Well—let's go! Come on!

SANCHEZ (unsure)

Fall in.

NOBEL (yells)

Fall in!

WASHINGTON

Jesus, Kid! Take it easy.

NOBEL

Sorry. Got carried away.

(Mac moves downstage center and snaps to attention. The Squad moves around him, and Washington gets right in his face.)

WASHINGTON

Where you from, Soldier?

MAC

Tulsa, Sir. Oklahoma!

WASHINGTON

Oklahoma! Oh my word—the Heartland—what we all died for.

MAC

Was that it, Sir?

WASHINGTON

THE WALL

Beats hell outta me. He's all yours, Sanchez

SANCHEZ (looking him over)

For being dead for 20 years, ya don't look half bad, Soldier.

MAC

Thank you, Sir. The Army has exacting standards to maintain and being dead is no excuse not to maintain them, Sir!

SANCHEZ

What happened to you, Soldier?

MAC

Over there?

SANCHEZ

That's right—over there.

NOBEL (sings)

Over there. Over there. We won't come back till it over over there.

(Washington and Sanchez look at him and shake their heads hopelessly.)

NOBEL

I can do some James Brown if that's more to your liking.

SANCHEZ (ignoring Nobel)

How'd you get it, Soldier?

MAC

In the back, Sir. Mortar frag partially severed my spinal cord.

SANCHEZ

Partially severed? And that killed you?

MAC

Didn't do me any good, Sir.

WASHINGTON (curiously)

But it didn't *kill* you?

MAC

No, Sir. It just crippled me, Sir.

THE WALL

How bad?
SANCHEZ

Chest down, Sir—vegetable state.
MAC

Still, it didn't kill you?
WASHINGTON

Not when I was hit, Sir!
MAC

(Sanchez reaches for Mac's dickey.)

Don't touch that, Sir!
MAC

What *did* kill you, Soldier?
SANCHEZ

My wound, Sir. Two days after I was hit, I died of my wounds.
MAC

What's the status of that shrapnel wound in your neck, Soldier?
WASHINGTON

Just a flesh wound, Sir.
MAC

(Sanchez nods to Washington who slips behind Mac, grabs his arms and pins them behind him.)

What the hell?
MAC

(Sanchez starts to remove the dickey.)

I wouldn't do that, Sir!
MAC

(Sanchez rips the dickey off, revealing a dark rope burn around Mac's neck. Washington releases him. The squad steps back staring

THE WALL

away incredulously. Mac falls to his knees weeping.)

SANCHEZ

Christ! He offed himself!

WASHINGTON

What the hell, Bro?

(Nobel starts toward Mac.)

MAC

I couldn't let 'em send me home like that!

SANCHEZ

That's sucks, man! Offed yourself. (A few beats.) We believed in you. We never stopped believin' in you.

(Nobel helps Mac to his feet.)

MAC

I know that, Bro! And I never stopped believin' in *you*—over there and now and all the time in between. Back in the world, I'd have been a poor sympathetic freak or laughed at because the draft dodgers would say I got what I deserved. I didn't wanna be pitied or detested. And I didn't want my wife to be stuck with—what was left of me. I couldn't go home like that.

WASHINGTON

This is hard, Bro. I dunno—

MAC

My place was with you guys, my squad—best damn family I ever had, and I wanted to go the rest of the way with you. I begged Will to leave me, just to let me go down with you guys right there on that mountain. When you guys got it, something in me died too. If I'd been whole—I could of gone on for you, but—not like I was. I died then too when I saw the kid fighting for his last breath, lying there in the bush crying for his mother. That's when my heart stopped.

NOBEL

But Mac—you still had life!

MAC

Not one worth livin', Kid. Not one worth livin'.

WASHINGTON

THE WALL

I dunno, Bro.

SANCHEZ

Shit, man, when you off yourself you kinda limit your other options!

MAC

What would you of done, Hector? What would *any* of you have done?

WASHINGTON

I dunno.

NOBEL

I don't either.

SANCHEZ (reaching for Mac)

I'd made damn sure that they never got me out of the bush, Bro.

(Sanchez hugs Mac.)

SANCHEZ

So, how'd you manage it?

MAC

Twisted a piece of plastic tubing from an IV around my neck and threw myself off the end of the bed.

WASHINGTON

Jesus, you must of had a tremendous will to die.

MAC

More than the will to live. (A beat.) I left a note for Will and Angel—made them promise each other never to tell my family or you guys. I knew the Army would just list me as another combat fatality.

WASHINGTON

That's what you were, Bro. You lost your life out there in the bush with us.

SANCHEZ

You never left us, Bro.

NOBEL

And we're not going to leave you now.

(They all embrace each other, slap high fives and shakes hands.)

THE WALL

WASHINGTON

Brothers—

SANCHEZ

To the bitter end.

(The LIGHTS COME DOWN slowly as the Squad moves back against The Wall. In the semi-darkness, Madison McCabe passes, making her nightly rounds and moves off stage left. Then we hear VOICES.)

MEGAN (off)

Three o'clock in the morning. Why do we have to come here at three o'clock in the morning?

(Megan enters with Will and Alyssa not far behind.)

WILL

You'll see.

MEGAN

No I won't! It's dark; I can't *see* anything!

ALYSSA

Just hang in there, Megan. We have work to do here tonight.

MEGAN

God, Mother! You're beginning to sound like—*him*!

ALYSSA

Don't refer to Will as—*him*! He's so much more than that.

MEGAN

Not to me!

(She flops down defiantly on the bench.)

MEGAN

There are lots of other things I'd like to call him, but I won't—because of his sensitive nature and unhealed war wounds. (A few beats.) Okay. So what great truth is going to be revealed to me here tonight?

THE WALL

WILL

This isn't going to work.

ALYSSA

Will has something very important to tell you, Megan.

MEGAN

I'm all ears.

WILL (sharply)

No, you're all mouth, Megan, and if you didn't get it from me I'm sure it wouldn't be nearly as irritating.

MEGAN

Not from you—*for* you!

ALYSSA

You two just stop it—please!

MEGAN

Okay, Mom. I'm sorry. (To Will.) Tell me.

WILL

We're here for two reasons. The first is the most important—and it's why we came at this hour. (A few beats.) How do you feel?

MEGAN

Tired.

WILL

No, I mean—about being here, right now. *What*—do you feel?

MEGAN (thinks, then)

I guess—sad and a little uncomfortable.

WILL

Uncomfortable?

MEGAN (nods to The Wall)

This place—all those names on The Wall. It's kind of like—they're here.

WILL

They are. (A beat.) Mac wants to see you. That's why I brought you here at this hour.

MEGAN

THE WALL

Oh, please!

WILL

Don't ask me to explain; just believe that's he's here. They're all here.

MEGAN

In spirit, you mean?

WILL

Yes, and more than that—for some of us. And I told Mac I'd bring you here for him to see. I gave him my word.

MEGAN

Okay, so what do I have to do?

WILL

Wait—and listen to the other things I have to tell you.

MEGAN

Do I have a choice?

WILL

Yes. You can walk away and never know the truth. I won't stop you.

ALYSSA

I will!

MEGAN

Guess I'll stay then.

WILL

Megan, Mac was a leader, a natural born leader, and I loved him like a brother. He saved my life on at least two occasions before he was killed.

MEGAN

Third times a charm.

ALYSSA

Megan, stop it!

WILL

But he didn't save my life on our last patrol.

MEGAN

Contrary to the evidence standing in front of me.

THE WALL

ALYSSA

Megan, *please*—just listen.

MEGAN

Okay. I'm sorry. Go on, Will.

WILL

On our last patrol, I was on the point—Sanchez or I always took the point because Mac had a wife, and then you were on the way. We figured we had less to lose. We were ambushed moving down a trail we'd already come up so the mortar fire was brutal; on the point, I was out of the kill zone, but a sniper caught me with a lucky shot. When I got back to the squad and called in air support, everybody was dead but Mac. I carried him down the side of a mountain to an LZ and they flew us to Da Nang.

MEGAN

So—you're saying now that you saved my father's life instead of him saving yours.

WILL

That's right. (A beat.) Angel can confirm..

MEGAN

Why should I believe her?

WILL

Because she was there when they took us off the chopper. Mac *couldn't* have carried me down the mountain.

MEGAN

How bad was he hurt?

WILL

Real bad.

ALYSSA

Bad enough to die two days later.

MEGAN

So all these years you've been lying! (Will nods.) Why?

WILL

Because Mac is my hero; I wanted him to be yours. And I didn't want you to think your father's death was a total waste.

MEGAN

THE WALL

Why should I believe you now?

WILL

Because in spite of all my faults and the wreck of a man I've been for the last 20 years, I've tried to give you nothing but kindness and support, the same things Mac would have given you.

ALYSSA

And love, Megan. Will has never withheld his love. And it was for that love for you and for Mac that he was willing to sacrifice his own character.

MEGAN

Fine. I appreciate what you did, Will, but I'll never accept you as my father. And this doesn't erase the fact that my father is dead!

ALYSSA

But there's more to it than that.

MEGAN

What more?

ALYSSA

One of the things . . . we--Will and I--have been living with is the fact that we knew we loved each other before Mac was killed.

WILL

She doesn't have to know this.

ALYSSA

Yes, she does. And now that's *we've* acknowledged it, we can tell her.

MEGAN

You two were . . . *lovers*!

WILL

No. Not while Mac was alive!

ALYSSA

I didn't even know Will loved me until they were both in-country. Will came home on emergency leave when his father died. He told me then.

WILL

Because I thought I'd never see her again.

ALYSSA

THE WALL

And I acknowledged that . . . I had some very strong feelings for him. That's all there was to it.

MEGAN

Until Mac was so conveniently killed.

ALYSSA

Megan, don't! We had no idea that was going to happen.

MEGAN

But you wished it!

ALYSSA

No, Baby. I prayed for him every night. Will did everything he could to keep Mac alive.

MEGAN

But you can't deny that you loved Will.

ALYSSA

No, I can't deny it.

MEGAN

Isn'toC4iG4ray aK0u40

THE WALL

WILL

Welcome to the club.

ALYSSA

Yes, you do know him! You know him through what he did for you; you know him

ALYSSA (continuing)

through what he told you about Mac—because all the good things he told you about Mac are also true of him. He just wouldn't say them about himself.

WILL

Everything I told you is true, Megan; it just happened to different people at a time when the world was a little screwy.

MEGAN

So that makes it okay?

WILL

No, that doesn't make it okay. But it doesn't change anything either.

MEGAN (wearily)

Can we go now?

WILL

Not yet. I promised Mac he could see you.

MEGAN

I don't know if I could face him—knowing what I know.

WILL

He knows I married your mother.

MEGAN

But not that—you two were . . .

WILL

No.

MEGAN

Well, I won't do it; I won't continue with this lie anymore.

ALYSSA

No one has lied.

MEGAN

THE WALL

Yet!

WILL

Nobody is asking you to lie. You won't be able to see him anyway. He just wants to see you.

MEGAN

Will you be able to see him?

WILL

I think so.

MEGAN

And talk to him?

WILL

Yes.

MEGAN (thinks, then)

Okay, I'll stay . . . under one condition.

(They both stare at her nervously.)

ALYSSA

No conditions.

MEGAN (to Will)

You have to tell him the truth.

ALYSSA

Megan—please.

WILL

I don't know what that will do to him.

MEGAN

You didn't know what it would do to me either.

ALYSSA

Let's just go home.

MEGAN

Maybe you're afraid of what he'll do to you.

THE WALL

ALYSSA

Please, Will, let's just go.

WILL

I can't leave without Mac seeing you and Megan.

ALYSSA

Even it destroys whatever part of him is left in this place.

WILL

I don't think it will. But we've been through some very hard times. This is just one more thing. He'll—

ALYSSA

Survive? (A beat.) Will you?

WILL

If you're by my side.

ALYSSA

I'll be here for you—same as always.

WILL

And for Mac.

ALYSSA

Yes, and for Mac.

WILL (to Megan)

You're sure this is what you want?

MEGAN (not sure)

Yes.

WILL

Okay. I'll tell him.

MEGAN (after a few beats)

Will?

WILL

What?

MEGAN

Aren't I doing the right thing? (A beat.) I mean, you want me to be truthful, don't you?

THE WALL

WILL

Yes, I want you to be truthful; but in this case, even if the truth is the right thing, I'm not sure it's the best thing.

MEGAN

Don't fathers always know best?

WILL

Not this one.

(The Squad begins to emerge from The Wall.)

WILL

Stay here with your mother. I'll come for you.

(Megan moves to the bench with Alyssa and they both sit down.)

ALYSSA

What's going to happen?

WILL

I don't know. Just stay here until I say.

(Will moves upstage to meet the Squad. He notices Mac isn't wearing the dickey but doesn't say anything about it.)

WASHINGTON

The cat came back.

WILL

I said I would. (To Mac.) Everything—cool?

MAC

Yeah, Bro. Did you bring them?

WILL

Yeah, they're just over there.

MAC

Have them come over.

THE WALL

WASHINGTON (waves the dickey)

Hey, Bro, don't you notice somethin' is missin'?

SANCHEZ

He knew 'bout it, Bro. He don't havta *notice* nothin'.

WASHINGTON

That's right, man. You *knew*!

WILL

Yeah, I knew.

SANCHEZ

Why didn't you tell us?

WILL

It's not like we've been in close contact.

WASHINGTON

Last night! You could of told us then.

WILL

Yeah, if I hadn't given my word to Mac not to.

(They think about this.)

WASHINGTON

Okay. That's cool, Bro.

SANCHEZ

I'm in. No problem. Kid?

NOBEL

Since when does anybody give a shit what I think?

SANCHEZ

Since right now. And watch you mouth.

NOBEL

Okay. I'm in.

MAC

Bring them over, Will.

WILL (reluctantly)

THE WALL

Sure.

WASHINGTON

Wait!

(Will stops as Washington digs a piece of paper out of his pocket.)

WASHINGTON

I got this letter for Madison McCabe. (A beat.) Would you give it to her—if you see her?

WILL

I'll see her, Bro. I'll make a point of it.

MAC

I see Megan, Will, but bring her closer.

WILL (starts, then stops)

Sure.

MAC

Everything okay?

WILL (near breaking)

Tough duty here, Bro. Tough damn duty.

(Will forces himself over to the bench where Megan and Alyssa are waiting.)

WILL

It's time.

MEGAN

Is he here? Is that who you're talking to?

WILL

The whole squad is here. (A beat.) Come with me.

(Megan stands and starts with him to The Wall. Then she takes his arm, stops him and turns him around.)

MEGAN

Will—did you tell him?

THE WALL

Not yet.

WILL

MEGAN (touching his wounded shoulder)
Don't. You don't have to tell him about you and Mom.

What?

WILL

MEGAN
Don't tell him. (A beat.) No good would come of it.

Are you sure?

WILL (thinks)

MEGAN (nods)
Yes, I'm sure. (A beat.) I want this to be my gift.

To Mac.

WILL

MEGAN (thinks, then)
And—to you.

WILL
Thank you, Megan—from both of us.

(They move to The Wall now where the Squad circles around them. Mac just stares at Megan, shaking his head and wiping away a few tears.)

WASHINGTON
Megan McCafferty! She is fine, Bro. Jist fine!

NOBEL
How old is she?

SANCHEZ
You're dead, Kid, don't even think about it.

WASHINGTON
And if you *was* alive, you'd be forty.

THE WALL

NOBEL

Like hell. I'd be 37.

MEGAN

What's happening, Will. I feel—*something!*

WILL

Everything's fine.

SANCHEZ

Will, tell 'er you know this dashing Hispanic dude.

WILL

Give Mac a chance to see her.

(They step back.)

MAC

I can't believe it. She came from me?

MEGAN (to Will)

Can he hear me?

MAC

Yeah, yeah. Tell her I can hear her!

WILL

Yes.

MEGAN

Dad, it's me, Megan. I know you know about me, and Will told me all about you; this is all so crazy I don't know what to say. But I want you to know just this one thing: You're missed and loved and always will be. That's all—I miss you and love you. So does Mom, and . . . Will has taken good care of us.

(Mac wraps his arms around her and holds her for a moment.)

MAC

I love you too, baby—more than you can ever know.

(Alyssa gets up and moves center stage where they are all assembled near The Wall.)

THE WALL

ALYSSA

What do you think, Mac? Is she beautiful or what?

MAC (breaking)

Oh, yeah, she's beautiful.

ALYSSA

And she misses you like crazy.

MAC (breaking)

Alyssa—

(The Squad begins to move Mack back to The Wall.)

SANCHEZ

Come on, Bro. Can't let you git too caught up in that life.

MAC

Come on, Bro. Just a minute more.

WASHINGTON

No way, Bro. Your time is up, and we need you here.

WILL

They're in good hands now, Mac. You can stand easy.

MAC

Yeah, I know. Thanks, Will. Thanks for loving them. I wouldn't have had it any other way.

WILL

Mac, I've always loved her. I—

MAC (cuts him off)

I know that, Will. How could you not love her? See ya, Bro.

WILL

You guys are the best.

NOBEL

And brightest!

THE WALL

Hell of a lot a good it did us!

SANCHEZ

(Will gives the squad an informal salute as they begin to fade into The Wall.)

WASHINGTON

What we gonna do now, Bro, since he showed up?

SANCHEZ

I dunno, Bro—maybe wait on that dude Godot.

NOBEL

Why the hell not?

MAC

Watch you language, Kid!

(The Squad disappears into The Wall. Will wraps his arms around Megan and Alyssa.)

MEGAN

Are we all through here now?

WILL

Yes, we're all through.

MEGAN

Then we can go home.

ALYSSA

God yes, let's go home.

(As they start off, Madison appears, making her rounds.)

WILL

Madison McCabe. I have something for you.

(She give him an skeptical look.)

MADISON

What?

WILL

A letter from your friend—Mason Washington.

What's it say?
MADISON

It's addressed to you.
WILL

(She takes the letter.)

Where you folks off to?
MADISON

Home! We're going home.
MEGAN

Good for you.
MADISON

(They exit. Madison walks downstage, sits on the bench and opens the letter and starts reading silently.)

WASHINGTON (off)

Dear Miss McCabe. I don't have a lot to say to you, but what I do have to say is important, more so to you than to me. Because there nothin' can be done about my situation. But that's not true for you.

Now I'm flattered to pieces that you've come to hold me in such high regard, but, in all honesty, I don't think I'm all that deserving of it. I was human just like everybody else here, and I did lots of things that I wasn't proud of, things I certainly wouldn't want my mama to find out about.

Who knows what would of happened if I'd met you 20 years ago? I don't, but whatever you think might of happened between us is jist a dream that you gotta let go of girl. Maybe I would of been good for you, but I'm no good to anybody now. You gotta start to thinkin' of what *can be* instead of what could have been. So here's what I want you to do.

The way you can honor me is to take what you see here in this place and feel here in this place—take it away with you forward into *life*. Don't let this war kill the spark of life in you with what might of been. Honor me, honor all of us, by living the life that was taken away from us. Our loss has already kept too many of my brothers and sisters from livin', and it sickens my heart to see them give up something so precious as life.

THE WALL

Now you jist git yourself together girl—in the here and now—don't forget us, we don't want that, but walk away from this Wall and honor our loss by *livin'*! That's my wish for you and for all my brothers and sisters.

Peace and love,

Mason Washington, PFC United States Army

(Madison rises, with tears streaming down her cheeks, and stands erect.)

MADISON

Roger that, Bro.

(She exits. LIGHTS BEGIN TO COME DOWN SLOWLY as the SOUND OF A HUEY is heard in the distance and then approaching. The SOUND GROWS LOUDER AND LOUDER until the chopper is "overhead." It "hovers" for a moment then begins to pull away as if taking the Squad away. Then the SOUND RECEDES UNTIL IT IS GONE ENTIRELY. The stage is now dark except for a single WHITE SPOTLIGHT shining on The WALL. Total SILENCE.)

CURTAIN