

OVER THE HEDGE

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

- ROGER                      An older southern gentleman, kindly but proper, and self-appointed welcoming committee to those who cross over the hedge.
- BILLY                      A younger southern male who could be either an old boy or a young adult depending on how the director wants to spin the story.
- HANK                      An older southern gentleman, wistfully recognizing that he had no idea what he gave up when he agreed to act like an adult.

Note: If desired, genders can be switched. It is recommended that if a switch is made, all genders be switched.

SETTING

A field with a hedge running down the middle of it.

TIME

Any time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century or later.

## SCENE

*(The stage is divided by a low hedge. On one side – the adult side – stands Roger, an older southern gentleman, casually dressed. On the other side – the child side – enters Billy, also casually dressed.)*

Mornin' Billy!

ROGER

Mornin' Mr. Eisley!

BILLY

Billy, I told ya' you can call me Roger.

ROGER

I know, Mr. Eisley.

BILLY

So what brings ya' roun' t'day?

ROGER

Nothin', sir.

BILLY

Nothin'.

ROGER

*(Billy shrugs. After a moment, Roger motions that Billy can come over to his side of the hedge. Billy considers it, but then shakes his head.)*

I see.

Don't mean no disrespect, mister—

BILLY

None taken, Billy. None taken.

ROGER

It's just that ya' always offer, and I never... *(He shrugs.)*

BILLY



ROGER  
S'that so?

BILLY  
That's right, Mr. Eisley.

ROGER  
Can't help but notice this is the fourth day in a row I seen you walkin' by the hedge.

*(Billy shrugs.)*

What you scared of, son?

*(Billy shrugs again.)*

Must be somethin'.

BILLY  
I ain't scared. Just... I like it over here.

ROGER  
Most your friends already come over, Billy.

BILLY  
I know.

ROGER  
Must be getting' mighty lonely over there.

BILLY  
I'm alright.

ROGER  
Uh huh.

BILLY  
I am.

ROGER  
Didn't say nothin'. Just said *uh huh*.

BILLY  
Well, I am.

ROGER  
Alright.

*(The two stand in silence for a while, looking at each other.)*

Let me ask you somethin', Billy.

BILLY  
What's that?

ROGER  
Whatcha holdin' onto over there? Really.

*(Billy just looks at Roger, guarded.)*

You know you can't stay young forever.

BILLY  
Watch me.

ROGER  
You wait too long, well...

BILLY  
Well what?

ROGER  
You fall behind.

BILLY  
What's so bad 'bout that? Maybe I don't wanna race ahead.

ROGER  
S'that so?

BILLY  
What's so great about *bein' ahead* anyways?

ROGER  
Lot's of things. Money...

BILLY  
Money ain't so great.

Power...

ROGER

Power?

BILLY

Power t'make things the way you want 'em.

ROGER

I can do that now.

BILLY

S'that so?

ROGER

Yeah.

BILLY

An' how do you do that?

ROGER

Cuz I got magic.

BILLY

Ain't no such thing as magic, Billy. You should know that by now.

ROGER

Is too.

BILLY

*(Roger shakes his head.)*

You just don't 'member it.

ROGER

You just foolin' yerself, son. It ain't *real*. Real power... now that's different.

*(Billy's eyes narrow.)*

Power's *me* bein' able to lock *you* up, and *you* ain't able to do nothin' 'bout it.

*(Billy just stares at Roger.)*



ROGER (CONT)

What you got over there compares to that?

BILLY

Mystery. Adventure. Fairies. Rainbows—

ROGER

I got rainbows.

BILLY

No you don't, Mr. Eisley. All you got is colors.

ROGER

That's what rainbows are, son. Just colors.

BILLY

No, they ain't. You think you got power, but you don't. You so concerned about controllin' everybody and everything, but you lost control o' yourself. It's like I said, you ain't got no rainbows. Not no more... and you don't even know it.

ROGER

Oh, Billy. You just foolin' yourself.

BILLY

Maybe. Or maybe *y'all* just foolin' yourselves.

ROGER

So you just gonna stay over there forever, then...

BILLY

Don't see why not.

ROGER

And when they come to take you away?

BILLY

Take me 'way where?

ROGER

Someplace for the loonies who... frolic around, pretendin' they see fairies.

BILLY

I don't frolic.

ROGER

No. No, you don't. Not yet, anyway.

*(Roger stares at Billy hard.)*

Come on, son. Come over the hedge.

*(Billy considers it, his face a scowl. Suddenly offstage on Billy's side comes the sound of children laughing. Billy turns to look in that direction, and smiles at what he sees.)*

BILLY

Thank you kindly, Mr. Eisley, but... the answer's still no.

ROGER

There ain't no Neverland, Billy. No Peter Pan, no Tinkerbell. Them's just stories.

BILLY

I like stories. No sir, I'll stay on this side a while longer.

ROGER

It ain't right, Billy.

BILLY

Who's to say—

ROGER

*(Suddenly angry...)* It... ain't... right. William.

BILLY

Name's Billy. And I'll be stayin' on this side, if you don't mind, Mr. Eisley.

*(Billy backs up, and exits. As he's leaving, Hank enters from the adult side of the hedge.)*

HANK

That Billy?

Was.

ROGER

*(Hank looks longingly at the other side of the hedge.  
He takes a step towards it, but Roger puts a hand on his  
shoulder.)*

What you think your doin', Hank?

HANK

I just...

ROGER

You can't go there.

HANK

I... I mean...

ROGER

Hank, put your head on straight. What's the matter with you?

HANK

Look at it over there.

ROGER

I look every day. Ain't nothin' but foolish games b'yond that there hedge.

*(We can hear the sounds of children laughing from the  
child side. Hank watches, and a wistful, remorseful,  
sad smile comes to his face.)*

HANK

You remember?

*(Roger looks at Hank, uncomprehending.)*

Remember laughin' like that?

ROGER

Go home, Hank. You're drunk.

I ain't.

HANK

Yes you are.

ROGER

HANK

Why don't we go back there? Back to the other side?

ROGER

What's the matter with you? You gone senile or somethin'?

HANK

I just...

ROGER

What you think Debra's gonna say if you cross back over there? Hmm?

HANK

I just...

ROGER

Go home, Hank. Put your head on straight an' go home.

*(Billy comes back on stage, but stays near the edge, watching.)*

HANK

I just...

ROGER

I seen your lawn, Hank. Weeds croppin' up. Neighbors are talkin'.

*(Hank looks at Billy, who returns the look with a compassionate sadness.)*

Hank.

HANK

Yeah. Yeah.

ROGER

Give Debra my regards.

*(Hank takes a last long look over at Billy, then turns around and starts to exit.)*

HANK

Yeah.

*(Hank exits. Billy enters and partway to Roger.)*

ROGER

Come back, I see.

*(Billy nods thoughtfully.)*

Realized there really ain't no choice, didn't ya'?

*(Roger and Billy look at each other for a long time. There's no hatred or negativity, but a high tension. Finally...)*

It ain't about *if*, Billy, just a matter of *when*.

*(There is another short moment of silence.)*

Ain't no choice.

*(Billy shakes his head, and extends a hand. Roger takes it.)*

BILLY

There's always a choice, Mr. Easley.

*(Billy releases Roger's hand and starts to walk away. Just before exiting, he turns back.)*

You're welcome back any time, ya' know. Ain't never too late.

*(They share a final look, and then Roger shakes his head in disappointment. Billy exits. Roger stares at him, and a moment later the sound of children laughing can be heard again from the child side. Doubt rises into Roger's face as he finds himself tempted. Then suddenly he turns away and strides off on the adult side. Lights out.)*