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## The Historian

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## THE HISTORIAN

Setting: As the lights slowly come up they reveal an old man, with a southern accent, in his 60s slowly rocking in a rocking chair at center stage.

Old Man: Hell yes I remember them two boys. Chester and Timmy was good old boys when theys younger. Course they didn't think as much as most folks, but ya can't rightly blame um for that. (Pause, looks up at sky as if remembering) Let me see now, if I 'member rightly them boys was born in the same hollow up on Turkeycot mountain. An they been hanging out reglar since theys knee-high to a grasshopper. Chester was the leader a the two 'cause he was the meanest. 'Course Timmy was as big as damn 6th year ox but he's as timid as he could be so Chester pretty much ruled over him. Timmy was real slow ya see, and didn't really care much about what he did as long as he didn't have to decide himself. So Chester was the boss a that outfit. (Pause, adjusts himself in chair) 'Course Chester was no genius himself now either. Hell I 'member one time old Chester decided he was going to light a match to the fart of an old mule that had been reliev'n' himself so much that it was going to take Chester all day to finish plowing half an acre. Well old Chester crept up behind that mule and waited for her to hunker down for a good un and just as that mule lifted her tail Chester lit a match to that ass and a blue fire shot outa that mule just like a damn gas stove. And I mean to tell ya that mule's eyes bugged outa her head and she let outa that field like a damn jackrabbit, buckin' an a neighin' an a smashin' all through Chester's daddy's tobacco crop. (Shakes head and chuckles) Well, after Chester's daddy got a hold of Chester's ass it was right sore too as I 'member. (Pause, shakes head and looks down) But I mean to tell ya that won't be the last time. I 'member another time back when them boys was going to Mt. Zion elementary down in Kelso and one day they's skipping Miss Annette Burpleson's history class so as they could toilet paper the boys room. Well whiles they's in there smokin' cigarettes and flinging wet toilet paper on the walls Chester gets the idea of pullin' a sink outa the wall so as maybe they'll have to

close the school to fix it; like I told ya he won't no Einstein or nothing. So he gets Timmy to be lookout in case Mr. Hornkins happens to pass by an commences to a tuggin' an a pullin' on that ole sink. Well Chester can't budge it an it don't take long 'fore he gets right disgusted so he calls Timmy over to give him a hand. Well ya know Timmy's a big boy even back then. An he comes over an gives that ole sink a tug an just as it tears outa the wall Principal Gerrold Hornkins comes a strolling inta that privy to relieve himself an gets hit head on with a stream a water comin' outa tha hole where that sink used ta be. (Pause, chuckles to himself) Well I mean to tell ya at right about that point Chester an Timmy were both pretty surprised, sitting in the middle a the bathroom floor with that ole sink 'tween their legs watchin' their principal get drowned right in front of em. Well Chester was the first one to get a hold a himself an he tried to make a run for it 'fore Mr. Hornkins could figure out what happened. But that ole Principal grabbed a holt a that boy's neck before he'd gotten a inch outa that john. An poor ole Timmy just sat in the middle a the floor watching the water rise aroun' his legs. (Shakes head, chuckles, sighs) Well as I recall the boys got two weeks suspension for that trick, but it sure won't be the last. I 'member that time back when they's at Maybird High and Chester had just gotten his car. A 1973 jacked-up, candy-apple red, Chevy Nova it was. Had a 350 four-barrel under the hood and twin I-beam thrusters on the floor. Hell, that boy thought he's hotter 'an cat shit. Well one day Chester was giving Timmy a ride to school and they's late as usual an Chester was tryin' to open a package a nabs he'd bought for his breakfast. Well, while he's a fumblin' with 'em crackers an tryin' to drive at the same time he comes aroun' that blind curve right before Zack Dooley's chicken farm an one a Dooley's cows has done got loose an strayed inta tha road. Well Chester swerves to miss tha cow an hits tha gas instead of tha brake an goes flyin' up that hill in front a Dooley's place an tears through Dooley's fence an his car flips twice 'fore it finally comes ta rest in tha middle a Dooley's yard. Well somehow or another they's both ok, 'cept for Timmy's head which he'd done busted open on tha windshield an Chester ain't got nothing wrong with him 'cept for a couple a bruises. But do you know what that damn Chester Turnblit did next. He climbed

outa his car, hopped up on the hood an finished opening up them damn nabs that had done caused the wreck in tha first place. An he sat there eatin' his breakfast while Timmy wiped the blood offa his face with a dixie flag that Chester had in tha back seat. An they sat there just like that until the cops came. (Pause, shakes head, looks up as if to reflect) I mean to tell ya I ain't never seen two boys as dumb as those two were when they got together. (Pause) Hell, they's ok when they's younger but as ya get older the stakes go up on things. (Pause, speaks more slowly now, not as lively) Few years back Chester ran out on his wife an kids. Some say it's 'cause he missed Timmy or because he knew Timmy couldn't make it without somebody to tell him what to do. Others say it's 'cause he always was a good-fur-nothin' bastard an didn't want the responsibility of a family no more. They say he'd figured it was about time he ruined somebody else's life 'sides his own. (Pause, slowly rocking) Yeah, tha last I heard they's still doing time for that boy they killed while they's trying to rob that convenience store down in Franklin County. (Pause) Yep, it's a damn shame. Sometimes it seems like it might a been better if some folks were never born, the way their lives just don't seem to amount to nothing good. (Long pause, seems to go into a daydream, then suddenly becomes aware of the silence and livens up again) Ah hell! Listen at me gettin on, yore prob'ly half asleep after all my yapping. You're nice to listen though, not many people want to hear my old stories much anymore, guess they done gotten kinda old after all these years. (Pause, strains to get up, then slowly shuffles towards stage left) I reckon it's about time for me to be gettin' on, you say hello to that pretty momma a yours for me now will ya. I 'member when . . . (Lights fade to black and his voice trails off)

*Chris Tharp*