

THE FALLING AND THE RISING

Libretto by Jerre Dye
Composer Zach Redler

all rights reserved
copyright REDLER/DYE
February 27, 2017
revised April, 2017
revised June, 2017
revised August 2017
revised July 2018

Lights up on a female SOLDIER wearing desert fatigues. She drops her pack and rifle beside a small table and chair.

She takes a photograph of her daughter from the pocket of her fatigues and stares for a moment.

She sits, takes out a laptop, opens it, and turns it on. As the computer powers up, the entire space illuminates with the image from her desktop- her face on a video camera plastered the length of the entire playing space. She checks her look in the laptop camera, removes her hat, and smooths the edges of her slicked back, regulation hair. She looks at the photograph one last time and places it on the table. She stares into the video capture for a second, breathes, and pushes "record".

LONG DISTANCE- a female soldier sends a message home

Soldier-

"Happy birthday to you
Happy birthday to you
Happy Birthday, baby girl..."
...or almost Happy Birthday.

It's dark outside where you are.
Like, 2 am where you are.
It's spring outside where you are now.
So, maybe send some spring my way. Okay?
This desert here could use some green.
I miss the air... that perfect light.
I'm desperate for some spring out here.
More desperate than you'll ever know.
But even more to see your face.
Oh, what I wouldn't give
to be there on your special day.
You're so much more than spring to me.
You're so much more than spring.

I know I swore we'd Skype t'day.
I swore we'd talk no matter what.
But duty calls. You know the score.
How well you know.
Too well you know.
I'm on patrol all day, sweet girl
and won't be back 'til nightfall.
By then, your party's long since done.
I know. I know. I promised you.
I know you're bummed as hell.

Me too. Me too.
 Try not to be too mad at Mom.
 Forgive me if you can.
 When I'm back home I'll make it up.
 I promise you. I'll make it up to you.

The SOLDIER pauses the recording. We see the "pause" on the screen above.

I know you're sound asleep right now-
 all warm inside that bed of yours,
 asleep inside a dream, no doubt.
 Not even quite thirteen, just yet.
 Just waiting for thirteen.

She picks up her daughter's picture again and continues singing. The "pause" slowly morphs into baby pictures. The world opens up into a more self-reflective place.

When you were just a baby,
 I'd sneak inside your room at night.

She refers to the photograph while moving freely about the room.

You know I couldn't help myself.
 I watched you sleeping in your crib
 and marveled at the sight of you.
 Your tiny chest would rise and fall,
 would fall and rise,
 and rise and fall.
 So small. So small.
 Just you and me.
 Just me and you against the world.

I stood there in that darkened room.
 and watched you dreaming all night long.

Talks to the photograph again.

You just can't know the feeling, girl.
 Each sound, each move, each sigh profound.
 You took my breath away that night
 You did. You do. You always will.

Leaves photograph.

As I watched you fall and rise.

You will rise and fall
and fall and rise.
So tall.
Just you and me.
Just me and you.

Back to the photograph again.

And while I watched you sleeping,
I couldn't help but wonder, "What...?"
"What's in that precious head of yours?
What dreams are in that little head?"
"That precious little head."
It's then and there the thread... it broke.

Leaves photograph.

I realized there for the first time then-
that all those dreams inside your head?
They belong to you.
You did not need your Mom to dream.
You rise and fall alone, my love.
You fall and rise alone.
But still. But still.
I cannot make this distance up.
Oh, what I wouldn't give... oh God.
What I wouldn't give to watch you sleeping sound just now-
to watch you dreaming of...

***The SOLDIER un-pauses the recording and continues with her video message.
Her face reappears above.***

...thirteen.
So soon you'll be thirteen.
Thirteen!
How can it be?
How can that be?
I should there for you right now.
I should there for you.
A better Mom and a better soldier.
The two things are just so intertwined.
And so it feels impossible... impossible.
But love just doesn't go away.
I don't know how to do this now.
I signed up. I made this choice. I took a vow.
And here I am. And here we are.

If I could leave right now I would.
 Hero is a tricky word.
 You deserve a joy... just joy and spring for you.
 Just joy and spring for you.

She puts the picture back into her uniform pocket.

Just know that when you blow those candles out...
 (all thirteen candles in just one breath)
 that I'll always be there, sweet girl.
 I'm always there beside you.
 That's how us Mommas do, ya know?
 We're always there.
 I'm always there.
 Goddamn, my silly stupid heart.
 I'm sorry.
 You hate it when I curse.
 I'm the worst.

She checks her watch "oh shit!"

My time is up.
 I have to go.
 A soldier's never late, ya know.

She puts on her cap.

I'm off to make you proud, I hope.
 Not half as proud as you've made me.
 There go the tears.
 Here come the tears.
 I'll go before look a mess.
 I'm signing off, sweet girl of mine.
 I'm signing off, my grown-up girl.
 Just don't grow up too fast, okay?
 Go slow.
 Go slow.
 And save some little girl for me,
 'cause Mom'll be home really soon.

She kisses her two fingers and touches the screen, ends the recording, grabs her rucksack and gun. Lights close in on the Soldier's face.

Your Mom will be home...

EXPLOSION!

Darkness. Reality shatters. Tumbling visual/auditory chaos as the table, chair and computer disappear inside flashes of light simulating an I.E.D explosion. We experience both the explosion itself, as well a collision of disparate imagery shaken loose inside the SOLDIER's head... deployment, desert images, her battle buddies, light, glass, fragments, sand, blood, medevac Blackhawk, childhood memories, and images of her daughter. All this happens in rapid succession, in response to the musical composition. This time tunnel explosion culminates in the sound of dust and debris falling from the sky- a cascade of delicate sand resolving into a terrific silence.

Lights slowly come up on a hospital bed facing upstage. The head of the bed is slightly raised, away from audience view. DOCTORS and/or NURSES (4) in scrubs slowly enter on all sides. Perhaps an operation room practical drops slowly from the sky. They all gather around the patient resting in the bed (SOLDIER). The light in the hospital room is very dim. The DOCTORS and NURSES appear almost as apparitions. We can barely make out their faces at first. Perhaps we hear the sound of a respirator or a heart monitor incorporated as music. They conference around the bed as the patient breathes deeply.

(super title appears "WEEK ONE: COMA INDUCTION")

PROGNOSIS

Doctor 1-

female soldier

29

options are diminishing

Doctor 2-

another roadside I.E.D.

several soldiers lost their lives

Doctor 3-

the patient has been stabilized

extensive trauma to the head

her frontal lobe is compromised

Doctor 4-

blunt force trauma quite severe

for now, prognosis is unclear

All Doctors-

resolve or die

resolve or die

The doctors and nurses return to the bed with urgency.

Doctor 1-

the brain expands inside the skull

Doctor 2-

with nowhere left to go but down

Doctor 3-

her spinal chord must decompress

Doctor 4-

administering propofol

They rotate the bed, revealing the soldier.

The SOLDIER lurches suddenly from the bed, panicked.

There are two separate realities at play here-

one belonging to the soldier and another reality for the DOCTORS and NURSES.

Soldier-

N00000000000!

She is an animal, trapped. She scrambles to the foot of the bed.

The DOCTORS do not seem to see this, but instead continue with their work.

SOLDIER becomes distracted by the lack of eye/responsiveness of the DOCTORS

and NURSES. They cannot see her standing there. An IV dangles from the

SOLDIER's right arm.

Soldier-

Where am I?

(no response)

I said, WHERE AM I?

(no response)

Doctors 1 and 2-

slow the pulse

Doctors 3 and 4-

must slow the pulse

Doctors 1 and 2-

cool the brain

Doctors 3 and 4-

must cool the brain

Doctors 1 and 2-
calm the mind

Doctors 3 and 4-
must calm the mind

Doctors 1 and 2-
ease the pain

Doctors 3 and 4-
must ease the pain

DOCTORS AND NURSES FREEZE.

SOLDIER rips out IV.

Quick flashes of explosions in reverse are projected across the entirety of the space- more disorientation and mystery. Inside her brain.

Soldier- (a sharp discovery)

Wait.

It's coming back.

Flash of light

A quick jarring image from the blast.

wall of sound

A quick jarring image from the blast.

the pain

A quick jarring image from the blast.

searing heat

Images return in escalation.

earth and sand like falling rain

a haze of smoke

The images stop for a brief moment.

and then the screams

Fast succession of imagery of her battle buddies.

the screams...

The images stop abruptly.

My team? My guys!
Where is my team?!

***DOCTORS AND NURSES SUDDENLY UNFREEZE.
They turn bed again.***

Doctor 1-
Heart rate slighted elevated

Doctor 2-
propofol

Doctor 3-
midazolam

Doctor 2 and 3-
migs per kilo one point two

Doctor 4-
increasing level, one point three
to hold her in suspended state
to hold her in suspended state

Charts, dosage information, a surging human bloodstream being injected with drugs are projected across the space.

Soldier-
SOMEONE HELP MY GUYS OUT HERE!
MY MEN ARE DOWN!
THERE'S WOUNDED HERE!
HELLO?

(nothing)

HELLO!

(nothing)

Doctor 1-
Patient still in some distress.

Soldier-
I have to go!

Doctor 1-
Pressure slowing

All- slowing

Soldier-

I have to get back to see my girl.
You have to tell her I'm alive.

Doctor 2-

unconsciousness in
FIVE...

Soldier-

No.

Doctor 2-

FOUR...

Soldier-

No

Doctor 2 and 3-

THREE

Doctor 2 and 3 and 4-

TWO...

DOCTORS AND NURSES MOVE SLOW MOTION. MAJOR SHIFT.

The universe begins sounding like sedation taking hold. The medical/bloodstream projections dissolve into a clear, blue sky or some strange liquid space-a kind of visual sedation fantasia.

Soldier-

What's happening?

Doctor 1-

Give the soldier time to heal.

Soldier-

I feel like none of this is real.

Doctor 1-

a sleep of sorts

Doctor 2-

sleep taking course

All Doctors-
suspend her in a quiet space

The SOLDIER walks unseen among the doctors.

Doctor 3-
some time to heal

Doctor 4-
some time to kill

All Doctors-
a place where she can find her way

The SOLDIER reaches into her pocket to retrieve her daughter's picture form before.

Soldier-
Your tiny chest would rise and fall...

All Doctors:
All untethered from the world.

Soldier-
and fall and rise ...

All Doctors-
All unraveled from the pain for just awhile.

The DOCTORS/NURSES move into darkness- all but two.

Soldier-
For just awhile.
Just don't forget that I'm still here.

All Doctors-
coma is induced

DOCTOR 1 speaks to nurse.

Doctor 1-
A TBI is touch and go.
Should notify her next of kin.
Must stabilize to send her home.

DOCTOR 1 breaks the wall, speaking directly to Solider. A weird moment. Lights shift.

Doctor 1-

When you return, the world will still be here...

DOCTOR looks pointedly at SOLDIER, breaking the convention. SOLDIER overwhelmed by this otherworldly gaze.

Doctor 1-

... right here.

All exit but SOLDIER.

Soldier- WAIT!

The IV dangles from the SOLDIER's arm. She removes it. Lights reveal the pathway of the IV tubing- extending offstage left. The IV line grows taut like a fish on a line. The SOLDIER slowly pulls up the slack in the IV line, hand over hand stage left. The hospital bed is whisked away into darkness. The SOLDIER realizes the IV tubing is attached to a chair. She pulls it onstage. She is confused.

Quite inexplicably, a female soldier (TOLEDO) enters up left.

TOLEDO crosses in front of the SOLDIER as if she were a ghost.

TOLEDO stops center at attention. Then, at ease. The SOLDIER bears witness to the following with curiosity and confusion.

(super title appears "COMA, WEEK TWO: FINDNG STABLIZATION)

Soldier-

I think I'm kinda lost right now,

'cause none of this feels real.

Excuse me.

Excuse me.

Can you tell me where I am

or where are we are?

Hello?

TOLEDO a female soldier speaks to an army counselor

Toledo-

I'm not gonna lie

or sit here and deny the fact

that I don't want to be here now.

I don't.

Soldier-

I don't recognize this place...or you.

Toledo-

Getting shrunk is not my thing,
 or being all-emotional.
 So, no offense, alright?
 I'm sure you're awesome at your job-
 Lobbin' questions left and right.
 I'm not uptight. Don't wanna fight.
 I just hold my cards too close.
 I coast through life emotion-free.
 See, that's just me. Okay. That's just me.
 Some truths you gotta learn to own.
 And I'm a grown-ass women.
 So, I flat-out just don't spill my guts.
 That door got shut some time ago.
 So, I don't know just what to say.
 Some folks are just not built that way.
 I'm not cut out for all this.
 Am I dismissed?
 Yep. I should go.

Soldier-

Wait. Excuse me. Where am I? Who are you?

Toledo-

I need to go.

TOLEDO starts to leave.

What?
 Start with my name?

TOLEDO chuckles.

Okay. My name's "Toledo".
 I guess the army is to blame.
 It happened on my first deployment.

(a moment)

"Where you from?" Sergeant hollered.
 "Toledo, Sarge!" I yelled back.
 He had a knack for nicknames, see.
 And that one, it just stuck like glue
 so you make-do as best you can.
 Been "Toledo" ever since.

Toledo sits in the chair.

Bound for combat my whole life.
 My smallest brother is six foot three
 and I'm the only girl.
 Four brothers and I'm number five.
 I barely made it out alive.
 Grew up roughhouse, playin' sports.
 Basketball, ran track an' all.
 Did everything my brothers did.
 They said, "jump". I said, "How high?"

Toledo moves around, loosening up a little.

Back in school I'd talk some smack
 and pick a fight just 'cause I could
 and dared the person whoop my ass.
 Meet me after science class behind the gym.
 Poor them. Poor them.
 They'd come for me and turn around
 with my four brothers looking down.
 Not that I ain't all tough as hell.
 Don't get me wrong.
 I'm plenty strong.
 Where I come from that's how you roll.
 That's how the system works, ya know?
 So there I was all badass...one badass city girl,
 waltzin' into basic training
 acting liked I owned the place.
 All pokerfaced and slick as hell.
 Wasn't nobody... nobody gonna tell me shit.
 And sure as hell not how to walk, and talk, and sleep, and stand, and think
 And walk, and talk, and sleep, and stand, and think
 And walk, and talk, and sleep, and stand, and think
 and be.
 Not me. Aw, hell no.
 But I was wrong, by God, I was wrong.
 The Army showed me what was tough
 and how my best was not enough.
 You push pass BEST to BETTER, see?

Soldier-

Best to better.

Soldier and Toledo-

The Army showed that all to me...

Toledo-

who I was and am and will be.

Toledo-

Taught me about family.
And how a

Soldier and Toledo-

family's more than blood.
It's deeper down than bone.

Toledo-

Before... four brothers had my back
But now, I got an Army.

Soldier-

I have an Army.

Toledo-

See, now I got an Army.
Every one, they got my back- those men and women out there.

Soldier-

Every one.

Toledo-

Yeah, EVERY one.
Every single freakin' one would give their life for mine.

Soldier and Toledo-

Would give their life for mine.
Would give their life...

Toledo-

for mine.

TOLEDO paces on last time.

And did.
And do.
And will.
And have.
They sacrificed their life for mine.

They sacrificed it yesterday.

Soldier and Toledo-

Just yesterday.

Slow images of battle buddies in succession. Not whole faces. Just impressionistic fragments.

Toledo-

They're why I'm standing here right now.

Four soldiers gave their life for mine.

My unit lost four guys.

Soldier-

My guys.

Toledo-

My brother's ages almost.

Humvee blown-up half in two.

They didn't make it out alive.

But I did.

Battle buddy images fade.

Sacrifice is in our bones.

Soldier and Toledo- It's who we are.

Toledo-

That's who I am. "Toledo".

Yeah, that's my name. "Toledo".

And every morning when I rise...

I rise, "Toledo".

TOLEDO stands.

Can I carry all this weight?

Damn right, I can.

Soldier-

I will.

Toledo-

I must.

I can take the punch of it.

Oh, I can take a punch.

***SOLDIER slowly approaches TOLEDO.
In attempt to comfort, she places her hand carefully on TOLEDO's shoulder. This allows TOLEDO to slowly sit back down.***

Soldier-

You're not alone.
I'm standing here beside you now.

Toledo-

Am I dismissed?
I've reached my limit for today,
if that's okay by you.

TOLEDO places her cap back on and quickly exits right. Soldier starts to follow her. A brief hesitation from TOLEDO. She almost senses the SOLDIER's presence. This moment is interrupted as the JUMPER suddenly appears in light upstage right. He's dressed for a jump. He throws an unpacked parachute on the ground.

Jumper-

Fall in, soldier!

The world is shifting again.

Jumper hands TOLEDO's chair to another soldier. It's whisked away.

(super title appears "COMA, WEEK THREE: TRANSPORT STATE-SIDE... OR LEAP OF FAITH")

Soldier-

Me?

Jumper-

Yeah... I'm talkin' to you.

A DOCTOR (1) quickly rolls out a desk chair and sits. He holds the SOLDIER's charts. He is on cellphone call with the SOLDIER's family back in the United States.

The SOLDIER is confused. She splits her focus between the DOCTOR and the JUMPER. "Where am I NOW?"

Doctor 1- (over the phone/starting conference call)

Is everybody on the line?

As the DOCTOR looks at charts, images of the SOLDIER's x-rays appear above.

Jumper- (to Soldier)

What's the matter, soldier?

Doctor 1- (over the phone/starting conference call)

Can everybody hear me fine?

Jumper- (to Soldier)

Cat got your tongue?

Doctor 1- (over the phone/conference call)

I'm glad that we can speak today.

I have good news to share with you.

Our soldiers doing excellent.

Jumper- (to Soldier)

Hear that, slick? You're good to go.

Doctor 1- (over the phone/conference call)

She's flying past the goals we've set-

which is to say she's stable now

and coping with the meds quite well.

We've even noticed subtle cues

that might suggest she's breaking though.

Jumper- (to Soldier)

See, you're indestructible.

Doctor 1- (over the phone/conference call)

We'll move her on to Walter Reed

where she can get the care she'll need to push on through

and maybe see her little girl.

Soldier-

My precious girl. She knows I'm here?

Doctor 1- (over the phone/conference call)

How 'bout that?

There's just no better medicine.

Soldier-

She knows I'm here!

Doctor 1- (over the phone/conference call)

Nothing heals like family.

Soldier-
Family

Doctor 1- (over the phone/conference call)

Nothing heals like family.

But please...

I will not build your hopes up high.

Jumper and Doctor 1- There are-still too many big unknowns.

Jumper- It's clear we have a-ways to go.

Doctor 1- Any progress will be slow with a TBI like hers.

A coma is the safest place

Jumper and Doctor 1- to keep her/you anchored for awhile.

Soldier -
How long?

Doctor 1 and Jumper-

Who knows?

Doctor 1- The only thing we can be sure of

Doctor 1 and Jumper- is she/you will never be the same.

Soldier -
What exactly does that mean?

Jumper-

But first things first.

Doctor 1- (over the phone/conference call)

She's coming home.

An early morning flight.

Jumper: (to Soldier)

You better get your ass in gear!

Soldier-
I'm going home.

Doctor 1- (over the phone/conference call)

Details of her transport soon.

*The space is filled with the sound of a landing strip.
The DOCTOR and desk disappear right.*

Soldier-
I'm going home.

Jumper-
That's right.

Soldier-
So...?

The hospital bed glides out with the music.

Jumper-
So...

Jumper
That parachute won't pack itself.

Soldier-
What?

JUMPER indicates unpacked parachute.

Jumper-
I'd pack it right if I were you.

*SOLDIER tries to pack it.
JUMPER my assist as he sings.*

A parachute that's poorly packed ain't really worth a pile of shit.
And don't forget, it's thirteen thousand feet below, so...
if the chute don't open up?
There's good news and there's bad.
The good news is you'll bounce real well.
The bad news is that clean-ups hell.
At least you won't be 'round to care.

*He waits to see if she's laughing.
She isn't.*

Come on! That freakin' joke was great.

Jumper-
Suppose that none of this IS real. Big deal.

A mission's still a mission, right?
 And fear is not your freakin' friend.
 Indecision is for suckers, kid.
 Wanna sit here on your ass and wait?
 Seal your fate?

Soldier-

Waiting s'never been my style.

Jumper-

Then, the mission's pretty clear.
 Every soldier knows the drill.

JUMPER rolls out bed center stage.

Jumper-

Identify the problem first.

Soldier-

Identify the problem first.

Jumper-

Strategize,

Soldier-

Strategize,

Jumper-

then make a plan

Soldier-

make a plan

Jumper and Soldier- and execute.

Jumper- And finish packing up that chute.
 You in?

Soldier-

I'm in.

Jumper-

Good. Let's begin.

JUMPER moves the hospital bed center stage.

Jumper-

I sure would hate for you to miss a chance
to see what heavens really like.

JUMPER gathers himself.

Soldier -

You're not some sort of angel, are you?

Jumper-

(he laughs)

Not hardly. No.

He leaps effortlessly atop the hospital bed.

I've fallen from the heavens, though-
more times than I can count...
almost.

JUMPER reaches out his hand.

Jumper-

Get in.

Soldier-

Get in?

Jumper-

Get in the freakin' plane.

We've got a-ways to go.

Come on!

SOLDIER joins him atop the bed.

***The two stand on the hospital bed as if it were some sort of magic carpet.
The lighting hugs the bed. Two soldiers enter from stage left and right and
begin rotating the bed slowly clockwise as the two continue singing. The floor
becomes a sea of moving clouds.***

Jumper-

All the ones we leave back home...

all those loved ones left behind?

Sometimes they're the only thing that keeps us tethered to the ground.

The bed stops turning. The soldiers exit left and right.

***Images of the SOLDIER's thirteen year-old growing up appear superimposed
against the endless sky.***

Jumper-

All the ones we leave back home...

Soldier-

All the ones we leave back home...

Jumper-

all those loved ones left behind?

Soldier-

all those loved ones left behind?

Jumper-

Sometimes they're the only thing that keeps us tethered to the ground.

The family photos stop. Just sky everywhere.

Jumper-

I guess you ever jumped before?

Soldier-

No.

Jumper-

It's easier than you might think.
Like riding on a bike, almost.
'Cept it's really freakin' high.
A silence like you've never known,
a perfect sense of inner peace,
some proof that order does exist,
the world unfurled before your eyes,

Soldier-

And once you leap?

Jumper-

You can't go back.
You know you'll never be the same.
A peace that's tricky to explain.
So, I'll do the best I can.

The slipstream takes your breath away-

Soldier- Ahhhh...

Jumper-

your body ripped from time and space,

Soldier-

your body ripped from time and space,

Jumper-

a rush of wind to numb your face.

Soldier-

a rush of wind.

Jumper-

The free-fall rattles through your bones,
through your bones

Soldier-

Through my bones...

Jumper-

a thrumming heart inside your ears.
Then "BAM"!
The chute, it opens up.
You're body snaps into the air.

The clouds slow.

Then silence.
Such silence.
Dear God.
The silence penetrates.
Your heart slows down.
The rush of wind becomes a breeze
and in that moment you can see
the whole of God's creation.
the whole of God's creation.

Soldier-

Magnificent!

Jumper-

Magnificence personified.

Jumper and Soldier- Magnificence personified.

Jumper-

Above.

Below.

You know.

You know you're looking at a miracle.

Time dilates.

Twelve...glorious...seconds
of endless free-fall.

Soldier and Jumper-

Pulling light from all around

and still there's not a single sound.

Jumper-

Just fullness, flight and free-fall there.

Soldier and Jumper-

Just fullness, flight and free-fall.

Jumper-

The thinnest air.

The endless blue.

Just you.

Soldier-

Just you.

Jumper-

Just you.

All the sky falls away. Just the two in a down light.

Jumper-

To be above the world like that?

What can I say?

It's a privilege every day.

A privilege granted to the brave.

(looks at SOLDIER)

So, you feelin' brave today?

Soldier-

I do

Jumper-

Then all that's left to do is jump.

Soldier-
Jump.

Jumper-
Jump.

(aside)

Just be sure to hit the drop zone on the ground.

Soldier-
(what?)
Drop zone?

Jumper-
You'll suss it out.
Sometimes when all is said and done,
faith is all we've really got.

Both-
Faith is all we've really got.

(they both look down)
(he looks at her)

Jumper-
Oh yeah...
and don't forget to pull the chord.
"Ranger's lead the way."

JUMPER leaps from the bed into the darkness.
He exits.

Soldier- Okay...okay.

SOLDIER leaps too.
TOTAL BLACKNESS.

An isolated special comes up on a mound of parachute silk. It's whisked away unseen into the darkness, revealing the SOLDIER, laying on the floor beneath it. She lurches up with a gasp, as if someone waking from a dream. She calls into the darkness.

Hello?

(a moment)

HELLO?

Is anybody out there?
Can anybody hear me?

The lights come up on a strange room- dining room table and two chairs are beside her. Atop the table, a crisp tablecloth and a place setting for two. She steps into the space.

(to herself)

Feels like I'm ghost...a ghost
caught here, stumbling, in between...
trapped inside some endless dream,
asleep... awake... I just can't tell.
Every face so unfamiliar
and no one that I recognize.

The COLONEL enters. He lights the candles on the table.

Sir.
Excuse me, Sir.
Can you tell me where I am?

(super title appears- "COMA, WEEK FOUR- ARRIVING STATE-SIDE OR... REACHING OUT")

Colonel-
Impossible.

The SOLDIER stands. She dusts herself off and salutes.

Soldier-
Sir?

Colonel-
Impossible.
You're not coming home.

Soldier-
(holding salute)
Sir?

Colonel-
You just aren't coming home, are you?
Yet somehow it's as if you're there...

COLONEL walks toward SOLDIER. The SOLDIER moves out of the way like a ghost. SOLDIER looks around to see if there's someone else he might be talking to.

Colonel-

Right here.

As if you might just reappear outside that door and walk on through...

I dare you.

Just walk on through- right through that door

a million times just like before.

SOLDIER steps deeper into the scene.

Colonel-

I know this drill.

"You forgot your car keys, right?"

COLONEL picks up imaginary car keys. He jangles the keys. The sound of the car keys lingers.

"You, silly goose." is what I say.

And then you cut your eyes that way...a bit pissed off....the slightest smile.

COLONEL picks up his wife's picture while sitting on the table.

But then you laugh.

And then we laugh.

And then you smile that smile of yours.

And then I fall in love again.

An ordinary average day.

COLONEL places his wife's picture on the table facing him.

Soldier- Are you okay?

He sits, singing to the picture.

Colonel-

How could you leave me here alone
to sort through all these endless days-
in this haze of time undone
with nowhere left for me to run
but back again,

SOLDIER takes her daughter's photo from her pocket.

Soldier-
back again

Colonel-
back again

Colonel and Soldier-
to you.

Colonel-
I'm more desperate than you'll ever know.

Soldier-
More desperate than you'll ever know.

Colonel-
But even more to see your face.

Soldier-
But even more to see your face.

Colonel and Soldier-
I miss you more than I can say.

Colonel-
Happy Anniversary.

Soldier-
Happy Birthday.

***SOLDIER notices the depth of his grief.
COLONEL pulls out chair at the dining room table for his pretend guest. SOLDIER goes along sits. COLONEL begins pouring two glasses of wine. The SOLDIER begins to sing into the COLONEL's ear in hopes of allowing him to remember.***

Colonel-
Kid update:
Sarah's beau is nice, I guess.
I'm sure he's fine. We met last month.
You shoulda seen this fella sweat.
I had to laugh.
Her work's cut out with this one.

Phillip's job is going well.
The kids are swell.
The youngest one?

She lost a tooth when I was there this spring.

Soldier-

You're so much more than spring.

Colonel-

She has your eyes- your dancing eyes.
And when she laughs? Like reeling bells.
I wish to hell that you could hold her.

(collects himself)

The other day, to kill the gloom
I imagined you napping in that room.
I went so far to crack the door,
to watch you dreaming, like before
and marvel at the sight of you... all fast asleep.

They stare at their pictures together.

Soldier-

Her tiny chest would rise and fall...

Colonel-

and fall and rise

Colonel-

Just me and you.

Soldier-

Just you and me.

They stand, clutching their pictures.

Colonel and Soldier-

Oh, what I wouldn't give.

Colonel-

Oh, God.

Just us.

Okay, here come those stupid tears.

They both move downstage in tandem singing to their pictures.

Soldiers-

I know you hate it when I fuss.

Colonel-

You don't deserve my tears today.

Soldier and Colonel-

Just joy and spring and you,

Colonel-

my love.

(a moment)

Colonel-

I was the one who always left.

He crosses right.

Soldier-

My love

She crosses right.

Colonel-

You were the one who stayed behind.

Soldier-

My love

Colonel-

I don't know how to do this now.

I don't know how to do this now.

I don't know how to do this now.

She devotes her attention solely to him.

Soldier-

"Hero" is a tricky word.

Colonel-

"Hero" is a tricky word.

Soldier-

I tried it on a thousand times.

She approaches him.

Colonel-

I tried it on a thousand times.

Soldier-

It never seems to want to fit.

Colonel-

Never seems to want to fit
 'cause you deserve the Purple Heart.
 Not me. Not me.

COLONEL sits back down. She follows slowly.

I'll never have you back again.
 I tell myself this every day,
 and time keeps dragging 'cross the floor
 and opens other countless doors, I know.
 I know... I know... all of this will change, I know, but...

She kneels beside him and gently sings into his ear.

Soldier-

Go slow.
 Go slow.

Soldier and Colonel-

Go slow.

Colonel-

Forgetting is impossible.

Soldier-

(standing)

And love just doesn't go away.

Colonel-

Okay.
(He stands.)

Okay.

***The COLONEL blows out the candles on the table. He exits. She watches.
 As he does this... Southern church music.***

(super title appears- "COMA, WEEK FOUR- REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS")

A stained glass window descends from the sky. She watches.

Soldiers take the table and chairs away.

A Sunday morning Baptist church service somewhere in America.

*HOMECOMING SOLDIER make his way to the front of the church.
He has recently returned from combat. He is confined to a wheelchair following injuries sustained in battle.*

*As he makes his way to the front of the congregation, the SOLDIER watches.
A light comes up on an empty seat in the front row of the audience.
The SOLDIER sees this and takes a seat, breaking the fourth wall. She joins the audience in becoming a church congregation member.*

TESTIMONY a soldier speaks in front of a congregation

Homecoming Soldier-
Mornin’.

He waits for a response form the house.

Mornin’.

*The congregation/audience replies, “mornin’ “ in response.
SOLDIER enjoys that “others/the actual audience is witnessing as well.*

Ya’ll can do better than that.

The congregation/audience replies, “mornin’ “ in response.

How ya’ll doin’ today?

The congregation/audience replies. He begins.

Last time I sat up here like this (I was maybe five, I guess)
I played the donkey in the Christmas play.
Cardboard ears, the tail, the works.
Felt like an ass here ever since then.
Talkin’ ain’t my thing.

Look, I don’t know why I’m here today.
I don’t know why I’m here at all (in lots more ways than one),
just that the Pastor told me told to...said,
“Son, relax. Just tell the church about your life
and what it means to be back home.”
“Your testimony”, is what he said.
“Just tell the folks about your truth

and naturally you'll touch on faith."

Touching faith. Ain't that a kick?

At first I told him, "No."
 "HELL NO", is what I think said.
 And then my Mom shot me a look,
 And then my Mom shot me a look like,

"Don't you make me tan your hide.
 You ain't too old to spank, ya hear."

And now I'm here in front-a ya'll.
 Strangled by this stupid tie.
 So, if I sound like some big dummy,
 all ya'll need to blame my Mom.
 It's all on her. It's all her fault.
 Including this-here stupid tie.

It's not because I'm scared to talk.
 Not scared a-much no more.
 It's just that I am not the man that people knew before.
 The truth.

Let me put it this way.

Every soldier gets a rifle.
 Drill Sergeant says, "THIS ONE IS YOURS."
 "THIS ONE IS MINE!" You holler back.
 You and that rifle become one.
 You eat, you sleep, you march, you crawl.
 You eat, you sleep, you march, you crawl.
 That rifle's just a part-a you.
 Just like this chair is now for me.
 We're close; I guess you'd have to say.
 That why it's hard to speak to folks-
 for folks to bend an ear and hear
 and not just see this goddamn chair!
(sorry) dadgum chair...
 "my truth", is what the Pastor said.
 This is the truth of me.
 This is my truth.

After the attack
 I lay in bed in broken bits-
 in so much crazy stupid pain.

The drugs, they help. But then, they don't.
 And when they don't? You're left with you.
 But not the you you knew back when.
 Not the you you knew back when.
 Not the you you knew back when.
 That person might as well be dead.
 You're someone else you don't quite know.
 You're someone you don't recognize.

Point is, ya'll, that Christmas play?
 That Christmas play seems far away.
 I'm a different jackass now.
 In fact, you all seem far away.
 A million miles from where I sit.

The SOLDIER sings from her seat in the audience.

Homecoming and Soldier-

I cannot make the distance up.

Homecoming Soldier-

But I try.

Soldier-

I try

Homecoming Soldier-

I try

Soldier-

I try.

Homecoming Soldier-I do.

It's hard as hell, but damn I try.

People ask me all the time,
 "What's next for you, young man?
 "What does the future hold for you?"
 Most times I answer, "I don't know. "
 But that's not what I wanna say.
 When someone asks "What's next for you, young man?"
 I wanna say, "Ain't nothin' else."
 Ain't nothin' else but NOW, my friend.
 Just now. Just this. Ain't nothin' else.
 Ain't nothin' else in life but this-

SOLDIER stands from her seat in the audience and makes her way toward him.

Homecoming and Soldier-

THIS moment that we have RIGHT NOW.
Just now. Today. Just you and me.

Soldier-

Just this.

Homecoming Soldier-

Just this.

Soldier-

Just this.

Homecoming Soldier-

I don't count on tomorrow.
I don't trust no yesterday.
I only see in front of me.
How's that for a testimony?

A moment.

She looks at the audience.

Can I get an amen?

SOLDIER slowly sits on the floor beside his wheelchair.

And as far God the Father goes? Yeah, I dunno.
I just don't know.
I get real weird with God, I guess.
And that's the truth. You said, the truth.
At least the truth for me, right now.
Don't get me wrong. I do believe.
But I believe in family.

Soldier-

I believe in family.

Homecoming Soldier-

There's God in that.
There's God in them.
There's God in all of us...
Right here. Right now.

(super title appears- "COMA, WEEK FIVE- Right here. Right now.")

All-

Right here. Right now...

The SOLDIER stands in amazement as All CHARACTERS enter from behind on all sides, scattering themselves throughout the space in isolated light.

Soldier- Is there some kind of end in sight?

All- a sleep of sorts

Something on the other side?

All- sleep taking course

For days, for weeks, for months, for years...

All- suspended

who knows how long I've wandered here.

Each of you has guided me

All- she'll find her way

awakened something deep inside,

All- some time to heal

but I'm scared if I remain,

I'll lose myself... my sense of me.

And I promised her. ***(if there's anything for the chorus here, it could be things like... "That precious head. The thread it broke. So intertwined.")***

I promised her.

I promised her that I'd return!

Please, take me back. ***(there go the tears music)***

All- we rise and fall

or show me the way.

All- we fall and rise

I know that I am ready now.

I want to see my grown up girl.

Just don't grow up too fast, okay?

She kisses her two fingers and touches the picture.

Your Mom will be home...

The SOLDIER walks slowly among these people, these memories, retracing her steps back home throughout the finale. During this journey, she makes first time contact (eye and physical) with each of the characters she has encountered along the way. She weaves in and out of the previous realities one at a time. This is a journey in retrograde.

Toledo- You can't see the scars I hide.

Colonel- The strength abiding deep inside.

All- Deep inside... my/your heart that charts my journey home.

Soldier- Just you and me and here and now.

She connects with the HOMECOMING SOLDIER

Homecoming- I'm not the man I was before.

She connects with the TOLEDO.

Toledo- Just don't forget that I'm still here.

She connects with the JUMPER.

Jumper- A million miles from where I sit.

Soldier- You push past best to better.

She connects with the COLONEL.

All- Best to better.

Soldier- See, the Army showed that all to me.

ALL CHORUS ENTERS. Lights brighten.

All-

I give my life.

This is my vow.

I'll die for you.

We rise and fall.

We fall and rise as one.

She walks among the again.

Solider- Just you and me.

All- Just me and you

Soldier-

All untethered from the world

All unraveled form the pain

All- Pain

Soldier- For just awhile

All- For just awhile

Soldier-Just you and me and here and now

Toledo- Don't forget that I'm still here.

All-

We're stand right beside you now
It taught me best to better
Best to better
The army showed that all to me.

FULL CHORUS MOVES FORWARD.

ALL-

I give my life.
This is my vow.
I'll die for you.
We rise and fall.
We fall and rise.
Rise.

She weaves through them one last time.

I give my life.
This is my vow.
I'll die for you.
We rise and fall.
We fall and rise...
and fall...as one.

They all gather slowly around her, behind her.

Soldier-

Just let them know.
Someone let my baby know
that I'm alive.

All-

Alive

*She begins slowly backing into the chorus.
They absorb her.*

Soldier-
Alive

All-
Alive

Soldier-
Alive

All-
Alive

Soldier-
Alive

All-
Alive!

*They all close in around her.
She disappears behind them.
A moment of tense stillness.
Finally, they part, revealing a different SOLDIER.*

*Reality returns. Time has passed. A hospital hallway. Walter Reed.
The SOLDIER now wears a robe and walks with a cane.
She takes a few careful steps forward.
Then, slowly lifts her head,
looking down the hall.
Her fourteen year-old daughter appears at the back of the house.
Our SOLDIER smiles.*

Soldier-
Happy Birthday, baby girl
or almost Happy Birthday.

*Our SOLDIER opens her arms.
The DAUGHTER runs toward her Mother.
They embrace.*

All-
Alive.

PERUSAHAAN