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By

Kevin Anthony

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JOHN SULLIVAN writes...This (relatively) large cast full-length play blends elements we've seen before but in unexpected ways. Brokeback Mountain comes to mind, but just briefly. Unlike small time ranch hands, Ennis and Jack, from Annie Proulx's eponymous novella, main character Tyson Garrett, has a national profile as a PRCA champion bull rider, a huge public persona, a (barely) working ranch staffed by people he trusts, a personal physician—on call to patch what's broken after each rodeo. And a complex and sometimes conflicted relationship with his small town best friend, his friend's family and the ghosts of growing up in the emotionally stunting cul-de-sac of a small town in Texas.*

And just to complicate the Terlingua Chili, Tyson is gay, still closely closeted, but simultaneously a symbol of manhood for much of rural America. This play hits many notes—Iraq war veterans with PTSD issues, exploitation of athletes by their managers, a failed suicide, the destructive

side of fame, even the Texas Two Step—but everything feels integral and necessary to character and plot. With two coming-out stories that reflect each other like twin mirrors, and some very lucrative promotional contracts riding on Tyson’s next—very dangerous—ride—there’s much more but I don’t want to be the spoiler, here—the stakes in this piece are mighty high. An Eight Second View offers us a radical reversal of what it takes to really be an open-hearted, bona fide, self (and other)—accepting man in a culture hostile to anyone non-normative. While you read this piece, give a listen to If I Needed You—especially the version by the song’s author Townes Van Zandt from his album, The Late Great Townes Van Zandt. (Spacing is playwright’s own.)

Five stars

AN EIGHT SECOND VIEW

CHARACTERS

Tyson Garrett: Champion bull rider, early thirties. He is in western attire of boots, cowboy hat, long sleeve western shirt and jeans. He is lean, unshaven and clearly in good shape. He is thin. He is gay. Has a good heart.

Jake Welker: sixteen-year old son of Dan and Lippy. He is handsome, well built. Typical teenager coming of age. Dresses in cowboy attire including a hat. Must know how to do a country two-step dance or be willing to learn.

Shannon Barrow: Manager and housekeeper of Tyson's ranch. late-twenties, has a lot of attitude dresses in tight jeans, shirt and cowboy hat. She is also an Iraq war vet. Must know how to country two-step dance or be willing to learn.

Doctor Steven Goldman MD: About the same age as Tyson. He is a medical doctor. Not nearly in as good as physical shape as Tyson, little pudgy, clean-shaven, well dressed. He gay and Tyson's partner.

Dan Welker: Early thirties, overweight, belly hangs over his belt. He is wearing jeans, a western long sleeve shirt and a cowboy hat. Good old country boy type. Evangelical Christian. Married to Lippy and father to Jake,

Lippy Welker: Early thirties, matronly type married to Dan. She is a homemaker and an evangelical Christian like her husband. Sister to Tyson.

LaVerne Goldman: Doctor Steven's Jewish mother in her sixties. She is sweet, kind and controlling.

Rex Ashton: Tyson's agent. Good old country boy, 30 to 50 years of age, hefty size, wears jeans, cowboy hat and western style business jacket.

Charlie Duncan: Late twenties, ranch hand. Young and in good physical shape. Wears western attire, good hearted and friendly attitude. Iraq war vet. Must know how to do a country two-step dance or be willing to learn.

Television Narrator #1, Dakota Heller: Could be either male or female, age not important.

Television Narrator #2, Cameraman: Could be either male or female, age not important.

SETTING

Front room of Tyson Garrett's ranch house. Western type furniture, décor and pictures. Couch, two chairs and a table behind the couch, side tables and related furniture. Maybe a few Western pictures. Back should be the inside of a ranch living room. Stage left there is a big screen television—the audience cannot see the screen. The front door to the ranch house is stage right.

There is a door to the kitchen and bedrooms at the center of the stage and a door to the barn and yard would be stage left.

ACT I

Scene 1 Living room of Tyson's Ranch House

Afternoon, Tyson is returning from a rodeo and it is two weeks before the National Professional Rodeo Championship in Las Vegas.

ACT II

Scene 1 Living room of Tyson's Ranch House

Afternoon, two weeks after opening scene. Dan and Libby are picking Jake up from the Ranch.

ACT III

Scene 1 Living room of Tyson's Ranch House

Afternoon, a few days after Act 2, Tyson is competing in the PBR Finals.

Before the Play begins

About fifteen minutes before the play begins, Shannon and Charlie come onto the stage. Shannon is teaching Charlie how to do a two-step dance. She is painstakingly going over the steps of the dance, the rhythm, dance position and holds. It's a very slow process and Charlie does not seem to get the hang of the dance. They are not speaking loud enough for the audience to hear. They are having fun.

ACT I

SCENE 1

Shannon stops teaching Charlie. She turns on the music (George Strait's song Amarillo by Morning.) Stage lights up and they dance for no more than 30 seconds. Shannon and Charlie are dancing the two-step. Charlie is clumsy but Shannon keeps helping him to stay on the proper step but he appears hopeless. This is a light-hearted exercise to balance the sadness in the song. Shannon is laughing as she critiques him. He is smiling and laughing at himself. This is all light-hearted fun.

CHARLIE

(With a grin.) I'm hopeless.

SHANNON

Remember a good frame—here.

(Shannon takes his hand and puts him into a proper frame position.)

And, the steps will follow.

CHARLIE

I'm hopeless.

(Charlie drops his hands and stops dancing.)

SHANNON

Charlie, relax, we're not in Iraq.

Dancing is about creating a connection.

CHARLIE

Lieutenant, I can't dance.

SHANNON

I'm not your lieutenant anymore.

You're not hopeless and neither is your dancing. Start on your quicks. Quick, quick, slow, slow.

(Charlie gets back into the dance frame.)

Relax, soften your grip, it's a touch not a hold.

You're stiff.

CHARLIE

I'm not stiff.

SHANNON

Your dancing tells me you are.

Open yourself up in here.

(She points to his heart.)

Then you can connect and the dancing will follow.

(A horn blares from off-stage.)

That's Tyson, he's going to need help.

(They go to the front door. The horn blares again.)

We're coming!

(They both exit the front door. When they return, Charlie has an arm around Tyson as he enters the living room. Tyson can barely walk. He's in a great deal of pain. Shannon has a travel bag in one hand and an envelope with Ex-rays under her arm. She drops his travel bag and puts the Ex-rays on the table.)

TYSON

(Loudly) I need help sitting down.

(Shannon loops an arm around Tyson to help. They guide him to a chair where he obviously is in a great deal of pain. Before he sits down, he slaps a pant leg with his good arm and a cloud of dust rises.)

SHANNON

I just vacuumed, why don't you do that outside?

I did. TYSON

(Tyson sits down.)

Was it your ribs or shoulder? SHANNON

Both. It's my first good bang-up of the season. TYSON

No, it's your fourth. SHANNON

What bull were you riding? CHARLIE

Renegade Ghost. TYSON

That bull likes to throw the rider in the well. CHARLIE

He threw me forward but enough to hit his horns. TYSON

Well, the doctor is not going to be pleased. SHANNON

Did he watch it? TYSON

I got a video of it but I didn't show him. SHANNON

I could use a shot. TYSON

Well, I'm not getting it for you. SHANNON

TYSON

Shannon! Bring me a shot of whisky.

(Shannon gets a bottle of whisky from the kitchen and walks over to Tyson and puts the bottle on the floor.)

I can't reach that.

SHANNON

Well, you just have to try.

(Tyson gets painfully up from his chair and steps over to Shannon and the bottle and begins to bend over to get the bottle.)

TYSON

AHHH!!!

SHANNON

(Shannon mimics him bending over.)

AHHHH!!!

TYSON

AAAHHHHH!!!!!!...If I didn't love you, I would fire you!

SHANNON

AAAHHHHH!!!!!!...If I didn't love you, I would quit!

(Tyson gets the bottle and takes a generous drink.)

TYSON

Whew! Let the healing begin.

Charlie, did you get a count on the herd?

CHARLIE

Sort of.

TYSON

Charlie, what is a "Sort of," head count?

CHARLIE

Well, I put post-it notes on each steer.

TYSON

Post-it notes?

CHARLIE

They were numbered.

TYSON

You put numbered post-it notes on each steer?

And how did that work out?

CHARLIE

Pretty good for the first two hundred and then a gust of wind came up and well a lot of the notes
got
blown away.

I'm sorry, Ty.

TYSON

That's okay, a lot of city boy still left in you.

When you turn them out to the pasture tomorrow, let them out one at a time, try counting them
that way.

CHARLIE

That'll work.

(Doctor Steven comes on stage from the front door carrying a doctor's satchel.)

SHANNON

Doctor Steve, he's your patient, again.

(Doctor Steve angrily drops his doctor's satchel on the table.)

CHARLIE

(Charlie moves quickly to the door to the yard. He wants to get away from the angry Doctor.)

I think I'm going to check on the herd.

TYSON

Why?

CHARLIE

Oh, just see if they're happy.

(Charlie exits.)

SHANNON

This whole ranch is one big happy place right Doc?

DOCTOR

(Disgustedly) What is it this time? Sprained back, broken foot, leg or arm, mild concussion, rib cage tear.

TYSON

I got Ex-rays over on the table.

SHANNON

Would you like to see the video?

(Shannon goes over to the television. The back of the television is to the audience and off to the side and cannot be seen by the audience. Shannon turns on the television. The doctor looks at the television. Tyson looks at his whisky bottle. There is a good deal of crowd noise.)

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

Well folks, we have Tyson Garrett up on Renegade Ghost.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #2

Renegade Ghost is out of the Lonesome Bucks Ranch. He has had a great season and has been ridden only twice this bull is always a top scorer.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

Tyson is going to have his hands full.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #2

Tyson needs a 87 to get into first place.

(The crowd noise increases and everyone is watching the television.)

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

(Excited.) He's out—let's watch him—hang on—the Ghost jumps and turns to the right--keep movin—keep movin—another good kick—cowbell rings—Tyson got his eight seconds. Whoa, whoa, Tyson got tossed and landed on his side.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #2

He's going to feel that bang-up in the morning.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

Tyson got a 91 and moves into first place.

(Crowd roars, Shannon turns off the television. The Doctor turns away and shakes his head. He looks at an Ex-ray.)

DOCTOR

I'm not a doctor; I'm just a mechanic in a body repair shop.

You cracked two ribs, dislocated clavicle, probably a tear in your rotor cuff...

SHANNON

And, a partridge in a pear tree.

DOCTOR

(He looks at the second Ex-ray.)

That's not all; you have a hematoma on the side of your skull.

TYSON

How long before I can ride?

DOCTOR

(Angrily.) I'm tired of patching you up just so you can ride a bull for eight seconds. It is the damdest, dumbest, sport every invented that tosses you up and down on a smelly beast that throws you into dirt that is mainly manure so the bull can step on your body parts, and you might just get killed doing it.

TYSON

Doc, don't hold back, let your feelings out.

DOCTOR

(Angrily.) Feelings! Why are you doing this to yourself?

TYSON

Why don't you ride a bull then ask that question?

DOCTOR

This is madness.

TYSON

It keeps me strong.

DOCTOR

Strong for what?

TYSON

My life.

DOCTOR

(Looks again at the Ex-ray.)

This hematoma is going to need four weeks to heal.

TYSON

The PBR Finals are in two weeks.

DOCTOR

Tyson, listen to me.

If you reinjure this area, you'll die.

TYSON

I'll be ready.

DOCTOR

If you do not end up dead or in a wheelchair, you'll be using all your strength just to get out of bed in the morning.

TYSON

Come-on Doc, wrap me up.

(Tyson painfully takes off his shirt.)

DOCTOR

Shannon, can you get me an ice-pack out of the refrigerator.

(Shannon goes into the kitchen.)

I'm going to put a cortisone shot in your shoulder, pain meds and an ice pack for the hematoma.

(Shannon returns with an ice pack and plops it on top of Tyson's head. Tyson adjusts the pack to the side where the hematoma is.)

TYSON

I'm already taking meds.

DOCTOR

What medications?

TYSON

Whisky.

DOCTOR

Vicodin works a lot better than whisky.

TYSON

Just wrap me up.

DOCTOR

I'm the doctor here. You're just the dumb-ass bull rider.

Shannon, can you get the arm sling.

(The Doctor pulls a hypodermic needle from his bag as Shannon goes into the kitchen.)

Your ribs didn't splinter.

TYSON

(The Doctor puts the needle into his chest.)

AAAHHHH! I hate you.

DOCTOR

No, you don't.

(Tyson begins to slump.)

TYSON

AAAAHHHHH!!!! Yes, I really do

DOCTOR

(Finishes giving him the shot, turns angrily away.)

I don't care if you hate me

TYSON

You don't have to take it so personal.

DOCTOR

Tyson, when we bought this ranch it was a paradise. We have horses to ride, cows to chase and lots of trails. Now, I'm watching your body break apart. Retire. You have a championship buckle and we have enough pasture to double the herd.

TYSON

I ain't ready.

DOCTOR

Tyson, rodeo is changing. They're breeding bulls that are stronger, quicker and meaner. These animals can jump three feet in the air and then they turn before their hooves touch the ground. You can't beat genetics; in a few years, no one is going to be able to ride them.

TYSON

I got a few bulls on my list to ride. I took Renegade Ghost off this week

(Tyson moves over to the chair and the Doctor helps him sit down. Tyson takes a sip of whisky.)

DOCTOR

Did you win any money this week?

TYSON

I'd rather not talk about it.

DOCTOR

So, you got banged up and didn't win any money.

TYSON

No, I took first but I don't want to talk about it.

DOCTOR

Ty, what are you talking about?

TYSON

I won ten grand and a new truck but gave it away.

DOCTOR

What?

Business partner—we have a ranch to support.

TYSON

(Slowly.) Mattie drove down from Billings, she was driving an old beat-up pick-up and she brought Desmond with her. He has that same dam grin as Shane. I gave her the money and the truck. Been ten years and she's still all about Shane.

SHANNON

(Shannon returns with a white sling. She adjusts the ice pack on top of his head and wraps a band over it to secure it.)

Here's your sling.

TYSON

I'm not wearing a sling.

DOCTOR

Right, the sling would get in the way of the pain.

(There is a knock at the front door.)

REX

Open this dam door!

TYSON

(Hushed.) Get me up!

(Shannon helps Tyson to his feet. He grimaces in pain. She takes the ice pack and shoves it behind a pillow on the sofa.)

REX

(Knocks again.)

Used to be a time when your agent could walk in your front door without having to knock.

(Doctor opens the door and Rex ambles in. He has a large folder under one arm and he is giving Shannon the eye.)

Well, looks like the scenery has gone up a notch.

SHANNON

(Takes a moment to take in the Rex's move on her.)

(Sweetly) Well, it is so nice to meet a real cowboy.

REX

I am born cowboy.

SHANNON

Well, I have six bulls I need to castrate.

REX

Castrate!

SHANNON

It won't take but a few biddy minutes.

REX

(Shocked) Well, I can't, can't help you right this moment, but, but, I could next time.

SHANNON

Oh well, I got to do them now, though, I can't wait.

REX

Well, I'll just have to catch you the next time.

(Shannon leaves through the door to the yard.)

REX (Continued.)

Glad to see you have got yourself a domestic.

TYSON

Rex, what is it?

REX

Just saying, had some fine-looking cowgirls on the circuit and my trailer was always rocking. You should join us some time.

TYSON

Why are you here?

REX

Sounds like Renegade Ghost banged you up pretty good.

TYSON

Just a bruise.

(Rex looks suspiciously at Tyson.)

Ask Doc, he saw my x-rays. Go ahead Doc, tell him.

DOCTOR

Just a bruise.

TYSON

(Irritated.) What's on your mind, Rex?

REX

Oh, you know agent things; PBR Finals are coming up in two weeks and I have some concerns—endorsement concerns.

(Rex open his folder under his arm to a stack of papers. He shows the open folder to Tyson.)

See this, ain't nearly as thick as it was a year ago.

TYSON

So, I am not the spokesman for Cowboy Jim's Horse Treats?

REX

You either are losing endorsements or you are gaining endorsements; there is no standing still.

TYSON

I ain't standing still.

REX

You're in a slide and we need that championship in the Finals.

TYSON

You're sounding like my agent.

REX

I am your agent.

TYSON

But you never used to sound like an agent.

REX

We got endorsements to think of partner. Hell, you are on the road to becoming the favorite son in Montana; you could be the next governor.

Anyways, I got a crew outside, just some simple stuff.

TYSON

What?

REX

You know, television time, need to get your pretty face out there.

(Rex goes to the door.)

Come on in, boys.

(A news reporter and a cameraman come onto the stage. They are the same actors that narrated the bull ride on television and will need to change their voices. They setup on Tyson.)

CAMERAMAN

Rolling.

DAKOTA

This is Dakota Heller of KADY and I am here with Tyson Garrett, bull-riding champion from two years ago. Tyson, you won last week but you took another bad spill. Is it going to keep you out of the Finals?

TYSON

Not a chance.

DAKOTA

What happened with Renegade?

TYSON

I had him, up until I heard the bell and I didn't think he had any big kicks left and he just exploded and I was airborne.

DAKOTA

How are going to prepare for the Finals?

TYSON

Got a ranch to run and chores to do. Rest-up a bit, get back to regular living.

DAKOTA

The Hell Maker is going to be in the line-up.

TYSON

I heard that.

DAKOTA

The Hell Maker only been ridden once, put four riders in the hospital and two of them quit the circuit.

TYSON

I know who Hell Maker is.

DAKOTA

The last four riders that drew the Hell Maker passed on their ride.

TYSON

Probably the right decision for them.

DAKOTA

They say Hell Maker is a nasty arm jerker.

TYSON

No, he throws the rider back and then he bucks his head up and into the rider's face.

DAKOTA

Would you pass on the Hell Maker if you drew him?

TYSON

No, the Finals are everything.

DAKOTA

Well, we are going to wish you the very best.

TYSON

Thank you, boys.

DAKOTA

And this is Dakota Heller of KADY.

(Dakota Heller and cameraman leave the room.)

REX

Are you alright?

TYSON

Yeah.

REX

You're not standing straight.

TYSON

Get out of here, Rex.

REX

(Rex puts his arm around Ty.)

We're partners now, remember.

TYSON

How long have we been partners?

REX

Hell, going on ten years; we've been joined at the hip.

(Rex ambles to the door and says over his shoulder.)

We need a championship.

(As soon as the door closes, Tyson collapses but the Doctor moves him to the chair. Shannon hands him the ice pack but he places it on the table.)

DOCTOR

Your ribs and shoulder are not going to let you ride in the Finals.

TYSON

(Smiles and sips some whisky.)

I'll be ready.

DOCTOR

I hate rodeo ever since we lost Shane.

TYSON

I understand.

DOCTOR

No. You don't. The moment you are up on that bull are just as terrifying for us as they are for you.

TYSON

It is just like NASCAR, every once in a long while a driver gets cashed in.

DOCTOR

Do you know how silly that sounds? This isn't sport; It's human destruction derby.

TYSON

Steven, sit down we have to talk.

DOCTOR

What is it?

TYSON

My sister is dropping by.

DOCTOR

Dropping by? She lives 700 miles away.

TYSON

She is bringing Dan and Jake.

DOCTOR

Are we celebrating Thanksgiving early?

TYSON

(Tyson is sipping his whisky.)

We could use the company.

DOCTOR

(Angrily.) No, we don't need their company.

TYSON

For a few days, max.

DOCTOR

I can't stand their, "We're Christians and you're not attitude."

TYSON

No use in upsetting them.

DOCTOR

How can you sit on a 2000-pound bull but be afraid to tell your holy roller sister she's not invited.

TYSON

Some truths are a lot tougher than riding a bull.

DOCTOR

You are too banged up to argue with.

TYSON

(Tyson tries to stand but settles back in his chair.)

(Yells.) Shannon, I need you.

TYSON (Continued.)

(Shannon returns to the stage from the yard.)

I'm going to need a favor.

SHANNON

Good, I need the overtime.

TYSON

My sister is coming for a visit and I need your help.

SHANNON

What!

TYSON

She's a Christian and I need you to play along with her.

SHANNON

Is she a "hell and damnation" Christian or a "user-friendly" Christian?

TYSON

Depends.

SHANNON

I am so sad when I am religious.

TYSON

Just for a few days.

SHANNON

I can't be sad for that long.

DOCTOR

(Doctor is looking out the front room window.)

Your sister is at the gate.

TYSON

Okay, can you play along with me?

DOCTOR

Play along; are you serious? I'm going to look at some calves.

SHANNON

When I play along it is going to cost time and a half.

TYSON

Okay, whatever you want, help me with this.

DOCTOR

Oh Geesus!

(The Doctor grabs the bottle of whisky and takes a swig and hands it to Shannon. She takes a swig.)

SHANNON

Whisky works on all kinds of pain.

(The Doctor leaves. Tyson stands. Dan, Lippy and Jake Welker come on the stage. Dan and Lippy are first on the stage. Jake is behind them. Jake's hands are shoved into his pockets; he is not connected to his parents.)

TYSON

Hello sis, I'd hug you but I got thrown this week.

DAN

We know, we watched you on television.

(Sis offers Tyson a cheek to kiss and Dan offers a hand punch. Jake is hanging back. Dan gets a shot glass and comes over to Tyson and puts it in front of him.)

Fill her up.

(Tyson pours whisky into the glass and he downs the shot.)

And, again.

TYSON

Hold on partner, last time you drank like this your Daddy's pick-up ended up in the lake.

(Tyson fills his glass again.)

DAN

Takes a lot more to clear up my throat these days.

TYSON

Jake?

JAKE

Hi.

(Jake shuffles past Tyson and sits in a chair. He is being a teenager.)

DAN

Jake, shake your uncle's hand.

(Jake gets up and comes back over to Tyson and shakes his hand.)

That's more like it.

SHANNON

Aren't you going to introduce me?

TYSON

This is Shannon Barrow.

LIPPY

How nice to meet you.

SHANNON

(Shannon shakes Lippy's hand but Dan has turned away.)

My pleasure Ms. Welker, Tyson, has told me so much about you and I just have to say it is so refreshing to have the company of a good Christian woman in this house.

LIPPY

Why, thank you, are you a Christian?

SHANNON

Yes, I am.

LIPPY

You don't dress like a Christian with that skimpy top and blue jeans.

SHANNON

(Shannon looks at Tyson; her religious side is finished.)

Oh, I just wear a top inside, when I am out in the yard, I take it off because it gets so darn hot.

LIPPY

You work topless in the yard?

SHANNON

When Tyson lets me.

LIPPY

WELL! I've never heard of such a thing!

SHANNON

All the cowboys take their shirts off.

LIPPY

Well, I live by the Bible.

SHANNON

Oh, I live by the Bible too but in life I learned there is a second book a person needs to read.

LIPPY

What book is that?

SHANNON

With all Tyson's drinking and fighting, I'm still working him through the first book. His progress has been so slow my pastor gave me his blessing to move in here.

TYSON

(Tyson is shaking his head realizing the mistake he has made.)

(Interrupts) As my house manager.

SHANNON

Well, I do sneak into his room sometimes at night.

LIPPY

(Shocked and appalled.) Well, we don't take to that live-in nonsense before marriage.

SHANNON

At first, I had the same thoughts so I asked my pastor and you know what he said? He said, "That he would give me up to Tyson if it brought him back to the fold." It was a hard decision but I decided to stop sleeping with the Pastor so I could help Tyson.

LIPPY

(Tyson is signaling to Shannon to stop talking by drawing his hand over his throat.)

(Libby angrily and stomping her foot.) You slept with the Pastor of your Church?

SHANNON

(Shannon is startled, appears ashamed and bows her head.)

And, the deacon.

LIPPY

I never heard of such a thing. I don't know of any Christian church that would tolerate that kind of sinning,

SHANNON

Do you reach out to the sinners among us?

LIPPY

As Christians, that's our duty.

SHANNON

It is my duty as well and I decided to save the world one cowboy at a time.

LIPPY

I have never heard of using sin to save a soul.

SHANNON

According to Philippians 2:4 We put the interest of others before our own.

LIPPY

Well, I am not familiar with that teaching.

SHANNON

Oh, it's there; my pastor showed me.

LIPPY

But, aren't you putting your interest before Tyson by living with him?

SHANNON

I asked my pastor if he wasn't putting his interest before mine and do you know what he said. He said, by sleeping with me he was putting my interest before his.

TYSON

Ladies, let's all have a seat.

What has everyone been up to?

(Tyson, Jake, Dan and Lippy sit on the couch. Shannon squeezes onto the couch between Dan and Lippy.)

SHANNON

Honey, I would sit in your lap but it would be just too painful.

DAN

We've been watching your rides on television. You held onto to Renegade Ghost really well. I thought he had you but you kept your seat.

TYSON

He's one of them smarter bulls.

DAN

We saw your ride on Hacksaw. That was a beaut! How you scrambled out from underneath that monster. I never seen anyone crawl so fast.

TYSON

I never seen anyone crawl that fast either.

DAN

And that disqualification on Grinder was a terrible call.

TYSON

To be honest, I could never tell if my hand touched that bull.

JAKE

I saw your hand touch the bull; you should have been disqualified.

Jake, don't start!

That's what I saw.

He argues about everything.

My hand could have touched.

Well, I saw it and you didn't.

You never believe anything I say.

Here it starts, another argument just to argue.

I am going for a walk.

Well, Dan will go with you.

I know this farm well enough not to get lost.

I am going with you and that's that.

(Smirks) So, you can keep an eye on me.

Jake, stop trying to argue! I will go with you.

Have Charlie saddle a horse and let Jake take a ride.

DAN

JAKE

LIPPY

TYSON

DAN

JAKE

DAN

JAKE

LIPPY

JAKE

DAN

JAKE

DAN

TYSON

(Dan and Jake leave.)

LIPPY

I am sorry Ty, but raising teenagers can be aggravating. They don't know how to take care of themselves.

SHANNON

Then, Tyson still a teenager.

LIPPY

Few weeks back, one of Jake's good friends, Billy Benson got himself drunk and drove off a cliff. Pastor gave him a eulogy and said there were too many evil influences for him to handle. I want to save my son from all these influences.

TYSON

Losing a friend at any age is difficult, especially as a teenager.

LIPPY

And, Dan and I have had a very difficult year.

New Walmart opened and all the little businesses closed. I lost my job at the dress shop and I work for Walmart now.

TYSON

What about Dan's contractor business?

LIPPY

It dried up; there just isn't any money to build anything. He got a part-time job at Walmart and we qualified for food stamps. All these changes have been hard on Jake.

TYSON

Do you need money?

LIPPY

No, we came to see if you could help us with Jake.

TYSON

Everyone's ride is rough in their teenage years but it will smooth out.

LIPPY

I've tried but as soon as Jake says something Dan starts in on him.

Jake doesn't respect any of us not even the Church.

TYSON

At his age, I didn't listen to the Church and neither did Dan.

LIPPY

The Church has been working with us to turn him around.

TYSON

The Church couldn't turn Dan and me around.

LIPPY

Well now, Dan is moving up in the Church. I have been working with the Pastor, you know helping around the Church office and I got the Pastor to make Dan an elder. And, he can't have his son acting the way he does.

TYSON

(Laughs) Dan an Elder in the Church. And after all the hell-raising we did.

LIPPY

Well, he settled down.

TYSON

Jake's is in the same stage Dan and I went through.

LIPPY

We sent him to talk to our preacher and he wants to have him spend a few days at his Christian camp.

TYSON

Lippy, this is Jake's ride, not ours.

LIPPY

Ty, you are starting to sound like Jake.

SHANNON

I sure hope not. Last thing the world needs is another bull rider.

TYSON

The world would be a different place if everyone had to get up and ride a bull.

SHANNON

Sure, the entire population's IQ would have to be lowered by 50 points.

TYSON

Everyone needs to get their ass kicked from time to time—keeps them sharp.

SHANNON

(To Lippy) He landed on his head this weekend.

TYSON

No, it's the ones that never get their ass kicked that create the most trouble. The ones that get their asses kicked are the ones that get something accomplished.

SHANNON

But you're getting your ass kicked every week and what are you going to accomplish if you can barely stand and walk?

TYSON

You're talking like I get thrown every week.

I do run this ranch—1200 acres, 400 or so head.

SHANNON

If you were full-time, the ranch would not be the break-even proposition that Doc supports.

(Offstage you hear loud voices arguing. Doc and Charlie come on the stage.)

TYSON

What's that all about?

DOCTOR

Jake got into it with Dan.

CHARLIE

He's twisted up inside; Dan told us to leave them be.

LIPPY

Ty, you got to help us; talk to him, he respects you.

(Tyson takes a sip from his bottle.)

TYSON

Oh hell, someone help me up.

(Shannon gives him an arm and he painfully gets up from his chair and walks over to the door to the yard.)

TYSON (Continued.)

Jake, stop jawin and come inside.

Everyone leave; especially you, Shannon.

(Everyone leaves stage right. Shannon goes into the kitchen but leaves the door opened to listen in. Jake comes in from the yard alone.)

Come in, sit down.

(Tyson sits down. Jake finds a seat across from him.)

So, what's going on?

JAKE

Nothing.

TYSON

Not according to your parents and now Doc and Charlie have weighed in.

JAKE

(Jake has clammed up. His hands are in his pockets, looking at the floor.)

Nothing is going on.

(A long silence follows.)

TYSON

(Slowly, painfully Tyson gets up from his chair, walks over to Jake's chair, leans over and puts his hands on the armrest of the chair effectively cornering him.)

I am always dealing with fear. I feel it and can almost taste it.

(A silence comes back.)

What are you afraid of, Jake?

JAKE

I stopped being afraid—that's my problem.

TYSON

Were you being bullied?

JAKE

Just by the church.

TYSON

(Tyson removes Jake's cowboy hat and pulls his hands out of his pockets.)

I'm here to listen.

(Jake tries to get out of his chair but Tyson grabs him by the wrist and puts him down in the chair and keeps him in his seat. Tyson is looking at Jake's wrist.)

What's this?

JAKE

Nothing.

(Tyson still looking at Jake's wrist.)

TYSON

Rollup your sleeve.

(Jake tries to pull away.)

What's going on?

Rollup that sleeve!

(Jake rolls up his sleeve and it shows a white bandage wrapped around his wrist.)

Let me see the other wrist.

(Jake rolls up the other sleeve and it reveals another white bandage.)

JAKE

I tried, three nights ago but they came home early.

TYSON

Aw Geesus, Jake, why would you do this?

JAKE

(Jake rolls down his sleeves and shoves his hands into his pockets.)

I told my parents that I'm gay.

They told me I didn't know what I was saying and I needed help.

TYSON

(Tyson steps back from the chair.)

Why did you tell them?

JAKE

They needed to know before the Church found out. They said they could not accept me and they had me go see a Church counselor to, "Make me understand what being a Christian man is."

(Tyson walks away; he is at a loss for words.)

The counselor wants to send me to his "Pray away the gay camp." I told my parents I wasn't going and they said I had to go if I wanted to be their son.

TYSON

They would never disown you.

JAKE

Disown me or they will be disowned by the Church.

TYSON

In time, everything can be worked out.

JAKE

Uncle Ty, I didn't choose to be gay; there is nothing to work out. I love my parents.

TYSON

(Solemnly). I know.

Stand up.

(Jake stands up timidly not knowing what to expect. He has his hands up to ward off a potential punch.)

TYSON (Continued.)

Give your uncle an easy hug.

(They hug.)

Let me talk with your parents.

Go outside and have Charlie put a saddle on Chief.

JAKE

Is Chief the big paint?

TYSON

Yes, how'd you know?

JAKE

When I went to the corral, he came over to me and put his muzzle in my chest.

TYSON

Chief sensed your pain.

Ride him; you'll see what I mean.

(Jake leaves stage right to the yard, Tyson collapses into his chair and Doc enters where Jake exited.)

DOCTOR

What's going on?

TYSON

Jake tried to commit suicide.

DOCTOR

What!

TYSON

He's gay and he came out to his parents. They didn't take it very well and are putting him into a "Pray away the gay camp." I told him I would talk to his parents and straighten things out.

DOCTOR

Straighten what out?

TYSON

Well, I'm going to explain...

DOCTOR

Explain what? Prejudice is a disease, it is contagious, hereditary and religious.

TYSON

I can get through to his parents.

DOCTOR

How?

TYSON

We're family, they'll listen to reason.

DOCTOR

You think they're rational? They want to put him in a "Pray away the gay" camp.

TYSON

They will accept him. If we, and I mean Jake, can give them time.

DOCTOR

You are headed in the wrong direction on this.

TYSON

Will you ask them to come inside?

(Doctor shakes his head in disagreement and leaves. He leaves through the door to the ranch. Dan and Lippy come into the room.)

DAN

Chief is one fine looking horse and big, too.

TYSON

He's sixteen hands.

DAN

You know a good horse...

TYSON

(Abruptly) We're not here to talk about horses.

DAN

(Sheepishly.) What did Jake tell you?

(Tyson doesn't answer.)

He's confused, mixed up like all the rest of these teenagers.

TYSON

He's not confused at all.

DAN

(Dan takes a sip of whisky.)

What did he tell you?

TYSON

That he's gay and he loves you.

DAN

(Angrily.) The boy doesn't know what he's saying I tell ya.

LIPPY

We just know he's not gay. He's a regular boy with his sports and his church group. Dan and I know with all these messages and influences he is just confused like his friend Billy.

TYSON

He strikes me as a young man that really knows himself.

DAN

(Angrily.) He is as confused and mixed up as we were when we were his age.

TYSON

Do you love your son, Dan? How about you Lippy? Do you love him?

LIPPY

Of course, we do.

TYSON
What about you, Dan?

DAN
(Slowly.) Yeah, I love my son.

TYSON
What difference does it make if he's gay?

DAN
(Angrily.) I tell you, he's not gay.

TYSON
I have known Jake since we diapered his butt and nothing has changed for me.

DAN
It is not what you think.

TYSON
It isn't what I think; It's what he told me.

DAN
(Angrily.) We thought you could help but instead you're on his side.

LIPPY
We thought you could reason with him and get him to the camp.

TYSON
Why change him?

LIPPY
(Loudly,) Because its sinful.

TYSON
Your Church tell you that?

LIPPY
Yes, and so does the Bible.

TYSON
Plenty of churches say it is not sinful and they are reading from the same Bible.

LIPPY

The camp will give him the help he needs.

DAN

That's right.

TYSON

He told me about his suicide attempt.

DAN

(Angrily.) That just goes to show you how confused he is with the music and that dang internet.

TYSON

Are you more afraid of him being gay or taking his life?

DAN

It all goes together.

TYSON

(Bewildered.) You don't see a difference?

DAN

If he's gay; his life is going to be filled with misery.

TYSON

(He painfully gets out of the chair and walks over to Dan.)

You need your ass kicked.

DAN

By who, you can hardly stand up.

TYSON

That's the beauty of bull-riding. You get your ass kicked on a regular basis and you respect everyone and everything.

LIPPY

A person chooses to be gay.

TYSON

Where did you get that piece of information?

LIPPY

Well, the Church says that a person can be tempted to turn away from their church and chose to be gay.

TYSON

Maybe, if all that the Bible said, “Was to love your neighbor like yourself,” and left it at that, the world would be a better place.

DAN

Don’t preach to me about the Bible.

LIPPY

A gay person’s life is disgusting.

(Tyson looks at his hands, clinches a fist. He is a bottle of anger.)

DAN

Gay lives are empty without a future.

TYSON

Empty? No future sounds like your home town.

DAN

(Dan bows his head.)

Our whole town has had a string of bad luck is all.

TYSON

You’re sounding like a part-timer at Walmart.

DAN

The town is what it is; you can’t change it

TYSON

And you can’t change your son.

(Dan’s anger goes away; he’s defeated.)

LIPPY

Come on Dan, let’s head home.

TYSON

I'm going to talk to Jake again. You put in 700 miles today no need to double that. Go on, you can take Doc's room tonight.

(They leave and Tyson sips his whisky. He looks deeply troubled when the Doctor comes in behind them.)

DOCTOR

So, how did it go?

TYSON

They want to force him to fit in.

DOCTOR

I was so lucky. My parents opened my world up.

And, I became a doctor even though my mother takes credit.

TYSON

We'll give it some time and we will get through to them.

DOCTOR

You need to sit down and rest.

(Tyson sits down. He takes a sip of whisky.)

What did you say to them that got them so upset?

TYSON

It was the whisky talking.

DOCTOR

So, what's your plan B?

TYSON

Let everything cool down; Try it again tomorrow.

DOCTOR

Try what? You've taken your best shot.

TYSON

I'm going to explain to them that gay people are...

DOCTOR

Ty, that's the whisky talking.

TYSON

Gay people are...

DOCTOR

Stop! You can't tell them anything. They are isolated living in that small town.

(Thinking to himself.)

Education is all we need.

TYSON

If I wasn't so banged up, Dan would be getting an education right now.

DOCTOR

There are other ways to educate a person besides kicking their ass.

TYSON

After reason fails, ass whipping has always been the best second choice,

DOCTOR

You can't reason anything out.

TYSON

I reasoned plenty of things out.

DOCTOR

Sure, like which rodeo you want to ride in. That's not reasoning. If you are not honest with yourself, how can you reason anything out?

(Pause.)

Tyson, you're a fraud.

TYSON

How can you be around a fraud?

DOCTOR

Because you would give away your winnings and a new truck to Mattie and you take in the Charlie's and the Shannon's of the world.

(Shannon pops her head out of the kitchen.)

SHANNON
Wait a second, Doctor.

TYSON
Have you been listening in?

SHANNON
That's my job.

DOCTOR

(Looks at Shannon.)

Correct me if I am wrong. You were homeless, with a stutter, unable to sleep more than two hours a night.

SHANNON
With a college degree.

DOCTOR
It wasn't final exams that did that.

SHANNON
I was in a slide.

DOCTOR
And, Tyson pulled you out.

SHANNON
Technically, it was Chief that healed me.

DOCTOR
And there's Charlie. No parents, no siblings and a nasty habit of not sleeping for three days.

SHANNON
Not sleeping is his transferable skill from Iraq.

He's a work in progress; I'm the finished product.

DOCTOR

You do all these good things but you can't get honest.

TYSON

I admit that I am a work in progress too.

DOCTOR

(Surrenders.) Yes, you are.

TYSON

N

I need to educate Dan and Lippy.

DOCTOR

They will not get it; we need to show them.

TYSON

How are you going to do that?

DOCTOR

It worked on my mother. I told her you rode bulls and she thought you worked at the stock market.

She could not understand what you did so I showed her a video of you bull riding.

TYSON

And, that worked?

DOCTOR

Well, she didn't speak for three days.

I mean her lips moved but there was no sound.

TYSON

(Suspiciously.) So, what are you going to show my family?

DOCTOR

Like bull riding, you have to show people what it is.

TYSON

Then, it makes sense.

DOCTOR

No, bull riding never makes any sense but when people see it the mystery is gone.

TYSON

How you going to do this?

DOCTOR

Bring in my mother—Laverne Goldman. We need a game changer. Someone that knows what every person needs to do to make his or her life better.

TYSON

You think your mother can get through to them?

DOCTOR

Everyone tells her everything.

When she is not busy gathering intelligence in our neighborhood, she volunteers to take calls on the suicide prevention line. She has saved thirty-one callers from suicide including the mayor.

(Jake comes into the room, the Doctor goes outside.)

SHANNON

I'll let you two have some time together.

(Shannon returns to the kitchen.)

TYSON

There is a bottle of whisky in the cupboard, bring it over here with a couple of glasses.

(Jake fetches the whisky and a couple of glasses.)

Ever had whisky?

JAKE

Nope.

(Tyson pours two shots.)

TYSON

Well, you've earned it.

(Tyson takes a drink; Jake sips his.)

Whew!!!

JAKE

You'll get used to it.

TYSON

Did you talk with my parents?

JAKE

I did.

TYSON

How'd it go?

JAKE

Not well.

TYSON

They'll never accept me.

JAKE

I'm not giving up on them and neither should you.

TYSON

I guess you learn not to quit on the bulls.

JAKE

That's one of the lessons.

TYSON

I've watched you riding bulls for as long as I can remember.

JAKE

You want to talk about bulls?

TYSON

Yes.

JAKE

Bull riding is the ultimate eight seconds you can live.

TYSON

TYSON (Continued.)

(He sips his whisky.)

But it's not just the eight seconds. It's all the steps before it.

(Tyson gets up from his seat.)

Three or four days before my ride I begin to push everything away. I get quiet and I don't think about anything else. It is not about the bulls; it's about me finding that inner space where my real strength is.

And, I stay in *my place* for hours.

(Pause)

Everyone has that inner space; that's where their real strength is. Some people never find it: hell, they don't even look for it.

JAKE

Is that what you do to ride bulls?

TYSON

Yep. It is all about finding my center and taking all my conscious muscle memory and putting it into my subconscious mind. When you get on that bull there is no time to think; it is all reaction.

(Tyson looks away and takes a few steps as if he is watching a memory.)

I stay there until I get to the rodeo. I follow my routine, check my rope, gloves and gear. I stay busy and quiet and I keep my focus.

JAKE

Do you try and figure out how the bull bucks?

TYSON

You don't take a breath of air much less think in those eight seconds. I wait for the silence; the crowd may be roaring but all I can hear is my breathing.

Then I give my head nod. That's the signal to open the chute.

(Tyson shakes his head up and down—this is the signal the bull rider gives to have the chute opened.)

I'm watching his shoulders. He drops the left shoulder and he is going left. And, you keep your hand attached to the rope and glued to your crouch. You can't be too stiff and you can't be too relaxed, you need to be stiff and relaxed.

(Tyson places a fist in his crotch.)

Your crouch hand moves away even a few inches, you're off-balance and you're going to get tossed.

A few years back I rode a bull named, "Dispatch." I rode him clean for eight seconds. About a year later, I got, "Dispatch," again. And I figured he'd take the same two lurches out of the chute and start a hard right turn like before.

Did that happen, hell no, he didn't even lurch once, as soon as he cleared the chute instead of a hard right, he made a hard left and threw me in a second and a half.

(Tyson sits down.)

JAKE

Sounds like he learned some new tricks.

TYSON

I thought that but when he strutted away, he stopped and looked at me. He remembered me.

JAKE

All that for eight seconds?

TYSON

That eight-second ride is the biggest risk a person can take and for the that brief moment your life is at full speed not the half speed of our daily lives.

JAKE

Do you think I can be a bull rider?

TYSON

(Pauses, and takes a thoughtful sip of whisky.)

No.

Take a sip of that whisky.

(Jake dutifully takes a sip of whisky with a youthful expression of distaste.)

JAKE

I've been working out and have put myself into good shape.

TYSON

You know what the pre-requisites for bull riding are?

JAKE

You have to be strong and have courage.

TYSON

Nope, bull riders have a bad childhood and a thirst for adrenaline.

And, I'm talking about adrenaline that's a freight train that starts before the ride and lasts a day or two after.

(Smiles and sips his whisky.)

You are not an adrenaline junkie. And you've had a pretty good childhood.

Not like your father and me.

JAKE

My father never said he had a bad childhood.

TYSON

When your childhood is always bad then you see it as normal.

Wasn't a time that we didn't see your granddads with a drink in their hand.

(Tyson raises his glass and touches Jake's like a toast.)

Drinking, bull riding and religion are the only ways I know of to fix a bad childhood.

Your dad chose drinking and religion; I chose drinking and bull riding.

JAKE

I thought you bull ride for the money.

TYSON

I pick up my share but I end up paying Doctor Steve to patch me up.

And, I spend the rest on this damn whisky.

JAKE

Uncle, I can't see anyway forward I just want out.

TYSON

Are you stuck?

JAKE

Yes, ever since I lost my best friend Billy.

TYSON

Your mother told me about his accident.

JAKE

(Smirks.) Is that what they told you?

TYSON

What do you mean?

JAKE

I don't want to talk about Billy's 'accident.'

TYSON

Why not?

(Tyson is suspicious but decides not to press Jake.)

Okay.

When I was your age, I was interested in football and I dated some.

JAKE

I pretended I was into football and had interest in girls. Every day I got dressed for school I felt that I was putting on camouflage.

The more I fake everything the more I hate myself.

TYSON

Going along with others doesn't mean much.

JAKE

But it does; being true to yourself means everything.

TYSON

I never looked at it that way.

JAKE

You never had to. If am going to have any sort of a life, I better start here.

TYSON

Why not take a long view? See high school as one of the bus rides in life. You get on the bus until you graduate and then move on and start your life.

JAKE

Is that how you saw it?

TYSON

Yes.

JAKE

Yes, but you weren't living your life as someone else?

(Tyson doesn't answer.)

There is so much that is fake in the world except for riding bulls. It's as real as it can get.

TYSON

(Smiles.) There is no time to fake anything in eight seconds.

JAKE

I kept thinking about you getting into a chute and sitting on a bull. I want the kind of courage you have.

TYSON

Well, you do have that.

JAKE

I don't have the courage to live in that small town as a gay teenager.

TYSON

Jake, suicide would have destroyed your parents.

JAKE

But it would have been easier for them to explain.

(Pauses.) It is not about the gay life; it is about me and knowing who I am and being proud of that.

(Pauses, Tyson is thinking about his own truth.)

Have you ever lost a friend?

TYSON

I did.

(Pauses)

Lost him when I was just a little over your age.

What if we give your parents some more time?

JAKE

I can't live there anymore.

(Pause.)

Billy was my lover.

TYSON

He is the one that was drunk and drove off a cliff.

JAKE

We planned to meet up by the lake when he got off work.

(Pause)

I just knew something terrible happened to Billy and as that sun peeked over the lake. I knew my life had changed forever.

I was so sad I didn't want to live anymore.

TYSON

(Tyson stands up slowly. He is in pain as he steps back into this memory.)

TYSON (Continued.)

My friend Shane was bull riding and got tossed and then the bull stepped on him.

I jumped into the arena.

The bull was running loose.

I covered Shane with my body and held him.

He tried to breath and when he realized he couldn't he just smiled at me and he mouthed the words, "I love you."

His girlfriend, Mattie, jumped into the arena but it was too late; he was gone.

It was the worse moment of my life.

I learned to *Cowboy Up*.

JAKE

What does that mean?

TYSON

Finding your inner-strength; for a cowboy that is where their real toughness is.

JAKE

Do you follow it?

TYSON

(Tyson pauses for reflection.)

I try.

JAKE

Uncle, I guess you have to *Cowboy Up* to ride bulls.

TYSON

(Smiles)

The issue before us is not my surviving a bull ride but you surviving that small town.

Don't listen to the voices in your little town; like bull riding, cut out all the noise in the arena.

TYSON (Continued.)

Focus on yourself and what you want to accomplish.

JAKE

I can't think of what I want to accomplish.

TYSON

Doesn't have to be much. I just want to get eight seconds on a bull.

JAKE

I could deal with eight seconds of anything but every day in that town feels like a lifetime.

TYSON

To be a gay teenager in a small town takes more courage than riding a bull.

JAKE

Are you telling me to *Cowboy Up* in my little town?

TYSON

Yes. When you find your inner strength, you are honoring who you are. Then it doesn't matter what other people say or think about you,

JAKE

If I were to come out that small town would crush me like they did Billy.

TYSON

You're probably right.

JAKE

I knew where my pain was coming from. The counselor was trying to stop my own thinking and take guilt shots on me.

When I cut my wrists, it was a relief from the pain inside.

Did you ever have that kind of pain?

TYSON

(Tyson is silent and takes a few moments to collect his thoughts.)

We have a lot to work out...

I mean with your parents. Can you give me a little bit of time?

JAKE

Okay, but I am not going to that camp.

TYSON

It's going to be hard getting through to your parents in the next day or two. Could you maybe go to the camp and buy me some time?

JAKE

You only come out of the camp in one of two ways. You are either come out a liar or an outcast.

TYSON

Just tell them what they want to hear.

JAKE

No, Uncle Ty, those days ended for me that night I spent at the lake.

(Pauses) I will not go back to that town.

TYSON

Fair enough. I'll talk them into to having you stay her for a few weeks.

JAKE

That would be great.

TYSON

You can help Shannon and Charlie.

JAKE

Why did you want me to ride Chief?

TYSON

I took Chief on a ride over an old wooden bridge and a plank broke and he fell and tore up his front legs.

JAKE

Those are the scars on his front legs.

TYSON

Took Doc three hours to stitch him up.

Chief was in a lot of pain and he seemed to push all that pain away and was healed enough to ride after a few days.

TYSON (Continued.)

A few years back, I got hurt. Doc had me laying up in the bed. But I could hear Chief calling for me. I could barely walk. Charlie saddled him up and I just sat on him as he walked me through the pastures up a trail or two and I started feeling better.

Chief taught me that real healing happens in the mind and it happens fast.

(Pauses.) In three weeks, I was back to living. Doc asked me how I recovered and I told him it was the whisky.

JAKE

Do I have to drink all this whisky?

TYSON

Pour it into mine.

(Jake empties his shot glass into Ty's.)

JAKE

I'm going to get some sleep.

TYSON

Shannon has your bedroom there are some beds in the bunkhouse.

JAKE

(Jake gets up from his seat.)

Good night, Uncle Ty

TYSON

Wait a second.

(Tyson stands ever so slowly and painfully.)

Don't hug my busted shoulder.

(He hugs Jake.)

You have grown up to be a fine young man.

JAKE

Thank you, no one has ever said that to me.

TYSON

Well, you taught me a lesson tonight.

JAKE

What is that?

TYSON

Good night, get up early and take Chief out, he loves to ride in the early morning.

JAKE

I'll do that. Good night.

(Tyson gives him two thumbs-up hand gesture, Jake walks out stage right and Shannon comes in from the kitchen. Tyson sits back down.)

SHANNON

So, what are going to do?

TYSON

Dammit, Shannon, that was personal.

SHANNON

Dammit! Yes, it was; now what are you going to do.

TYSON

Talk to his parents and work it out?

SHANNON

Your brain scan missed a few spots.

TYSON

I can talk with them.

SHANNON

Talk all you want. They can't change. Walmart stole their livelihoods, did they move? Hell no, they stayed put and ended on welfare.

TYSON

They are behind a wall but I can get through it.

SHANNON

(Angrily) Stop fooling yourself.

TYSON

I can reason with....

SHANNON

(Angrily) Stop it. You can't reason with them.

TYSON

(Angrily.) I just have to break down their walls.

SHANNON

N

(Angrily.) Whose walls need to be broken down?

(Pauses, kneels down and takes Tyson's hand.)

(Lovingly.) You're the only one that can save this boy's life.

TYSON

(Angrily.) That's enough!

SHANNON

Fear has Dan, Lippy and you so wrapped up none of you can step away from it.

TYSON

I have enough courage to handle my fears

SHANNON

The fear I'm talking about is with you every waking moment not for eight seconds when you sit your ass on a bull.

(Pause and reflects.)

I was raised on a family farm.

Every year, droughts, the price for a bushel and the big farms coming for us like a cancer.

I was always afraid to make friends because I knew I would lose them. I hid away in my room and read. Eventually, we went bankrupt. I hated to lose my home but I was relieved that the fear was gone.

TYSON

I can handle fear.

SHANNON

Some people hide from their fears with anger, religion or substances—you chose pain to cover yours.

TYSON

I don't like pain. I don't want pain. I don't look for pain.

SHANNON

No, you just chose the activity where you are most likely to find pain that is more than the pain...

(Shannon points her finger at his heart.)

That's in here.

TYSON

I have had just about enough of your analysis.

SHANNON

This bull riding pain isn't real.

TYSON

Want to look at my Ex-rays?

SHANNON

You don't get anything from it. Good pain makes us grow.

TYSON

Jake's pain has pushed him to suicide; you call that good pain?

SHANNON

Yes, because his attempt created a change that got him out of that town and to the only person in his world that can help him.

TYSON

Bull riding has changed me.

SHANNON

A long time ago—maybe. But now you just go back and cling to it, just like your sister and brother-in-law holding onto their small town and their religion. You have learned all bull riding is going to teach you—move on.

SHANNON (Continued.)

(Angrily.) You think you're a champion?

TYSON

(Angrily, points at his belt buckle—This is a championship belt buckle.)

Behind this buckle, there are hundreds of bulls and add to that the broken ribs, arms, sprains and muscle tears and a hundred bruises; that's the price I paid.

SHANNON

(Angrily.) That buckle for sitting on a dumb ass bull that is smarter than you doesn't make you a real champion.

TYSON

(Angrily.) My buckle says it does.

SHANNON

My purple heart and bronze star say more.

You risked your life for an eight-second ride and I risked mine for...

TYSON

Your country?

SHANNON

No, it was for all the Charlie's in my command.

(Angrily.) My father was a real champion. He worked our farm and in his spare time he worked in the city at all kinds of jobs—warehouse, janitor, painter. Between our farm and his jobs, we never missed a meal and we always had nice clothes to wear. And he never got a belt buckle for it.

TYSON

(Angrily.) I know I'm a champion.

SHANNON

(Angrily.) For sitting on a bull.

(Pause as she stands up.)

Do you know what I know about life?

TYSON

That you have to poke your nose into my business.

SHANNON

My father taught me that a good life is all about honesty.

When I got honest with myself, I found my path.

TYSON

(Angrily.) And what did your father have to show for it.

(Shannon is stunned and deeply offended. She takes off her apron.)

I'm sorry; I didn't mean it.

SHANNON

(Calmly.) Time for me to move on and you can stay stuck.

TYSON

Shannon, I'm sorry for what I said.

(Shannon tosses her apron on the chair. She turns and walks out and passes Doc.)

DOCTOR

What was all that screaming about?

TYSON

We need a new manager.

DOCTOR

What!

TYSON

Shannon just quit.

(Tyson has been sitting but slumps into his chair.)

DOCTOR

For what?

TYSON

She meddles too much.

DOCTOR

Meddling over what?

TYSON

She struck a nerve and I let my whisky do the talking.

I'm going to reason it out with the parents.

DOCTOR

You're right.

TYSON

Yes, I can explain...

DOCTOR

No, you're right about your whisky is doing the talking.

TYSON

Shannon can get me so angry.

(Tyson looks up at the Doctor. He is defeated.)

I hurt everywhere.

DOCTOR

(Shakes his head.)

I know.

(The Doctor helps Tyson stand up but he falls down.)

TYSON

God damn me.

DOCTOR

Let me help you up; it's time for bed, Cowboy.

(Doc helps Tyson up from the floor.)

TYSON

(Tyson slowly gets to his feet.)

I have to *Cowboy Up*.

END ACT I

Intermission

Thank you for taking my call.

TYSON (Continued.)

Can you come back? I am so very sorry for the things I said.

The ranch needs you but most of all I need you.

I could not find the whisky you hid so Doc put me on Vicodin but after three days I had to get off it because every time a heifer had a calf I'd cry.

(Pauses.)

You hid the whisky in my clothes hamper.

Well, if you come back, I will bump up your pay

Yes, yes, there is a bonus. A good bonus.

SHANNON

(Shannon steps out of the kitchen.)

Doc, said if I didn't come back he was going to move out.

(Tyson turns around and sees Shannon come out of the kitchen.)

So, what's been going on during my vacation? You do pay for my two-week vacation, won't you?

TYSON

Yes, I will pay for your vacation but I need you to come back because all hell is about to break loose, Dan and Lippy are coming to get Jake.

(She turns to Jake.)

SHANNON

How are you doing?

JAKE

I'm good, we have 12 new calves since you went on vacation.

TYSON

I cried for three days straight.

SHANNON

We are going to have 400 head.

(Knock at the front door.)

LAVERNE

(From outside the front door.)

Steven, it's your mother.

(Tyson answers the door. Laverne comes on stage dressed in white rhinestone studded jeans, a western white shirt with long fringe and a cowboy hat carrying a bottle of hand sanitizer. Charlie, Jake and Shannon are talking to each other back stage.)

TYSON

Hi Laverne, good to see you.

(Laverne offers Tyson a cheek to kiss and he gives her a kiss.)

LAVERNE

Tyson, my dear, how are you?

(She sprays hand sanitizer on his hands and he rubs them together.)

Broken anything lately?

TYSON

Everything is healing.

LAVERNE

I just hate those mean bulls. How is the ranch doing?

TYSON

We had three new calves today.

LAVERNE

I have always wondered, do your cows go into labor?

TYSON

Yes, but it is not quite the same.

LAVERNE

I was in labor with the Doctor for 16 hours. My doctor said if I had to go one more hour I would have died and at that moment when I laid eyes on my son, I just knew that any child that could go through that kind of labor was just going to be a doctor.

SHANNON

Hi, Laverne.

LAVERNE

Oh, Shannon, I heard you had left the ranch.

(Laverne sprays hand sanitizer on her hands and Shannon rubs them together.)

SHANNON

I came back; this is my home.

LAVERNE

I am so relieved that you are here to look after the boys.

SHANNON

N

It's a full-time job.

LAVERNE

Oh, I know it is. A woman is so needed here on the ranch. Well, they are just so needed.

Where is Steven?

TYSON

He's in the yard.

(Laverne goes to the door to the yard.)

LAVERNE

Steven, it's your mother.

DOCTOR

(From off stage)

Come on out.

LAVERNE

This place smells like, like a...

DOCTOR

It smells like a ranch, mother.

LAVERNE

Well, it is going to defeat my Chanel perfume.

Steven, I don't like your yard; there are so many things to step in. Come inside.

(Steven steps inside. His clothes are filthy.)

Whew! How did your clothes get so slimy?

DOCTOR

Mother, I just helped a heifer deliver a calf.

(Laverne starts to spray sanitizer over his entire body as Steven gives her a full body hug. Laverne is horrified as if she has just been touched by a leper. Her lips begin to move but there are no words coming out.)

Delivering calves is a messy business.

LAVERNE

Me, me, messy?

(Doctor stops hugging and turns away, Laverne's white jacket is smeared with his handprints.)

DOCTOR

We have been busy, I delivered three calves this morning.

LAVERNE

But, you're a doctor?

DOCTOR

It is all pretty much the same and I get fewer complaints on the ranch.

LAVERNE

(Laverne lips are moving but she is not saying anything. Finally, she speaks.)

Tyson, my dear, can we talk?

(She sits on the couch and Tyson sits next to her. The Doctor, Shannon, Jake and Charlie step off to the side for a private conversation.)

Tyson, you are so dear to me and Steven has told me all about Jake and his parents.

TYSON

They are pretty hard to get through to.

LAVERNE

And, why is that?

TYSON

They are locked up like a bull in the chute.

LAVERNE

(Laverne puts her arm around Tyson.)

You always have such marvelous descriptions of life.

TYSON

Why do so many people get stuck in their chutes?

LAVERNE

Because there is so little love in the world.

I was a grocery store checker and I gave and received those little touches from all the shoppers I met during the day. If you have those little touches, you have love all the time and you are getting a full piece of the pie and not just a slice at the end of the day.

TYSON

How did we all get here?

LAVERNE

Because my dear Tyson, we have forgotten how important the little touches of love are.

All love is good love; people that love or have loved know this. It's the ones that don't know love and they don't know how powerful it is are the ones that get stuck in their chutes.

TYSON

How can I make them see this?

LAVERNE

(Smiles.)

You can't.

Just change yourself.

(Laverne tightens her around Tyson.)

I would take you as my own.

TYSON

(His cell phone rings and he answers it.)

My sister and brother-in-law are outside.

I'll go and get them; Jake you want to come with?"

JAKE

No, I'll wait here.

TYSON

Are you okay?

JAKE

Yeah, I'm fine.

TYSON

You sure, now?

JAKE

Yeah.

TYSON

It's all going to work out. Don't worry.

JAKE

Sure.

(Doc, Laverne and Tyson head outside while Jake, Charlie and Shannon stay together.)

SHANNON

Jake are you ready for this?

(Jake does not answer.)

I have your back. You need a hug!

Let's make it a group hug.

(Jake, Charlie and Shannon embrace each other. When they part, Shannon is seeing that Jake is clearly worried and unsure.)

I'd give you a pep talk but I don't know if it applies.

CHARLIE

Give him, "Mission Objective for April 12."

SHANNON

Our last day in theater?

CHARLIE

Yeah, that bad day.

SHANNON

I'm not sure it will help.

JAKE

I am sure I could use it.

SHANNON

You sure?

JAKE

Yes, I would like to hear it.

SHANNON

I need a moment.

(Shannon goes into the kitchen and returns wearing her army cap. She is all military. Shannon takes a moment and motions Charlie to stand next to Jake. Then she snaps into a military attention. She will look at them but also directly at the audience.)

AHHH----TEN---SHUN

SHANNON (Continued.)

(Charlie snaps to attention, Jake is surprised.)

AHHH----TEN---SHUN

(Jake snaps to attention.)

The sound of the ranch comes into the play—birds, cows, Chief whinnying. Shannon remains at attention. And the sound baths the stage.)

Think of this moment.
We are on the same road as yesterday.
But, the journey will be different.
let's get these paper products into Baghdad.

Dismissed.

(They all relax.)

That's all I got.

CHARLIE

He ain't stepping back.

(Charlie turns the song "Asking us to Dance" on again.)

Come on let's dance.

(Shannon and Jake dance.)

(Dan comes in. He is about to take a drink from a flask of whisky but puts it in his pocket.)

JAKE

(Jake stops dancing to hug his dad who is clearly shocked.)

Hello, father.

(Shannon and Charlie move to back stage.)

DAN

How are you doing?

JAKE

I'm better, where's mom?

DAN

She's talking to Ty. What have you been doing?

JAKE

Doing chores, taking care of all the new calves.

DAN

A couple weeks at the ranch was all you needed to clear your head. I'll let you get back to that pretty young woman over there.

JAKE

She's just a friend.

DAN

Just the same it is good to see your interest, now go on and dance some more with her.

(Tyson and Lippy come into the room and walk over to Dan. Dan offers Tyson his flask of whisky; Tyson declines. Shannon motions Jake and Charlie to follow her outside. Laverne takes a seat in the corner to observe.)

TYSON

What do you want for your son?

LIPPY

Well...Like every mother...

TYSON

(Cuts her off.)

I didn't ask what every mother wants, I asked what you want.

LIPPY

Well, I want him to be happy.

TYSON

Describe happy.

LIPPY

Oh, Ty, your happy with your big ranch and your cattle herd and there is your bull riding career.

DAN

And, your famous now.

TYSON

Describe happy.

LIPPY

Well, you have friends and you belong to a church.

TYSON

Is that right for everyone?

DAN

Well, it should be.

TYSON

Well then, I think everyone should get up a bull from time to time. That makes me happy.

LIPPY

You're being silly.

TYSON

I wish I was, but this is serious business. This ain't catchin hell for driving Dan's daddy's pickup into the lake.

Love your son; his life is at stake.

LIPPY

With prayer...

TYSON

(Cuts her off.) He is beyond the help of your Church.

(Lippy is deep in thought.)

Jake loves the two of you. He needs you to love him back.

DAN

(Disinterested.) Well, he has a strange way of showing it.

TYSON

Remember Daddy telling all of us that this rodeo was our ride and not his.

LIPPY

Well, he was talking to both of you.

TYSON

No, he was talking to you as well.

I did not understand what he meant by that advice.

DAN

We were young then and he was telling us to just have a good time.

TYSON

I thought that until my third rodeo.

Shane and I were backstage talking and laughing about all the rodeos we would win and the championship buckles we would wear.

Ten minutes later, he was laying on the floor of the arena with a crushed chest.

That was Shane's ride and this is mine and you got to let Jake have his.

DAN

All these influences coming from that dang internet are taking his ride away.

LIPPY

We want his life to be right with the Lord. We want him to have a family that will make him happy.

TYSON

But it has to be his life; and you are taking that from him.

(Tyson calls for Jake outside.)

Jake, come inside.

TYSON (Continued.)

(Jake returns to the stage.)

Tell your folks what you have been doing these last two weeks.

JAKE

I have been riding Chief every day.

DAN

(Dan shakes his head in disbelief.)

I told you he's just a horse.

JAKE

(Smiles.) I know now I will never again try to take my life.

DAN

Is that what this horse taught you?

JAKE

Chief taught how to be silent.

He walked real slow for hours and hours.

I slowed down and began to realize how beautiful these trails are.

DAN

Beautiful places, in the brush around this place?

JAKE

(Smiles.) Once I could see beauty outside myself; I could see it in myself.

DAN

Well, if it can keep you away from all those influences.

LIPPY

Sounds like the old Jake, you're fine.

JAKE

I feel calm inside.

JAKE (Continued.)

I know what I want for my future.

LIPPY

And what is that?

JAKE

I'm gay and I chose to be open to the world about it.

DAN

JAKE!

JAKE

I'm not asking permission or forgiveness just acceptance.

(Dan goes to strike Jake but Tyson blocks him.)

DAN

(Angrily.) WE TOLD YOU WE WILL NOT ALLOW THIS.

(Shannon and Charlie return to the stage when they hear Dan yelling.)

JAKE

I love you. And I will not go back home so nobody will ever know.

(Tyson lets go of Dan.)

(Dan looks at Jake. Jake takes Charlie's hand.)

DAN

You two are vile and sinful.

SHANNON

(Points at Dan.)

This is what vile and sinful looks like.

DAN

(ANGRILY.) Jake, get in the truck you are coming home with me.

JAKE

I'm not going home.

DAN

(He drinks from his flask.)

I SAID GET INTO THE TRUCK; you're going to that camp.

JAKE

There's no camp, and no small town to get murdered in—like Billy.

DAN

Your mind is so twisted. Billy wasn't murdered.

JAKE

(Jake pulls out his cell phone and reads a text.)

This text is from Billy.

(Reads from the phone.) At 7:31, I'm leaving work now; see you soon.

At 7:34, I'm being followed.

At 7:39, I love you, Jake.

The police report says that he was drunk when he drove off the cliff at 8:30.

He never drank and they never found his phone.

DAN

We need to show this to the sheriff.

JAKE

And when the sheriff reads, "I love you, Jake," who do you think will be the next person to go over the cliff?

(Dan reacts to this statement, he is deep in thought.)

DAN

(Defeated and broken.) I don't have a son anymore. Come-on Lippy, were going home.

LIPPY

Let me talk with my son.

(Dan, storms off through the front door as REX comes into the room with his television crew and his folder with the papers for all the endorsements.)

REX

What's all the fussing about?

TYSON

What are you doing here, Rex?

REX

Just getting you some face time before the Finals.

TYSON

I am really not in the mood to do this.

REX

Endorsements, it is all about getting your All-American persona out there.

(He waves the endorsement folder at Tyson.)

TYSON

My All-American what?

REX

Your brand. When you win that championship, I am going to put that All-American smile of yours across the country.

TYSON

You are?

REX

Yep, and this is going to be a live feed.

TYSON

Live feed?

REX

Got cha, you can't back out of this.

TYSON

Rex, I am not ready to do this.

REX

Come on now, just a little face time for you. You know tell them how you are looking forward to putting a championship ride in. Not much, now come on.

TYSON

(Pauses.) I guess I have to do this.

NEWS REPORTER (DAKOTA HELLER)

We have the feed set-up back to the station.

CAMERA OPERATOR

We're rolling

DAKOTA

This is Dakota Heller of KADY and I am here with Tyson Garrett, past bull riding champion. Tyson Garrett is our special surprise guest for tonight's "Eye on the Horizon" segment. Tyson will be riding in the National Finals this weekend in Las Vegas.

Are you ready, Ty?

TYSON

(Pauses.) No, I am not.

DAKOTA

Not ready for the Finals? Why is that?

TYSON

(Tyson looks at Jake. Jake looks completely defeated.)

Time to step out of my camouflage.

I have nephew here. He's a real fine young man.

(Tyson takes off his championship belt buckle.)

Jake, come here.

TYSON (Continued.)

(Jake comes over to Tyson.)

You know what this is?

JAKE

Yes, you won it for being the bull-riding champion.

(Tyson wraps it around him.)

TYSON

It's yours.

You have earned this.

JAKE

Uncle Ty!

TYSON

I can't think of anyone that has as much courage as you. Every time you put it on, I want you to think of what a true champion you are.

DAKOTA

Well, we weren't expecting that.

TYSON

Looks like I need to go win me another buckle.

DAKOTA

Will you be ready?

TYSON

(Looks at Rex.)

Come here, Rex.

(Rex comes over to Tyson. Tyson places his arm on his shoulder.)

I owe everything to my partner here. How long have we been together?

Going on ten years.

REX

We've been joined at the hip; haven't we?

TYSON

Why, yes, we have.

REX

TYSON

(Tyson squeezes Rex tightly.)

I love this man, best partner a man could ever want.

REX

Aw shucks, Ty.

TYSON

I'm gay.

(Rex shakes loose from Tyson's hug.)

REX

(Rex looks like he just sucked a lemon.)

You're who?

TYSON

(Looks at the camera.)

And now I am ready for the damn Finals.

DAKOTA

Well, that sure is a shocker.

TYSON

It's going to be a bigger shocker when I win.

DAKOTA

Wasn't expecting that. That will be all we have tonight for our "Segment on the Horizon." And, this is Dakota Heller of KADY.

(The reporter and cameraman leave the room.)

REX

We just lost everything.

(Rex slaps the folder of endorsements down on the table and angrily storms to the door but stops.)

TYSON

You still want to be my agent?

(Rex turns shrugs his shoulders, comes back to the table. Picks up the folder.)

Rex, imagine the fashion line—shirts, pants, hats, saddles—especially saddles.

REX

(Rex thumps through the folder.)

Probably going to lose Brand Feed and Buckskin deodorant.

TYSON

We are not going to lose Buckskin.

REX

Oh, hell why not.

(Rex ambles to the doorway and leaves.)

LIPPY

(Libby steps towards Jake she is lost.)

Jake?

JAKE

(He embraces his mother but she is uncomfortable with his touch.)

JAKE (Continued.)

I am gay.

LIPPY

No, you can't be.

(Jake does not answer.)

LAVERNE

Can we talk?

My son here the Doctor is gay.

LIPPY

He is?

LAVERNE

Yes.

LIPPY

For how long?

LAVERNE

(Smiles and wraps her arm around Lippy.)

Since childbirth.

I will tell you about his childbirth at another time.

He was born gay. He didn't even tell me; a mother knows.

LIPPY

Jake wasn't born gay; he decided to be gay.

LAVERNE

My dear, it doesn't work that way. If it did; I could have changed Steven. Not that I would want to, he is my son and after my delivery I didn't care about his shape, size, eye color or anything else except his nose seemed a bit small. A mother knows their child.

LIPPY

But it is immoral.

LAVERNE

Every child is a blessing.

And a gay son has so much to offer their mother.

Do you know what a mother can do with her gay son?

LIPPY

Nothing.

LAVERNE

No, everything.

There never is a daughter-in-law to get in the way.

My gay son is a treasure; my other son is a doctor and he has a terrible marriage and we have nothing to talk about but Steven calls me every day and there is always something we can chat about.

LIPPY

But I have lost him.

LAVERNE

My darling, a mother will never lose a gay son unless she wants to.

(Off stage you here a truck horn.)

DAN

(From off stage.) Lippy, we're leaving now.

LIPPY

I don't want to upset Dan.

LAVERNE

My dear, we can always replace a spouse but we can never replace a child.

(Lippy goes over to Jake and wraps her arms around him.)

LIPPY

I have to leave with your father.

JAKE

Why?

LIPPY

Matthew 9:16 What God has joined together.....

(Dan bursts onto the stage with a large black book and a flask of whisky.)

DAN

(Angrily) Lippy, get in the car.

TYSON

Dan, you look like your daddy when he saw his truck in the lake.

DAN

(Angrily.) I just lost my son not some damn truck.

TYSON

You didn't lose Jake; no matter what you say or do he's still going to love you.

DAN

How can you say that?

TYSON

That's what he told me.

DAN

He's all I got.

TYSON

I know.

Your small town got a whole lot smaller with a Walmart

DAN

(Sadly and defeated.) I know.

You did the right thing moving away.

TYSON

(Smiles and looks away.) People see you as a bull rider and they think they know you by what you do.

TYSON (Continued.)

They put that big cowboy label on you. People see you as a man's man.

DAN

That's what you are.

TYSON

(Smiles.) People don't look beyond the label.

And it becomes a perfect place to hide.

DAN

You didn't need to hide from anything.

TYSON

Can't hide anything in a small town, Dan.

Jake is gay; just like his uncle.

DAN

(Shocked. His face is one of deep anguish.)

You're gay! Since when?

TYSON

Long before I drove your daddy's truck in the lake.

You were the best friend I had. You took a whipping from your dad because you told him you drove the truck in the lake.

I never said anything to you because I didn't want to lose you as my friend. You were all I had.

(Dan is a puzzle of emotion and he looks at Jake and then Tyson and back at Jake before he walks away.)

Dan, you were the best; I knew you took that whippin for me.

DAN

You lied to me all these years?

TYSON

I was lying to myself.

TYSON (Continued.)

We had some great times growing up.

(Dan stops at the door.)

I hate to lose my best friend. But I understand if you...

DAN

If I what?

TYSON

If you are stuck in your chute. Maybe someday that gate is going to open.

DAN

(Shaking his head.) I'm not stuck as long as I have the Bible.

TYSON

I can't argue with the Bible.

LIBBY

Tyson, you need the Bible.

TYSON

I'm going to respect your beliefs and choices.

DAN

Alright, we go our own ways then.

TYSON

(Smiles.) We made it through that small town together. With our drunk daddies on our ass, whippin us for every little thing. Without you I would not have made it. You were all I had to get through it.

DAN

The past is the past.

TYSON

And we survived it together. Nothing is going to take away how much you meant to me growing up.

TYSON (Continued.)

I love you man.

DAN

(Sadly) You and Jake are gay?

TYSON

Don't throw us away.

(Dan is conflicted and is stuck.)

Open your chute, Dan.

Come on, move out here.

DAN

And leave what is familiar?

TYSON

What's familiar?

DAN

The people; our Church.

TYSON

We have good churches here.

When you are ready, there is a place for you here.

DAN

I want you to have my bible.

(He places the black book on the table.)

TYSON

I could use another good hand.

(Dan walks out the front door.)

JAKE

Maybe I should go with him?

TYSON

Do you need more time to sort it out?

JAKE

I love him very much.

TYSON

So, do I.

(Jake starts to go out the front door but stops and looks at Tyson.)

This is home now.

(Jake returns and hugs his mother. She pulls away for a moment before she joins the embracement.)

LIBBY

(She releases Jake.)

Remember our family bible; I want you to have it.

(Lippy picks the bible up from the table and hands it to Tyson.)

(Shannon pulls a book out of the side table and hands it to Lippy.)

SHANNON

I want you to have this book.

LIBBY

Is this the second book?

SHANNON

Yes, it is.

LIPPY

(Looks at the book and opens it.)

The Godfather?

SHANNON

These are the only two books a person needs.

SHANNON (Continued.)

The bible is the training manual and the *The Godfather* is the operations manual.

LIPPY

Did you make up all that live-in girlfriend story?

SHANNON

Yes, Tyson and I have never lived together.

LIPPY

And you made up the part about sleeping with your minister and deacon.

SHANNON

Yes, that was made up.

(Smiles, walks away, turns and says.)

I turned them down.

(Lippy leaves. Tyson grabs his gear bag.)

TYSON

I am off to Vegas. Going to get another buckle. Laverne.

(Laverne gives him a hug and offers him a cheek.)

LAVERNE

I love you and I hate those bulls, all of them. Be careful.

TYSON

I love you too.

Charlie, keep an eye on the herd.

CHARLIE

We'll have more when you return.

TYSON

Jake, you made me proud. Take good care of Chief.

JAKE

Uncle Ty.

(Pauses. He can't say anything and offers him a hand to shake but Ty opens his arms and Jake hugs him.)

TYSON

Shannon, you're in command.

SHANNON

I'm always in command.

(She hugs him. Everyone leaves so Tyson and the Doctor can have a private moment. Tyson goes to embrace Steven but he backs away)

DOCTOR

Your hematoma is not healed.

If you get knocked there again you will be a vegetable.

TYSON

I feel fine.

DOCTOR

For ten years I have had the gut-wrenching experience of watching you get maimed but this rodeo feels different.

(The Doctor moves away from Tyson.)

I have a really bad feeling about this rodeo.

TYSON

I am going to win a buckle and retire.

DOCTOR

You don't need a buckle.

TYSON

It is not about the buckle.

We don't need the money.

DOCTOR

Not about the money.

TYSON

Then what is it?

DOCTOR

(Tyson picks up his traveling bag.)

Don't go, stay here and let's have a life together.

The ride started three days ago and I'm in my place.

TYSON

(Doctor Steve shakes his head in disbelief.)

The Doctor sadly leaves by the door to the Ranch. Tyson leaves with a bag through the front door. "Past the Point of Rescue" by Hal Ketcham begins to play and Charlie Jake and Shannon return to the stage and begin to shadow dance but Jake cuts in and dances with Charlie.

END ACT II

No Intermission

(They clasp hands.)

SHANNON (Continued.)

It will all be over in a moment.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

Well folks, we are down to the last ride of the year. Tyson Garrett has drawn the Hell Maker but Tyson has scored on every ride and has enough points to claim the championship without taking this last ride. But, this is the ride everyone wants to see and it is, by all means, the championship we have all hoped for.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #2

The crowd is cheering Tyson to ride the Hell Maker. No reason for him to take this ride.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

Pretty hard to turn this crowd down. The camera is on Tyson he is standing behind the chutes with his agent, Rex Ashton.

(The doctor pulls out his cell phone and furiously dials.)

DOCTOR

Rex, this is Doctor Steve, let me talk to Tyson.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #2

Unbelievable, Tyson is deciding on taking a ride and he is on the phone.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

Probably making a confession.

TELEVISION MARRATOR #2

I'd be confessing too if I drew the Hell Maker.

DOCTOR

Tyson, listen to me, there is no need to take this ride. You have won the championship, come home.

(The Doctor is listening on the phone before he puts it away in his pocket.)

This is my nightmare.

SHANNON

What'd he say?

DOCTOR

He said that he loved all of us.

SHANNON

(Points to the television.)

Steven, look at Tyson, see the hat he is wearing?

DOCTOR

It's not his hat.

SHANNON

It's Shane's hat.

This ride is about what is in here.

(She points at his heart.)

Where we find the people we love or have loved.

DOCTOR

But to risk your life?

SHANNON

This ride is not about buckles or championships or whether he rides the Hell Maker.

What matters is he connects with Shane.

DOCTOR

To risk it all for his dead friend?

SHANNON

He's not dead.

Steven, I loved the men and women in my command not just because of who they were or what they did but how we connected.

It is our connection where love is the strongest.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #2

Crowd could not ask for more. Tyson Garrett is going to ride the Hell Maker, the number one ranked bull in the PBR.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

Tyson is getting into the chute. He has his seat. Oh boy! The Hell Maker just reared up. Tyson is sliding off the Hell Maker. The chuteman got a hold of his belt and has a hold of him. The Hell Maker is back down but has reared up again. The chuteman has Tyson by the seat of his pants. The Hell Maker is back down Tyson is finding his seat. This is one mean-tempered bull. Tyson has got his grip and is set; here we go!

(The crowd noise gets louder and louder.)

(Excited.) Tyson gives his nod, the chute's open and the Hell Maker explodes straight out and jerks into a spin. Keep movin, a high kick and into a roll. Hell Maker kicks straight up. He's got him. Hold on boy. Keep movin, keep movin.

(The crowd is roaring.)

Tyson gonna ride him! Tyson's gonna ride him!

(The eight second cow bell sounds.)

Tyson wins it!

(Charlie and Jake leap to their feet. Charlie and Jake look away from the television and high five each other. Laverne takes her hands down from her eyes. Shannon and Steve have kept watching the television and their elation disappears into a frighten scared look. The crowd noise stops.)

Oh Lordy! Tyson got his eight seconds but the Hell Maker came for him and gave him a good stompin.

(On the corner of the stage behind the television screen, a light shines on Tyson he is laying on the ground. He has his rodeo number on his chest. A doctor and assistant wearing white coats with red crosses tend to Tyson. This is Dan and Lippy who have changed into medical garb with a red cross on their jackets. They have changed their appearance. Their backs are to the audience.)

TELEVISION NARRATOR #2

Tyson landed on his side and didn't move.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

That's the side the he got banged up a few weeks ago.

TELEVISION NARRATOR #2

You got to move after you get off.

SHANNON

Get up, Ty!

Please get up.

(Shannon slides off the couch to her knees.)

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

Now, folks, let's not jump to any conclusion, these spills always look worse than they are.

(Charlie and Jake stop celebrating and look at the television. Laverne covers her eyes. Doctor Steve looks unemotionally at the screen. His look is faraway and stoic.)

SHANNON

Steven, tell me he is okay.

(Doctor Steven does not answer.)

(Pleads.) Tell me he is going to be okay.

(Steve shakes his head in sadness.)

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

Tyson got a 92.

Folks, now we have the best medical team here at the PBR but let's all bow our heads.

SHANNON

Steven?

(Doctor Steven looks away.)

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

Let's ask the Lord Jesus to help Tyson.

SHANNON

(To the television screen.) Tyson, sit-up, just lift your hand, do anything.

DOCTOR

(Kneels and hugs Shannon.)

DOCTOR (Continued.)

(Slowly, Tyson gives two thumbs-up.)

LAVERNE

I just knew he would be okay.

SHANNON

He raised his hand!

He is going to be okay!

TELEVISION NARRATOR #1

That was a fabulous eight seconds.

*(The song, "Would You Go With Me," plays. This is a fast upbeat song. All the cast **celebrates** and join into a line dance. After a few tight moves they break into couples doing the two-step. Dan dances with Lippy. Tyson with Steve, Shannon with Jake and Charlie with Laverne. Then they mix it up and switch with Charlie and Jake. Laverne with Shannon.*

(Blackout.)

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *I was inspired to write An Eight Second View when my girlfriend suggested that instead of visiting our regular country western dance saloon for two-step dancing, we visit a local gay country bar.*

We were drawn into this community on our first night and it soon replaced our regular dancing venue. We developed several close friendships and were privileged to learn through their life stories about the gay community experience in Los Angeles.

Until this time, I was unaware of the hardships and the downright persecution of our friends as they tried to live their lives. Being exposed to the lives of my gay friends in the context of a country dance venue created a place where the wounded members of this community could shed their internal struggles in a venue of joy, happiness and healing.

The issue that most surprised me was the alienation experienced by members of the gay community and the courage they expressed to me to rise above the societal prejudices they

encountered. I remember one night when the mother of my date joined us. She was old enough to be the mother of everyone in the bar. She danced with a collection of young men. A friend commented to me that she was giving these men the opportunity to dance with a woman that reminded them of their own mothers that had disowned them!

I selected the bull riding story because I felt the need to demonstrate just how painful the life of a gay person can be. The pain is full-body and unrelenting.

I was further attracted to the power of dance and the connection it can create between people. I needed to have dance incorporated and frame the story to shape the narrative and provide a pathway for people to connect with themselves as they connect with others.

Finally, I wanted to address the power of connecting with ourselves, understanding who we are and why we are important to others. The unlocking of our own chutes and opening ourselves to the people and the world around us is at the center of a purposeful life.

*The crafting of *An Eight Second View* explored a community I knew very little about and as time went on, I found myself drawn more to the people, our friendships and the story of their lives than the dancing.*

*The last question, I felt the need to address was: *What is America About?* I care deeply for all the characters in the play and I am hopeful that I framed the struggle and heartache of our evangelical friends when they are continually being confronted with the dogma of their religion as they encounter people that they love that are gay.*

There are so many wonderful plays that I have seen I am hard-pressed to describe one that influenced me more than another. All my plays, explore one of my life experiences that I need to write about to sort out.

The greatest influence in crafting my plays is the Renaissance painter, Michelangelo Caravaggio. The work of this master has attracted my attention for a good many years. Unlike his contemporaries he brought a realism to his paintings by his attention to detail, balancing the thrust of his emotions with light that creates powerful story and emotions continues to inspire me.

AUTHOR BIO: I am a retired college professor from College of the Canyons and have had five one act plays produced through our New Works Festival: *The Internet Date, Wrangler, The Climb, Homecoming and The Letter*. I have also written and had a performance of a one-act play: *The Deposition*.

