

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SHAVE

CHARACTERS

SHEM *is in his mid-60s*

LEPPO *in his 70s.*

SHEM and LEPPO are brothers.

MERLE STUBBLE *an experienced barber in his mid-30s who has finally taken the leap and opened his own shop. STUBBLE is Cambodian-American from Lowell, a burly guy, heavily tattooed with a shaved head and sculpted growth on his face which seems to shift from day to day like the magnetic filings on "Wooly Willy."*

TIME

Now

PLACE

THE STUBBLE, a barbershop which recently opened in downtown Proctor MA. The shop is owned and operated by MERLE STUBBLE.

SYNOPSIS

"I'm forgetting how many wars I've forgotten."

Scene 5: THANK YOU FOR YOUR SHAVE

(The STUBBLE Barbershop, a recent addition to downtown Proctor MA, is owned and operated by MERLE STUBBLE an experienced barber in his mid-30s who has finally taken the leap and opened his own shop.

It's a two-chair shop – STUBBLE plans to hire an apprentice – with an odd assortment of sports memorabilia and lumberjack tools on the walls. A moosehead is displayed at eye-level prominently on the wall over the counter, which holds jars of all sizes, combs, clippers, a towel warmer for shaves, etc. There are chairs along the wall for waiting or just sitting and talking, but the shop hasn't been open enough to attract regulars.

There is a haphazard pile of clothes, boxes, personal effects, and a suitcase by the front door SL. On top of this heap is a small open crate of Asian Pears.

It's late morning and even though there's a pile of hair on the floor around STUBBLE's chair, it's been slow. STUBBLE seems frozen, as he leans on his broom staring at the hair on the floor.

SHEM and LEPPPO stand silently watching the inert STUBBLE. LEPPPO is a little uncomfortable, as if he's intruding in a dream. SHEM is impatient, because he's here to drop off LEPPPO for his weekly shave and get on with his other errands.

Finally SHEM crosses to the front door and opens and closes it again, as if entering for the first time.)

LEPPPO

Stubble?

SHEM

Hey, Stubble. You're open right?

LEPPO

We were here at 7:30.

STUBBLE

(Not looking up) Sorry.

SHEM

So you're finally open. Right?

STUBBLE

Hours changed.

SHEM

What are you lookin' at? Is this a CSI something?

*(SHEM tries to hand him a \$20 bill.
STUBBLE just looks at the pile of hair.
SHEM puts the money on the counter.)*

STUBBLE

7:30's too early to open. Nobody wants their hair cut at 7:30.

LEPPO

The sign says –

STUBBLE

Gotta change the sign.

SHEM

Who the hell wants their hair cut at 7:30?

STUBBLE

Commuters on their way to the train –

SHEM

And how did that work for you?

LEPPO

Towels warmed up?

STUBBLE

Not today.

LEPPO

Not today?

SHEM

Shoulda opened earlier, not later. For the commuters. Maybe if you served breakfast.

STUBBLE

I don't think the Board of Health would –

SHEM

A continental breakfast. Don't sell it. Just offer it. *A complimentary continental* breakfast.

LEPPO

Need a shave for the parade.

STUBBLE

Sorry Leppo. I can't shave you today.

SHEM

You shave him every week --

STUBBLE

My hands are shaking too much.

LEPPO

You nervous?

STUBBLE

No. My girlfriend –

LEPPO

My hands shake. Don't know what it is – Parkinson's? HYPOglycemia? VA at Bedford did all kinds of tests. "It remains undetermined."

SHEM

Agent Orange.

LEPPO

That's why I need you to shave me. (*LEPPO holds up a shaking hand.*)

STUBBLE

Look. My ex-girlfriend -- god that sucks -- my ex-girlfriend just dumped me. (*Points to boxes and suitcase*) Flat. Just dumped all my stuff.

LEPPO

Okay.

STUBBLE

Like a drive-by. She says there was nothing left. Of my stuff. Of us.

SHEM

He needs a shave for the Memorial Day parade.

STUBBLE

Says she's found someone new.

LEPPO

Vietnam.

STUBBLE

Did not see that coming.

SHEM

Stubble doesn't know anything about that. It's the forgotten war.

STUBBLE

I know Vietnam. I gotta find another place to live. Tonight.

LEPPO

Korea is the forgotten war.

SHEM

I'm forgetting how many wars I've forgotten.

STUBBLE

This is so screwed up. I'm sorry but I gotta close. I can't shave you today Leppo. Sorry. (*STUBBLE goes over and shakes LEPPO's hand.*) Thank you for your service.

LEPPO

Can you shave me tomorrow?

STUBBLE

I don't know.

SHEM

Don't do that.

STUBBLE

What? Got to. Close.

SHEM

That "Thank you for your service."

LEPPO

The parade is Monday.

STUBBLE

I DUNNO.

SHEM

You call the VA. I call ‘em for Leppo. You’re lucky to get a live one. And when you do: Every time someone answers -- “Thank you for your service” – every time they hang up -- “Thank you for your service.”

“Your file is buried under an avalanche of paper. Thank you for your service”.

“I am filing this conversation on a friggin’ etch-a-sketch. Thank you for your service”.

“We are cutting his counseling and upping his meds. Thank you for your service”.

“We don’t know what is wrong with him and he’ll die before we ever do. Thank you for your service.”

It’s not my service. It’s his service. And if you really appreciate his service then you return it in kind. With service. You’re overwhelmed, VA? Then you call for help. You don’t wait until it festers up like a boil and splatters all over the newspapers. And television. And congressional hearings.

(SHEM starts pacing, agitated.)

SHEM (CONT’D)

Yeah. That helps. Let’s bury an avalanche of caseloads in a congressional hearing. And sprinkle it with a couple of resignations. And then duct tape the whole disaster and stuff it in a time capsule departing for – what? – how about the year 2214?

Then Future Man who opens the thing will be so advanced and evolved – like he’ll have this huge head -- and he’ll know how to defuse the toxic indifference from the dark ages of the 21st century.

(SHEM kicks the suitcase by the door out of frustration.)

STUBBLE

HEY!

(STUBBLE goes to replace the suitcase.)

SHEM

THE ONE THING THAT ISN’T TOO BIG TO FAIL.

(STUBBLE notices something missing from the pile of his stuff. He lifts the crate of Asian Pears and rifles through the pile.)

STUBBLE

Where are my --

SHEM

He just needs a shave.

STUBBLE

I had a case of mangos. Where are --

SHEM

You know what Agent Orange can do to a man?

STUBBLE

No.

SHEM

He came back orange as a cheeto. You should have seen him.

(LEPPO looks at SHEM. That wasn't the case.)

STUBBLE

I had nothing to do with that. *(STUBBLE realizes his mangoes are gone.)* Aw, what the---

SHEM

He did it for you.

STUBBLE

He didn't even know me. I wasn't even born then. *(TO LEPPO)* I've only had the shop for three months -- when did you meet me?

LEPPO

When I came to get a shave.

STUBBLE

I had a case of mangoes –

LEPPO

I need a shave for the parade.

STUBBLE

I CANNOT SHAVE YOU TODAY. DO YOU HEAR ME? AM I UNDERWATER?
LOOK AT MY HANDS.

(STUBBLE slams the case of Asian Pears against the barber chair. The case splinters and Asian Pears roll out in all directions.)

STUBBLE then punches the moosehead. Hard. The lower half flies sideways, the top half tears off the wall and falls onto the counter spilling all the jars and equipment. It breaks into pieces.)

STUBBLE

OW.

(STUBBLE rubs his hand – the moosehead was like cement.)

STUBBLE (CONT'D)

Ow. Now get out. Please. Come back next week. I'll be fine. Or I'll be gone. Isn't it time for lunch? My hand's swollen I can't hold a razor. Not today.

(LEPPO gets up slowly.)

LEPPO

I thought it was shaking.

SHEM

What'd that moose ever do to you?

STUBBLE

It's dead.

LEPPO

Is it still shaking?

STUBBLE

It's dead.

LEPPO

Your hand.

STUBBLE

It's pulsating. The pain radiates.

*(SHEM looks at the crash-landed
moosehead)*

SHEM

You kill it?

*(SHEM is looking for something in the
broken counter on the floor.)*

STUBBLE

It's a hundred years old. At least. *(To LEPPO)* The pain shoots out of me. Like a radiator. Can't you see it? *(To SHEM)* It's filled with cement. It was dead before I was born.

LEPPO

Like Vietnam.

(SHEM finds his \$20 bill and pockets it.)

SHEM

C'mon, Leppo, let's go. You don't want him on your neck with a razor today.

(LEPPO, who is not a hugging kinda guy, goes to shake STUBBLE's hand, remembers it is injured, and chooses an arm around the shoulder. Though awkward, this is not ironic.)

SHEM

Hellavu way to run a business, Stubble. Thanks for your service.

(SHEM and LEPPO exit.)

As soon as the door closes, STUBBLE flips the sign to CLOSED. He pulls the shades. The room is dim.

He picks up the pears, using the front of his shirt like a basket. He sits in his chair in the shadows with the pears in his lap, rubbing his hand.

He eats a pear.

Lights fade to black.)

END OF SCENE