

BALLAD
A Two-Character Play
by Ken Love

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CHARACTERS
(Both African American)

EMMETT
An Older Gentleman

LARRY
A Younger Gentleman

TIME
Late 1960's to Early 1980's

(Late 1960's. A wedding reception. There has been much revelry, eating, drinking. It is late in the evening. Everyone is punchy. Emmett saunters to the bar, sits on a stool, and eyes the bacchanalia. He's nursing his last drink of the evening. Soon, Larry enters and sits beside Emmett)

LARRY

There stood two gunfighters.

EMMETT

A older man . . .

LARRY

. . . and a young buck.

EMMETT

Both raised by a man with a scar.

LARRY

Those boys never learned their daddy's name.

EMMETT

All they knew was the SCAR –

LARRY

Hold on . . .

(Larry and Emmett put their arms around one another's shoulder and pose. There is a flash, and they resume)

The oldest boy'd been an orphan.

EMMETT

His mama raped by an Indian.

LARRY

Gave birth to him on a boxcar. She got out when the train stopped at the next depot and staggered like a drunk wench all the way to the man with the scar . . . staggered to his doorstep and fell weary before him with the baby in her arms.

EMMETT

Scar'd known her.

LARRY

He knew a lot of wenches in his time.

(On the far side of the room, they notice Cynthia)

EMMETT

Speaking of which . . .

LARRY

Well, if it ain't your daughter –

EMMETT

Yep! Your brand-new wife! Shinin' like a show room Plymouth!

LARRY

I wonder if she'll ever be as pretty again?

EMMETT

Let me put it this-a way: she did all she needed to hook you.

LARRY

It's downhill from here then, ain't it?

EMMETT

Not just yet. Ya'll still got to make babies.

LARRY

Well –

EMMETT

What? You plannin' on raising some kids, right?

LARRY

We haven't gotten around to talking about that part of it . . . yet.

EMMETT

I see.

LARRY

When I get through with college. Maybe.

(Emmett sips his drink. Then –)

EMMETT

Scar took the woman and the baby on in.

LARRY

Five years later, she gave Scar a boy of his own.

EMMETT

The wench loved Scar. Loved him something awful.

LARRY

She'd been a whore in her younger days. And Scar had to get out of the gunfighting business on account of her.

EMMETT

They got in a bad way one evening. Fighting and cussing and such to where she shot Scar in the arm with a two-barrel iron. Shot his arm plum off, as a matter of fact.

LARRY

She left him. Stayed gone a season. And when she caught up with him again, she made a vow to God and the devil to be his woman till she gave up the ghost.

EMMETT

She regretted what she'd done to Scar. He forgave her. He was weak in that way for her. And she vowed to the devil to love him and be his woman.

Y' know, when I got a good eyeful of Cynthia's mother –

LARRY

Lovely woman.

EMMETT

Solid woman! In all the right places.

LARRY

Alright, Emmett. I don't need to hear all that.

EMMETT

Why? It ain't like I'm cuttin' her down.

LARRY

Just the same –

EMMETT

Whoop! There's Cynthia.

(Larry calls to her)

LARRY

Okay . . . Alright, he'll be but a minute.

EMMETT

What she want, a dance?

LARRY

Yeah. With her daddy. The last one before we cut.

Five years would pass. And the woman gives scar a child of his own.

EMMETT

A boy. And as they grew, he'd teach both boys the art and the way of the gunfighter.

LARRY

During his days as a gunfighter, he was feared throughout the territory.

EMMETT

Getting himself out of the business when a whore shot off his arm.

LARRY

Thus, he would teach his boys to shoot and such . . .

EMMETT

. . . with but one hand and one arm.

LARRY

Go on and get this last dance with your daughter before we split.

EMMETT

I'll do that.

LARRY

We'll do the honeymoon thing . . . then I'm knee-deep in the books again.

EMMETT

Yep.

(The two men hug)

I sure hope you get along with 'er better'n I did.

LARRY

What'd I say about all that?

EMMETT

Just the same . . .

LARRY

You're her father. Who ain't tried to do nothing but love her.

EMMETT

And I can only pray it was enough.

LARRY

I'll be seeing you, Emmett.

EMMETT

And I you.

(Emmett is exiting)

They never got his name. As far as folks knew, he never had one. All he had . . . was that scar.

(Blackout)

(Lights rise in the sitting room of Emmett's home. Flashback: early 1960's. He is watching TV when he hears a knock at the door. He rises and answers. Larry stands before him)

LARRY

Mr. Booker, right?

EMMETT

Yep. And you must be the boy.

LARRY

Yeah. Larry.

EMMETT

Larry.

LARRY

Yes, sir. Larry Davis.

(Emmett notices the way Larry is dressed)

Something wrong?

EMMETT

I thought ya'll was going to the movies?

LARRY

Well, I wanted to. But Cynthia thought we should go to this dance instead.

EMMETT

I thought you was lookin' awfully sharp to be sittin' in somebodies movie house.

LARRY

Yeah.

EMMETT

Well, come on in, Mr. Davis. Have a seat. Cynthia's upstairs. She'll be ready in a minute.

(They sit)

You keep up with the news?

LARRY

Some.

EMMETT

Let me tell ya – a man ought to know the world. As much of it as he can get his mind around. He ought to look at the news, read the papers and such so he can have some sense of where he is in this life. I been followin' the world since I was a kid. Now, that's somethin', ain't it?

LARRY

Yeah, it is.

EMMETT

I ain't tryin' to throw nothin' on you, now . . .

LARRY

Oh, I know –

EMMETT

I just hate to see life creep up on a man. Y' hear what I say?

(Larry nods)

Where y' from?

LARRY

Oh, I was born here. In New York.

EMMETT

Hmm.

LARRY

And you?

EMMETT

Me? I'm from Texas – Beaumont, Texas. Never knew nobody from Texas, have you?

LARRY

As a matter of fact, no. Can't say that I have.

(Silence)

Cynthia said you used to box.

EMMETT

I did. At one time.

LARRY

She told me you almost got to fight Joe Louis.

EMMETT

What . . . ?

LARRY

Joe Louis. She said –

EMMETT

She told you that?

LARRY

Oh, yeah. And you woulda gave Joe a good run for his money, too. That is, according to her.

EMMETT

Hmm.

LARRY

I mean . . . it's what she heard you say. I think.

EMMETT

I see.

LARRY

My dad was sure excited when I told him.

(Emmett reacts)

He likes boxing. So, yeah . . . I mentioned it to him. And he wants to meet you.

EMMETT

Oh?

LARRY

He says maybe you and him could even spar a little. See, he did some boxing when he was in the service and . . .

EMMETT

Is your daddy anybody I ought to know?

LARRY

Well . . . he's a teacher. Like my mother. He teaches high school. P.E.

EMMETT

A teacher, huh?

LARRY

And he coaches the basketball team.

EMMETT

Oh, yeah!

LARRY

Yeah.

EMMETT

Mr. Davis . . . ?

LARRY

You know him?

EMMETT

I think a man came into the store one time by the name of Davis. Said he might want to surprise his wife on her birthday with a brand-new rug –

LARRY

He's gon buy mom a new rug?

EMMETT

Of course, you ain't heard nothing from me.

LARRY

Sure. Won't she be surprised, though?

(Silence)

EMMETT

Now, look at this! Castro in Russia. Ain't that something?

(Silence)

Y' know, Cynthia . . . she thinks a whole lot of you.

LARRY

Oh? Does she?

EMMETT

Hmm.

LARRY

That's – that's not a problem, is it?

EMMETT

Should it be?

LARRY

Well, no . . . I mean –

EMMETT

Wha' chu think of Cynthia?

LARRY

Come again . . . ?

EMMETT

What do you see in her?

LARRY

Uh, well . . . I don't know –

(Emmett eyes him)

I mean . . . I guess I like Cynthia.

(Silence)

Is that okay?

EMMETT

Let me tell ya – she’s a pain in the ass. She’s my daughter and she’s my heart. But there’s times when I could rip her head off her neck. It’s the truth! See, she takes after her grandma – my own mother, y’ know?

LARRY

I see.

EMMETT

I ain’t talking of nothin’ out-the-way, now. I just want to put it so it’s –

LARRY

I’m being warned.

EMMETT

I’m not saying you ought not go out with her. Go! Have a grand time – and take my blessing. Understand, though, what you’re getting set up for.

(Larry acknowledges)

And as for all that shit about fighting Joe Louis, I’ll be the first to state overtly that I was closer to getting a whiff of Queen Elizabeth’s coochie than having any hope of taking the title from Joe.

LARRY

But –

EMMETT

And make sure your daddy knows it.

(Silence)

Truth is, Cynthia got all that from her grandma. My own mama. She’d got wind that I boxed here and there and . . . well, the woman just got it in her head to run with it, y’ know?

LARRY

I see.

(Silence)

EMMETT

But that girl . . . she thinks awfully high of you.

LARRY

And come to think of it . . . she's said a few words about you, too. Kind words, that is.

(Emmett is about to respond when he suddenly looks toward the stairs)

EMMETT

I believe that's her.

(Larry stands and smiles as he looks toward the stairs)

And Scar's woman gave him a son. And he'd teach both boys the way of the gunfighter.

(Larry turns to him)

LARRY

Did you say something?

EMMETT

Oh, nothing – nothing at-all.

(Larry looks back toward the stairs. Emmett eyes Larry.
Fade out)

(Lights rise in Emmett's backyard at night. Late 1970's. Emmett and Larry have just finished eating a barbeque supper. The embers in the grill are slowly fading. They sit on lawn chairs, drinking beer. Larry is lost in thought)

EMMETT

As scar got old, he got mean and ornery. Him and his boys would be sitting up drinking one night . . .

LARRY

. . . and get into an argument.

EMMETT

As old and evil as Scar was, he didn't take to funnin' much. Didn't take too much to get 'im mad. Bloodshot mad.

LARRY

Thus, over nothin', he stood and pulled his gun on them boys . . .

EMMETT

His own blood.

LARRY

Everything breathing braced for the worse.

EMMETT

Lord, yes! . . . The worse.

(Silence)

You okay?

(Larry nods tentatively. Emmett takes a bottle of pills from his shirt pocket)

And it so happened that Scar – their daddy . . . he shot first.

LARRY

Shot his own son. Right in the belly.

EMMETT

Damn near cut the boy in two.

LARRY

Without thinking, right on lightning-tap –

EMMETT

The other son, the oldest boy . . .

LARRY

Shot his daddy back.

EMMETT

And killed the old man . . .

LARRY

. . . dead! In front of his mama.

(He opens the bottle and pours two pills into his hand. Larry is, again, distant)

EMMETT
You sure everything's alright?

LARRY
What . . . ?

EMMETT
Something on your mind?

(Larry does not respond. Emmett takes the pills then
downs them with a swallow or two of beer)

LARRY
When did you say Miss Louella was getting back?

EMMETT
Day after tomorrow.

(He caps the bottle and places back in his shirt pocket)

The boy shot 'is father . . . then up and ran.

LARRY
Scar's woman never told of what happened.

EMMETT
She'd go on and bury both men.

LARRY
And did not shed one tear.

(Silence. Emmett studies Larry)

EMMETT
I, uh . . . I reckon it might be high time we went up to the lake again. For some fishing.
It's been a while, y' know?

LARRY
Yeah.

EMMETT
Don't you want t' go?

LARRY
Come to think of it . . . not now.

EMMETT

Well, we ain't got to pick up and go *now*. I'm thinking we might want to start the planning. Like . . . after Labor Day.

(Silence)

How 'bout that?

LARRY

I don't know, Emmett . . .

EMMETT

Man, what's ailing you?

LARRY

Nothing. I'm –

(Silence)

Did Cynthia say anything to you?

EMMETT

What of?

LARRY

Has she, like . . . I don't know . . . When you see her, what does she say?

EMMETT

Larry, you've been part of the family long enough to know Cynthia ain't never had much to say to me . . .

LARRY

Alright, have you overheard anything?

EMMETT

Well, she talks to her mother, but –

LARRY

What do they say to each other?

EMMETT

I ain't got the darkest clue.

LARRY

You live and eat in that house with no knowledge as to what's said in it?

EMMETT

Now, look here, boy –

LARRY

I ain't no damn boy –

EMMETT

Well, if something's on your mind, be a *man* and speak it! And quit picking around me like some chump.

(Larry rises, agitated)

What is it, Larry?

(Silence)

If it's about Cynthia . . . go on and speak it.

(Silence)

LARRY

The boy . . . the boy shot 'is father

EMMETT

. . . then up and ran.

LARRY

Ran long . . . and hard.

Cynthia . . . she's – she's fuckin' around. Yeah! Your contentious daughter has been rubbing asses with some other . . . *muthafucker* behind my back.

EMMETT

For how long . . . ?

LARRY

Don't ask me no shit like that, Emmett. Who gives a fuck as to how long? Ten years or five minutes, what does it matter?

EMMETT

You said she couldn't make it today –

LARRY

She said she had a headache. I'd call home and check on her, but I'm scared out of my head that if I do, the phone will just ring. And keep on ringing and –

(Silence)

EMMETT

Scar's woman never told of what happened.

LARRY

She'd go on and bury both men.

EMMETT

Scar sat t' home with his woman. And got old.

LARRY

He couldn't do nothin' . . . but get old.

The past two years, or so . . . we've been having problems. Fighting more than usual. Typical stuff, y' know?

EMMETT

As I recall . . . ya'll was set on having some kids.

LARRY

I don't want to get into that.

EMMETT

Of course . . . it ain't no big thing. Shit like this comes up. And it's gon keep on comin' up, too.

LARRY

But it was never supposed to happen to me. I mean . . . I thought I was doing right by Cynthia. I was open with her. I talked to her. I gave her love. I . . .

(Silence)

I guess I don't understand the world as well as I thought I did.

EMMETT

To hell with all that. Why do it all have to fall on you? It could be that Cynthia just ain't shit.

LARRY

Emmett . . .

EMMETT

Keep in mind she did come my loins. I raised her. I know that girl. She's my daughter, but she got a way about her that made even me, her own goddamn daddy, think twice before looking at her once.

LARRY

Maybe I can try to work it out.

EMMETT

You'd do better to leave the bitch in the wind.

LARRY

Quit talking about her like that.

EMMETT

She's my blood. I'll speak of her in any way I choose.

LARRY

Not around me, you won't.

EMMETT

Or, what?

LARRY

Don't take it there, man.

EMMETT

Look, this is my property.

LARRY

Oh, fuck you, Emmett! FUCK YOU! Fuck your goddamn property! And fuck that damn Cynthia, too!

(He breaks down, weeping)

EMMETT

Scar . . . he just sat and got old. There comes a time when a man can't do nothing . . . but sit. And get old.

How'd you find out?

LARRY

I'd rather not say.

EMMETT

Listen: gon and do what's needed. If you desire to work it out . . . you got my blessing.

LARRY

I just can't – I can't even begin to think of what I'll do . . . how I'll live without her, Emmett. I swear to God, I can't.

(Larry exits. Blackout)

(Lights rise. Flashback: early 1970's. Emmett and Larry are sitting on lawn chairs by a lake before a fire.

They've just finished eating. It is early evening and they've been fishing. Now they sit beneath a flamed sunset, drinking beer. Emmett appears distraught.

Suddenly, he begins to cough, which subsides after a moment)

LARRY

You ain't gon die, are you?

(Emmett gives a short laugh and recovers. Pause)

EMMETT

Got the test back the other day.

LARRY

From the doctor?

(Emmett nods)

Well? *Are you gon die . . . ?*

EMMETT

Boy, please!

(Emmett takes a swallow of beer)

Scar's boys would learn the way of the gunfighter. And be known and feared throughout the Territory.

LARRY

While Scar sat t' home with his woman. And got old . . .

EMMETT

. . . Pretty soon . . . judging from that test . . . the doctor . . . he's gone put me on medication. Which is to say . . . won't be long before I'll need to go off this.

(He refers to the beer from which he takes another swallow)

Damn shame.

(They laugh. Silence)

LARRY
Cynthia and me . . . we talked last night.

EMMETT
Kids?

LARRY
She's ready.

EMMETT
More like passed ready.

LARRY
'Bout now . . . the time feels right.

EMMETT
And it always comes down to time, don't it?

(Larry nods, chuckles)

Scar's boys would learn the way of the gunfighter. And be known and feared throughout the Territory.

LARRY
While Scar sat t' home . . . and got old.

EMMETT
One thing I sure ain't looking forward to . . . is having to drop a whole lotta goddamn pills everyday.

LARRY
Which would be the least of your worries.

EMMETT
Depends on how you look at it.

(Silence)

LARRY

We . . . me and Cynthia . . . we're building an extension to the house. A little playroom. And a nursery. For the kids.

(Silence)

EMMETT

The two brothers were hired to protect an old homesteader and his wife from a gang of bandits.

LARRY

The youngest boy'd get himself wounded in that gunfight.

EMMETT

One of them'd come from behind and shoot him in the back.

LARRY

His older brother turning just in time to take the outlaw down by pluggin' him in the head . . .

EMMETT

. . . and saving his younger brothers poor hide when he took the bullet from his back with a hot knife.

(Emmett stands. Silence)

Y' know . . . back in Texas, daddy'd take us up to the river. To fish. They had something of everything in that river. Bass. Perch. Walleye. And catfish! Man! It won't nothing to see catfish jumping out the water. Made for some . . . some good eating.

LARRY

Next year, then . . . let's plan on going to Texas.

EMMETT

Yeah. I'd like that.

LARRY

Alright! It's a plan.

(Silence)

EMMETT

Tell me something: are . . . are y' happy?

LARRY

Wha'? . . .

EMMETT

I mean . . . you and Cynthia?

LARRY

Oh, yeah. I suppose so, yeah.

EMMETT

You sure?

LARRY

I guess.

EMMETT

The boys got called on to defend an old widow and her daughter from an evil band of brothers, five to be exact.

LARRY

The daughter, a young, pretty thing, was being preyed on by the eldest brother, a man of low and terrible disposition.

EMMETT

The two boys called the brothers out and met them at the bank of the Bloody Bottom Creek where they were given an ultimatum:

LARRY

“Leave the gal and her mama be and hightail it out of the Territory . . .

EMMETT

Or suffer the forthcoming wrath.”

LARRY

Those wicked brothers laughed at them boys.

EMMETT

And having received such a disrespectful response . . .

LARRY

. . . cut all five of those wicked scum with a mere five bullets. Each.

EMMETT

Those five never got to levy a single shot.

LARRY

The two young gunfighters were taught well.

EMMETT

Yes, indeed.

(Again, Emmett coughs. After a few moments, the coughing subsides)

Y' know, my daddy . . . that man never could get sick. With nothing. He lived and went on to die . . . and did not once fall into sickness. Not once.

LARRY

Cynthia told me he damn near hit a hundred.

EMMETT

That's right. Ninety-eight when he gave it up. Not to no sickness. Just to ol' age. Damn!

LARRY

You'll get there, ol' man. Quit worrying. It's bad for you.

EMMETT

Yeah. Worrying . . .

(Silence)

Cynthia . . . she keeps you satisfied, right?

(Larry is incredulous)

Well?

LARRY

We're happy, Emmett.

EMMETT

In all the right places?

(Silence)

Daddy . . . he pretty much raised us by himself, y' know? Mama . . . she'd left us when I won't but ten. Or maybe eleven. The truth is daddy . . . he put 'er out. She'd been running with another man. And daddy caught on . . . and put her out.

(Silence)

A man ought to know his wife. Now ain't that right?

LARRY

Emmett . . .

EMMETT

I ain't trying to start nothing –

LARRY

Let's talk about –

EMMETT

Something else?

LARRY

Emmett . . . what's wrong? *Are you dying?*

(Silence. Larry awaits a response)

EMMETT

That man she'd run off with . . . she'd leave him, too. After a time, she'd get sick. Deadly sick. And the preacher . . . he refused prayer for 'er. She'd been a dog, the preacher said. *Now let 'her die like one.*

(Emmett laughs bitterly)

I guess it's clear that you know your wife. And that's good. A man . . . a man ought to know his wife. Things work better in a house . . . when a man . . . AND a woman . . . know one and the other.

LARRY

Is Miss Louella alright?

EMMETT

I reckon. I mean . . . I don't know.

(Silence)

What I mean is . . . there might be trouble in my house. And I ain't talking about some sickness –

LARRY

What kind of trouble?

(Silence as Emmett ponders, then sits)

Is there something me and Cynthia can help with? . . . Emmett?

(Emmett is lost in thought. Silence. Lights fade)

(Early 1980's. Lights rise in a hospital room. Emmett lies in bed, encumbered with a breathing tube in his nose, a feeding tube, etc. After a moment, Larry enters. Emmett notices)

EMMETT

Where my flowers?

LARRY

You don't need no flowers. You ain't dead yet.

EMMETT

The ol' folks would always say *bring me my flowers while I yet live*.

LARRY

Well, from what I see, we got plenty of time –

EMMETT

For me to die?

LARRY

Stop this shit, Emmett. It ain't like you.

(Emmett is about to speak)

And don't feed me that, either. I know you only too damn well.

(Emmett chuckles. Silence)

EMMETT

I – I don't feel . . . I ain't feeling any pain.

LARRY

And that bothers you?

EMMETT

As a matter of, yes . . . Then again . . .

(Silence)

LARRY

Miss Louella said she'll be back in a minute.

EMMETT

She was here?

LARRY

You were sleeping.

EMMETT

I wonder . . . I wonder did I miss it.

LARRY

Miss what?

(Silence)

We talked for awhile . . . me and Miss Louella.

EMMETT

'Bout what? Me?

LARRY

Who or what else could be the focus of our conversation?

EMMETT

To hell with you.

LARRY

Let's not start this again, man . . .

EMMETT

Wha' chu come here for, anyway . . . ?

LARRY

You got to ask?

EMMETT

Sympathy's a bitch, ain't it?

LARRY

Which makes me the biggest fool this side of the damn river.

EMMETT

And you'll always be one.

LARRY

The same as you.

EMMETT

If I won't in this damn bed –

LARRY

Stop it!

(He calms down)

Miss Louella loves you, Emmett. The poor woman can't help herself. And I can't figure out why you're so down on her all of a sudden –

EMMETT

Won't nothin' sudden about it.

LARRY

Be that as it may, she . . . Emmett, the woman is going out of her skull –

EMMETT

She's pissed off, boy. Trust me on that.

(Larry scoffs)

I'm a man. And a man . . . a man ought to know his woman.

LARRY

And I got to say that you, Emmett, don't know as much as you think.

(Emmett is about to respond)

The same as me.

EMMETT

That woman . . . Scar's woman . . . there's talk she still visits that grave.

LARRY

Both graves.

EMMETT

That boy and his daddy . . . laying side by side.

(Silence)

There'd been trouble in my house. And it will be fixed soon enough.

(Larry is about to respond, then is silent)

You, uh . . . you heard from Cynthia?

LARRY

She's flying in tonight. Miss Louella didn't tell you nothin'?

(Silence)

I guess, maybe . . . she wanted to surprise you.

(Emmett laughs derisively)

EMMETT

The woman – Scar's woman . . . she had a tombstone made for her man. And her child.

LARRY

She had them buried side by side.

EMMETT

Just off the bank of the Bloody Bottom Creek.

LARRY

One tombstone for both men.

EMMETT

And that stone is yet there still.

LARRY

Still

EMMETT

There'd . . . there'd been trouble in my house.

LARRY

Which I'm sure is all resolved –

EMMETT

I'd beg to differ.

(Silence as Larry gives him a questioning look)

I'd been sorry . . . so sorry when you and Cynthia decided to go different ways. I'd been so sorry about that.

LARRY

We made out okay, though.

EMMETT

Still . . .

LARRY

Still.

(Silence)

Cynthia . . . she never apologized for what she did. When I confronted her with it . . . damn if she didn't so much as bat one eyelid.

EMMETT

Nothing.

LARRY

Not even a smirk.

EMMETT

Cynthia . . . she takes after her grandmother – my mother. Damn 'em!

(Silence)

There'd been trouble in my house.

LARRY

Emmett, please . . .

EMMETT

A young girl . . . I took up with a young girl . . . behind my Louella's back. Being a man, I took it for granted I'd be good at that kinda thing – doing the . . . the cheating thing behind the wifes back. Thought I'd take to it well. And Lord knows –

(Silence)

One morning, though . . . at breakfast . . . I'm sipping my coffee, reading my paper . . . and Louella, I looked at 'er . . . while she stirred them eggs. I looked at her. And she . . . she looked back at me. Didn't say a word. Just glanced up . . . for about a minute . . . and looked at me . . . then went on back to cooking the eggs.

LARRY

She found out, didn't she?

EMMETT

Never mumbled a word on it. Just threw that little look at me.

But I – *I didn't stop*. That's the clincher! I kept on with that child. Knowing what my wife . . . knowing for well what –

(He struggles)

I didn't stop it. I kept on with that girl. She knew. Yet I did not bring myself to . . . stop it.

(Emmett weeps silently)

I pray . . . I pray to die . . . before I have to listen to that woman curse me . . . curse me to the dog I am.

LARRY

Miss Louella . . . she still loves you. And she's going plumb out of her skull –

EMMETT

I ain't hearing this. Be quiet –

(Larry wants to respond)

I said shut it on up! Before I get ugly!

(Silence)

Maybe . . . I don't know . . . well, we – we might go on another fishing trip.

LARRY

I'd like that.

EMMETT

We'll see –

(Emmett is suddenly stricken)

LARRY

Ol' man . . . !

EMMETT

Cynthia . . .

LARRY

Hold on, Emmett.

EMMETT

. . . I'm so sorry it ain't worked out for you two . . .

LARRY

. . . It's fine . . .

EMMETT

. . . I'm so sorry – so sorry that I failed my daughter –

LARRY

Wait and tell that to her. She's coming tonight.

EMMETT

Tonight?

LARRY

Yeah! Tonight! Now hang on!

(Silence. Emmett's breathing becomes more relaxed)

EMMETT

Scar's tombstone . . . remains there still.

LARRY

On the bank of that creek.

EMMETT

They say the ghost of Scar's woman can be seen there . . .

LARRY

. . . visiting from time to time.

(Emmett looks Larry in the eye)

EMMETT

And y' know, I might . . . I just might go and visit it *with her*.

LARRY

Hang on, now . . .

EMMETT

In fact, we'll . . . we'll visit Scar's grave together. You and me. One of these days.

LARRY

Emmett . . .

(Emmett's breathing slows, then stops)

Emmett!

(Long silence)

EMMETT! . . . Damn.

(Larry is at a loss. Then –)

Yeah. One of these days, ol' man.

(Larry shuts Emmett's eyes)

One of these days.

(Larry sits by the lifeless Emmett in silence)

(Lights fade. End of play)

