

By: Judy Darnell

Hey, kiddo, you asleep?

Ah, it's just as well...don't know what I was going to say.  
Stumble through a 'sort of I'm sorry' routine  
in my best John Wayne manner.

I know you think I stay on your case too much  
and maybe I do, but it's for your own good.

Guess this old tongue's pretty treacherous at times though, isn't it?  
Of course, you've got a smart mouth on you, too.  
Give as good as you get.  
I don't mind that...kinda enjoy it, even.

It's when you get quiet that I can't handle.  
The way you withdraw, and sort of curl up into yourself.  
That's when I know I've gone too far...said too much.

I don't mean to hurt you like that.  
But at least you know I care, don't you?  
I know it's a cliché, but it's true...I wouldn't yell if I didn't care.  
Now, don't ask me why I care, cause I'll be damned if I know.

Talk about your original odd couple.

All I know is...you've become a very important part of my life.  
Friend, comrade...the son that could have been...  
I had dreaded retirement...all those empty hours...  
but you've brought this house back to life.

Oh, you can be a pain in the ass sometimes  
but, by God, you're never dull.

Keeps me on my toes, just trying to keep an eye on you.

Oh, hell  
I know I can never say any of this stuff out loud,  
that's just not my way, kid.

But I think...I hope...  
you see through all the yelling, the smart remarks,  
and recognize them for what they are.

You should...you really should,  
cause you're my friend, my comrade...  
my son that could have been...

I love you, kiddo.

Sleep well.

THE ONE WHO GOES AHEAD

"I'm scared, kid."

That's a joke, McCormick.  
You're supposed to laugh.

Judge Hardcase.  
The name strikes terror in the  
Hearts of criminals.  
That's no exaggeration--  
Remember, it did in you, kiddo  
And you weren't even a crook.

I've faced 'em all  
Either behind the bench  
Or in the streets  
And I wasn't afraid  
At least no more than  
That healthy dose of fear  
Which keeps us from being fools--  
Most of the time.

I've banged the gavel on their  
Futures, kid.  
Some were sullen  
Some were hysterical  
One was Weed Randall.

He didn't even frighten me.

When I felt that bullet hit  
Saw the life pouring from my chest  
I thought I was gonna die  
But I wasn't scared.

I knew what had happened  
Who had done it  
And why.

But this damned thing  
Inside me now--  
It's the worst criminal I've  
Ever faced.  
Because it's stealing my life  
And I can't do a damned thing  
To stop it.

I can't beat it in a fistfight  
And my shotgun is useless.  
You can't even help, kid  
Although I know you would  
If you could.

I'm gonna die  
Not with a bang  
Like I always thought  
But with a damned little whimper.

That's a helluva way to go  
For a man who's spent  
His whole life fighting--  
Poverty as a kid  
Scum when I was a cop  
And more scum as a judge.

All those battles I've won  
But the war's going to  
The other side.  
How can I fight  
What I can't even see?

I'm scared, kid.  
Scared to go to that big  
Courtroom up there.  
I've never been on the other  
Side of the bench before.  
What if my wrongs outnumber  
My rights?

The Bible says, "Turn the  
Other cheek."  
You know damned well  
I've never been able to  
Do that.

There's only two things I've  
Really done right in my life.  
Marrying Nancy  
And taking you in.  
Maybe they'll count for something.

I'm scared, kid  
Scared of this thing  
Running through my veins,  
Scared of the day I'll close  
My eyes  
And never open 'em again,  
And scared of what comes  
After that.

But the biggest fear  
You'll never know  
Because I can't let  
You know.

I'm afraid, Mark...  
Afraid to go alone.

THE ONE WHO'S LEFT BEHIND

"I am coming apart at the seams here.  
I got this...hole inside me."

Oh God, Judge, don't die!

I'm sitting here  
Trying to be calm  
And my stomach feels all hollow  
Like Mammoth Cave.

Am I a jinx or something?  
Everybody I love has left me.  
My mom,  
Flip,  
My dad  
Two died and the other one  
Just...left.

I can't lose you, too.

This isn't fair!  
I was never supposed to like  
Ol' Hardcase  
Or...love you.  
What went wrong?

Judge, I still need you  
You're the one man standing  
Between me  
And loneliness.  
I thought I could depend on you.

Damn it, how can you do this  
To me?  
How can you die on me?

This is all your fault, Hardcase!  
If you hadn't made me play  
Tonto  
To your damned  
Lone Ranger  
I wouldn't be here now.

I wouldn't be choking  
On my food  
Unable to swallow  
Because of this...this ache.  
Not only in my throat  
But all over my body.

It hurts so bad.  
I feel like I'm dying, too.

It's just not fair.  
I had to grow up  
When my dad left  
And again  
When Mom died.  
God, don't I ever get to  
Be young?

I'm scared, Judge.  
Scared of the next six months  
How am I gonna get up  
Every morning  
And face you  
Without falling apart?

I'm scared of  
That Day.  
It's gonna come too quick  
For both of us.  
When it does, I'm afraid  
I'll start crying  
And never stop.

But the biggest fear  
You'll never know  
Because I can't let  
You know.

I'm afraid, Judge...  
Afraid of being left behind.