

ACT II

(Lights up on JESSEP's office.)

TOM. Commander Stone to see you, sir.

JESSEP. Thank you, Tom.

(STONE enters.)

Walter, any news?

STONE. Not yet, sir. We've still got a few more tests to run, and they'll take a while. Even at that, I'm not certain I'm gonna be able to make a determination.

JESSEP. I see.

STONE. Colonel, it would help us to know what happened.

KENDRICK. It was a code red, the men were shaving his head.

STONE. The boy didn't die of a haircut.

KENDRICK. He died because that's what the Lord saw fit.

JESSEP. Mary Mother of God, Jon, give the Lord a rest, will you please?!

KENDRICK. *(beat)* Yes sir.

JESSEP. *(pause)* You look like hell. You get some rest yourself.

KENDRICK. Yes sir.

(KENDRICK exits.)

JESSEP. Walter, I don't want to pin you down to anything. I know you've got more tests to run, let me ask you this: What are the possibilities at this point?

STONE. It could've been any number of things, Nathan. They used a gag, it could've gotten stuck in his throat, there could have been poison on the rag, he could've had the hell scared out of him and had a heart attack. Like I said, we may never be certain. Sometimes it's a judgement call.

JESSEP. A heart attack?

STONE. He has a medical history that suggests the possibility of a slight coronary disorder. Nathan, what the hell kind of reckless nonsense did Kendrick have those men –

JESSEP. Why wasn't the coronary disorder detected before?

STONE. I said the possibility of a –

JESSEP. That's not an answer.

STONE. *(beat)* The symptoms – Santiago's symptoms, were most likely pointing to a hundred far less debilitating conditions. There were no red flags.

JESSEP. Is that what you're gonna say to a board of inquiry?

STONE. *(beat)* I don't understand.

JESSEP. Doctor, you give these men a thorough examination every three months. And every three months you sent Santiago back on that wall with a clean bill of health, am I wrong?

STONE. *(beat)* The symptoms weren't nearly –

JESSEP. Walter, you tell me: What can happen to a doctor's career because of something like this? *(pause)* You know what I think happened? I don't think it was a code red. I think Dawson and Downey got it into their heads to kill Santiago. I think, like you said, I think there had to have been poison on the rag.

STONE. It's a possibility.

JESSEP. How long have we known each other?

STONE. Four years.

JESSEP. Close on to five now. One of the first things I did when I got this command was request your assignment to the hospital. And the first thing I'll do when I leave is tell the folks in the situation room I want Walter with the big stones coming with me. I put my trust in you, Walter. I put the lives of my Marines in your hands. That's why I think it had to be poison. Go back and run those tests. You're the doctor. You're the damn good doctor. Whatever you say, I'll live with it.

(beat)

There's gonna be an investigation into the cause of death. And I'll do whatever I can for you, Walter.