

*Excerpt from*  
*“No Time For Sergeants”*

CORPORAL #2. OK—Stockdale—Psychiatrist.

KING. (*Crosses Ben to Will's L.*) Oh, Lord. Now, Will, listen carefully. The psychiatrist test is one I couldn't get the questions for because there ain't any. The doctor just asks you whatever pops into his head. (*Crosses back R.*) So just keep your wits about you.

WILL. (*Crosses to Ben.*) I'll try. Maybe I can get a transfer too, huh, Ben?

KING. (*Crosses back L.*) He'll just ask you stuff like “What do you dream?”

WILL. (*Still on Ben.*) Okay. (*Touches Ben. To Ben.*) Maybe he'll give me a transfer too, Ben?

BEN. Yeah, sure.

CORPORAL. Stockdale!

KING. (*Crosses R.*) He's coming. Safest thing, I guess, is to say you never dream at all.

WILL. See you later, Ben. (*Exits off L. into Psychiatrist's office.*)

KING. No dreams. (*Crosses L. Nervously pacing.*) Oh, jeez.

BEN. Do you think he can?

KING. (*Irritably.*) Can what?

BEN. Get transferred too? Maybe you could talk to the doctor.

KING. Listen! Don't you complicate things.

BEN. I just wish Will was goin' too. I mean it'd be more fun. . . .

KING. Listen—Whitledge, you take care of yourself. I'll take care of him. (*Pacing.*)

BEN. OK, OK. (*Ben and King go offstage. LIGHTS FADE OUT in hallway and COME UP in Psychiatrist's office. Travellers open part way, and Psychiatrist's office is revealed at C.—this can be the unit used as King's room and Manual Dexterity room, redressed. A desk and two chairs. Psychiatrist signs and stamps a paper before him, then takes form from Will seated next to desk. Psychiatrist looks at form, looks at Will. A moment of silence.*)

WILL. I never have no dreams at all.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*A pause, he looks carefully at Will.*) Where you from, Stockdale?

WILL. Georgia.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Watching for reaction.*) That's . . . not much of a state, is it?

WILL. Well . . . I don't live all over the state. I just live in this one little place in it.

PSYCHIATRIST. That's where "Tobacco Road" is, Georgia.

WILL. Not around my section. (*Pause.*) Maybe you're from a different part than me?

PSYCHIATRIST. I've never been there. What's more I don't think I would ever want to go there. What's your reaction to that?

WILL. Well, I don't . . . know —

PSYCHIATRIST. I think I would sooner live in the rottenest pigsty in Alabama or Tennessee than in the fanciest mansion in all of Georgia. What about that?

WILL. Well, sir, I think where you want to live is your business.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Pause, staring.*) You don't mind if someone says something bad about Georgia?

WILL. I ain't heard nobody say nothin' bad about Georgia.

PSYCHIATRIST. What do you think I've been saying?

WILL. Well, to tell you the truth, I ain't been able to get too much sense out of it. Don't you know?

PSYCHIATRIST. Watch your step, young man. (*Pause.*) We psychiatrists call this attitude of yours "resistance."

WILL. You do?

PSYCHIATRIST. You sense that this interview is a threat to your security. You feel yourself in danger.

WILL. Well, kind of I do. If'n I don't get classified Sergeant King won't give me the wrist watch. (*Psychiatrist stares at Will uncomprehendingly.*) He won't! He said I only gets it if I'm classified inside a week.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Turns forlornly to papers on desk. A bit subdued.*) You get along all right with your mother?

WILL. No, sir, I can't hardly say that I do —

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Cutting in.*) She's very strict? Always hovering over you?

WILL. No, sir, just the opposite —

PSYCHIATRIST. She's never there.

WILL. That's right.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Stares at him for a moment.*) You resent this neglect, don't you?

WILL. No, I don't resent nothing.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Leaning forward paternally.*) There's nothing to be ashamed of, son. It's a common situation. Does she ever beat you?

WILL. No!

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Silkily.*) So defensive! It's not easy to talk about your mother, is it?

WILL. No, sir. She died when I was borned.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*A long, sick pause.*) You . . . could have told me that sooner. . . .

WILL. (*Looks hang-dog. Psychiatrist returns to those papers. Will glances up at him. Confidentially.*) Do you hate your mama? (*Psychiatrist's head snaps up, glaring.*) I figured as how you said it was so common . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. I do not hate my mother.

WILL. I should hope not! (*Psychiatrist looks down again.*) What does she beat you or somethin'?

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Glares again, drums his fingers briefly on table. Steeling himself. More to self than to Will.*) This is a trans-

ference. You're taking all your stored up antagonisms and loosing them in my direction. Transference. It happens every day. . . .

WILL. (*Excited.*) It does? To the Infantry?

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Aghast.*) The Infantry?

WILL. You give Ben a transfer. I wish you'd give me one too. I'd sure love to go along with him.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Rises, to R. of table.*) Stop! (*The pause is a long one this time. Finally Psychiatrist points at papers.*) There are a few more topics we have to cover. We will not talk about transfers, we will not talk about my mother. We will only talk about what I (*Stamps foot.*) want to talk about, do you understand?

WILL. Yes, sir.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Takes deep breath and finds place on papers. Leans on desk.*) Now then—your father. (*Quickly.*) Living?

WILL. Yes, sir.

PSYCHIATRIST. Do you get along with him okay?

WILL. Yes, sir.

PSYCHIATRIST. Does he ever beat you?

WILL. You bet!

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Looks up. At desk.*) Hard?

WILL. And how! Boy, there ain't nobody can beat like my Pa can!

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Beaming.*) So *this* is where the antagonism comes from! (*Pause.*) You hate your father, don't you?

WILL. (*Shakes his head. Pause. Helpfully.*) Naw—I got an uncle I hate. Every time he comes out to the house he's always wantin' to rassel with the mule, and the mule gets all wore out, and he gets all wore out. . . . Well, I don't really *bate* him; I just ain't exactly partial to him.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Pause.*) Did I ask you about your uncle?

WILL. I thought you wanted to talk about hatin' people.

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Glares, drums his fingers, retreats to form. Back of desk. Barely audible.*) Now—girls. How do you like girls?

WILL. What girls is that, sir?

PSYCHIATRIST. Just girls. Just any girls.

WILL. Well, I don't like just any girls. There's one old girl back home that ain't got hair no longer than a hound-dog's and she's always —

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Sits.*) No! Look, when I say girls I don't mean

any one specific girl. I mean girls in general; women, sex! Didn't that father of yours ever sit down and have a talk with you?

WILL. Sure he did.

PSYCHIATRIST. Well?

WILL. Well what?

PSYCHIATRIST. What did he say?

WILL. (*With a snicker.*) Well, there was this one about these two travelin' salesmen that their car breaks down in the middle of this terrible storm —

PSYCHIATRIST. Stop!

WILL. —so they stop at this farmhouse where the farmer has fourteen daughters who was —

PSYCHIATRIST. STOP!

WILL. You heared it already?

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Writing furiously on form.*) No, I did not hear it already. . . .

WILL. Well, what did you stop me for? It's a real knee-slapper. You see, the fourteen daughters is all studyin' to be trombone players and —

PSYCHIATRIST. (*Shoving form at Will.*) Here. Go. Good-bye. You're through. You're normal. Good-bye. Go. Go.

WILL. (*Takes form and stands, a bit confused by it all. Rises.*) Sir, if girls is what you want to talk about, you ought to come down to the barracks some night. The younger fellows there is always tellin' spicy stories and all like that. (*LIGHTS FADE OUT in Psychiatrist's office, travellers close and spot hits D. S. King and Ben come on, stand as before. An inductee passes, on his way to Oculist's as Irvin emerges, putting on his dark glasses. Ben goes off to Oculist's, King and Irvin remain in front of travellers, spot hitting them.*)

(*End of Excerpt*)