

AIN'T TINA TURNER CLASSICAL MUSIC

By
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

RUTHIE - A middle-aged to elderly woman from the streets, who speaks with a soft southern accent.

FLAVORS - A middle-aged man from the streets.

MORRIS / MOE - A middle-aged man from the streets.

TIME: In our day

PLACE: A room in an abandoned warehouse in any city, USA.

SCENE: The room is furnished with several old broken chairs and a small makeshift bookcase of several crates or cement blocks with books.

Characters dressed as street people.

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ACT I SCENE 1

At rise, there is thunder, rain, and lightning. Trash cans bang offstage. RUTHIE stands up and walks towards the doorway.

FLAVORS. *(Stumbles through door.)* Oh, excuse me, ma'am.

RUTHIE. *(Angrily.)* And who, sir, are you?

FLAVORS. What the hell business is it of yours who I am? The question is, who are you?

RUTHIE. *(Indignant.)* I, sir, am the lady of this house.

FLAVORS. *(Laughing, removes hat, bows.)* Madam, it is my grand pleasure.

RUTHIE. You, sir, are an intruder, and if you do not leave at once, I will holler my lungs out.

FLAVORS. *(Walks to bookshelf and looks at it.)* What the hell kind of place is this? Ya got books here? *(Takes a book and examines it.)*

RUTHIE. *(Snatches book from his hand and holds it close to her chest.)* I do not recall inviting you in, but sir, I am inviting you to leave.

FLAVORS. *(Bows again, takes her hand and kisses it.)* Madam, please allow this most ignorant man to introduce himself first, before ya throw him out into *(Stops, shudders, and emotes with passion.)* a dark and stormy night. *(Pauses.)* My name, madam, is Flavors.

RUTHIE. Is that a bottle of whiskey I see popping itself out of your pocket, Mr. Flavors?

FLAVORS. Yes, ma'am. *(Pulls out bottle and holds it high.)* It is indeed a bottle of whiskey popping itself out of my pocket. *(He opens and takes a drink. Wipes his mouth on his sleeve.)*

RUTHIE. I am a peaceful woman, so I am asking you and your bottle to

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leave, now.

FLAVORS. What's wrong, lady? Don't you want a little snort, too?

RUTHIE. My name is Miss Ruth, and mama always said, a little wine perhaps or a glass of sherry, but never whiskey. It is unbecoming, a gentleman.

FLAVORS. Ah, I've gotcha. Truth is Miss Ruth, I've been known for a lot of things, but a gentleman ain't one of 'em.

RUTHIE. Oh, but you are, Mr. Flavors. All men are capable of being a gentleman, but the sad truth is too many of them are like you, in a low stage of development. However, there is always hope.

FLAVORS. Oh, is that right? Let me get this straight. Not only am I (*Imitating her.*) vile and ignorant, but I am now in a low stage of development? Right? Right? Right? Just who in the hell are you? Believe me, lady, if you had all the answers, you wouldn't be livin in this place. Yeah, just who the hell ya think you are? (*Imitating her again.*) Oh dear, perhaps a little wine or a glass of sherry. Listen sweet pants, you ain't one bit better than me. Damn, you ain't nothin but an ornery old lady and all them fine books don't mean jack shit to nobody.

RUTHIE. Are you through?

FLAVORS. Yes, I am through.

RUTHIE. Now, would you please put yourself and your bottle outside? (*Points to doorway.*) I would appreciate your consideration.

FLAVORS. (*Mumbles and walks to door.*) I'll compromise. (*Places bottle just outside door.*) There! (*Places hands on hips.*)

RUTHIE. Quite frankly, I didn't expect that much from y'all.

FLAVORS. Really? Glad you're surprised. (*Mocking.*) Now tell me teacher, since I was a good boy, can I go to the head of the class now? (*Turns and looks her squarely in the eye.*) Just who in the Sam Hill are ya anyway?

RUTHIE. The question is, just who sir, are you? If I recall the situation correctly, you are the one who stumbled into my home without an invitation, insulted my character and looked at my literature. And all without an invitation. So, I am repeating myself and my question remains who, Mr. Flavors, are you?

FLAVORS. Just Flavors, Miss Ruth. Just Flavors. (*Walks to the doorway,*

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reaches for the bottle, takes a drink, wipes his mouth. Ruthie glares at him.) You never said nothin about takin a slug, remember?

RUTHIE. *(Turning away.)* I've never seen you around before. That's the only reason I'm asking. I apologize if I sound rude. I'm more curious than anything.

FLAVORS. *(Sits.)*

RUTHIE. *(Gestures.)* You may sit down.

FLAVORS. Thank ya, ma'am. I will. *(A banging of trash cans is heard offstage.)*

MOE. *(Offstage.)* Ruthie, Miss Ruth.

RUTHIE. *(Walks toward doorway and stands looking at entrance with hands on her hips.)* Morris, what are you doing?

MOE. *(Enters.)* I ain't drunk, Miss Ruth. Honest I ain't. Hey, who's the guy? You alright? He hurtin ya?

RUTHIE. It's alright, Morris. This is Flavors. And Flavors, this is Morris. But most everyone calls him Moe. *(Pats Moe's arm and smiles.)* It's okay.

MOE. *(Extends his hand toward Flavors.)* Moe, that's short for Morris, you know. Well, as they say, any friend of Ruthie's is a friend of mine. *(Smiles and shakes Flavors' hand heartily.)* Good to be knowin ya.

RUTHIE. Now just where in heaven's name have you been, Morris? It's at least a couple weeks since you've been around. You know I worry about y'all.

MOE. Aw, I'm sorry Miss Ruthie, sometimes I just need to escape. But I'm alright now. I took that one book you gave me and been tryin to read the thing and it helps off and on. But I like it better when you read to me instead. *(Turns to Flavors.)* Never seen ya around before. Gotta be new. Where ya from?

FLAVORS. Yup. I'm new.

RUTHIE. That's alright, Morris. See, Mama always said it was better to know a soul awhile before asking personal questions. Our new friend Flavors might just be feeling a bit uncomfortable.

FLAVORS. Hell no, I ain't uncomfortable at all.

MOE. I'd rather hear more about you, Miss Ruth, anyway. And about Mama and Papa and all that fine family of yours. I love to hear them

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stories.

RUTHIE. Oh, Honey we were really nothing special, but we were interesting. You see, Papa was a circuit judge. And the finest there ever was. He was always helping folks. Never could beat Judge Tyler in any election, they all said. My Papa was a fine man. Strange how Mama always referred to him as Judge Tyler. Now there was a lady, my Mama. About the size of a bird and I swear never ate more than a crust of bread at a setting. She always told me to work on my mind. So, I guess I did.

(Motions to bookshelves.)

FLAVORS. Guess that explains all them books ya got, huh?

RUTHIE. Oh, indeed. Mama and Papa believed in our education. Papa and all his brothers were graduates of Harvard. Mama, of course, was a schoolteacher. She never took dimes pay for it, either. She believed in noblesse oblige or the obligation of the nobility to take care of others less fortunate. We always had servants and they stayed with us until they passed on. Papa saw to it; they all got a little place of their own. Land, how they loved Papa and Mama. *(Turns to Moe.)* Did I ever tell you about Bessie? She's the one that raised me. Bessie looked after me from the day I was born until the day she died. I loved her. I guess you'd say that she was my nanny. I remember when I went off to college, how Bessie and I cried and cried. I missed her more than I ever did poor Mama. But Bessie was the one who spent time with me. When I would come home from college, dear, sweet Bessie would have the cook make all my favorite foods. Land, how she spoiled me. I loved her and she loved me, too. She loved my sisters and brother, but she loved me the best. I think my heart broke when Bessie died.

FLAVORS. So, your Mama really said, "Work on your mind?" Don't guess I ever heard nothin like that before. I like it. It's good. It's damn good.

RUTHIE. I don't know about it being good. I never learned to cook or iron or clean a house. Goodness, Mama never knew how to either. She always had help. I remember when I got married to my husband, John Marshall. He was a United States attorney and we lived for a time in a little house behind Mama until we moved to Puerto Rico on assignment. Dear Mama ended up sending me some of her help to take care of our

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house, because she knew I didn't know the first thing about domestic chores, nor did I have the desire to learn.

FLAVORS. You gotta be bullshittin me. Your father was a judge, a Harvard graduate, and you went to college yourself. What's your degree in?

RUTHIE. Library Science. I am a librarian.

FLAVORS. Well, well, with all of them degrees and that fine family of yours. Just what in the hell are ya doin here? What kind of a family, especially a real one like yours, would let their daughter end up on the streets? Ain't nobody gonna do that.

MOE. (*Turns to Flavours.*) What the hell do you mean? Ain't nobody's rich family gonna let them end up on the streets? They're the ones who'll let ya rot. Tell him about Earl, Ruthie.

RUTHIE. No, Morris, you tell him about Earl.

MOE. Alright, I'll be happy to. You see, last spring, our friend, Earl, died. Died of an overdose. Somebody found him behind the bus station. Earl came from one of them fine families. Lots of money, lots of education, and they called him scum. They turned their backs on him because he was different. Wasn't like them. Had to think like they did, live like they did, or you weren't no good. None of 'em could accept Earl like we did. We was his family. We're all family around here. Only thing Earl ever wanted was to be treated like a person. Guess, that's what we all want come to think about it. He didn't want no house or car or money. That would be like givin a T-bone steak to a new baby. What the hell you gonna do with it? It didn't mean nothin to Earl. And his family just couldn't understand that. It was like they talked to each other in a foreign language. Of course, them not being able to accept Earl made life hell for everybody. So, they just stayed clear of each other. Then Earl died last year. Family shipped him back home to be buried. Ya know, in the family plot. Just like Earl was one of em. Anyways, Mary Pat took a bunch of us from over at the Drop-In Center, in her van, down to his funeral in Indiana. Was a pretty nice doings, too, even though his kin did everything they could to avoid us. I think the whole bunch was hopin we'd just pack up and head home. I did end up meetin Earl's brother and we talked for a while. He admitted, maybe they shouldn't have been so hard on Earl. So, I told him.

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“Hell, that’s all-right buddy, you’ve just got the rest of eternity to think about it.”

FLAVORS. Yeah, maybe you got him wonderin’.

MOE. Probably not.

RUTHIE. I know it broke Mama and Papa’s heart when I divorced after my marriage of only six years. Papa was retired by then and when I came home and told them I was leaving Mr. Marshall, why Papa went into his study, and I didn’t see him for days. And poor Mama, why she took to the bed for a week. Divorce was a disgrace back then. I don’t think she ever forgave me for degrading our family name. Whenever she would introduce me to her friends, seems like she would always say “this is Ruthie, she used to be such a good girl”. And I would always say “Mama, I’m still a good girl”. And she would just roll her eyes.

FLAVORS. That must’ve really hurt ya, didn’t it?

RUTHIE. Yes, sometimes it did. But I also knew Mama and Papa loved me. They just didn’t happen to love what I did is all. Had nothing to do with them loving me.

FLAVORS. How in the world, then, did a real lady like yourself, end up on the streets?

MOE. Hey man, it ain’t any of your business how any of us ended up here. What the hell, we ain’t askin you, are we?

RUTHIE. That’s alright, Morris. I’m sure Mr. Flavors is just interested and not necessarily nosy.

MOE. What do you mean, Ruthie? He ain’t nothin but nosy and he’s been askin too damn many questions. (*Turns to Flavors*) What the hell business is it of yours, anyway? You’re new around here and let me tell ya somethin, pal, don’t go pushin your luck or you’ll have us all on ya. It don’t matter to nobody how Miss Ruthie got here. How the hell did you get here?

FLAVORS. Hey buddy, cool off. You’re makin a big issue out of this. I ain’t tryin to hide nothin. I’ve been on the streets all my life. Don’t think I could live any other way. Never knew my father. Met my mother for the first time when I was 18. Man, I love hearin these stories. I never knowed nobody with a life like this. All them books and stuff. Somebody to teach you manners. To have a Christmas tree and a Thanksgivin dinner with a

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turkey and a family settin around the table. You did have all that didn't ya, ma'am?

RUTHIE. Yes, we had all of that and much more.

FLAVORS. And all them lights on a tree? Hell, I'd probably never take the damn thing down. I'd leave it up to just look at. And I'd never get tired of seein it either. I guess these be my dreams. Used to think I wanted a family. Drunk or sober, always felt the same way. But the older I got, the less likely my chances were, so, I sorta gave up on the idea and settled for dreamin about it instead.

MOE. Look, I didn't mean to come back at ya so hard. Never did know my family, either. Aw hell, there was a lot of times when I just made up a havin kin. Made me feel better.

FLAVORS. I think a lot of us make up shit. Guy needs a dream of somethin every now and then to keep him goin, I guess.

MOE. I was jerked up by anybody I could get in with. Yup, anybody and everybody. I ain't never had no Christmas or Thanksgivin dinner with a turkey at a real table in a real house, either. Probably best, because I wouldn't know what knife to use and just might whack off my finger or somebody else's. Now ya know why I love Miss Ruthie's stories. You're right, maybe we all pretend for a while. Ain't nothin wrong with that, is there?

RUTHIE. No gentlemen, there is nothing wrong with pretending. Truth is, it makes me feel good knowing you enjoy hearing about me and my family. You listen and that makes me feel important. Actually, we all need to feel important once in a while.

MOE. Hey Ruthie, how about readin to us? You know, one of them stories from one of them fine books. How about it, Flavors? Ya up to that?
(Gets up and walks to bookshelf.)

RUTHIE. What would you like me to read, Morris?

MOE. Don't make no matter to me. Maybe you could start out with that poem I like. Since he's so damn smart, let's see if Flavors here, can figure this one out.

RUTHIE. Now Morris, let's make our new friend feel welcome.

MOE. Alright. *(Looks through the books and examines the cover.)* This is it. This is the book them poems are in. I knew it was a green color.

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FLAVORS. What's wrong, can't you read?

MOE. Yeah, I can read. I was just lookin for a green book. Is that alright? Didn't know I had to ask your permission.

FLAVORS. Forget it. I was bein a smart ass. I know, you're probably an ex-college professor too. And just happen to enjoy livin in a warehouse. The streets, the only place in the world where everybody used to be somebody. Okay, Ruthie, let me hear Moe's poem. I wish now, somebody would've told me to work on my mind. I like that.

(Moe and Flavors are seated, leaning up against the wall. Ruthie takes the book, brings the chair forward to center stage. Sits down, opens book very carefully and begins to read.)

RUTHIE. Abou Ben Adhem. Abou Ben Adhem may his tribe increase. Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace, and saw, within the moonlight in his room, making it rich and like a lily in bloom, an angel writing in a book of gold. Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold. And lo to the presence in the room he said, "What writest thou?" The vision raised its head, and with a look made of all sweet accord, answered. "The names of those who love the Lord." "And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so," replied the angel. Abou spoke more low. But cheerily still; and said, "I pray thee, then, write me as one who loves his fellow men." The angel wrote and vanished. The next night it came again with a great awakening light and showed the names who love of God had blessed. And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest. *(Closes book slowly and holds it to her chest.)*

MOE. So whadaya think about that Mr. Hot Shot?

FLAVORS. Since you're the one with all the answers, what do you think?

RUTHIE. Excuse me gentlemen, but I think what the poet means is when you love your fellow man, you are blessed by God. And those blessings can come in a lot ways. From the way we think about something to having a friend.

MOE. Makes a fellow wonder, that's for sure.

RUTHIE. It's only my opinion, is all.

MOE. Explain that again will ya Miss Ruth?

RUTHIE. Well, you love your fellow man, Morris. Look how good

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you've been to so many people. Look how you have helped me and looked after me. And you look after a lot of others as well. You're always seeing to it that we're safe. And you expect nothing in return. To me, that's loving your fellow man. And you've been blessed for this, because everyone respects you, Morris. Everyone. And that's something few people can ever say.

MOE. Well, I don't know about all that, but thanks for tellin me.

FLAVORS. I don't know about all this poetry crap, too deep for me. I still like what Mama says. Work on your mind. Yup. Makes a whole world of sense to me.

RUTHIE. Education and music were important to her and Papa. She would turn over in her grave if she saw me like this. *(Pause.)* You know, someday I am going to get me one of those little tape recorders. Why, we could play music like Pachelbel and Chopin and Bach. I know you gentlemen would enjoy that. Have you ever seen one of those little tape machines I am speaking about?

FLAVORS. Yup. I sure have.

RUTHIE. You see, on Sunday afternoon after our big dinner, which was usually fried chicken, Papa and Mama would take us all into the parlor where we'd listen to records on our Victrola. While they were enjoying every note, we children were just waiting for it to quit and be done with. We wanted to be outside playing. Dear Lord, any place was better than sitting in that stuffy old parlor, listening to music. But you know, when I look back, it was nice. *(Pause.)* Yes, it was so very nice.

SCENE 2

It is the next day and Moe is searching through the trash can for something to eat. Flavors enters.

FLAVORS. Find anything good?

MOE. Mornin. Yeah. Got a couple butts here and half a donut. *(He takes a bite and hands the remainder to Flavors.)* Want a bite? Or maybe you ain't hungry.

FLAVORS. Thanks. That's mighty nice of ya.

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MOE. Think nothin of it. Miss Ruth would expect that of me.

FLAVORS. Yeah, she'd expect it out of either one of us, is what I think.

MOE. You're probably right.

FLAVORS. Do they serve breakfast at that soup kitchen?

MOE. Yup.

FLAVORS. Gotta listen to a sermon first?

MOE. No. It's the gospel mission that makes you do that, but it ain't bad.

Don't say much at breakfast but the old Reverend makes up for it at lunch.

He goes on forever. Lots of us don't go there no more. Ain't no amount of food worth sittin through that. Hell, I'm a drunk and I know it and I sure don't need some old wind bag to remind me of it every day.

FLAVORS. Well, that's easy enough to take care of. Just don't go over there.

MOE. Well, I don't. That's what I told ya, didn't I?

FLAVORS. Yeah. I guess you did.

MOE. Yeah, I did.

FLAVORS. So what you're sayin is breakfast is alright at either place but stay the hell away from the gospel mission at lunch, cause it ain't worth it.

MOE. Miss Ruth would probably disagree. She goes there a lot. Says she likes it. Guess women can take that stuff easier than us guys.

FLAVORS. Somebody told me once if all the women quit goin to church, they'd all fold up.

MOE. Probably right about that. Just another one of them differences between us. Ya ever try to figure out a woman?

FLAVORS. Once or twice. But wasn't very good at it. I think it's a waste of time.

MOE. Yeah, but then there's Miss Ruth. She ain't like other women I've known.

FLAVORS. She's just nice. Hard to believe she lives like us on the streets and is still nice. That ain't normal.

MOE. I've knowed Miss Ruth for a long time, and she's nice to everybody. That lady ain't got a mean bone in her body. Guess I never heard nobody ever say nothin bad about Miss Ruth.

FLAVORS. She's a lady all right.

MOE. And leave it to a lady to bring out the best in some of us. I gotta

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admit, I kinda like it when she worries about me.

FLAVORS. Having somebody concerned about ya, can make a difference.

MOE. That's what I hear.

FLAVORS. Had someone concerned about me once, but managed to screw that up too. Wasn't content until I destroyed both of us. I'm a real asshole.

MOE. I figured that from the minute we met.

FLAVORS. Well, you were right.

MOE. Don't ever be mean to Miss Ruth is all I'm sayin.

FLAVORS. I won't, because I respect her like you do. She's a fine lady. And I don't guess either of us have known too many fine ladies in our lives and I'd be the first to protect her.

MOE. First after me, that is.

FLAVORS. Okay, first after you.

MOE. Ya see, I've been around here for years and I've knowed Miss Ruth all that time, and you're right she's.... well, she's just a damn nice person. And them's the ones who can get hurt the most.

FLAVORS. What do you mean?

MOE. I've seen a side of her, like nobody I've ever knowed. Kindness like she's got inside her, ain't somethin you see very much on these streets.

FLAVORS. Guess I still don't understand.

MOE. One day we was at the gospel mission, gettin ready to have dinner.

FLAVORS. You mean the place with the wind bag preacher?

MOE. Yeah, that's the place. Anyways, it was summertime and hotter than Hell. Seemed like the temperature broke 100 degrees for about a week straight. Just no let up. One hot muggy day after another. The heat was comin up off all the concrete and asphalt and I swear you could fry an egg on the pavement.

FLAVORS. You know, I knew a guy once who actually —

MOE. (*Interrupts*) Look, ya wanna hear this story, or not?

FLAVORS. Yeah, go ahead.

MOE. Anyway, it was a scorcher that day. A few of us had gotten there early in hopes they'd let us in. See, it's always cool in the mission. They

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got them big fans, ya know. We was hopin they'd open them doors early for us, but they didn't. So, we was all standin outside in that swelterin heat. You could feel it comin up through your shoes even. Miss Ruth was there and we was fannin ourselves with whatever we could. After what seemed to be one hell of a long time, they started to let us in. I wasn't payin much attention to who all was there, but I did notice Miss Ruth was sittin next to Becky and they was both ahead of me.

FLAVORS. Who's Becky? You lost me.

MOE. She's another one of us who's been around a long time. Gets them fits ya know. Seizures is what they call em I guess. Well, the old Reverend was wound up like an eight-day clock that afternoon. Fact is, I thought he would never quit. Finally, the old boy finished preachin, after he admitted gettin carried away. I noticed Miss Ruth had her arm around Becky, but I didn't pay no real attention to it. Next, they started servin dinner and I just happened to look over and see Becky start shakin and jerkin. Ya ever sees the likes of one of them fits before?

FLAVORS. Yeah, I have.

MOE. I'll never forget. Miss Ruth was so calm. She pushed her chair to the side and slowly helped old Becky down to the floor, so she wouldn't fall and hurt herself. She stroked Becky's head like a little old baby. Of course, that wasn't the first of them fits Becky ever had down there, but it was the first one I saw her have.

FLAVORS. Miss Ruthie probably put somethin in her mouth too, so she wouldn't bite her tongue. That's what they do.

MOE. Don't know but I'll never forget how she stroked Becky's head and talked real nice to her. After it was all over, Ruthie cleaned her up, had her lay down and stayed with her until she was alright. See what I mean about bein kind?

FLAVORS. Yup, them things scare the shit outta most people so they high tail it.

MOE. Here's somethin else, too. Miss Ruth even came back to make sure the mess was cleaned up.

FLAVORS. Ain't nobody does that.

MOE. We had bean soup and the basket full of corn bread set right in front of Becky. When she started shakin and doin all that fit kind of stuff,

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she must've stuck her hands in the middle of that and a few bowls of soup because food went flyin every which way. Even the table was shakin. It was a hell of a mess. But Ruthie knew what to do.

FLAVORS. That's what happens.....

MOE. (*Interrupts*) Miss Ruth probably didn't like it either. But she did what had to be done. I knowed one thing; she made all the rest of us look like assholes. Hell, Becky must have weighed three hundred pounds at least and little old Ruthie handled her like nothin.

FLAVORS. What makes some people like her so damn good and others like me, selfish bastards?

MOE. I ain't no better Flavors. Hate to tell ya, but we're more alike than not.

FLAVORS. It's a bitch bein poor, ain't it?

MOE. Yup

FLAVORS. But when you're poor and sick, that's the worst.

MOE. Boy, if that ain't the sorry truth. Things could be worse off with me. At least I got my health and can take care of myself.

FLAVORS. I've often wondered.

MOE. What? Wondered about what?

FLAVORS. Oh, I don't know.

MOE. No, what do you mean?

FLAVORS. It's just sometimes, I wonder what my life could have been like, if I hadn't made so damn many dumb mistakes. Never had a problem yet that wasn't my fault.

MOE. That's a dangerous thing to think about for very long.

FLAVORS. Maybe. Maybe not.

MOE. No, I mean it. There ain't a damn thing you can do about the past. It's over and done and all the pissin and moanin in the world can't change what is. Hell, I can get to thinkin about my mistakes too, but I make myself stop.

FLAVORS. And once I start thinkin of all the mistakes I've made, well, that ain't enough, so I start thinkin of the rest of the shit I've pulled. And before long, I'm in a pit so deep, I can never get out.

MOE. I know what you mean, Man. Was you ever in the service?

FLAVORS. Yup. Navy. Lied about my age. Went in when I was 14.

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You?

MOE. Nope. Should've though. Maybe things been different if I had.

FLAVORS. Aw, who the hell knows? You coulda had your ass blown off, too.

MOE. Yeah, maybe.

FLAVORS. I was scared. Don't let nobody kid ya. We all was. But it was the thing to do. Fight for your country, ya know. Sure, ain't like that today.

MOE. I know. Some places give you a hard time for sayin the Pledge of Allegiance.

FLAVORS. I heard that too.

MOE. Yeah. I didn't believe it either at first but every word's the sorry truth.

FLAVORS. A few of us enlisted together. Hell, we never thought about gettin blown up. All we thought about was eatin and havin a place to sleep. Them barracks looked like a palace compared to where we comed from.

MOE. I understand that shit.

FLAVORS. Didn't have a family, so leavin was no problem. Ended up on a destroyer in the Pacific. The whole thing was good for me, though. Otherwise, I'd be dead by now or in prison someplace.

MOE. Probably what I shoulda done. So, you was scared, huh?

FLAVORS. Who the hell wouldn't be? Think about it. I remember my buddy, drank 19 beers the day before we left. I know that's hard to believe, but the damn fool did.

MOE. No kid can drink that much.

FLAVORS. Everyone was talkin about it. Old Maynard Snyder drank 19 bottles of beer. He spilled most of it and puked out the rest. Maynard never made it back. Hell, we was just kids.

MOE. Yup. Kids tryin to be men.

FLAVORS. Couldn't wait to grow up. And the Navy made damn sure that happened. Men older than me was afraid and homesick.

MOE. One good thing about not havin a home is, ain't nothin to miss or cry over.

FLAVORS. But I was still scared. Not about dyin or nothin, but scared about... oh hell, I don't know.

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MOE. I ain't scared about dyin, either. Never have been. Think livin scares me more.

FLAVORS. Why the hell would ya be scared about livin? If ya can make it on the streets, you can do anythin.

MOE. Hey look, are ya tryin to start somethin? I can handle myself on these streets or any place else.

FLAVORS. You got you an attitude, pal. Don't care what it is I say, ya got somethin to argue about.

MOE. Hell, it ain't me, it's you. Just remember you're new around here and there's always somebody damn happy to knock that chip off your shoulder.

FLAVORS. Okay. I think you're an asshole and you think I'm an asshole. So, we're even. Let's face it, there's just some people, like the two of us, who can't get along with each other. So, I'll stay outta your way and you stay outta mine.

MOE. Fine by me. I had you pegged the minute we met. Gotta say one thing though, you're slick. Real slick. You even conned Miss Ruth. *(Flavors begins to have a seizure. Not sure of what to do, Moe feebly attempts to help him.)*

MOE. You're gonna be alright. You're fine, man. Look, you still got your hat on too and you ain't even pissed your pants, like Becky did. Hey, don't die on me. *(Pause.)* You ain't gonna croak, are you? *(Pause.) Moe begins to shake Flavors.)* Please don't die, alright? *(Flavors begins to come out of seizure.)*

FLAVORS. I ain't dyin.

MOE. Thanks. For not kickin the bucket, I mean. You had some scary shit goin on.

FLAVORS. Well, you can tell your grandchildren you saw old Flavors here at his worst. Havin one of them fits, as you called it. Just gotta lay here for a minute.

MOE. How was I to know ya had em? Could've said somethin about it, stead of makin a damn fool outta me.

FLAVORS. Forget it, will ya? If anybody feels like a damn fool, it's me. Not every day a man gets to have people see him like this.

MOE. Look, I ain't gonna say nothin to nobody if that's what you're

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thinkin. Ain't no blabber mouth. Got enough of my own problems, don't need to borrow none from you.

FLAVORS. *(Pause.)* Thanks.

MOE. Ya know, you can tell Miss Ruth, if ya want.

FLAVORS. No! Ain't tellin nobody. Hear me?

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