

Act One Scene 4

VA Hospital in Dallas, TX 1994

START

Spotlight on ED DENNY speaking to the audience

ED DENNY

It was 23 years after I came home from Vietnam that Alice found me in her garage trying to kill myself. We were no longer married, but her garage seemed like the right place to do the deed. She was plenty furious with me but instead of letting me die, damned if she didn't take me to the VA hospital. They put me in the psychiatric ward, and assigned my case to Dr Reagan.

(Lights up as DR REAGAN enters. ED DENNY joins her — two chairs facing each other.)

DR REAGAN

Ok, Ed. You served on active duty for two years in the US Army?

ED DENNY

Yeah.

DR REAGAN

Did one tour in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot — Warrant Officer?

ED DENNY

Yep.

DR REAGAN

What exactly is so wrong in your life that you thought you had to kill yourself?

ED DENNY

Every part of my life has turned to pure manure — I've got no one to blame for it but myself. I see no prospects for anything ever getting better. All my life I wanted to be an architect but I got disillusioned with that and quit, so started on a completely new path — that exploded in my face, too. I'm completely broke, and living off the charity of relatives — worn out my welcome.

DR REAGAN

Anything else?

ED DENNY

I know this must sound weird, but I don't feel affection for anyone since I returned from Vietnam. I mean, not anyone. When I first got home and felt that way, I thought it was caused

ED DENNY(CONT)

by some sort of shock I was in, that it would go away...but it never did. I've been involved with a whole series of different women —divorced three times, and now I've been kicked out by my long-term mistress. None of 'em want to see my sorry ass again — I never felt anything I could call love about any of them. I've fathered children — no emotions at their births. I knew damned well that whole deal was totally screwed up. My father died — no sorrow, no sadness, no mourning — zero —totally flat. Totally shocked the Hell out of me to feel nothing at all one way or the other.

(Beat)

I can't face one more night of bad dreams and nightmares. I feel so exhausted I can't imagine putting one foot in front of the other anymore. Time to die — no other choice.

DR REAGAN

Sounds like we have a lot to unpack. The good news is you're where you need to be. The things that you've been through since you returned home have brought you to this place, at this time. Let's start at the beginning. Why did you join the military?

(ED DENNY and DR REAGAN continue to talk inaudibly)

END

(Lights fade.)