

Pallbearers  
by  
Zach Brengel

From his screenplay of the same name

### Cast of Characters

<u>Rush</u> :	Eldest Burkhart brother.
<u>Will</u> :	Second eldest Burkhart brother.
<u>Mike</u> :	Third eldest Burkhart brother.
<u>Charlie</u> :	Youngest Burkhart brother.
<u>Elizabeth</u> :	Their mother.
<u>Kerry</u> :	A waitress.

ACT I

Scene 1. Parking Lot

*A large pickup truck is sitting in a parking lot, draped in blue light. Funeral music is heard in the distance. A wooden coffin sits in the bed of the truck. The music stops.*

Scene 2. The Table

*In the almost empty Chinese restaurant, lit in an amber hue, four brothers sit and eat their food. A photo of a women is in the center of the table. The second eldest, WILL, age 23, nurses a flask. After a while the third eldest, MIKE, age 21, looks away from his food.*

MIKE

(Rural North Carolinian accent)

It ain't Momma's cookin' that's for sure.

*The rest of the brothers, CHARLIE, age 19, RUSH, age 25, along with Will, all burst out laughing.*

WILL

(Less accent than his brothers)

Well, I don't think anything can beat Mom's cooking.

RUSH

Maybe if the Virgin Mary spat in it!

*Laughing continues.*

MIKE

Nah, The Lord would have to!

WILL

Mike, if Christ our savior took his heavenly pants down, and pissed on these noodles, it still wouldn't come close.

RUSH

Ha ha! That's a good one Bill!

WILL

Thanks man, but please it's Will.

RUSH

What are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

WILL

I go by Will. Short for William?

*All but Mike stop laughing. Mike looks around in confusion.*

RUSH

Damn it! You've been Bill since we were boys, and all of a sudden you wanna be called Will?

WILL

I've gone by Will for a few years now. Sorry you're late to the party.

RUSH

Maybe if you came home now and again, I would have been able to figure it out!

CHARLIE

Guys can you-

WILL

Well I'm so sorry that I'm out there bettering myself!

CHARLIE

Guys!

RUSH

If you were "bettering" yourself, you'd be able to send some money home, and you'd quit your goddamn liquor!

MIKE

Will you all shut up!

*They shut up. Will reaches for his flask, but stops himself.*

MIKE

What would Momma think?

CHARLIE

I don't think we can ever know, what she thinks.

*Will takes this rhetorical statement literally.*

WILL

Well, I think we can assume she would hate us fighting, just based on how she reacted to it when she was alive. Oh, and it's thought not thinks Charlie.

RUSH

Don't give em that, let em talk how he talks!

(CONTINUED)

WILL

Well, it doesn't hurt to correct-

CHARLIE

I'm gonna take a walk!

*Charlie gets up and exits Stage-Right.*

WILL

What's up with him?

RUSH

Charlie is a... Well he ah...

WILL

He's what?

RUSH

Charlie is a homosexual now, and that's been botherin' him lately.

*The smugness disappears from Will's face.*

WILL

Whoa, Whoa, that's a little important. Why didn't I know about this?

RUSH

You haven't been around.

*Will looks around.*

WILL

Did he tell Momma?

RUSH

Would you have told Momma?

*Will gets up.*

WILL

I've got to talk to him about this-

*Mike stands up.*

MIKE

He doesn't want to hear from you. I'll handle it.

RUSH

Like you handled Mom.

( CONTINUED )

MIKE

Oh, shut up.

*Mike leaves.*

WILL

Now, what the hell did Mike do?

RUSH

Somehow, more than you.

*Both brothers take sips from their drinks, and both find that they're empty.*

WILL

Here I'll get that. Sweet Tea right?

RUSH

Yep...thanks.

*Will takes the cups and exits Stage-Left. Rush takes a bolo tie out of his pocket and puts it on. He also fixes his shirt and hat. He picks up the photo and stares at it.*

RUSH

Hey, Momma.

Scene 3. Parking Lot

*Charlie is standing against a wall, looking at the sky. Mike enters Stage-Left. The exit sign behind them illuminates Charlie in pink, and Mike in Red.*

MIKE

How are you doing man?

CHARLIE

Alright.

MIKE

Nice day huh?

CHARLIE

I guess so.

*They both look to the sky.*

MIKE

You know she's up there? Looking down on all of us fighting like animals! Poor Momma.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

Do you think she knows?

MIKE

I think so.

CHARLIE

Poor Momma?

MIKE

Ya. Poor thing.

CHARLIE

Why should I feel bad?

MIKE

Huh.

CHARLIE

She would have thrown me to the streets if she'd known!

MIKE

What are you talking about? Charlie she loved you!

CHARLIE

You know what she used to say about people like me! All the love in the world couldn't fix that.

MIKE

She never knew anyone like you! You don't know if she would have changed her tune!

CHARLIE

Maybe I would if you took care of her!

*Silence.*

MIKE

Charlie I-

CHARLIE

I'm sorry.

MIKE

It's alright. Why don't you say hi to your brothers. I'm gonna stay out here.

*Charlie exits Stage-Left. Mike takes a deep breath.*

VOICE

You doing ok?

(CONTINUED)

*Startled, Mike turns around. Spotlight falls on  
KERRY CLARK, a hostess on her break.*

KERRY

You boys doing alright?

MIKE

As good as we can.

*Kerry walks closer.*

KERRY

Where y'all headed?

MIKE

Cemetery.

*He points to the truck, which is once again  
illuminated.*

MIKE

Momma's in the back.

KERRY

Oh, sorry about that.

MIKE

It's fine. We're working through it.

KERRY

Weird to be eating at a place like this on funeral day.

MIKE

It's on the way.

KERRY

Huh. When my daddy died we ate at the Olive Garden.

MIKE

That sounds nice. How long ago was that?

KERRY

I think, uh, three years now.

MIKE

Huh. That was probably a better idea.



Scene 4. The Table

*Will and Rush are at the table, sipping sweat tea. For a second Rush looks to the floor, and Will quickly spikes his own drink.*

WILL

You know, they don't make iced tea like this up north.

RUSH

Is that right?

WILL

Well, it's just so bland up there. Something about it's not right.

RUSH

You Yankees are just afraid of a little sugar in your tea.

WILL

I guess so, but I did try this one brand, it was nice too, from Europe. It sucked just as much.

RUSH

Really?

WILL

Ya.

RUSH

Maybe if you didn't waste your money on fancy tea, you could have sent some home for Momma's medicine.

*Will is pulled into "debate mode."*

WILL

So treating myself every once in a while suddenly erases my poverty.

RUSH

Not entirely, just raises some eyebrows. Mainly mine.

WILL

I assure you Rush, that every remaining cent I make is going to my tuition.

RUSH

Well some of it is going to tea, or whatever you keep in that flask.

(CONTINUED)

WILL

Am I not allowed to live every once in a while?

*Beat.*

RUSH

Why wasn't Momma allowed to live?

*Beat.*

WILL

I don't know rush. If she lived to see me pass the bar, I could have payed all of her bills, and Charlie's school, and everything else we could have ever needed.

RUSH

Well she will never see that, Bill, so you can have as much "tea" as you like.

*Charlie rushes in Stage-Right. He's just come from his argument with Mike. He's still noticeably distressed.*

WILL

Oh, Charlie. I just wanted to say, I'm sorry about earlier.

CHARLIE

Oh, It's fine.

WILL

If you ever need anyone to talk to, I'm right here.

CHARLIE

Thank you Will. I was -

RUSH

Oh cut the crap Bill. Let the kid breathe.

WILL

Let him finish his sentence! He's done enough breathing!

CHARLIE

Guys-

RUSH

You're just gonna act like his friend, but when you go back up north you're gonna abandon him, just like you did us!

Scene 5. Parking Lot

*Mike and Kerry are laughing with each other.*

KERRY

And that's how you get fired from a Walmart.

MIKE

You did the right thing. I was always more of a Sam's Club guy.

*Kerry laughs.*

KERRY

You ever get in trouble being this funny?

MIKE

Only when I entered that "least charming" contest.

*They both laugh. Kerry's phone beeps.*

KERRY

That was my 15. It was nice talking to you Mike.

MIKE

Same here. Say, I was thinking, how'd you like to go to the Olive Garden sometime?

KERRY

Like...As a date?

MIKE

For sure. Kerry you're an incredibly beautiful woman, and I'd be honored if you'd go out with me.

KERRY

Oh...Mike...

MIKE

Nah, that's too formal, forget it. Some of my guys have this thing going down next Saturday, gonna be a blast. We can go together

KERRY

Oh. I'm sorry. You're a nice guy Mike, but I only just met you. Now I really need to get inside.

*She goes to the door, but Mike grabs her arm and pulls her in.*

MIKE

Then maybe we should get to know each other a bit better.

(CONTINUED)

*He tries to kiss her. Kerry slaps him. She pulls away.*

MIKE

Ah!

KERRY

You know, I would love, for just once, to have a normal friendship with a guy. Screw you Mike.

*Mike freezes. Kerry exits Stage-Left. Mike follows after her.*

Scene 6. The Table

*Will and Rush are still arguing. Charlie is watching nervously.*

WILL

So I can't talk to my kid brother, because I go to college?

RUSH

I'm not saying you can't. I'm just saying you're spouting BS!

CHARLIE

Rush-

WILL

BS that BS! The only one spouting BS is-

*Will realizes the redundancy of his statement. He gestures to Rush.*

WILL

AHH! You're-

CHARLIE

I need to use the restroom!

*Will and Rush freeze. Charlie runs off Stage-Right. Kerry runs in Stage-Left, Mike following her.*

KERRY

Go away!

MIKE

*Kerry exits Stage-Right.*

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Damn.

RUSH

Scared off another one didn't you.

MIKE

I guess so.

RUSH

Makes sense. She looked like a smart girl. Only trailer park trash go for you.

WILL

Rush, what the hell-

RUSH

Can it city boy!

MIKE

I don't think calling Bella that helps any of us.

RUSH

What else do I call that Jezebel? Beckoning you away when you had a responsibility?

MIKE

Rush, I broke up with her. Please leave her out of it!

RUSH

Hasn't even been a week and you're trying to start a new thing with a new girl, like they're some sort of object.

MIKE

Kerry is a nice girl! I-I'm sorry I couldn't help myself.

RUSH

You couldn't help yourself!? Like you couldn't help yourself when your Momma was dyin'?

WILL

Rush calm down!

MIKE

How the hell was I supposed to know that was the night she was gonna take a turn, huh?

RUSH

You just had to, you had to see your woman that night. You son of a... You killed Momma, you son of a-

(CONTINUED)

*Rush lunges at Mike, Will pulls him back by the shoulders. Rush's hat falls off.*

WILL

Dammit Rush. You've done nothing but criticize us this entire time. I know I'm distant, and Mike's a screw up, and Charlie's a mess, but if you want to lay a finger on my little brother, you're gonna have to go through me.

*Beat.*

RUSH

Outside. Now!

Scene 7. Restroom

*Charlie rushes stage left and slams the door behind him. He hugs the wall, breathing heavily. He steps away from the wall.*

CHARLIE

That bitch! I'm glad she's dead.

*(beat.)*

Now she'll never have to know her sons a queer.

*Charlie stares at the lights. He gets frustrated with them and flips the light switch.*

Scene 8. Beyond

*Charlie finds himself somewhere else. A disjointing collage of colors is shinned on the entire set, He looks around. He spots ELIZABETH BURKHART, his mother. She turns around.*

ELIZABETH

Charlie sweetie, what's wrong?

*Charlie fights tears.*

CHARLIE

I'm sorry Momma.

ELIZABETH

Why are you sorry honey?

CHARLIE

I said some things. I don't know if I meant them.

*Elizabeth pulls charlie into a hug.*

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13.

ELIZABETH

It's ok honey. You know I'll always love you, right?

CHARLIE

No matter what?

ELIZABETH

No matter what.

CURTAIN.

ACT 2Scene 1. Parking Lot

*Will and Rush stand face to face. Mike watches with anticipation. Suddenly Rush punches Will in the face. Will stumbles back, then hits Rush back. They've played this game before. Rush hits Will, who returns a blow. The two now have some distance. They clench their fists and run towards each other. At the same time, they both release their fists. In a split second, they are locked in a hug.*

RUSH  
It's good to see you again.

WILL  
I missed you too.

*They stay embraced for a while.*

WILL  
Let's go get our little brother.

Scene 2. Beyond

*Elizabeth and Charlie are sitting on a bench.*

CHARLIE  
Momma?

ELIZABETH  
Yes, sweetie?

CHARLIE  
I have to tell you something.

ELIZABETH  
What is it dear?

*Charlie takes a second to consider his answer.*

CHARLIE  
Momma I'm-

*The lights go out. A spotlight is lit over Charlie, who now stages alone. Another spotlight illuminates Elizabeth, who is slowly walking Stage-Right. A small amount of light reveals a silhouette approaching Charlie from Stage-Left.*

(CONTINUED)



CHARLIE

What? No! Momma!

*Charlie reaches to Elizabeth, but he is not able to move. As light floods in, the silhouette is revealed to be Will.*

WILL

Charlie?

CHARLIE

Momma!

WILL

It's so dark.

CHARLIE

Momma!

*Will flicks an invisible switch.*

Scene 3. Restroom

*Charlie and Will are back in the Restroom. Elizabeth is gone.*

WILL

There.

*Charlie looks at where Elizabeth once stood. He falls to the floor and sobs. Will sits next to him.*

WILL

It's alright.

CHARLIE

It's not fair.

WILL

It never is.

CHARLIE

She never got to know.

*Will pats his back.*

CHARLIE

I never got to know!

WILL

It's ok. Let it out. I'm here for you.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

What if she hated me?

*Will takes his time with his response.*

WILL

Then the three of us would still love you.

CHARLIE

Why do I miss her?

WILL

Because you love her.

CHARLIE

Why do I love her?

WILL

I can't tell you. It's complicated.

*Will looks at the door.*

WILL

Sometimes we hate the people we love most.

*Will stands up.*

WILL

We'll be outside when you're ready.

*Will exits. Charlie takes a deep breath. He stares at the light switch. He gets up and walks to the door.*Scene 4. The Table*Kerry is mopping the floor. Mike enters Stage-Right.*

MIKE

Hi.

KERRY

Hey.

MIKE

Is it a bad time to apologize?

KERRY

Depends on the apology.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Cool.

*Beat.*

MIKE

I'm sorry I took things too fast, and too far.

*Beat.*

MIKE

And I'm sorry I was insistent on something you didn't want.

*Beat.*

MIKE

And I'm sorry for only seeing you as a potential date.

KERRY

That's a good start.

MIKE

I'll take what I can get.

*Kerry smirks.*

KERRY

You're a good guy Mike, you just have some issues.

MIKE

You're not the first to tell me.

KERRY

Then try to fix them.

MIKE

Harder than it looks.

KERRY

I know.

*Kerry takes out a pen and paper, and begins to write.*

KERRY

My shift's over.

MIKE

Bummer.

*Kerry puts the piece of paper on the table.*

(CONTINUED)

KERRY

I'd like to see you again.

MIKE

(Humorously)

As a date?

KERRY

No.

*Mike smiles. Kerry exits Stage-Right. Rush walks in Stage-Right.*

RUSH

Hey brother.

MIKE

Hey.

RUSH

You know I'm never going to stop judging you, for what you did.

MIKE

I know.

RUSH

It was stupid, irresponsible, and downright deplorable.

MIKE

Noted.

RUSH

But you're still my little brother Mikey. It's not right of me to put all the blame on you.

*Rush reaches out his hand.*

RUSH

So why don't we work on it together?

*Mike shakes Rush's hand.*

MIKE

I love you brother.

RUSH

I love you too.

*Will and Charlie emerge from Stage-Left. The four brothers stare at each other. Rush puts his hat back on. They file out of the restaurant.*

Scene 5. Parking Lot

*The truck starts up and drives away.*

Scene 6. Cemetery

*The boys walk the coffin down the path, until they reach Elizabeth's grave. They each place a flower, then the photo of Elizabeth on the coffin. The coffin is buried. Will takes out his flask, and pours the contents over the grave. The boys stare at the grave.*

MIKE

Rush?

RUSH

Hm?

MIKE

You were with Momma Right? The night...the night I was out?

RUSH

Ya. I was.

MIKE

What did she say, you know...before she passed?

*Rush looks down at his little brothers in an almost paternal way.*

RUSH

She simply asked how y'all were, and said how she couldn't wait to see all her boys together again.

*Will looks at the sky.*

WILL

Well, I guess she got her wish.

*Mike starts to sob, leaning on Will for support. He mumbles incoherent thoughts, maybe an apology is heard.*

WILL

I'll take him to the car. You guys take your time.

RUSH

Will do.

*Will and Mike begins to walk away. Will turns back. He takes his flask out, and throws it into the dark. Rush smiles. Will turns away again.*

(CONTINUED)

RUSH

Oh and Will? While you're waiting pull up some directions for dinner. It's been a long day, I think we're all hungry.

WILL

Got it.

*Mike whispers through his tears.*

MIKE

Ol-Olive Garden...

*Will and Mike exit Stage-Right.*

RUSH

Hey kid?

CHARLIE

Yes?

RUSH

You know I don't really understand what you're going through, but I want you to know that doesn't matter to us. You're a Burkhart through and through, don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

*Rush takes off his hat and places it on Charlie's head. Charlie smiles, and hugs him.*

CHARLIE

Thank you Rush.

RUSH

No problem, kid. Now, I'm gonna see how Mike's holding up.

CHARLIE

Alright.

*Rush begins to walk away. Charlie turns his head down towards the grave.*

RUSH

Hey. Stand tall son. Your mother's watching.

*Rush exits Stage-Right. Charlie looks up above the grave. Elizabeth stands behind it, smiling at Charlie. Charlie tips his hat to her, then exits Stage-Right.*

CURTAIN.