

Maple Road

by

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Cast of Characters

MARSHALL:

15

JIM:

41

Place

Barn

Time

Midnight

JIM enters the barn.

MARSHALL punches a wooden wall wearing shoe laces around his knuckles.

JIM: ...Feel better?

MARSHALL: ...some...

Jim offers Marshall a smoke, his son shakes head no.

JIM: I was something like twelve years old. Had a crush on the most beautiful little angel this side of town named Penelope. I was infatuated with her. There wasn't anything I wouldn't do when it came to her. We grew up right around these parts together...then one day, after years of hiding my true feelings from her, I decided I was gonna man up and pour my heart out to her. Got to a point where if I didn't say something, do something, anything to let her know how I felt, I was gonna explode, something in me was gonna die.

So, I walked down Maple Road, all the way to the Red Creek but as I passed the creek, right by the drawbridge, Penelope was locking lips with this boy named Tyler.

Well, that put a dead stop to my tracks for sure. I never got the chance to tell Penelope how I truly felt about her. She married Tyler, years later. Had the house, children, the whole lot. Not a day goes by when I wonder if I would have done it sooner.

I see you come out here...blood on your knuckles...keeping things in like your old man. Waiting on things. Just as I did.

Don't wait. Go out there and take what you want. Go out there and grab it with both hands and make it yours. Life's too damn short to wait and miss out.

You understand what I'm trying to say?

Marshall grabs his Dad's cigarette.

MARSHALL: I thought you don't want me to smoke?

JIM: Take a Goddamn puff, boy. You understand?

Marshall nods.

JIM: Now, I don't know exactly what's going on with you. That's your business but if what I had to say to you hit the right spot, at least I did something for you. I know we ain't have much but one thing I can do is try to steer you clear of the same mistakes I've made. That's all I can ever do...pass me your beer.

MARSHALL: Beer?

JIM: The beer you're hiding behind that wooden post you keep punching. I'm thirsty.

Marshall brings his father the beer.

Go open another one for yourself. (beat) Get out there...maybe even be a sheriff, one day. Sheriff Mitchell, has a nice sound to it. Get all that hostility out of you and you'd be doing the world a bit of good.

MARSHALL: I hate who I am...

JIM: You're just finding your way.

MARSHALL: I don't like what I'm finding.

JIM: Keep searching until you find what you like.

MARSHALL: I try, nothing ever changes.

JIM: Try harder.

MARSHALL: If I try any harder, I'll kill myself.

JIM: What you say?

MARSHALL: Nothing, forget it.

JIM: No matter how hard life gets, it ain't ever worth doing that, you hear me?

Marshall nods.

I don't care what it is...ain't nothing worse than doing yourself in...especially at your age. You have your whole life ahead of you. There is too damn much for you to see and do in this world...you can't tap out as soon as things get tough.

Hell, your Grandfather went through a depression, a war...he saw everything bad before he saw anything good...he didn't get through all that hell for nothing. You come from a long line of thick-skinned soldiers and just cause you got a splinter in your toe, don't make it alright for you to flee the coop.

I been shot to death and come back...my life wasn't fought on dying, son...you can't go and think it's okay for you to dishonor those that come before you.

MARSHALL: I wasn't trying to dishonor anybody, Dad.

JIM: Not just anybody.

MARSHALL: You know what I mean.

JIM: Do you know what *I* mean?

MARSHALL: Yeah, yeah, I do...

(beat)

JIM: Don't ever let me find your ass hanging off of some Goddamn ceiling cause I'll kill ya myself...got it?

MARSHALL: I said, YEAH.

JIM: Don't care what you suffer, you ride the course all the way through whether you like it or not cause that's what you have to do. Plain and simple, right or wrong, no questions asked. Say, 'I won't ever kill myself.' Say it! Say the damn words.

MARSHALL: I won't ever kill myself.

JIM: That's my boy.

MARSHALL: It's not always as easy as you think, Dad.

JIM: What ain't?

MARSHALL: Suffering.

JIM: You need to talk to your Granddaddy some cause he will straighten all that out for ya. If you heard one-tenth of what that man suffered through, your life will be apple pie.

MARSHALL: But what if Grandpa ain't never suffered with what I'm suffering with?

JIM: I said I don't give a DAMN what you suffering with boy! You talk to your Grandfather and he'll straighten you out.

MARSHALL: Why can't I just talk to you? You're my father, ain't ya?

JIM: Don't you start getting wise with me.

MARSHALL: But you are! When you ever gonna be there for me the way I need you to be there for me? I can never talk to you cause you never really listen to what it is I'm trying to say. I'm trapped! I can't talk to Mama cause she hates my guts, I got no friends cause they all treat me different and I don't want to be different, I just want to fit in and be like everybody else and I don't know how cause I can't connect with anyone the way I know myself to be and I refuse to connect with myself because I don't like who I am and I don't wanna be who I am and I have no where to go!

JIM: I haven't the slightest idea what in the hell you trying to say, boy. You crazy or something? It's okay if you crazy, crazy is tolerable.

MARSHALL: I don't want to be crazy!!

JIM: Stop shouting at me before I knock you out.

MARSHALL: I'm not a crazy person...

JIM: You sounding like one but it's your age, those hormones start acting up and doing things to ya that make you think you're crazy and you even act crazy but you ain't crazy...that's just testosterone.

MARSHALL: (sarcastic) Yeah, that's what it must be, Dad.

JIM: I was the same way your age, trust me. Had the worst case of swollen balls you ever did see.

MARSHALL: What are you saying?

JIM: Blue balls. You just need to get your squeeze on. Your tank is too full.

MARSHALL: There's nothing wrong with my tank.

JIM: Trust me, I'm an expert, I was your age once...just let it go Marshall and all your stress---

MARSHALL: I'm fine, Dad, really.

JIM: Boy I don't miss those days. Ha, ha. But that's all it is.

MARSHALL: I'm glad we had this talk Dad, thanks.

JIM: No problem. Talk to your Grandpa when you get a chance...he's a good man and he'll know what to say to ya...he's always had a way with words my old man...I take more after my mother in that regard...was never one to put good sentences together...you're more like your Grandpa than you think...

MARSHALL: Right.

JIM: Right. (pause.) I'm gonna head on back up to the house...you ah, you do your own thing, alright?

MARSHALL: Yeah.

JIM: Okay. (beat) Son, sometimes a horse has to be a sheep, even though it's a horse and ah, that's alright, too...

Jim exits.

Marshall looks on.