

THE HOLE

A Play

in

Three Acts And An Epilogue

by

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Settings

Act One – A side alley.

Act Two – An open road.

Act Three – An open plain.

Epilogue – The open plain of Act Three.

There should be just enough scenery and stage furniture to suggest the scene.

The time is now.

Characters

Bill, about fifty.

Craig, late forties.

Ed, early thirties.

Diane, late twenties.

Policeman, about forty.

ACT ONE

A side alleyway with trash cans and piles of trash, a few old crates.

BILL, about fifty, seated on a crate.

CRAIG, late forties, seated on another crate.

They wear old and worn-out clothes.

BILL

I am tired. I am weary. I am so tired. I am so weary. Life is tiring. Life is wearying.

CRAIG

What's new, huh ?

BILL

Nothing; absolutely nothing. Nothing is new. Everything is always the same, for as long as I remember; everything has always been the same.

Pause.

BILL

I want change. I need change.

CRAIG

You can't have none.

BILL

Why not ?

CRAIG

Let's face facts. You're a fucking scumbag; I'm a fucking scumbag: we're both fucking scumbags. We live in a dump – no, we don't even reside in a dump – we live in an alleyway, not even a proper place to live, not an abode. We are so fucking low. We live in trash. Look at this place ! Piles and piles of trash. Maybe, we are trash, human trash.

BILL

We don't actually live in trash. We live in an alleyway, where there are garbage cans and overflowing piles of trash. It is not a certified trash dump. I don't think we are even human. Do we qualify as human ? I don't think we do.

CRAIG

I'm not sure we actually live. I mean, we exist, and we sorta reside here; but I don't think we actually live here. We exist..here.

BILL

So much for our state of being.

CRAIG

What else can we do ? We're old, we stink and we ain't got no money; so, we exist in an alleyway, with trash. We are trash. Life has not been kind to us.

BILL

Should we have any hope at all ?

Craig surveys his surroundings.

CRAIG

No.

BILL

So, whose fault is it then, we're here ?

CRAIG

Ain't mine.

BILL

Ain't mine.

CRAIG

Gotta be someone's fault, not ours.

BILL

What brought us to be living here, in scumbag land ?

CRAIG

My life, my existence, ain't been good, so far.

BILL

Can it improve ?

CRAIG

I do not believe so.

BILL

People as intelligent as us should not

reside, exist in such a lousy place.

CRAIG

Did we ever have it any better ?

BILL

I don't remember.

CRAIG

Has it always been this bad ?

BILL

As long as I remember.

CRAIG

Who is to blame ?

BILL

I did make a really bad mistake, many years ago; but what made me make that mistake ? Was I in control of my destiny, my future, my life; or was someone else ? I need a fresh start.

CRAIG

How can we achieve that, in the state we're in ?

BILL

So, we sit back and just take it all, all that abuse, for being what we are ?

CRAIG

I reckon, we just hafta take it.

BILL

What you gotta do, is stop yourself remembering how shit your life was. Then you don't work out why it was so shit. You're better off not knowing. Then you don't ask yourself, did it have to be that bad ? Couldn't it have been a little bit better, not so god-damn awful ? Was it really necessary to be that bad ? Then you ask yourself, did something you did, cause things to be that bad ? Or was the damage done by someone else ? Did another person, or other people, cause things to be so bad ? Who or what is responsible for your

life turning out so shit ? Are you the author of your own misfortune, or are you innocent, in that respect ? That is the question. Was the damage done to you, avoidable ?

CRAIG

You gotta take responsibility for your own life. You gotta own your mistakes. You gotta learn from them.

BILL

I reckon my life has always been shit, one way or the other. But now, I'm trying to work out who or what in particular was the cause, it all turned out so bad. I find I do not point the finger at myself, upon examination of the facts.

CRAIG

What facts ?

BILL

The events that led to my downfall.

CRAIG

Your downfall ? Do you think it even matters, do you think your misfortune is so important, you actually have a downfall ? Do you think you're important enough, for anybody to care what happens to you ? Huh ? You are deluded if you think that.

BILL

I was a sensitive child. Maybe, I had esteem issues. I don't really know no more.

CRAIG

You gotta move on.

BILL

I know that.

CRAIG

Then, why remember the past ?

BILL

I don't want to; it seems my brain will not let go, unfortunately.

CRAIG

It should do.

BILL

Should it ?

CRAIG

I reckon so.

BILL

What would you know about..psychology ?

CRAIG

I don't know nothing about no psychology.
All I know is, people.

BILL

I ain't people.

CRAIG

You ain't people ?

BILL

No, I ain't.

CRAIG

What are you, then ?

BILL

I am..me. I ain't people.

Pause.

CRAIG

What about folks ?

BILL

I don't know nothing about no folks.

CRAIG

Are folks people ?

BILL

I don't know.

CRAIG

Are people folks ?

BILL

I...I...do not know.

CRAIG

What do you know ?

BILL

I don't know nothing about no-one, no time, never...

CRAIG

You really don't know shit.

BILL

I know Jack Shit. That is exactly what I know.

CRAIG

If you don't know shit, why am I even talking to you ?

BILL

I don't know. If I were you, I wouldn't be listening to me.

CRAIG

You're just a bitter old man.

BILL

I ain't old.

CRAIG

How old is old ?

BILL (deliberately)

I..ain't..old.

CRAIG

I could not describe you as, young.

BILL

I am..middle-aged.

CRAIG

How old is that ?

BILL

Fifty.

CRAIG

You look older than that.

Bill shrugs.

BILL

Thanks a bunch.

Pause.

CRAIG

I reckon, life, anyone's got a life, you gotta make it count.

BILL

Huh ?

CRAIG

Life gotta have a purpose.

BILL

What if, you ain't no purpose in life ?

CRAIG

Then, it's a waste o' time.

BILL

My life has been a waste of time.

CRAIG

You said it.

Pause.

BILL

Other people have better lives than me. Other people can truly say, their lives meant something. I can't say that. All I can say is, does it matter ? Not to the world in general; only to me.

CRAIG

C'mon...

BILL

I did what I did, - at the time I thought I was acting independently; but now, I realise, I was programmed to do.. what I did. I had no choice. It was imposed on me, imposed. I never did nothing out o' real choice. I never had no choice. I always did what other people said I should do. If I did not comply, they would call me, "stubborn". I was not.. stubborn; I was just standing up for myself,

offering my opinion, doing things the way I wanted; but that was not allowed. No, mustn't be allowed to actually do what I wanted. No; that was not allowed.

CRAIG

You complain enough.

BILL

Why not ? I have waited long enough, to make my complaint.

CRAIG

No-one's listening. No-one's interested...

BILL

I gotta do something, sometime, somewhere.

CRAIG

What ? When ? Where ?

BILL

I..don't know. Only, I don't think I can go on like this, any more.

CRAIG

You done that in the past, so what makes the change now ?

BILL

Maybe, I'm just fed up, with everything. Maybe, I have been, too patient. Maybe, I've put up, with too much.

CRAIG

People had ta put up with you. People had ta be patient with you. You gotta make some effort, to improve yourself.

BILL

Maybe, I could do that, in another place, somewhere else; another environment.

CRAIG

This is where we live; this is where we have always lived, for as long as I can remember.

BILL

I gotta dream o' better.

CRAIG

I only dream o' worse.

BILL

You're too negative.

CRAIG

You're too positive.

BILL

I am what I am.

Pause.

BILL

I don't think I can live here much longer.

CRAIG

We've lived here for as long as I remember.

BILL

I got yearnings, to escape.

CRAIG

You can't escape, nothing.

BILL

Why not ?

CRAIG

Because you're a nobody, with no money,
and no imagination.

Pause.

BILL

Gimme a chance, that's all I'm asking...

CRAIG

You go no chance, to do, anything else, except
rot here.

BILL

I ain't rotten yet.

CRAIG

You're close enough.

BILL

I ain't dead yet.

CRAIG
You're not far off.

BILL
I live...

CRAIG
Just about...

BILL
I am alive...

CRAIG
Ha !

Pause.

BILL
I ain't rotten.

CRAIG
You smell bad enough.

BILL
So do you ! Poo !

Pause.

CRAIG
I think, you stink !

BILL
My clothes smell.

CRAIG
You smell.

Bill smells himself.

BILL
So what if I do ?

CRAIG
You have, hygiene problems...

BILL
So do you.

CRAIG
We both stink.

BILL

It's our environment, our lives, our lack of amenities.

Pause.

Bill looks around and spots an old washbasin amid the trash. He stands and goes over to the washbasin and stands it up against a wall.

BILL

All I need now is a mirror.

CRAIG

And some water, and some soap.

BILL

Ain't got none o' that.

CRAIG

Then, you're just going through the motions.

Bill sighs and then places the washbasin carefully down on the ground.

BILL

I would wash, if I had some water.

CRAIG

You ain't got none.

BILL

I stink, not because I want to, but due to circumstances beyond my control.

CRAIG

Poverty...?

BILL

Poverty.

Bill goes back to his crate and sits on it. He then surveys the alley.

BILL

I reckon..you gotta have hope...

CRAIG

Hope, for what ?

BILL

Hope, for something to happen.

CRAIG

Ain't nothing gonna happen, unless you make it happen.

BILL

How do I do that ?

CRAIG

You do something.

BILL

Like what ?

CRAIG

I dunno – you get up off your ass and you do something.

BILL

I ain't never done nothing the whole of my life.

CRAIG

That's why you here, with me, in this dump.

BILL

I am not..lazy.

CRAIG

Yes, you are.

BILL

- I just lack, motivation.

CRAIG

“Motivation !” What the fuck is that ?

BILL

A reward, I guess; the offer of a reward.
A better life; the hope of a better life.

CRAIG

Hope, again.

BILL

A man's got no hope is...well...hopeless.

CRAIG

What makes a man, hopeless ?

Bill shrugs.

BILL
Living in a place like this.

Pause.

CRAIG
So, what do you want ?

BILL
I want..freedom.

CRAIG
You can't have it.

BILL
I wanna get outta this place.

CRAIG
We got nowhere else to go. We're poor,
destitute. We got no money. We can't
afford the rent on any place; so, we gotta
stay here.

BILL
Maybe, we could move outta the city,
into the countryside.

CRAIG
How ?

Pause, whilst Bill thinks for a moment.

BILL
I guess, we gather up our belongings...

CRAIG
We ain't got none.

BILL
- We do have some things...

CRAIG
Nothing of any value.

BILL
Then, we get together what we do have,
meagre as it is, and we..go on the road.

CRAIG
Where to ? Huh ?

BILL

I dunno; some place.

CRAIG (exasperated)

Where !?

BILL

We'll find a place, in the countryside, somewhere.

CRAIG

I don't wanna end up in some desert, with no water, and no sense of who I am, expiring in the heat.

BILL

I wanna go to a tranquil place, where there's water, and a soft breeze, where it's nice n' cool in the evening, and not too hot in the day; not a desert, a lush meadow. I want green grass, and some flowers, on the riverbank, where the stream flows gently, as the sun sets; a place as dreamy as the night, where we can lie, undiscovered and at ease with our lives, free from any morbid thoughts of death. I wanna find such a place.

CRAIG

That's just a dream, a romantic dream.

BILL

It gives me hope.

CRAIG

You think the air will be better there, away from the city ?

BILL

Less pollution, for sure.

CRAIG

If it's near a farm, it would smell of shit...pig shit, horseshit, bullshit.

BILL

Keep away from a farm. Keep away from the shit. It can be better. We can live a better life.

Craig sighs.

CRAIG

You believe that ?

BILL

Yes, I do.

CRAIG

It's not where we live – it's the life we lead, because we are poor, dirt poor, homeless, destitute. Won't get no better if we move.

BILL

Not if, when, when we move, it will get better. We can lead a better life.

Craig shakes his head.

CRAIG

Dirt poor – so we swap municipal poor for rural poor – any which way, we're still poor.

BILL

What can we do about that ?

CRAIG

Nothing; absolutely nothing. You got a lousy life, you just gotta accept it.

BILL

- Without complaint ?

CRAIG

Without complaint.

BILL

You don't mellow with age.

CRAIG

I get more bitter with age.

BILL

That's how it is ?

CRAIG

That's how it is.

Pause.

BILL

You know, sometimes, all I can do is, despair...despair my life is so shit. Why did it turn out so bad ?

Bill leans forwards and looks at Craig, for an answer.

CRAIG

You asking me..that ?

BILL

I guess I am.

CRAIG

How'd you expect me to know that, about you, huh ? I know why my life is shit; I don't have a clue about yours.

Bill leans back again.

BILL

I thought we were friends...

CRAIG

We are friends.

BILL

You don't seem very friendly to me.

CRAIG

That's 'cause I am fed up to the back teeth hearing you moaning about how bad your life is.

BILL

I have so much regret.

CRAIG

Don't we all - ? Everyone got regret.

BILL

Not as much as me. It's so tiring to have a genuine deep regret, like it's the story of your life, and nothing else happened, before or after, that time, when it all went wrong. Your life finished there and then. All you can do now is remember all the circumstances, and conclude, you had no

chance, to do anything else. You're caught in a cycle of regret, like a washing machine got stuck on the wrong program; nothing turns the wheel. You're soaked. What happened, why it happened, is still a puzzle. I gotta make sense out of it all.

CRAIG

God, that's gonna be difficult. You're trying to make sense out of a senseless world. It's a waste of time. There simply is no sense in a senseless world, no reason, no cause and effect, no way to predict the future, no way to avoid what is to come, even if you can see it coming. Only the past happened, and you're stuck with it; you cannot change the past, or make yourself understand why things happened.

BILL

I try to understand why things went wrong, and I tell myself, it's not my fault; but, then I realise, it was as much my fault as anyone else's. It was more my fault than anyone else's. Then, I really despair. If you can't fight your corner when you're young, you're doomed. In the end, I gotta blame myself; but, when I do that, it's not a liberation from the past. It just makes me feel as bad as when I blame someone else.

CRAIG

Does it really matter, who's to blame ?

BILL

Of course it does. It determines how much guilt and resentment you should feel; but, I feel resentment no matter which way I reckon it, and anger. Was it necessary for me to suffer so much, because I made a bad mistake ? I suffered at the time, and I'm still suffering now.

CRAIG

No wonder no-one can stand you, if you feel so sorry for yourself.

BILL

Someone has to feel sorry for me. I gotta do it, because no-one else will.

CRAIG

No-one should feel sorry for you at all;
not even you.

BILL

But I do; I do.

CRAIG

Well, I don't; which is what matters.

BILL

Is it what matters ? Not in my world, not
in my life.

CRAIG

You live in your own little world. No-one
else lives there.

Pause.

BILL

I still reckon I gotta move on, somehow.

CRAIG

You think changing your surroundings will
change your inner soul ? Your mental state ?

BILL

It might help.

CRAIG

It might not.

BILL

I gotta give it a go.

Pause.

CRAIG

People don't like self-pity.

BILL

I can't help that.

CRAIG

You could try. You wallow in self-pity.

BILL

I guess I do; but, it has not escaped my
notice, everyone else has it better than me.

CRAIG

That's what you think...

BILL

I seen it, with my own eyes – everyone has it better than me.

CRAIG

Not everyone.

BILL

Most people...have it better than me.

CRAIG

Do you know many people ?

BILL

I look and I see, so many people better off than me.

CRAIG

That's because your a sad scumbag with too much self-pity.

BILL

What is the right amount of self-pity ?

CRAIG

Less than you got.

BILL

How much should I have ?

CRAIG

Less, much less.

BILL

But I am allowed to have some ?

CRAIG

Keep it to yourself; I'm bored with it,

BILL

Maybe, if I could improve...

CRAIG

How can you do that ?

BILL

By moving to the country.

CRAIG

Ha ! I do not think so.

BILL

I do. I believe that is my future. It's gotta be better than my past.

CRAIG

You can't escape your past, because it goes with you, no matter where you go.

BILL

It might help me...recover.

CRAIG

Well, I don't wanna go. I don't wanna leave.

BILL

What's so special about this place ?

CRAIG

I'm used to it.

BILL

You got no imagination.

CRAIG

I don't have your imagination.

BILL

Damn.

Pause.

CRAIG

Look, I can understand it gets too much sometimes, but would it really make that much difference, if we moved somewhere else ?

BILL

It might help my mental state, which is... fragile.

CRAIG

It's so much easier just to stay here.

BILL

I need, peace of mind.

CRAIG

Don't we all - ?

BILL

I need ta feel, something different.

I just can't go on like this.

CRAIG

You been stuck here, in this place, for years and years, for as long as I remember.

Why do you need this change, now ?

BILL

It's been building up inside me, for months now -

CRAIG

- You didn't complain -

BILL

- I am complaining now. It'd been building up, like water in a dam. You don't see nothing until it bursts. I just cannot go on living here.

Craig sighs and shrugs.

CRAIG

Ain't much of a place, I must confess.

BILL

Nothing to stay here for.

CRAIG

I guess not.

BILL

I stood it for as long as I could.

CRAIG

You're like a volcano. You suddenly blow.

BILL

You know, I was suppressed. Can someone as compromised as me, actually have deep intense feelings ?

Craig sighs.

CRAIG

People feel what they feel...

BILL

Am I allowed any feelings ?

CRAIG

Of course you are. Everyone got feelings.

BILL

I need ta go, elsewhere.

CRAIG

Why ?

BILL

I need a new start.

CRAIG

What are you trying to escape from ?

BILL

Myself, my dreadful past.

CRAIG

You'd be taking that with you.

BILL

Not if, a change in where I live can change my state of mind.

CRAIG

But can it ? Will it ?

BILL

It might.

CRAIG

“Might” - maybe, that's not enough.

BILL

It is for me. It gives me some hope. I stay here, I will just despair until I drop dead.

CRAIG

What if, something happened on the way, and you died ?

BILL

That would be the end of me, and my past.

CRAIG

You wouldn't have a future...

BILL

But I might have a present, which is better than my past.

Pause.

CRAIG

So, what's so bad about your past, anyway ?

BILL

It haunts me. I made a dreadful mistake, and I get reminders each day, what I done. Then, I start to think...what I should not think...if only things were different, but I know things were the way they were, and I am forced to remember...

CRAIG

You tire me out...

BILL

I do - ?

CRAIG

Yes, you do. You bore me to death. You are so tedious, so wearying.

BILL

I need ta go elsewhere. Seriously, -

CRAIG

Okay. Okay. I get that...

Craig stands and walks a little way, then stops.

BILL

You..understand...?

CRAIG

I guess I do.

BILL

You'll come with me ? You'll help me escape ?

CRAIG

I reckon, I gotta help you.

Craig sits down on another crate.

BILL

You're a real friend.

CRAIG

We'll need a cart, for our belongings.

BILL

We ain't got much.

CRAIG

We do have a little, a few things of value, to us.

BILL

All we got is junk.

Bill looks around the alleyway, with its trash cans and piles of garbage.

BILL

Look at this place. It's fulla garbage.
The sum total of our achievements.
Things precious to us. A pile of junk;
garbage, trash; nothing of any real value.

CRAIG

Things of sentimental value..to us.

BILL

If we put all this on a cart and took it
down the pawnshop, they'd turn us away.
They'd say, you can't borrow nothing on
that pile o' junk.

CRAIG

So what – we don't have nothing of any
material value; we weren't lucky like that.

BILL

How do you measure the extent of a person's
wealth ? From their assets, the monetary
value of their possessions.

CRAIG

All we got is our clothes, some bedding, and
our utensils.

BILL

A lifetime's worth of...nothing.

Craig sighs.

CRAIG

What d'you expect ? We are scumbags.
We always been scumbags.

BILL

Life has been..unkind to us.

CRAIG

And why is that ?

BILL

Because we're scumbags.

CRAIG

You got it.

Pause.

BILL

Do we deserve to be living here ?

CRAIG

"Deserve...?"

BILL

Yes. Did we deserve our..misfortune ?

CRAIG

Does anyone ever deserve anything ?

BILL

That's a moral question.

CRAIG

What happened to us, it could happen
to anyone...

BILL

- But it happened to us.

CRAIG

Life is shit, sometimes.

BILL

My life has been shit, ever since... it
happened...

CRAIG

"It - ?"

BILL

It...

CRAIG

What happened ?

BILL

I lost my soul. I have been empty inside, ever since. My life ended, there and then, but my existence, continued.

Pause.

CRAIG

Tell me what happened.

BILL

I can't do that.

CRAIG

Why not ?

BILL

I...I..would find it too distressing, to recount the details.

CRAIG

Gimme some idea...

BILL

I am too fragile, too delicate, too easily upset. Life has just passed me by. I see other people are happier than me, more successful than me, less disturbed than me. I can't share the happiness of other people. I see them enjoying themselves, having fun, but I think to myself, in the end, it's all ephemeral. Life is just too short to think about the past, but I can't escape from it.

CRAIG

I gotta help you, I guess.

BILL

I'm relying on a change in circumstances to make a change in my mental state.

CRAIG

Let's hope it works.

BILL

It might be my only chance of a cure.

CRAIG

What if it doesn't work ?

BILL

I can't face that possibility. All I can do is, hope it works.

CRAIG

Okay. You need a shot at happiness.

BILL

Not happiness. Just, not to feel so bad, all the time.

CRAIG

Okay. I'll help you.

BILL

Thanks.

CRAIG

I know where I can get us a handcart.

Craig stands and goes towards the end of the alleyway.

CRAIG

Back soon.

Craig goes out.

Bill looks around the alleyway. He stands and goes to a trash can.

He opens the lid of the trash can and is repulsed by the smell. He puts the lid back down on the trash can.

He looks around the alleyway again, sighs, then goes to sit down again on a crate.

He shakes his head.

BILL

Ain't gonna miss, nothing.

He leans back against the wall and closes his eyes.

Lights down.

ACT TWO

An open road.

Bill and Craig dragging in a handcart with their meagre possessions piled up on it.

Bill looks to Craig.

BILL

I need a rest.

CRAIG

Okay.

They stop and the handcart stops.

Bill goes over to the back of the cart and lowers down an empty crate to sit on.

He then takes another crate down for Craig.

Bill goes to the edge of the road and puts a crate down at the roadside, behind the handcart.

Craig takes the other crate over to the roadside, and puts it down behind Bill.

Craig sits down on the crate.

BILL

Not many folks on this road.

CRAIG

That's what you wanted, a secluded place, out of sight, out of mind.

BILL

It's..deserted.

CRAIG

Well, it is near the desert.

BILL

I need a fertile place, with a tree, and some shade, to rest my weary head.

Craig looks around, from side to side, then looks at Bill.

CRAIG

Ain't nothing like that here.

BILL

Gotta go further.

CRAIG

I guess so. We are bums on the road,
to find us an abode. Ain't seen no-one
on this road, for half an hour. I guess,
it's remote. Maybe, we could see some
tumble-weed, if there's enough wind.

BILL

Maybe.

Pause.

Bill looks behind them.

BILL

Hey, there's a truck back there. It's stopped.
There's a guy getting out, and a girl. They're
coming over to us.

CRAIG

They'd better be nice.

BILL

I hope they are.

CRAIG

"Hope..." We need more than hope.

ED, early thirties, comes in, followed by DIANE, late twenties. They are casually dressed.

Ed and Diane stop and take a good look at Bill and Craig.

CRAIG

What are you looking at ?

DIANE

Nothing.

ED

Guys, you sure is nothing.

CRAIG

So what if we are ? This is a public
highway. We got as much right to be
here, as you do.

DIANE

We got a truck.

Diane looks at the handcart.

DIANE
All you got is a handcart.

ED
To Hell in a handcart.

BILL
We're on a journey.

DIANE
Where to ?

CRAIG (sarcastically)
The Promised Land.

ED
And where is that ?

Bill points in the direction of the handcart.

BILL
That way.

ED
Not this way.

CRAIG
Gotta get there somehow.

DIANE
In a handcart.

ED
You look like a pair o' bums.

CRAIG
We are, a pair o' bums.

DIANE
Poo ! You stink !

CRAIG
Don't get too close, or I might breathe
on you.

Diane steps back. Ed steps back.

ED
We don't wanna get, contaminated.

CRAIG

You keep your distance, now.

DIANE

We gotta. Don't wanna throw up.

Diane, keeping her distance, moves around to speak to Bill.

DIANE

When was the last time you had a bath ?

BILL

I don't remember – it was so long ago.

Ed, keeping his distance, moves around to speak to Craig.

ED

When was the last time you brushed
your teeth ?

CRAIG

Ain't got much teeth left to brush.

Diane and Ed move away from Bill and Craig, to stand together.

DIANE

You both stink, even from a distance.

ED

Didn't one of you realise how much the
other one stinks ?

Bill shakes his head.

BILL

No.

Ed looks at Craig.

ED

You - ?

CRAIG

I guess not. You're not here to help us,
are you ?

ED

How could we help you ?

Diane sighs.

BILL

You have such contempt for us.

ED

You are scumbags.

CRAIG

We know that.

BILL

Did you get outta ya truck just to sneer at us ?

ED

Umm...

DIANE

I guess we did.

CRAIG

What is the point o' that ?

BILL

You're better off than us. You got a truck.

DIANE

We do have a purpose in life, a destination, a place to go.

ED

We know where we're going.

CRAIG

Good for you.

DIANE

Do you know where you're going ?

BILL

We have some idea.

DIANE

You ain't got a named destination.

BILL

Well...no.

DIANE

So, basically, you don't know where you're going, geographically...

CRAIG

We know where we're going, metaphorically.

ED (sarcastically)

The Promised Land.

BILL

It's out there, somewhere.

DIANE

Where ?

Pause.

BILL (pointing)

We're going in that direction.

CRAIG

We're taking a rest. We got crates to sit on. You don't.

ED

We stand...

DIANE

We're upstanding citizens...which is more than can be said for you.

BILL

That's..a nasty comment.

CRAIG

Don't tell me your whole life is taken up with making nasty comments and sneering at other people...

No reply from Ed or Diane, who move further away from Bill and Craig, to huddle together and talk.

ED

Maybe, we should be helping them.

DIANE

You think so ?

ED

Maybe, we should. What harm would it do ?

Diane sighs.

DIANE

I don't think I could actually help them.

ED

Why not ?

DIANE

It would be doing it out of a sense of obligation, to what is right, and I just don't do that. It would be, insincere.

ED

Does it matter ?

DIANE

I would not be, hypocritical. It might be mean, but it's what I am...

Craig stands, having overheard Diane and Ed.

He comes towards them.

CRAIG

A nasty sneering bitch !

Ed and Diane step back to avoid Craig.

ED

Don't you come near us now.

Ed pulls out a pistol and points it at Craig, who immediately stops in his tracks.

ED

Keep away from us !

DIANE

I am being honest.

ED

Who cares what your reason for helping them is, if you actually help them - ?

Craig backtracks carefully, holding his hands up above his head. He goes to his crate, and sits down.

BILL

You help us, the idea is laughable.
You only have contempt for us.

Diane looks down at Bill and Craig.

DIANE

I can't..help you.

BILL

At least you know that. So few people have ever given us help. Most people just ignore us, or smile condescendingly, then pass us by, without engaging in conversation. But you have actually taken the time and trouble to get out of your truck, deliberately, to sneer at us, and make, nasty comments.

ED

That is..unfair.

CRAIG

Is it ?

DIANE

I think it is.

CRAIG

You think it is. Well, ain't that something ?
You think we are disrespecting you !?

ED

Something like that.

DIANE

People like you, should not question our sincerity.

CRAIG

Well, we do; and we don't particularly care for your opinion.

ED

You're too low-down for us to respect you.

BILL

You disrespect us !

ED

So what if we do – we are of a higher social status...

DIANE

That ain't hard -

ED

...to you...

BILL

This is an achievement for us, to go
on the road.

CRAIG

He had to persuade me, it was necessary.

DIANE

Is it ?

BILL

Sure is. I had to get away from where I
was -

ED

Why ?

BILL

I had..problems.

DIANE

What problems ?

BILL

Psychological problems...

ED

Such as ?

BILL

My past...

DIANE

Everyone's got a past.

BILL

Mine was...too much for me.

ED

Yeah...?

BILL

I was haunted by events from my past.

DIANE

PTSD ?

BILL

Probably.

ED

Why didn't you get some treatment ?

BILL

I live on the streets. Got no money. Ain't gonna get no psychologist doctor's gonna treat me.

DIANE

What about drugs ?

CRAIG

What drugs ?

DIANE

To treat PTSD...

BILL

Are there any ?

ED

I guess you'd hafta see a psychiatrist for that.

BILL

Ain't no-one's gonna give me no drugs.

DIANE

You could get some stuff on the streets...

BILL

Ain't got no money.

ED

Not even for street drugs ?

BILL

Not even for that. Things're bad enough as they are. Don't wanna become no junkie, not on top of the mental health issues.

ED

I don't think I can help you.

CRAIG

You don't even try.

ED

Seriously, who can help you ?

BILL

No-one. I gotta help myself.

DIANE (to Bill)

Can you do that ?

BILL

Why should you care ?

DIANE

I don't, but...I don't like to see anyone suffer.

BILL

But since it's me, it don't matter.

DIANE

I wouldn't say that.

BILL

Well, I would.

Pause.

Ed and Diane move towards the back of the handcart and look at its meagre contents.

Diane turns to speak to Bill and Craig.

DIANE

You ain't got much belongings.

CRAIG

I hope you're not disappointed.

DIANE

What ?

CRAIG

That we got anything at all. Scumbags like us should have nothing.

DIANE

I didn't say that.

CRAIG

It's what you implied.

DIANE

I don't think I even did that.

BILL

We are a lost cause. We don't expect anything from you.

ED

That's what you're gonna get, exactly nothing.

BILL (to Craig)

Good job we don't rely on them.

CRAIG

We gotta rely on ourselves. No-one is gonna help us.

Pause.

DIANE (to Bill)

What was your past ?

Bill takes a little time before he answers.

BILL

I prefer not to talk about it.

Diane looks at Craig.

CRAIG

He won't even tell me what it was so messed him up.

BILL

It's bad enough living through it, and surviving. I can't bring myself to talk about it, to anyone else.

Ed joins in.

ED

You gotta do that one day.

BILL

Ain't gonna be now.

CRAIG

You'll hafta tell someone, some day.

BILL

Not today, not tomorrow, not any time soon.

CRAIG

One day, you will.

Pause.

DIANE

You're digging yourself a hole, if you don't tell no-one, ever.

BILL

Maybe, I will, one day. It's just too raw, too painful, at the moment.

DIANE

Sharing your distress can ease the burden.

CRAIG

He shares his distress; he won't talk about the cause.

DIANE (to Bill)

If you didn't smell so much, I'd give you a hug.

BILL

If you tried, I would back away. I don't want no hugs from no-one; no..sympathy.

ED

You ain't gonna get none.

BILL

Good; that's how I want it.

DIANE

Suit yourself.

BILL

I will.

DIANE

I offered.

BILL (to Diane)

I don't want no sympathy from you, especially.

DIANE

Why not ?

BILL

It would make you feel good; and I don't want that.

ED (to Bill)

You, sir, are a mean-spirited son-of-a-bitch !

BILL (sarcastically)

You got so much understanding.

ED

Of you !? Of a pair o' bums !

BILL

We might be bums, but we're still human.

DIANE

Just about...

ED

Barely...

Bill stands.

Ed points the pistol at him.

ED

Don't come near us.

BILL

I just wanted to, stretch my legs.

ED

No sudden movements.

BILL

Okay.

Bill walks a little up and down, then stops.

BILL

What should I do now ?

ED

Dig your hole. See if we care.

BILL

This ain't the right place.

DIANE

What is the right place ?

BILL

I'll know when I get there.

DIANE

How will you know ?

BILL

I will feel it...up here.

ED

You're gonna rely on your brain !?

BILL

Yes...

ED

Your brain is turned to shit. You ain't got no proper reasoning in that brain of yours.

BILL

Don't mock me.

Ed points the pistol at Bill.

ED

I got the gun. You obey me.

BILL

Okay. Okay.

Bill holds his hands up and takes a step backwards, then retreats back to his crate, and sits down.

BILL

I tell you now, I do not like to be mocked, by anyone. It upsets me, too much.

DIANE

Aren't you the sensitive soul !

BILL

I am, I am, sensitive.

CRAIG (to Ed)

Ain't too hospitable, pull a gun on your neighbours.

DIANE

We ain't your neighbours. You're a pair o' scumbags.

CRAIG (to Diane)

What are you ?

Diane looks at Ed.

ED

We're two honest citizens.

Craig chuckles.

CRAIG

I doubt that.

DIANE

What ?

CRAIG

Your honesty. Your sincerity.

DIANE

We are..sincere.

CRAIG

You have a mighty high opinion of yourselves.

ED

We are not scumbags, unlike you.

CRAIG

So, because we are of lower social standing, you can insult us ?

DIANE

Did we..insult you ?

BILL

Yes, you did. You insulted us, and you disrespected us.

DIANE

Can you even insult someone like

you ? Someone, so low down ?

BILL

We are human. You should not treat us like shit.

DIANE (sarcastically)

I do apologise. I didn't know you were so sensitive.

BILL

Poor people can be sensitive.

ED

Well, we didn't know that.

CRAIG

You know now.

Pause.

DIANE

I could give you something...

CRAIG

What ?

DIANE

A blanket.

BILL

You got a blanket you would give us ?

DIANE

Got one in the cab of our truck.

ED (to Diane)

You would give him that ?

DIANE

It might keep him warm...

ED

You're trying to help him - ?

DIANE

Yes, I am.

ED

Even though he stinks - ?

DIANE

Yes. I'll go fetch that blanket.

ED

Okay.

Diane goes past Bill and Craig and goes out.

ED (to Bill)

See, she's gonna give you our blanket.
Ain't that generous ?

BILL

Sure is.

ED

She's a decent soul at heart.

CRAIG

Maybe she is.

BILL

We get tired, at times, at night. My old
blanket ain't as good as it was, years
ago, years and years ago.

Pause.

Diane re-enters carrying a blanket.

She shows it to Bill, opening it up a little.

DIANE

Ain't got no holes. It's warm, at night.

BILL

Ma'am, I am mighty grateful to you, for
that gift of a blanket.

DIANE

I'll put it on the back of your handcart.

Diane rolls the blanket up again and places it carefully in the back of the handcart.

DIANE

There you are. I helped you.

CRAIG (grudgingly)

You did.

ED

See, we can help.

CRAIG (sarcastically)

Your generosity knows no bounds.

ED

Where'd you learn to use high-falutin words like that ?

CRAIG

I used ta read books. Not any more. That was years ago, when I believed education could cure poverty. But, as you can see, education is not enough. What you need is help, and money.

DIANE

We gave you help.

ED

Can't give you no money.

CRAIG

What would be wrong with that ?

ED

It's a matter of principle.

BILL

Born poor, die poor.

ED

Not necessarily.

DIANE

We ain't got much money.

ED

Only enough for ourselves.

CRAIG

I thought so. No-one's ever got no money.

ED

You're lucky to get that blanket.

BILL

And we are grateful.

DIANE

Good. We tried our best to help you.

CRAIG

Tell us how we can overcome our state of poverty.

DIANE

I...don't know.

ED

Ain't got a clue. We ain't poor, you see, but we ain't rich. We got enough for ourselves, but we ain't got much left for some charity, which is what what we're giving to you with that blanket.

Craig sighs.

CRAIG

Charity...

DIANE

That's what it is.

ED

We ain't millionaires.

CRAIG

No-one ever is.

ED

If there's one thing I can't stand, it's an ungrateful bum.

CRAIG

We ain't, ungrateful.

ED

I think you are.

CRAIG

Think whatever you wanna think; I don't care.

DIANE

You are, beggars.

Bill sighs.

BILL

We never beg.

ED

What – never ?!

BILL

Never.

Pause.

DIANE

Do we understand each other ?

CRAIG

You can't change us. You can't improve our state of being.

DIANE

We tried...

CRAIG

- And you achieved nothing, nothing.

Pause.

Diane moves away from Bill and Craig, followed by Ed. They huddle to talk, so that Bill and Craig should not hear them. They speak quietly, with hushed voices.

DIANE

We gave them a blanket.

ED

I know. Don't let it upset you.

DIANE

It does, it does upset me.

Craig has been listening in. He speaks in hushed tones to Bill.

CRAIG

She is..upset.

BILL (ambiguously)

That's a shame.

CRAIG

She's upset...

Craig stands up and speaks at normal volume, to be heard by Ed and Diane.

CRAIG (to Diane)

You're upset...

DIANE

Yes, I am.

CRAIG

You're the only person got feelings...

DIANE

I didn't say that.

CRAIG

What about us, huh ? Have we got feelings ?

No reply from Diane.

Ed points the pistol at Craig, who sits down.

ED (to Craig)

Don't go upsetting her.

CRAIG

I do, apologise.

(to Diane)

I'm sorry.

ED

So you should be.

Pause.

The sound of a motorcycle from the left.

Ed and Diane look in the direction of the motorcycle.

Craig and Bill look in the same direction.

A POLICEMAN, about forty, rides in from the left, on a motorcycle, and stops.

He gets off the motorcycle.

POLICEMAN

What's happening here ?

ED

We were speaking to these two gentlemen.

The policeman looks down at Bill and Craig.

POLICEMAN

They ain't no gentlemen. They're bums.

ED

I guess they are.

POLICEMAN

Why are you folks speaking to these two bums ?

DIANE

We were trying to help them.

POLICEMAN

They're beyond help. They're bums.

DIANE

I gave them a blanket.

POLICEMAN

Voluntarily ?

DIANE

To help them...

POLICEMAN

Without threats, without coercion ?

DIANE

It was my idea, to give them a blanket.

POLICEMAN

It ain't stolen ?

DIANE

No. I gave it to them.

POLICEMAN

Why ?

DIANE

To keep them warm at night.

POLICEMAN

Why did you do that ?

DIANE

Outta pity, for their predicament.

POLICEMAN

Pity !?

DIANE

Yes; I pitied them.

The policeman turns to Bill and Craig, and walks towards them. He stops when he gets close enough to smell them.

This repulses him, and he steps back, then addresses Bill and Craig.

POLICEMAN

You smell.

CRAIG

Indeed, we do.

POLICEMAN

Is that your blanket ?

BILL

The one she gave me, yes.

POLICEMAN

You don't want pity, do you ?

CRAIG

No.

POLICEMAN

What you want, is to have some dignity,
ain't that so ?

BILL

Yes.

POLICEMAN

You ain't gonna get none.

CRAIG

We know that.

The policeman goes over to speak to Ed and Diane.

POLICEMAN

They stink.

ED

They sure do.

POLICEMAN

You know what; they don't want pity.
What they want is, dignity.

ED

Dignity ??

POLICEMAN

Dignity.

ED

How can you have dignity if you're a
bum ?

POLICEMAN

Exactly. - Are you concerned for their
welfare ?

DIANE

I guess we are.

POLICEMAN

Don't be. They got their lives and you
got yours. There's no comparison. You
can't feel what they feel. A single act of
generosity, like giving them that blanket,
is enough. You don't owe them nothing.
No pity. Maybe, a little understanding,
but no pity.

ED

Okay.

POLICEMAN

You go on your way now.

DIANE

Thanks, officer.

Ed and Diane walk off to the left. They take a last look at Bill and Craig as they go out.

The policeman then goes back to stand at a little distance from Bill and Craig.

POLICEMAN

You folks best get going on your way.

CRAIG

Yes, sir.

Bill and Craig stand up and pick up their crates, which they put on the back of the handcart.

They tie down the crates and stuff the blanket inside one.

The policeman goes round to a position a little in front of and to the side of Bill and Craig, who are holding the handles at the front of the handcart.

POLICEMAN

So, you folks know where you're going...?

BILL

We have some idea.

CRAIG (points ahead)

That direction.

POLICEMAN

Good. You stay outta trouble now.

CRAIG

We will, officer.

The policeman gets on his motorcycle and drives off.

CRAIG

I guess, we'd better get going.

BILL

Yeah.

Pause.

Bill is reluctant to pull the handcart and looks at Craig.

BILL

They didn't give us much, did they ?

CRAIG

That's all we're gonna get.

BILL

People are mean.

CRAIG

They are to us. C'mon.

Craig starts to pull the handcart and Bill has to follow.

They pull the handcart off.

Lights down.

ACT THREE

An open plain, with a tree near the end.

Bill and Craig pull the handcart onto the plain and towards the tree.

They stop and let go the handcart once they get close to the tree.

BILL

That's it. We're here.

CRAIG (ironically)

The Promised Land...

BILL

- Where I can start a new life.

CRAIG

Can you..start a new life ?

BILL

I have some hope...to do so.

CRAIG

Some hope is better than no hope, I guess.

BILL

Gotta have some hope. Otherwise, you would be, hopeless.

Pause.

Bill goes round to the back of the handcart and takes down a crate, which he sits on. Craig then goes round to the back of the handcart and takes down a crate, which he sits on.

CRAIG

That's better. My legs are aching.

BILL

Life is what you make of it.

CRAIG

Sure is.

BILL

I gotta make a fresh start, forget about the past.

CRAIG

Can you do that, forget your past ?

BILL

I gotta try. I gotta have a present, and
a future; not just a past.

CRAIG

The past should be dead and buried.

BILL

It's always part o' you, but it must not
dictate the life you live in the present,
if you're gonna have, a future. Either
I banish the past, or the past banishes
me, to a place so remote, I can't even
see a way out of the black hole I dug
for myself many many years ago.

CRAIG

You dug your own destiny ?

BILL

I guess I did.

Pause.

BILL

This is a pleasant spot, with a tree;
an ideal location.

CRAIG

What are you gonna do ?

BILL

I'm gonna dig a hole...

CRAIG

Here - ?

BILL

Right here. I'm either gonna bury the
past, or the past is gonna bury me.

CRAIG

You're gonna dig a great big hole for
yourself...

BILL

That's what I'm gonna do.

CRAIG

It could be your grave...

BILL

Or, my freedom; my liberation. I got
a spade...

Bill stands and goes over to the handcart, where he picks up a spade. He then goes over to the tree, and put the spade in the ground, where it stands upright on its own, when he lets go of the handle.

BILL

I hate my past, every last second of it.
I just hope I can bury it, here, under
this tree.

CRAIG

That would be a relief, for both of us.
You moan, incessantly.

BILL

I hope I can change. I hope I can improve.
It's my past makes me moan.

CRAIG

You won't tell me exactly what it was...
Why is it such a secret ? Huh ?...made you
the way you are ? Was it something you
did, or something done to you ? You can
at least tell me that.

BILL

It was something done to me...but I made
a mistake made it happen.

CRAIG

That's as clear as mud.

BILL

I need ta dig this hole. You gonna help
me ?

CRAIG

Do I have to ?

BILL

I would be mighty grateful if you did.

Craig stands and looks at the spade.

CRAIG

I ain't gonna dig my grave. Guess, I
gotta help you dig yours.

Craig goes over to Bill. He picks the spade up out of the ground and hands it to Bill.

CRAIG

You start.

Bill takes the spade from Craig and moves a little to the side of the tree, to start digging a hole.

Bill digs, watched by Craig, until there is a small pile of soil to the side, with a shallow hole about a foot deep. Bill then tires and puts the spade down, so that it stands upright in the small pile of soil.

Bill then walks out of the shallow hole.

BILL

I'm tired.

Craig moves a few steps to look at the hole.

CRAIG

It's only about a foot deep.

BILL

It's my hole.

CRAIG

You got further to go. You couldn't bury yourself in a hole one foot deep.

BILL

I have no intention to make this my grave.

Bill goes over to his crate and sits down.

BILL

You know, I used ta be a much better person, much better; but, that was years ago. I had a lot to recommend me, many good qualities; I was generous, kind, full of enthusiasm for anything new, open to suggestion, even self-sacrificing, to some extent; not at all the way I am now, selfish, obsessed, boring, dependent, vulnerable, immature, weak, depressed, and, just not a decent companion at all. No wonder you can't stand me; no-one can...

CRAIG

I hafta stand you. I'm the only person you got left...

BILL

Everyone else has deserted me, and no wonder. I only stand myself, because I have to. It's a good job you're not like me; otherwise, two people like me, we would never stand each other...

CRAIG

One is bad enough...

BILL

Exactly. I regret what happened to me, too much; but, once you start to regret, you build a life of resentment for all the things you were given to regret. I guess, it all turned me into a complete and total loser, a loser all my life. I had the potential to be a winner; but, because of what happened, I am a loser, through and through. I don't really wanna be a loser for the whole rest of my life.

CRAIG

So you're a loser, you're a loser – so what ?

BILL

Ain't so bad until you see someone who is a success, and you compare yourself...that is, distressing. I admit, I did make a serious mistake, but I was young, and it was an innocent mistake, an innocent ignorant mistake, because I totally misunderstood what I needed to do. I did not intend such long-lasting consequences to come back and bite me on the bum, the way it has. Shit, can't you make a mistake when you're young and don't know no better ? How come, other people can get away with much worse, and never have to pay the price for being stupid ? I had no malice, not one ounce, but it all weighed against me, and pulled me down. Life is unfair. Has been to me.

CRAIG

Life is more than fair, to some people.

BILL

Not to me; not to you.

CRAIG

I have no complaints.

Bill sighs.

BILL

Well, I have.

CRAIG

Who are you gonna complain to, huh ?

BILL

You.

CRAIG

So, I gotta listen to all your old regrets
and resentments...?

BILL

Someone has to, and that someone has to be...

CRAIG

Me.

BILL

That's the way it is.

CRAIG

Well, I am getting a little fed up with that.
I have been more than patient with you.
Please, sort yourself out.

BILL

I am trying; I am trying.

Pause.

Bill gets up and goes over to the shallow hole. He picks the spade out of the small soil pile and gets into the hole.

CRAIG

Don't exhaust yourself.

Bill starts to dig some more.

BILL

I am pacing myself.

CRAIG

Your obsession with digging that hole
might kill you.

BILL

It is my obsession.

CRAIG

I gotta watch you. That's bad enough.

BILL

You could help.

CRAIG

I don't think so. That would exhaust me.
If it kills you, it kills you. Ain't gonna
kill me.

BILL

So, you're just gonna watch me...?

CRAIG

It's safer, for me.

BILL

What about me ?

CRAIG

I am keeping an eye on you, for your
sake.

BILL

What is this ?

CRAIG

Reckless endangerment of yourself.

BILL

Is that a crime ?

CRAIG

I guess not, unless you endanger someone
else. That will not be me.

Bill continues to dig.

Craig watches Bill for a while, then gets up and walks over to the tree. He lies down, so that his head can rest against the tree. He looks at Craig for a moment, then closes his eyes.

Bill looks at Craig for a few seconds, then sighs. He looks down at the hole he pauses for a few seconds. He wipes his brow with his sleeve, then continues digging.

BILL

Lazy son-of-a-bitch !

Craig stirs for a moment, open his eyes, and then settles down to sleep again. He closes his eyes.

Bill continues to dig down into the ground.

BILL

You ain't gonna help me. No-one helps me. You hear ?

No reply from Craig.

BILL

You're asleep, huh...?

No reply.

Bill digs down until the hole is about two feet deep, with a larger pile of soil to the side. He then puts the spade into the pile of soil, so that it is upright.

He climbs out of the hole.

He bends down and nudges Craig.

CRAIG (waking)

What ?

BILL

You wanna look at my progress ?

Craig sits up, then stands.

CRAIG

Okay.

Craig walks over to the hole and looks.

CRAIG

It's gotten deeper. Ain't deep enough for a grave.

BILL

It's not intended to be a grave.

Craig looks up at the sky and notes the position of the sun. He has to shield his eyes with his hand. He looks at Bill.

CRAIG

What do you intend ?

BILL

Huh ?

Craig looks wearily at Bill.

CRAIG (slowly, deliberately)
What..do..you..intend ?

BILL (puzzled)
What do I intend ?

CRAIG
What is your intention ?

BILL
I'm digging a hole.

CRAIG
Why ?

BILL
Because, I wanna bury my past, in that hole.

CRAIG
Your past is an essential part of you.

BILL
I know that. I can't live much longer with
my past haunting me.

CRAIG
I just think you're digging yourself a hole.

BILL
That is..what I'm doing.

CRAIG
They say, "If you're in a hole, stop digging."

BILL
I say, if you're in a hole, keep digging.

CRAIG
The idea is, you'll disappear into that hole.

BILL
That's what I want..to disappear.

CRAIG
There'll be nothing left of you, except this
obsession, to dig a hole.

BILL
I might get buried in this pit, and I don't
mind; I look forward to it, if I can bury

my anguish and desolation, in this hole.

CRAIG

You'll only do that if you die.

BILL

This is a living death, to feel this pain,
this mental agony.

CRAIG

Why do you feel so bad ?

BILL

I made the mistake that caused this all
to happen; it was my fault, but, I still
blame other people, who could've
prevented this happening to me. They
could've given me a chance, but they
re-enforced the error I made, and they
did not suffer as a result, I did. They
all waltzed away from the situation;
they left me to suffer and to rot, and
they all had good lives, not me.

CRAIG

Look, you might not dig it deep enough
before sundown.

BILL

Then I'll work in the dark.

CRAIG

This is a crazy obsession, of yours.

BILL

I don't care. This is my life, what's left
of it.

CRAIG

Well, don't expect any help from me.
You won't get none.

BILL

I know that. You just have a good sleep
under the tree, and leave me to it.

CRAIG

Okay.

Craig moves away from Bill and goes to sit down under the tree.

CRAIG

I don't wanna see you kill yourself.

BILL

How will I do that ?

CRAIG

Exhaustion.

BILL

I'll survive. Gotta get back to work.

Bill goes to the hole, picks up the spade and stands in the hole, to start digging again.

CRAIG

Idiot.

Craig leans back against the tree, and watches Bill digging.

Bill looks at him.

BILL

You take it easy now.

CRAIG

I will.

Bill digs.

BILL

When you're in a hole, keep digging.

CRAIG

Imbecile !

BILL

I do believe, you are insulting me.

CRAIG

Not if you deserve the abuse I'm giving you.

BILL

"Deserve ?" - how is that ?

CRAIG

You really are as dumb as I say you are.

BILL

You're just getting nasty to avoid doing

any of the work.

CRAIG

I am getting nasty because your endeavour is pointless, ridiculous, a waste of time and effort.

Pause.

BILL

I thought we were friends.

CRAIG

We are.

BILL

You should help a friend in need.

CRAIG

Friends give advice, friends look after their friends.

BILL

You should be helping me.

CRAIG

I should be talking sense into you, but you are taking no notice, of what I say. You can't expect a real friend to do what you want, if what you want is, stupid. I am not prepared to humour you. I am a genuine friend.

BILL

I don't like you no more.

CRAIG

Good.

Bill continues to dig.

CRAIG (to himself)

To Hell in a handcart.

Bill digs, spading more soil onto the pile by the side of the hole.

Bill manages to dig further down, so that he is down to his waist in the hole, to a depth of about three feet.

Bill places the spade down on the side of the hole, and then tries to lift himself out of

the hole with his hands placed on either side, but cannot do it.

BILL

Hey !

CRAIG

What ?

BILL

Help me get out. I'm in too deep to pull myself out.

Craig stands and goes over to the hole.

CRAIG

You've dug yourself a hole and you can't get out of it.

BILL

Okay...so help me out.

CRAIG

What are friends for ?

Craig holds his hands out and pulls Bill out of the hole by holding onto his forearms, as Bill pushes upwards with his feet.

Craig manages to help Bill up.

Bill stands by the hole.

BILL

How deep is a grave ?

CRAIG

About four and a half feet, nowadays.

BILL

Why is that ?

CRAIG

So that a professional grave-digger can get himself out of the grave, unlike you, - you needed help; you're out o' condition.

BILL

I'm fit enough to die.

CRAIG

You ain't ready, yet, to die.

Bill looks at the hole.

BILL

Ain't deep enough.

CRAIG

You dig it any deeper, I might not be able to pull you out o' it.

BILL

That's what I want.

CRAIG

You're not serious. You don't really wanna die, do you ?

BILL

I don't know. Maybe, I do. It would put an end to my misery.

CRAIG

I thought you enjoyed wallowing in misery.

Bill thinks before replying.

BILL

I don't enjoy it. I'm used to it.

CRAIG

So, if you got back in that hole, you'd not expect me to get you out of it ?

BILL

I guess not.

CRAIG

Do you really wanna go back into that pit ?

BILL

It's not finished.

CRAIG

It will finish you.

BILL

That's what I want, and end to it all.

Craig sighs.

CRAIG

You don't want that. What you want is to moan and moan and moan; and you hafta remain alive, to do that.

BILL

What if I used a crate ? That would allow me to get down into the hole, and even lift myself out, with your help...

Craig thinks for a moment.

CRAIG

I guess, you're right. Okay, we'll use a crate.

Craig goes over to one of the crates and picks it up. He carries it over to the hole. He lowers the crate into the hole.

CRAIG

There you go.

BILL

Ha ! You helped me.

CRAIG (realising)

I guess, I just did.

BILL

You helped me, dig my own grave.

CRAIG

My hope is that it's just a hole you dug, not your grave.

BILL

My intention is...

Craig looks Bill in the eye.

BILL

...is...I don't know, what my intention is.

CRAIG

You wanna die - ?

BILL

I'm not so sure, any more.

CRAIG

Good. Maybe, there's hope for you,

after all.

BILL
I'm gonna dig down, a little more.

CRAIG
Why ?

BILL
If you're in a hole, keep digging; that's
what I say.

Bill goes to the hole and lowers himself, so that his feet touch the top of the crate. He manages to get to the bottom of the hole. He picks up the spade from the side of the hole and starts digging again.

CRAIG
You know what, you made me help you.

BILL
So I did.

CRAIG
Why did I do that ?

BILL
You're dumb. That's why.

CRAIG
Damn.

Bill continues to dig, and Craig goes back to the tree, where he sits down and leans his head backwards.

CRAIG
Son-of-a-bitch, made me, help him.

Bill digs, spading out the soil onto the pile, which is now quite large.

Craig looks bemused.

Bill continues to dig, as the sun starts to set, and the scene goes from sunlight to twilight.

Craig gets up and goes to look at the hole.

CRAIG
Can you see what you're doing ?

BILL
Just about.

CRAIG

Is that good enough ?

BILL

It has to be, for me.

CRAIG

Okay. Don't have an accident, now.

BILL

I won't.

Craig moves away from the hole, back to the tree, where he sits down and leans his head back against the tree. He watches as Bill gets lower, until only his head is now visible above the top of the hole.

Bill stops digging and places the spade down flat against the ground, near the pile of soil.

Craig notices this and stands. He goes from the tree to pick up the other crate, and then goes, carrying the crate, to the hole. He sits on his crate and looks down at Bill's head, which is poking up from the hole.

CRAIG

Okay; you gonna get out o' that hole ?

BILL

No.

CRAIG

What are you playing at ?

BILL

I ain't playing at nothing.

CRAIG

What are you doing ?

BILL

Contemplating...

CRAIG

Contemplating what ?

BILL

My life.

Craig sighs.

CRAIG

Not that again...

BILL

Yes; that again.

CRAIG

I thought you had enough of that.

BILL

It's my life...

CRAIG

Ain't much of a life if all you can think about is, your life.

BILL

What else can I do ?

CRAIG

Think about other things...

BILL

Like what ?

CRAIG

Like...I dunno...

Bill picks up the crate in the hole and lifts it up over the other side, from where he had placed the spade, and pushes it back a little.

CRAIG

What are you doing ? You need that crate to get outta the hole.

BILL

I dug myself a hole, and now I'm gonna.. reside here.

CRAIG

You can't live in a hole in the ground.

BILL

Don't intend to live...

CRAIG

Not that die crap again !

BILL

Yes, that, again.

Craig stands and looks down at Bill's head.

CRAIG

Oh, c'mon !

BILL

I want you to spade in the soil, on top
of me...

CRAIG

No way...

BILL

I'm gonna lie down flat, and I want you
to cover me.

CRAIG

I would only do that for someone who's
dead...You're not dead.

BILL

That's a technicality.

CRAIG

It's the truth.

BILL

Lay my body -

CRAIG

You are, alive.

BILL

You cover me with soil, I will be dead.

CRAIG

- And I will have killed you...

BILL

At my request.

CRAIG

I will be, a murderer.

BILL

You assisted, a suicide.

CRAIG

I ain't gonna do that. I will not help you
commit suicide. I will not be an accessory
to the crime.

BILL

You ain't no real friend.

CRAIG

I will not bury you alive. You wanna do that, you do it yourself.

BILL

I can't do that. It won't work.

CRAIG

Then, get outta that hole.

BILL

If it ain't my grave, what's the point digging it in the first place ?

CRAIG

Don't ask me. You dug yourself a hole, and now you can't lie in it.

BILL

Shit.

Pause.

BILL

What am I gonna do ?

CRAIG

Climb outta that hole and start living your life.

BILL

With all my resentments and regret ?

CRAIG

Accept them, as your past, as part of your life.

BILL

I don't wanna do that.

CRAIG

You gotta; you just gotta.

Pause.

BILL

I don't wanna live like that.

CRAIG

No-one wants to live like that. They're stuck with it. They learn to live with that pain. They learn to live with their anguish.

Bill sighs.

BILL

Okay. I guess you're right. Hand me down that crate.

Craig hands down the crate that Bill had used, to Bill.

Bill puts the crate at the bottom of the hole, and stands on it.

Craig holds down his hands to pull Bill up by the forearms.

Craig pulls Bill out of the hole.

Bill stands by the side of the hole.

BILL

Can you reach down to that crate ?

Craig crouches and tries to reach the crate by putting his hands down into the hole, but he cannot reach the crate.

CRAIG

Can't get it. That hole's as deep as a grave.

BILL

You know what that means ?

CRAIG

We only got one crate to sit on. We'll hafta take turns.

Craig stands up.

CRAIG

That's your fault...

BILL

Sorry...

CRAIG

- Your stupid obsession, to dig a hole.

Craig picks up the one remaining crate and moves it away from the hole. He sits on it.

BILL

I said I was sorry.

CRAIG

You really are selfish. You only think about yourself, you never think about the consequences of your actions, for other people.

BILL

Sorry...

CRAIG

Other people do exist, you know.

Bill sighs.

BILL

I know.

CRAIG

Well, I'm sitting on the one and only crate, for now. You can sit on the ground.

Bill sits down on the ground.

The twilight has been now darkened, and the only light is from the moon.

BILL

What are we gonna do now ?

CRAIG

We'll hafta fill in that hole. It's not safe to leave a great big hole in the ground. People might fall in it.

BILL

That'll take all night.

CRAIG

I'll help, this time.

BILL (ironically)

Thanks.

CRAIG

I will help you fill in a hole, but I won't help you dig a hole. You can start filling it in.

Bill bends down to pick up the spade and starts shovelling soil into the hole.

Craig watches him, until Bill becomes tired and puts the spade down into the remaining pile of soil.

Craig stands up.

Bill hands the spade to Craig, and then sits down on the crate and watches as Craig spades in the soil.

Lights down.

EPILOGUE

Next morning.

Early morning light.

Bill finishes the last topping of soil onto a slight mound on top of the hole. He bats it down flat with the spade.

Craig, seated on the crate, watches Bill with weary eyes.

BILL

That's it. Ain't a hole no more. Ain't a danger.

CRAIG

Ha ! You didn't even manage to kill yourself.

BILL

I tried. You wouldn't let me.

CRAIG

You'll thank me for that, one day.

BILL

I wouldn't be too sure, o' that.

Bill picks up the spade and goes over to the handcart, where he puts the spade down flat. He picks up the blanket and then goes to sit down near the tree.

Bill wraps the blanket around himself, and leans his head back. He closes his eyes and goes to sleep.

Lights down.

THE END

