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Songs That Won the War

By Unknown

He's back.
My name's Lidia Simmons,
and I'm 12 years old.
And these here are my memoirs.
I can't really tell you much
about me nor my life
without first I tell you about
my brother Stu.
All spring
Stu had been kind of quiet.
Perhaps it was because
a couple months earlier
our father had gone out looking
for work and never returned.
It wasn't the first time
Dad went away.
Ever since he'd come back from
Vietnam, things hadn't been just right.
Mom held two jobs
just to make ends meet,
and we were still dirt poor like
everybody else in Juliette, Mississippi.
But this June morning
in 1970 was different.
All the flowers were in bloom,
and along with the color
and the sweet smell of summer,
our father had come home.
Looks lonely.
Looks more lonely
than anybody I ever seen.
Mom says that
war destroyed our lives.
It's how come
he couldn't find work.
It's why he's been gone
all this time.
Says if it weren't for the damn
war, we'd still have that house.
The house had termites.
That's why
the county condemned it.
I'll see you later.
Don't get arrested.

As I watched
my brother walk to my dad,
I knew he would start talking to
him as if no time had passed at all.
No one in my family
ever seemed to say "hello. "
I guess that was our way of
never having to say good-bye.
We sure had ourselves a lot of good
times in this old place, didn't we?
Yeah. We sure did.
Simmons!
Your house is on fire again!
Oh, no! No, no, no.
No, no, no, no, no, no.
You okay?
Shoot!
I'm fine.
Stu, don't you dare.
Why don't you go
and wake up your dad,
tell him
breakfast is about ready.
Yes, ma'am.
Dad. Dad. Hey, Dad. Dad.
Dad! Dad!
Jeez!
You all right?
Yeah, I'm fine, son.
I'm sorry.
Get ready...
Hi.
Mmm. Mmm!
Eggs and everything!
Look how nice
it all goes together.
You don't think
it's too well-done?
No. No, not at all.
I just pretend
like I'm a starving Indian
and this is
my last piece of sausage,
and I got into a fight over it

with another starving Indian,
it tumbled into the fire,
and this is all that's left
between me and death.
I'm that Indian.
Give it here.
Give it back.
Give it back, Dad.
Stu, you wanna do us
the honor of saying grace?
Dear Lord, bless this food.
Please.
Hey, asshole!
Stu! Stuart!
Hey! That's enough. That's
enough now, both of you!
Just quit it.
You all right, son?
Tell your sister
I'll be gunning for her.
Yeah, all right, Lester.
I'll tell her you was gunning for
her in a doughnut shop, you moron!
You'll see, Simmons.
I'm gonna kick your ass too!
What was that all about?
Stuart, I turn my back
for a second,
you're in
the middle of a fight.
Who is that boy?
His name's Lester Lucket.
He's the reason Lidia got
stuck in summer school.
She hit him in the tooth
with a rock,
and he told the principal she'd
been cheating off all his papers.
She hit him in the mouth
with a rock?
Oh, yeah. He's always
calling her names.
So last year she vowed to knock
every tooth in his head out.

I'm gonna have to
talk to that girl.
She got
a pretty good start.
She doing anything else
I should know about?
Well, yeah,
she's doing a lot of things,
but I don't think
you should know about them.
I didn't bring you down here to
referee a boxing match, Stuart.
I brought you down here
to tell you about something
I've been putting off.
You know how all this time
I been out looking for work?
Yeah.
Well, something about that
ain't entirely accurate.
The truth of the matter is,
I been in a...
I been in a hospital.
For what?
Well, it has to do
with me being in the war.
Well, I went... I went
nuts for a little while.
Them doctors called it
post-traumatic stress.
You remember how I used to...
Remember, I used to do things
before, they didn't make no sense?
Well, it's 'cause there's
a lot of pain in my head.
And I'm gonna tell you
something else, too.
I landed three jobs
after the war.
And I lost every one of them
'cause of them dreams.
It wasn't 'cause
I couldn't do the work, son.
They're finding out a lot

of men who go off to war,
they just don't
come back the same.
A lot of them.
But not... Not me.
I'm definitely
getting better.
Come on, let's finish
our coffee and doughnuts.
You dreamt one of them dreams
this morning, huh?
What was it about?
I don't... I don't think I ever told
you I had a friend in the Marines.
Dodge. Mama told me his name.
She didn't mean
to do nothing wrong.
It's okay.
We were good friends,
Dodge and me.
We'd gone through
boot camp together.
There was this one night our
platoon was sweeping the village
in the hills
just west of Khe Sanh.
The village
had been taken by the NVA
and retaken by us
so many damn times
that the poor people there had to dig
their own trenches just to stay alive.
Boo!
What's wrong with you?
Been with you in the bush
too long.
I notice as long as I been in
the bush, you been behind my butt.
We were good friends,
Dodge and me.
He was a big son of a bitch.
Excuse me, but he was.
He was the biggest man I... Biggest
man I could ever call my friend.

Right flank, talk to me!
We did everything together.
Left flank, talk to me!
Move down.
Dodge!
So long to get
where I'm going
Get on the radio!
We need artillery!
I've been waiting so long
Come on!
Get down, down, down!
Dodge!
Get down!
Fox Trot Five!
To get where I'm going
To the sunshine of your love
And then what happened?
What happened to Dodge?
Come on, Stu!
What say I tell you about
it all at some other time?
Right now you gotta go build
that tree house of yours
and I gotta find me a job.
All right, Dad. Good luck.
Lidia Simmons,
get your skinny ass off
of Lipnicki's property now,
before they tell your dad!
That's an order!
I don't see nobody, Elvadine.
I heard something.
Let's get out of here.
I don't get what you're so
worried about. There's no one home.
What if
that old man Lipnicki
crawls out from under
that junk pile and eats us?
You worry too much.
Let's get out of here!
Look at all that
awesome garbage!

We'll be able to build
a humongous tree fort!
Merry Christmas, ladies!
I don't think
you get it, Simmons.
We don't give a dead rat
about building your dorky fort.
What the hell?
Yahoo!
Let's get out of here.
Hold up. I wanna see this.
That's Leo Lipnicki!
All right! Yes!
They're playing suicide!
Damn!
And there's Arliss.
Good job, Arliss!
Are they nuts,
or are they nuts?
Are you trying to
talk about my family?
Hey there, Ula. How's
life treating you today?
Don't talk to me.
Don't look at me neither.
Hey, Arliss! Leo! Caught me
some trespassers over here!
Hold them!
Well, nice speaking with you.
Yeah! We wanna have a little
conversation with them!
Don't let them
go nowhere, now!
Let's get out of here!
Cut them off, Ula!
Grab them, Willard!
Hey, come on!
Stop!
Uncle! Uncle, man!
Maybe we ought to help him
learn his friends some manners.
How about we says a rhyme and they
gotta finish it, slurring his friends?
Only if it don't rhyme,

he has to eat a dirt clod.
You think that up just now? That's a
classic. Did you hear that, trespasser?
All right, who gets a rhyme?
I got one.
Here I sit,
eating a pastry strudel...
Bingo, Ula.
Go on, trespasser.
Think up a rhyme
to "pastry strudel. "
Here I sit,
eating a strudel...
Go on.
Chet plays with Barbies
and Stu eats doggie doodle.
Hey! Why don't
you just let him go,
pick on somebody
your own size.
What's the matter? You guys
afraid of a fair fight, one on one?
Maybe you got a point. Ebb.
Good boy.
Stu!
Stu, don't get
yourself killed!
Get him good!
Say "Uncle," man!
Say "Uncle"!
He'll kill you! Stay put!
Kick him again!
Hey, you kids!
What's going on?
Nothing. He just fell.
Better get your butts
out of here
before the cops
get wind of y'all.
Quarry's ours, and you'd
better don't come back,
unless you wanna leave here
in an ambulance.
Pick a finger.

Come on,
let's get out of here.
You know, one of us ought to
go back there and kick some ass.
I'm serious, guys.
My brother's got more
fireworks than Ho Chi Minh.
We could hole up
in that fort you wanna build,
those mongrels
won't be able to touch us.
What do you say, Stu?
Stu?
That was fun. Come on,
let's go to the tree.
You got an extra smoke?
Why don't you hawk
your own damn cigarettes?
Dang, girl, I risk my neck all
morning for your dumb behind.
You think
I at least entitled to
a 5-second break
or a puff off of your scag.
What do you mean,
"Risking your neck"?
Well, what you call tromping
around in them crazy, gap-toothed,
banjo-picking, no-eyelid hillbilly
yard stealing all their junk.
Dang!
They ever do find out
we robbed them,
I reckon they gonna whup my
behind till it's flat as yours.
You didn't even go
onto Lipnicki's property.
I'm the one
who got everything.
And quit nigger-lipping
my smoke. Give it here.
Excuse me?
What the hell you just say?
Give me my smoke. What?

You know what.
Girl, you'd better
get out of my face.
You call your friends that.
How I calls my kin
ain't none of your business.
It's a fight! What'd I miss?
I'm sorry.
What's she sorry for?
I think you have something that
belongs to me, my mood ring.
Where's my
puka shell necklace?
I'll see you gets it!
Look, I said I was sorry.
My mama said I don't have
to hang out with nobody
who degrades me that-a-way,
even if they is my best girl.
But I'm gonna let it go
this time.
But you're on probation,
and don't think I'm gonna
forget about it neither.
Now put your eyes back
in your head and let's go.
Wasting all our time.
Lordy, lordy, lordy.
What I have to put up with.
Are you sure
this be the short cut?
Oh, damn it!
No way! Bull-honky, man!
Come on!
This is our territory, man!
We never hawk your ideas!
They ain't gonna move.
How you know?
Hey! I'll race you for it.
Winner gets all.
You any good at running?
I'd sooner die than to lose
a foot race to my brother.
Come on. To the tree.

One, two, three!
Go, Stu!
Go, Lidia!
Oh, damn!
Tie!
Guess we're gonna have to
share it!
No fair!
Us girls got there first,
and we raced for it and tied!
I said we'd try it
and we tried it.
I want
all our stuff back!
Simmer down, now!
All right.
I say y'all try to get along
one more day.
Oh, come on, Dad!
If y'all cannot work together
after that,
then I guess
you are gonna have to
put a little daylight
between yourselves.
Share it on the split.
You boys
can have it in the morning
when the girls'll
be in school.
And in the afternoon you take
off, you let them enjoy it.
And I don't wanna hear about
you raising your fists again.
You got that?
Yes, sir.
You all got that?
Yes, sir.
Yes, sir.
Daddy?
What?
Can I give you a French
twist tonight with Dippity Do?
If I can give you a French

twist with a dip-dilly-dew.
Whose turn is it to help me
with this laundry, Lidia Joanne?
Promise?
Yeah.
I'm coming.
How you doing
these days, Elvadine?
My life be a wreck.
How you been?
Pretty good.
Hey, Elvadine, Amber, come
on, help me with the laundry!
Bye, Mr. Simmons.
Bye, Mr. Simmons.
Good-bye, Elvadine.
Good-bye, Amber.
I'm proud of you for sharing
that fort with your sister.
You treat her good, she'll be in
your corner the rest of your life.
Something happen to your lip?
Got kicked in the face.
By who?
Lipnickis.
They ought to call them
the Lip-kickis.
I think the Lipdickis.
Y'all...
Y'all feuding with them, too?
I hold my temper.
It's just sometimes I feel like I
could wring his scrawny little neck.
Boy, sometimes all it takes
is a split second
to do something you'll regret
the whole rest of your life.
Stuart, sometimes...
"Sometimes" is too much.
Anyhow, got me a job today.
Working for the state.
Get out. Are you serious?
Yes, sir.
Your old grammar school.

I'm the new
custodial engineer.
Hey, Ma! Dad got a
janitoring job at the school!
I heard!
Isn't it wonderful?
It's too bad I graduated.
We could hang out.
That's really boss, Dad.
Well, thank you.
I'll see you later.
Dad?
Yeah?
Better come in
here a minute.
I think it's ready.
Oh, Lidia, I'm...
Honey, I'm working
on the radio.
Come on, Dad.
Come on, you promised.
Sit down.
Oh, Lidia.
I wish you'd...
What're you gonna do to it?
I'm just taking it up.
You're just what?
I'm just taking it up.
Gosh, Dad.
Dad?
Hmm?
How come you and Mom
don't talk no more?
Well, I been gone
a long time, Lidia.
We're just giving each other
a little space right now.
You better start
crowding her, Dad.
Put your arms around the
woman every once in a while,
or she's gonna think
you don't like her no more.
Now, I'm giving you

this advice
'cause I can see you just
don't know what you're doing.
Well, I'm gonna
take that to heart.
Lidia suggested
that I dance with you.
That is if you're still
interested in taking my hand.
I've been waiting on you
to ask for the longest time.
You even got your hair
done up for the occasion.
In all the years
I'd known my mother,
this was the only time I'd ever
seen her cry from happiness.
Then again, maybe it was
just Dad stepping on her toes.
I been working
Amber's railroad
All my living long day
I been working
Amber's railroad
Excuse me, fat girl.
Is it absolutely necessary
that you serenade us?
I'm on a diet,
I hope you know,
'cause I have
a granular condition.
You got
a Hostess Twinkies condition.
Funny, Marsh.
These girls are giving me a
heart attack. Let's 86 them.

Must be 12:

beat it? You heard what Dad said.
What is she talking about?
What did your dad say?

Every day at 12:

walk? I don't think so.

I know so.
Who asked you, blubber butt?
I can go on a diet,
but you'll always be ugly!
I'm gonna kick
your pygmy butt.
This ain't working out. Somebody's
gonna have to be the boss!
Well, let me guess... Could
that somebody possibly be you?
What do you say we go
double or nothing on a dare?
Winner runs the show here,
loser has to follow orders.
So if us girls win, you
guys have to be our slaves?
Stu! No.
What's the dare?
Us guys'll make a list
of junk.
All you gotta do is get
everything on it. Everything!
If so, you're the boss.
If not, you have to do exactly what
we say for the rest of the summer.
You are on.
How we gonna find a stove, a
wading pool or a Barcalounger?
Keep your eyes open
and your mouth shut.
What if that white man
Lipnicki come out and shoot us?
He ain't gonna shoot us. Why you
even think something like that?
'Cause if I was him,
I'd shoot us,
and if I was white,
I'd probably aim for me!
This is all our stuff from the
old house. There's our mantelpiece.
I can't believe they took our
mantelpiece. They probably took everything.
That old thief, Lipnicki.
He doesn't even own this

property, stupid squatter.
Then he steals our stuff
on top of it.
It's Billy Lipnicki!
I knew it was him!
Quiet, Billy,
before you get us all in deep!
Arliss! Leo!
Willard! Ula! Help!
I'm gonna get you!
You're not gonna get away,
you snot-nosed little brat!
Get him before he gets us
all shot dead!
Knock it off. I ain't gonna
hurt you, you wild little goat.
Calm down. If I let you go, you
promise not to scream no more?
Any of you bring any money?
All I got's 10 cent.
Billy, you promise to keep
quiet about us coming here,
and we'll give you
a dime every trip.
Hmm.
I got front!
I got shotgun!
Well, I'm driving!
Think they'll get any of it?
Hell, no.
They're probably at Elvadine's having a back
bend contest or something stupid like that.
This is cool.
All right!
Yeah! Come on!
All right!
All right!
That was cool!
That was great!
What smells so bad?
You could die
of fumigation down here!
Golly!
Could be a cesspool.

Oh, man, it's poison ivy.
One time through here, we'd be
itching till our balls fell off.
There they are.
I told you.
The Lipnickis are coming!
Way to go, Lester!
We ought to teach them and their
slimy buddy Lester Lucket a lesson.
You're not thinking
what I think you're thinking.
They can't see it
from up there.
Come on.
Think it'll work?
It'll be worth it
if it does.
Let's see
if the Lipnickis float.
Come on.
This is our territory now. Get
lost, and leave the trolley.
What isn't your territory?
If I were you, I wouldn't go
down there. It's awful scary.
You ain't us, are you? We can
go down any hill we please.
Well, don't say
I didn't warn you.
Watch this.
This is disgusting,
stinking crap!
Pee-yoo! It smells
like a butt down here!
I'm gonna kick your ass
for this, Simmons!
Take a bath first! That way
we won't smell you coming!
Butt brain!
Oh, no.
Oh, boys!
Oh, boys!
Stove, wading pool,
siding and Barcalounger.

Start building, slaves.
Okay, I got it...
We build it out of their stuff,
and then we'll kick them out.
Can't. We promised.
So what? Everybody here
knows my word ain't no good.
Like I said,
start building, slaves.
And when you get done,
you gotta paint it.
Screw you, man. We're not
doing nothing you say, suckers.
Hey, we had a deal.
Deal's off.
Marsh, come on!
Come on, yourself.
No way am I gonna be
no slave to no girl.
Chet, carry me over here
so I can reach this branch.
I'm out of here.
Hey, they got great stuff!
You guys are seriously bailing?
Does Howdy Doody
have wooden balls?
Welshers!
Who wanted
the boys anyway?
We can have it all
to ourselves.
Amen!
Think you could make any more
noise with that damn car of yours?
Sorry about that,
Mrs. Higgins.
And quit trying to look through
my dress and see my nipples.
Hi, hon.
How was your day?
Honey?
They let me go
from that job today.
What? Why?

It hasn't even been a week.
Some way or another they found out
I spent time in that mental hospital.
Did you tell them
you went into that hospital
voluntary, for nightmares?
It's nothing personal,
they said.
Law says you can't work
for the city or state
within the vicinity
of children
if you've spent time in a mental
hospital or corrective institution.
It's on account of our government
you wound up in that place.
And now they're
turning you down for work
like you're some kind
of criminal?
What is that?
We still got my jobs, and
we can get food stamps and...
Food stamps?
God bless America. They...
They give you a handout
before they give you a job.
Don't tell the kids
just yet.
They gonna find out.
I know.
'Cause I'm gonna tell them.
Just not till
I get myself up again.
Okay.
Just don't want them getting
the idea the world's against us.
You know, my father,
he used to say,
"Nothing you ever do in this
lifetime is gonna make a difference. "
Wouldn't you know, Lois, out of all
the remarks anybody ever said to me,
that's the one I held on to.

Maybe that's why I joined up.
A chance to do something good
when they was drafting.
Then I let my best friend die
'cause I didn't have
enough guts to stand up...
Don't do this
to yourself, Stephen.
You done the only thing
you knew.
Well, I don't want
our kids growing up thinking
they're powerless
'cause of me!
Everything they do in this
world has a consequence.
Our children
still believe in miracles,
they still believe
anything's possible.
As long as they believe like
that, they're gonna be something.
They're gonna make
a difference in this world.
And that means
I made a difference.
I'm gonna get a job.
I'll get one.
I need five men!
How about me, boss?
You, with the suspenders.
You with the denim,
you with the thermos jug.
He could use some help,
you guys.
Child, it is too hot to work.
I might catch me
a stroke out here.
No, no, no, no
Don't you cry
We can't lift this.
Come on.
We almost got it. Come on.
All right,

let's try this one more time.
I can't lift that.
Poor son of a gun.
He wants to
build that place so bad,
he's willing to put up
with anything.
One, two, three!
Look how
they got him sweating.
Am I lying or what? It brings
tears to a man's eyes to see.
You guys wanted that up there,
then why didn't you ask me?
Put that thing up there.
That the way you ask me? Ain't
you heard the word "please"?
Please?
Get out of my way,
lightweight.
You're gonna rise
Rise with the sun
Let's go.
Wait a minute. Wait.
The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
Hallelujah!
Wow!
Way to go!
I knew you could do it!
Come on, Marsh!
Way to go!
How'd you do that?
I don't get it.
Well,
she's for sale, Stuart.
Been repossessed.
Found out today bank's had
her on the market 14 months.
Nobody's interested,
on account of she's so
close to the train tracks.
Tragic, isn't it?
Dad, nobody wants it

'cause she's a wreck.
Why, how dare you?
Paint's chipping off the
walls, cracked windows...
Lipstick and rouge, that's all
that is. Lipstick and rouge.
This here's a fine old girl, you
just gotta look a little deeper.
She's got good pipes,
sound foundation.
She gonna keep us cool in the
summer, keep us warm in the winter,
give us clean water to drink. I
mean through the pipes, not the roof.
Yeah, but Dad... Listen
to that water pressure.
Brings tears to my eyes.
Dad, you've gone
stark raving mad.
Mmm. She's speakin' to me.
Yeah? What's she saying?
"You can buy me. "
Did she say
where to get the money?
No. She did not
mention that.
Come here,
I want to show you something.
I figure in there's
gonna be your room.
Dad.
It's the biggest room
I ever seen.
It is, isn't it?
Upstairs there's a vanity
in the master suite.
Yeah? How do you know?
'Cause last time I was here, I
climbed up a tree, snuck a peek.
Your mama's always wanted
her very own vanity.
I'm gonna build her a French potty
in here. You know, one of them bidets?
"Walter Crouly Home. "

Next owner

is none other than...

Us.

Stu...

It's gonna take a good while before I can
get enough money together to get this place.

I'd like to surprise your mom.

You think...

You think maybe we could keep
this whole thing under our hats?

I won't tell a soul.

Good. Good.

Are we just pretending
we're gonna buy this place?

We're hoping, son.

So long as we got hope,
there's always a chance.

All right, let's be picking
them up and putting them down.

Hey, son!

That man over there says you
know something about a mining job.

Go to hell.

Excuse me? Did I...

Did I say something?

Just go on and get your
jollies off of somebody else.

All right, I'm tired of all
y'all making fun about my car!

First shot I get at a decent
job, and my car blows up.

I'm tired of people making fun
of my car, too, but it runs.

It does, huh?

When I got money
to put gas in her, she does.

If you got a line
on a good job, I got a car.

Maybe we should have dinner
tonight at my house, discuss it.

What you having?

How come all we ever eat
is potatoes anymore?

We eat mashed potatoes, fried

potatoes, baked potatoes.
Hey, everybody!
Hey, Dad.
Hi.
Meet my new friend
Moe Henry.
Hi, everybody.
You want something to eat?
Yes, ma'am.
There's not much.
Moe and me got hired on
as miners this afternoon.
Hey! Good job, Dad!
Problem is, if I don't
show up tomorrow morning,
foreman's gonna give my
position to someone else.
Moe knows how to get me
a card tonight, right?
That's right.
The problem is,
it's gonna cost 50 smackers.
\$50 for a union card?
Where you gonna
get that?
Tell them about the dollar.
If I get the card,
Moe's gonna ride to work
with me, pay me \$1 every day.
That's right! For gas!
Lois, it pays 10 times
what I'm making now.
Got the first installment
right here!
Why do you think
that is, Stephen?
Don't fight me
on this, honey.
Hey, Daddy, I got five and
some change if you need it.
Not here, not now.
I believe I got \$17.
\$17 plus this,
what Moe had, that's \$18.

I have 800 Coke bottles
you can have.
That should give you
about \$35, \$40 at least.
Mama, I thought you was
saving that money for a...
Special occasion? That is exactly
right. That is what this is.
Your daddy just landed the best job of
his life. Congratulations, Stephen, Moe.
Thank you, Mrs. Simmons.
We'd better run before
that place closes. Moe.
Can I come with you?
Sure!
It's near 50 miles
to that marble mine.
Think Flossie'll make it, Dad?
It took you six months
to save that.
Now he's gonna go
blow it on a job
he'll probably lose
inside the first week.
Come outside.
Come on, Flossie,
don't fail me now.
She busted again.
Mmm-hmm.
Lidia Simmons,
what is the matter?
It's you.
You don't got good shoes,
you hardly ever eat anything,
you work all the time.
This money was gonna be
a new chance for you.
Why you always giving
your chances away?
Now, listen here...
All your dad has ever done is fought to
make this world a better place for us.
Yes, he struggles. Yes, he has
had dirt kicked in his face.

All the more reason
he needs our help.
Now, you don't wanna help him,
that's okay.
You gotta
follow your instincts.
But I will not listen
to you knock him.
He's part of me.
You cut him down,
you're cutting me down.
You're cutting down yourself.
Dad?
Would you like to
go back to bed?
What are you doing up
this late, Pocahontas?
Well...
I dreamt I had to pee, and
then I woke up and it was real.
Dad, Stu says them dreams
give you a nervous breakdown,
and that's how come
you had to go away.
Are you going away again?
I ain't going nowhere
you can't come.
You believe in angels?
Sure.
Why?
Don't you believe
in anything you can't see?
No. So do you think
I have a guardian angel?
Lidia, I bet
you got a dozen of them.
Like who, for example?
Well, I bet your grandfather's
watching over you.
Well, I thought you said
he was an alcoholic.
Lidia, it's... Lidia, it's
Dad, listen,
when you get old and die, you'd

better fire whoever's got my case
and take over
the job yourself.
I'll tell you what.
When the Lord calls me home, I'll
just ask Him about that. Okay?
But right now I think we both
ought to be hitting the sack, hon.
Look here, I cut my arm.
That makes 31 scars.
I must got more scars
than you now.
Hell you do.
I got more scars
than Frankenstein.
Put your arm up here
next to mine.
Come this-a-way.
Them cigar burns
you give yourself don't
count. Gotta be an accident.
I'm itching
like a wet dog.
You smell like one, too.
Shut up.
Orbiting Pluto, Billy?
No.
We never get
to do nothing good.
I hate this town, I hate these
ugly clothes, ugly shoes...
Why don't you just say you hate
everything under the universe
and give our ears a break?
She's gotta recite the whole
encyclopedia of hates every damn day.
It's clear.
You done good by us,
Billy boy.
Thanks.
People said
Billy Lipnicki was nuts
and saw visions
and talked to the spirits.

The only thing that I knew
is that he loved dimes.
But what I didn't know at the
time was that, that very same day,
my father had pulled out
his only decent shirt,
ironed it perfectly and put
his tie on to look respectable
so he could buy us a new house
at the county auction.
Flossie stall again, Dad?
What the hell's the matter
with you? Can't you drive?
Come on, Flossie.
Get that piece of junk
off the road!
I'm a-gonna raise a fuss
and I'm gonna raise a holler
Go around him, stupid!
Did she stall again, Dad?
Yes.
What's the matter with you?
Move it!
He's just doing it
to spite you!
That's why he cut you off!
Yeah! Move it!
What the hell?
Dad, he's hitting our car!
I see that.
Hit him again, Dad!
Do something!
What do you want I should do,
go stand between the bumper?
Quit hitting our car, you big,
fat son of a bitch!
Son, don't...
Don't say that.
What the hell'd you say to me?
That's the way you teach your
kids, to back-talk adults?
Well, no,
but I think he seen you slamming
against our car like that, he got...

He got a little emotional.
Dad, he tricked us
into falling into poison ivy!
Yeah, I got dung
all over me 'cause of him!
You throw my kid
in a cesspool?
No!
Liar, liar, pants on fire,
hanging from a telephone wire!
You lying to me, son? You better
don't catch yourself lying to me!
Don't let him talk to
you that way! He's a liar!
Hit him, Dad!
Let's let this go.
Come on, Dad!
Seems like our kids
are gonna live.
Show him who's boss!
Doesn't look like there's any
damage to our fine automobiles.
You being smart with me?
If you looking for a fight,
I'll fight you right now.
He couldn't beat himself
out of a wet paper bag.
I don't believe
in fighting.
I'll bet you don't. You
yellow-tailed, chicken-livered wussy.
Go, Dad! Whoo!
Tell him like it is!
Go, Dad! Way to tell him!
Beat him up, Dad!
Way to go, Dad!
At least he don't smell
like a drunken skunk!
I ought to break your neck,
you little shithead!
Dad! Dad!
Afraid I can't allow you
to put your hands on my son.
You don't see me

correcting your children.
I don't mind so much you plowing
into my car and calling me names,
but you go after my child,
you're gonna push a button on me,
and then I'm gonna
lose control and kill you.
Now, apologize to my son.
I apologize.
That's mighty kind of you.
My son has something
to tell you.
Apologize
to Mr. Lipnicki, Stu.
Tell him you're sorry
for insulting him.
Sorry, Mr. Lipnicki.
It's all over now.
Let's get out of here!
You're gonna be in trouble.
For what?
Taking stuff off
the Lipnickis' yard.
It just so happens
I got permission.
I don't believe you.
'Cause you'd say anything. 'Cause
you know I'm gonna tell on you,
and when they find out,
they're gonna kick your ass.
Don't say nothing, Lester.
Name me one reason
why I shouldn't.
You're going to summer
school again, aren't you?
So?
If you keep your big, fat mouth
closed, I'll do all your homework.
First time I get less
than a "B," I'm telling.
Either way, I got you.
Well, did you put
your best foot forward?
We're trying to.

You know, bank tries not
to encourage the cheapskates
by suggesting
an opening offer of \$5,000.
Some of these people been writing
us checks for, oh, a nickel.
It's really causing some
problems around here.
Well, my check ain't
for nowheres near \$5,000.
You reckon
I'd still have a chance?
Neighbor, I'd like to say yeah,
but I don't wanna lie to you.
Haven't you ever considered
buying a mobile home?
Sign says, "No minimum bid. "
Yes, sir, it does.
I really like
the white house the best.
You wanna kiss it
for added luck?
Good luck to you.
What say we go get your mom and
your sister some cotton candy?
All right.
You stay right there.
Can I get two, please?
Dad?
Dad?
Dad!
Dad!
Hey, punk!
Don't you know you can't buy
no houses with food stamps?
No, Willard,
his daddy has a job.
Remember we seen him plucking
spuds out in the field?
Then again, maybe he was just
thieving them taters for supper.
Hey!
That's enough!
I hate them kids!

All right.
Go on. Go on.
Get on with your business.
I guess this is all my fault.
If I can't control myself,
how I expect you to?
Hey, trespasser! I know of a
house your daddy could afford.
Course, couple of robins
living in it now.
Get in the car.
I hope you know them're the
kids that just beat me up.
I know who they are, son.
Why'd you give them Mom
and Lidia's cotton candy?
'Cause it looked like they hadn't
been given nothing in a long time.
My goodness, you're doing
a beautiful job on that.
Where you getting
all the stuff?
I don't know. Lidia gets it.
Stu...
Son, have you tried
talking to them Lipnickis?
It's self defense, Dad!
You went to war to fight for
people you didn't even know!
Yes, I did! Because I
wanted to help people.
But in the end, I killed
more people than I saved.
I lost more friends than I
ever made before or since.
I lost my dignity, I lost my
house, I about lost my family.
None of that
was your fault, Dad.
You done the right thing,
going to war.
Stu,
I think it's time I finished
telling you about them nightmares.

Aw, Dad.
Just listen!
I started to tell you
that I had this friend Dodge.
We'd gone through
boot camp together.
Swore we'd stick
by one another, come what may.
The sunshine of your love
I've been waiting...
There was an explosion
and I could hear him.
Stephen!
It was Dodge.
He was calling my name.
Stephen!
Stephen!
He was hurt.
We were all hurt.
You and me, man.
You and me.
You and me, man. We're getting our
asses on the next bus out of here!
You just hold on!
I carried him.
I swear I carried him
as far as I could.
You and me, man. You and
me, man. You and me, man.
We got to that helicopter just as...
Just as the enemy was coming in.
Leave him! Just you!
Everybody in the company
had died, it was just...
It was just me and Dodge.
Come on, let's go!
I was scared out of my mind.
Craft's too heavy! We can
take one man, that's it!
He's gonna be all right!
We can't lift off
with any more than one!
Let's just give it a try!
No! Enemy's coming in, man!

You gotta make a decision!
I can't leave him!
It's your choice, man.
It's one of you
or none of you.
I can't leave him.
You understand?
We're not the enemy!
Dodge was so bad off,
he didn't know from nothing.
And I was so scared
of being left behind that I...
I laid my best friend down on the
ground and told him to go with God.
He let go of my hand,
then he just closed his eyes.
I got inside of that
helicopter and I flew away.
Two days later,
my country
presented me with a Purple Heart
and a Bronze Star for bravery.
Why didn't you
make them take him, Dad?
'Cause I lost my mind.
Fighting had consumed us,
and we'd all gone nuts.
And that's what
my struggle's been about.
All these years.
Trying to forgive myself,
pardon my country.
I can't tell you
never to fight, Stu.
But if you wanna know
what I think...
I think the only thing that keeps
people truly safe and happy is love.
I think... I think that's
where men get their courage.
That's where countries
get their strength.
And that's where God
grants us Her miracles.

And in the absence of love,
Stuart, there is nothing,
nothing in this world
worth fighting for.
I'll try to work it out with
the Lipnickis, all right?
I know you will.
I know you will. You're...
I love you.
I love you, too, Dad.
You're my son.
Good morning,
girls and boys.
My name is Miss Strapford.
Now, this summer,
we're gonna be familiarizing
ourselves with what I believe
is just the finest book
ever come into print.
It is entitled, Why My Life
Is Like a Bowl of Cherries.
Now, doesn't that title
just give you a thrill?
Excuse me, darling.
When the teacher is speaking, the
polite thing for girls and boys to do
is to shut their little mouths
and listen, you understand?
Yes, ma'am.
Now, once we
are finished with this book,
we are gonna be devoting our
time to writing our memoirs.
This is where you will
indicate to me why your life...
Is like a bowl of cherries.
Let's get this class
into some sort of order.
Son, you're a tall boy.
Why don't you swap seats with that
little girl back there in the plaid?
Go on. Pick up your
stuff and move on back.
And you,

with the hearing aid!
Why don't you have
a seat back there?
Just crank up
that little thing of yours.
And, you, sweetheart, why
don't you have a seat up here?
Oh, my, you're a big girl.
I'm sure you'll see just fine
in the rear aisle. Go on.
And you, little girl,
why don't you have a seat
in the back with your friend?
Now, isn't this much better?
Nigger lover.
Shut up!
Colored girl, didn't I
just tell you to hush up?
I wasn't saying nothing.
Well, now, I distinctly
heard you whispering.
Stand up and tell the class
what was so important that
you had to interrupt me again.
I already told you.
I wasn't saying nothing.
I know you did.
And I wanna hear what it was.
We're all waiting.
She already told you.
I think
she can speak for herself.
All right. I'll tell you.
I was saying, "Elvadine,
what you gots to write about?
"Been in the sixth grade your
whole good-for-nothing life.
"Ain't got no daddy.
"Never goes anywhere
but where your feets take you.
"Onliest money ever belonged
to you in the whole world
"was \$20 you got yourself
in a birthday card

"from your uncle last year. "
But it really wasn't
for my birthday, really.
It was for
laying over his lap,
letting him spank me
with my underpants down.
Now here you come along, shoving
me in the back of the room
where I's can't even see good,
which means I probably not gonna
graduate this summer neither.
Just 'cause you read
how some white man say life
be like a bowl of cherries,
I gots to come up with
something to fit his saying.
Well, fine. I'll just write
down how happy I'm gonna be
to get 20 more dollars
on my birthday.
Never mind what he got
planned for me this year.
And I'm gonna write how maybe
the new man my mama's seeing
might stop drinking
and treat me nice.
And maybe he gonna adopt me
and take us off the welfare.
And at the end,
I'm gonna be sure and put,
"Life sure is
a bowl full of cherries. "
But to tell you the truth,
Miss Strapford,
I think you and that book
and this whole class
be a bowl full of shit!
Go to the principal's office.
Now.
Didn't you hear a damn word
she said?
Excuse me?
She told you the best truth

she knows.
And you don't got no right to put
her out or call her a liar neither.
My mama says
folks who treat people bad
only do it because
they're ignorant.
So I'm gonna help you.
She's gonna sit up front
where she can see from now on.
She ain't gonna go by
"colored girl" no more neither.
You're gonna learn her name.
I don't know about you, but
all my friends have names.
And this just so happens
to be my best friend.
Her name is Elvadine.
My daughter knows the difference
between cruelty and insensitivity.
So I wrote my memoirs
for Miss Strapford.
And the summer
just drifted on by.
Dad got his union card
and a job pumping water
out of an abandoned portion
of the Foothill Marble Mine,
two counties north of us.
It was a good job 'cause there was
three million gallons of water to pump.
I hear they ain't been working
in this section of the mine
for 20 years now.
It's kind of spooky,
really.
Let me get it.
What was that?
I don't know.
Moe!
Help!
I can't move.
All right, let me see.
Stephen?

Am I all right?
All right, this is not
gonna feel too good.
No, no, Stephen.
Stephen, it ain't no use.
Ain't no use. Best go.
Get out of here while you can.
You know I can't do that.
You still owe me \$3
for gasoline.
I want you to know,
if I gotta break your leg into 10
pieces, I'm taking you out of here.
Oh, thanks. That makes me
feel a whole lot better.
Third time's
the charmer.
Grit your teeth
and get ready to swim.
All right, don't move
back there. Keep apace.
Move them back,
move them back.
My name is Lois Simmons.
Stephen Simmons is my husband.
Is he all right?
I don't know. I hope so.
Move back!
Get out of the way.
Move over!
Moe. Moe!
Oh, my God! What happened?
Stu?
He saved my life.
Your daddy saved my life.
Hey! Dad!
Dad, what happened?
Let me see him.
Get back. We're in a
hurry. You all right?
Get back, son.
Dad! Dad! No!
Dad!
Dad!

Dad!
Is he gonna live?
I've heard of others like
him that have pulled through,
but I gotta tell you,
what's keeping him alive hasn't
a thing to do with medicine.
He's got massive
thoracic injuries,
one of his lungs
is collapsed,
he's hemorrhaging, his
heart's bruised awful bad.
Dad.
Oh, Dad.
They say
he should've died instantly.
They didn't know my dad.
And he hung on.
Stu never said much
about that day.
He just went straight over to the
tree house and started in on it.
For the rest of that day
and most of the night,
he kept himself busier than a
one-legged man in a butt-kicking contest.
I guess around dawn,
Stu finally passed out.
Meanwhile,
little John D. Rockefeller
just kept on
hoarding his loot,
biding his time till he
seen a chance to spend it.
Do you have a bag?
And spend it he did.
Arliss! Leo! Willard!
Get your good-for-nothing
carcasses over here!
Look at him, every last
one of you, look at him!
He can't even move,
for Christ's sake!

What's the matter with him?
Well, now, you tell me!
I don't know.
Ice cream coma?
He's your goddamned brother!
You're supposed to take care of him!
If your mama could see
how you's treating him,
she'd come down from heaven
and kill every last one of us!
I ought to beat the hell
out of every one of you
for letting him wallow
in the dirt like that!
Now, get him cleaned up
before the ants carry him off!
And from now on, if any of you
leave this yard without him,
it's gonna be on a stretcher!
Get up! I almost got my
ears torn off, stupid idiot!
I wish
we'd never even had you.
Where'd you get that,
anyhow?
Big airplane just dropped
them out of the sky.
You don't honest up, Billy, we're
gonna scrub you down with lipstick
so everyone thinks you got
diaper rash, how about it?
Nuh-uh!
Yes-huh!
After that, we're gonna shave
your head bald as a witch's tit.
I ain't gonna look
like no witch's tit.
You will
if you don't tell us.
You can cut off every hair on
my head, but I ain't telling you
Oh, my God!
The Lipnickis are coming!
Great!

That makes for a perfect day.
What the hell
they doing here?
Hey, did you guys
tell them about this place?
Of course not!
No way, man!
I gots to go home.
My mom gots to do my hair.
See you, Lid.
Stu?
What?
I was gonna tell you.
Tell me what?
What'd you do, Lidia?
I mentioned to the little kid Lipnicki
Billy that we was building a fort.
He ain't even allowed
off his property.
How could
you be talking to him?
What?
All the junk
come from the Lipnickis' yard.
Oh, no!
No! Oh, man, I warned you, Stu!
A walking, talking broadcast
station, that's what she is!
Oh, man, I fold.
They're halfway across
the lot. What are we doing?
Stall them a minute.
I gotta think.
Simmons!
Simmons, you better
get your butt down here!
Stu, it's kind of important
you come out here now!
I admit it.
I shouldn't have been there.
Yeah.
So I screwed up.
Yeah.
All right, let's not make

a big thing out of this.
So, now what?
I don't know. I'm not going
out there to fight them.
Oh, Stu!
You're not thinking
of handing it all back?
This is our house! Maybe the
only one we're ever gonna have.
Don't you think
we ought to fight for it?
Don't you recall a damn thing
Daddy's taught us?
He finds out we been fighting,
he's gonna be real disappointed.
Well, maybe
this ain't the time.
But haven't you considered that
maybe he's never gonna find out?
He's lying in that hospital, on
machines that're breathing for him.
Don't you say
one more word!
You just better not talk
like that no more!
He's gonna be fine!
He's always fine!
Okay, Stu, I'm sorry.
Name one time
he didn't turn out fine.
You're right. I'm sorry.
I... I didn't
mean that, really.
We'll figure another way,
that's all. No fighting.
Oh, Stu!
I think you ought to join us out
here on the patio right quick!
Stu! Oh, Stu!
Come here, twerps!
Ow! Let go my ear!
Ow!
Shut your face, freckles!
Stuart Simmons,

meet Arliss Lipnicki again.
Billy there says you all been
mooching of'n our property.
This is our stuff. Your daddy
took it from our old house.
Seen bird houses
built better than this.
Probably fall to pieces
in the first good wind.
Bitching lock.
Where'd you get it?
It's my dad's.
Come from the war.
Come on, give it back.
Ah, goody gumdrops. I think I'll
just take it home and play with it.
Now, come on. Give it back.
That there's our stove,
tell you that right now.
Them boards and rusty nails
is our'n, too.
Well, if it's just them
few things,
we'll dismantle them
and give them back.
Stu?
Trespasser wants to give
us back our ruined boards
with 10 million scratches
and dog piss stains.
Afraid I'm gonna have
to lay claim to this here
piece of crap fort.
Hell, you don't
need to claim it.
You guys can come
visit any time.
Yeah!
Shut up, Billy,
you little dip.
Hey, cool fort!
God, what the hell
did they do to your head?
Same thing

I'm gonna do to you!
You got five seconds to
tell me an idea I like better
than seizing this place
for our own.
Four, three, two.
We'll dare you for it.
Cool, Arliss! A dare!
What kind of dare?
Any kind you say.
But if we win,
we keep the fort.
If you lose?
It's yours. Lock and key.
It's fine by us.
See you at the quarry.
If we win, do we get to own
the fort and say who's in it?
That's what we get to do.
If I got the key,
I'd have it be everyone's
and we'd have a big party with
Ring Dings, Little Debbies,
Rocket Pops
and Yoo-hoos and...
Shut up, Billy,
you little broken record!
Thank you, now I'm starving.
And I mean starving.
God!
I'm scared.
Hold on, asshole!
I am holding on!
Water's calm now, but she gets
real ugly when she empties.
Oh, man.
You sure
you swum down there?
You ain't psyching me out,
are you?
I told you I did.
Man!
What are them noises?
It's draining, I guess.

It'll stop sooner or later.
Stu, let's nix on this.
We can find another lot.
Look, it's real simple.
You and Leo's gonna swim to
the other side and tag it.
First one back to the ladder claims all.
Either side yellow-bellies,
it's a forfeit.
Y'all got that?
Oh, my God! What is that?
There ain't no way
across here.
Well, we'll find out,
won't we?
What's going on?
You never been down here,
have you?
You swimming across here
is a bunch of dick.
It ain't as bad as it looks.
Simmons ain't afraid
to swim it.
That moron's crazier
than you.
You swim it!
Fine! I will!
Willard, go down there.
I ain't going down there.
Don't you knuckle on me. You
want them to think we's chicken?
They can think whatever they
like, I ain't going down there.
Ebb?
Why? You chicken, big fellow?
Ula?
No way!
Hey, where'd Leo go?
You ready?
On your marks, get set...
Hold on. Look here.
I'm gonna give you
one last chance to back out.
Give me the word, and we'll

think up a different deal.
For your sake.
You forfeit?
Lidia, count us down.
On your marks.
You know there ain't no way.
Get set. Go.
You psycho?
Stu! Stu, come on!
You're gonna make it, Stu!
You're halfway there!
Stu, come on!
Don't get in the middle!
Stay out of the middle!
Come on, Stu, swim!
Stu! Come on, please, Stu!
Stu, come on,
you can make it, Stu!
Swim!
Swim, Stu!
Come on, swim!
Come on, Stu!
You can make it, Stu!
Come on, Stu! Stu!
Stu! Stu, come on!
Come on, Stu!
You can make it. Come on!
I can't believe
that lunatic made it across!
I taught him
how to swim like that.
Boy, I psyched you out.
You thought we was really
gonna swim it. What a cretin.
Hey! The fort's ours!
Have it. We never wanted your
cruddy old fort in the first place.
I told you I'd get you
through this mess.
Hey, the lock.
Go get it yourself, why
don't you. I dare you.
Come on, Stu, forget the key.
We got the fort.

Come on, Billy.
She's right.
Let's get out of here
before somebody gets hurt.
So we deposited Billy on firm
ground and went to visit Dad again.
Stu thought he looked better.
Elvadine said a prayer for him.
I'm here, honey.
Do you even know who I am?
Lois.
Stephen.
That's me.
That's me.
Hey, Mom!
Stuart!
Lidia. Y'all are to
come in here now.
Something wrong? Ma?
Your daddy just died.
No.
No.
It wasn't painful.
His heart
just quit pumping.
He's gonna be okay. He
cannot die. He's on machines.
Son, they took him off.
Well, tell them
to put him back on!
Honey, he's gone.
He's... They can't now.
I'm sorry.
Why'd they take him off, Ma?
Because it cost too much?
No.
You understand, don't you?
I understand that everybody
just give up on him!
Nothing could've kept
your father away from you,
given he had a choice.
I bet he's up there right now
in heaven, looking down on us.

He's gonna be able to look out
for us the rest of our lives.
Well, I sure as hell hope he does
a better job than when he was alive.
Don't say that, Stu!
Why not? You thought
he was a deadbeat.
I never said that. For all's I
know, he could've been an angel.
Maybe he's looking down
on us now.
Maybe he died in that war and God
sent him back for one last visit.
For what?
To get our hopes up?
To promise us
he'd stay forever?
And we's gonna have
a big house
with a tire swing,
a vanity and a picket fence?
And then just leave? Again?
What the hell kind of
loused-up angel is that?
He didn't mean
to leave, honey.
No, he didn't mean it. I think
God just took him on home.
We're his home, Ma!
The stupid Lord
can have him later.
Why? Why does God
take everything, Ma?
Bad enough our house
and all our things.
Why'd he have to
take my daddy?
What did I do so wrong that
he'd have to take my daddy?
Oh, no,
you didn't do nothing.
He could've took anybody.
Charles Manson,
super-old people already

been around 100 years.
My dad was only 34 years old.
I needed him more than
you, God! I needed him more!
Come here.
No!
Hang on.
I want him back, Mama.
We all do. We do.
No, Stu!
Stu...
They showed up
this afternoon
before we could get
all our ammo done.
Now they're wasting
half my brother's fireworks.
How's your dad?
He died.
Aw, Stu.
Is there anything
we can do for you?
What if Dad's watching?
Dad's dead.
What if he knows
what we're doing?
Dad's gone, Lidia.
Here's the real stuff.
Smoke bombs.
Camouflage paint.
Uniforms.
Take what you want, guys.
Oh, man! Stu!
Hurry, hurry, hurry!
Close it! Hurry!
Get them off!
Stinging me!
Ow!
Get them off!
Eat that, sucker.
You get out of my tree and
stay out, and nobody gets hurt!
But if you come back,
all bets are off!

Come back here!
Here's one! Let's clobber him! Run!
Regroup!
Keep running.
That's what you do best.
You yellow-bellied chickens!
Oh, my God!
Lidia, get out of there!
Come on!
Help me save the fort.
Oh, no.
Wait.
What're you doing?
Putting out another fire.
Arliss, why're you
doing that?
Why don't everyone
share the fort?
For the last time,
get lost, you little twerp.
God!
Ula Lipnicki!
All them times you knocked out
my teeth, I'm gonna show you now!
Get away from my friend!
You knocked out my tooth.
You knocked out another
front tooth, you douche bag.
We thought if we hit
them hard the first time,
they would surrender
and the fighting would end.
But it didn't.
It just got worse and worse.
And I guess somewhere along the
way, we all sort of lost our minds.
It's just a shot away
Just-a, just a shot away
Rape, murder
It's just a shot away
You sick, crazy bastard!
It's just a shot away
See you later, alligator.
I'll get you, Ebb!

I'm gonna kick your scrawny little
butt from here to kingdom come!
Army tags!
Ow!
Got her!
You and me, man.
You and me, man.
You and me, man.
Oh, my God.
Billy, don't move!
Stay there! Billy!
Hey!
Forget the key, Billy. The fort's
gone. Just stay where you are.
The planks are rotted.
Don't move a muscle.
Hold still now, Billy.
I'm gonna get you.
Billy! Is that you,
you Dumb Dora?
Yeah!
Hold on!
Don't do nothing stupid.
I just came
to grab the key.
It's okay now.
I got you.
I'm a-scared!
It's okay, I tell you.
Let go.
Don't be mad at me.
Give me your hand.
Give me your hand.
Billy!
Damn it, Billy!
Help!
Grab onto something!
Come on, you can make it!
Come on, Billy, reach!
Hang on, Billy! It's
gotta stop draining soon.
He's heading for the drain!
Get him!
Billy!

He's stuck in the drain!
Yank him off!
Get him, get him!
Hurry!
Yank him off the drain!
Billy!
We're coming now! Grab him!
Grab him!
Oh, no. He ain't breathing.
He ain't breathing!
Come on, Billy! Help me now.
Take a breath. Come on, wake
up! Damn it, Billy, fight it!
Fight it! Listen to me.
I'm talking to you.
Come on! Come on!
Live, Billy.
Breathe!
Please, God, breathe!
Stop it, you'll hurt him!
It ain't no use.
He ain't taking air.
Don't you listen
to them, Billy.
We're gonna pull through
this now, you and me.
Wake up! Come on, you
gotta live. You gotta live!
You gotta!
Don't hurt him.
Just let him be.
No! You gotta
give him a chance.
Come on, Billy,
take a breath!
My daddy says people can do
anything they have a mind to
as long as
they believe they can.
Please, God, let him breathe!
You took my dad. Don't take
Billy. He's just a little kid.
You gotta wake up now.
You gotta live!

Come on, breathe! Breathe!
Don't quit now, Billy!
Will somebody please help me?
I will.
You know
what you're doing?
I sure hope so.
Wake up now, Billy.
Nobody's gonna be mad at you.
You did the best you could.
Come on, you're a real-life hero.
Come on, wake up, Billy!
He woke up.
You know, I saw an angel.
A real one.
He was holding onto my hand.
And I was gonna
live in his kingdom.
He said I must come back
and take care of my daddy.
And he looked like you,
but only bigger.
Come on, Billy.
Let's go home.
These were Dad's.
What are you thinking?
If Dad's watching,
he can go now.
He is watching.
From that day on,
the Lipnickis didn't hang
around the quarry no more.
We didn't see much of them, except
for Billy, who kind of adopted us all.
The guys and us started to rebuild
the fort, but after a few days,
we all got kind of
disinterested, and give up.
Now Stu and his friends
mainly hang out at the theater
so as to
try and pick up babes.
Mama said
Daddy was at peace finally,

that he wasn't suffering
no more.

Then a few weeks later,
a visitor came to see us.
Can I help you?

Oh.

Well, good afternoon, ma'am.
My name is John Ray Wilkens.
I'm with
the Clairville Auction House.

Yes.

Well, about six weeks ago,
your husband put down a bid
on one of our
bank-owned properties.

We tried to call y'all, but
I guess the phone's been down.

Things been
a little tight.

Yeah, well, anyway,
your husband put a
down-payment bid of \$432.

Well, thanks for returning the
check. We could sure use the money.

No, ma'am,

I'm not returning the check.

You see, the bank took on too
many of these failed mortgages,
and if they don't start getting
rid of some of these properties,
they're gonna be
bankrupt themselves.

So, the bank accepted
your husband's offer,
being that it was
the only one they got.

Are you telling me
Stephen bought us a house?

Yes, ma'am.

Lipstick and rouge, Ma.

Don't I know!

So, I guess these memoirs are about us
getting a home
of our own,

but they're also about learning
what's worth fighting for.
My daddy once said
of fighting,
"We are meant for better
things, you and I."
And these days whenever
I'm ready to belt someone
who's got my dander up,
I hear him whisper
those words in my ear.
My mama says that people's
lives are like tapestries.
The color and the beauty
of the designs
depend all
on the people you know,
the things you've learned.
What I learned this summer
is that no matter how much
people think they understand war,
war will never
understand people.
It's like a big machine that don't
nobody really know how to work.
Once it gets out of hand,
winds up
wrecking all the things
you thought
you was fighting for,
and a whole bunch of other good
things you sort of forgot you had.
I learned this summer
that my brother was right.
My daddy's the wisest man
I've ever known.
And that no matter
what anybody tells you,
with God's help,
human beings can do anything.
God! Look at it!
Come on.