

The Predator

A Play in Two Acts



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To the Reader

The Predator, is a play that highlights America's fascination with drones. It has been read or played at Georgetown University, Wittenberg University, Syracuse University, Columbus, Ga. Convention Center, Bricolage Theater (World Affairs Counsel of Pittsburgh) and numerous small settings including Presbyterian, Episcopal, UU and Catholic Churches.

Anyone is free to download, print and use the play.

If you do use the play, please send a critique to jgilroy1@stny.rr.com
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A play in two acts. The first act is a monologue; the second, dialogue.

CHARACTERS

Ella Golden—19 years old. Sophomore at LeMoyne University, Syracuse, NY

Major Jennifer Golden—42 years old. Drone pilot, Hancock Air Field, Syracuse, NY

Senator Barbara Lewis—50 years old. United States Senator from New York.

Kelly Maguire—55 years old. Peace and Justice activist from Chicago

ACT I

Setting is minimalist—simply four comfortable swivel chairs placed in a row.

All four actors come out, nod to the audience, and take their seats in the row of chairs. Three of them swivel to face the rear of the stage, leaving ELLA facing the audience.

ELLA

My mother didn't want me to come east. I'm glad I did. I love it here in Syracuse. Green mountains, lots of water, and the people are so friendly.

My mom's suggestion--- suggestion? Yeah right! My mom's *insistence* that I apply for admission to the Air Force Academy in Colorado started when I was in middle school. She assured me that getting an appointment there would be 'a piece of cake'. As the years passed, my sports involvement led me to a championship high school volleyball team in Nevada. My mom said I was a shoe-in to go to Colorado Springs and the academy.

When I questioned all this, she got on me for not respecting the wishes of my dad. I should tell you that my dad, Lt. Col. Sean Golden, was killed on duty in Iraq. Mom told me that Dad had great hopes for me to be among the small team of women combat fighter pilots in the United States.

The fact that my dad had died in combat, matched with my good grades and sports achievements, would give me four years of college at no cost at the Air Force academy. Of course, I *would* have to give four years back to the Air Force.

I said, "Sorry, Major Mom. I've spent my life as an Air Force brat. It's time for a discharge."

When she realized I wasn't budging, she pleaded with me to go to the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. For me that would be like going back to high school—that's where I graduated, from Clarke High School in Vegas. I commuted the forty miles each day from my mom's trailer at Creech Air Force Base.

My mom's a pilot—sort of. She doesn't fly planes, she sits on her fanny twelve hours a day watching a screen that on occasion finds a bad guy—an insurgent, hopefully, a high-level enemy. When the decision is made that the guy is bad, my mom fires a missile via satellite from a drone hovering somewhere over Pakistan or Afghanistan.

Kind of spooky, all that. But you know what? I really didn't know what she was doing and if I did, so what? She was doing her job, just like my dad who died a hero serving our country. Mom assured me she was safe. I would not be an orphan. She fired safely, thousands of miles away from the bad guys.

So, I passed my school years accepting all that and having a good time. Each morning I rode a bus to my high school in Las Vegas. I was active in extra-curricular stuff so I didn't get back home until around eight each night. Major Mom was either on duty or asleep. She always left me pizza to warm up and lots of goodies.

In the spring of 2009 a couple of things sort of jolted me out of my senioritis—you know, parties, boyfriends, lots of adventures on the horizon. Well, all that good stuff was interrupted by some peaceniks who tried to enter Creech. The protestors did a die-in at the main gate. Some of the young guards were so surprised and shaken that they were ready to shoot them. It was pretty much all my friends talked about on the bus the following morning. Most of them said the guards should have shot the whole lot.

I kept quiet and pretended to be studying. Just recently, on the bus, I read a book that began to turn me around. A *People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn created a buzz in my mind. Zinn, a former US Air Force bombardier and later a college professor, made me realize I was a stooge for media, school and government lies. I began to see the spin of those lies in the glorification of our wars against people around the world, especially brown-skinned people. The more I read, the more I began to realize that I'd been duped by my family, my teachers, my government, my church and of course the profit-makers, the corporations who fed the war machine.

So, I sat back in my seat, a verbal coward, and read on.

When Major Mom insisted that I make a decision, I shocked her. Not that I turned down the Air Force Academy or any other military academy—that didn't shock her, she expected that. When I said I'd decided to go east, that pretty much floored her. She really thought little ole Ella would take the college bus up to Las Vegas. Instead, I told her I had selected a Jesuit college in Syracuse, NY — LeMoyne.

Her first response was harsh. But I detected a light bulb going off in her military mind. She was already in plotting mode.

As it worked out, Syracuse was just coming on as a sister base of Creech, Nevada. Within weeks, Major Mom talked to her commanding officer and not only was her transfer approved, but my mother received a bonus for volunteering to help command a new Predator facility at Hancock Air Base. Guess what? Five miles from LeMoyne. Can't I ever get a break?

(ELLA turns to face the back of the stage and MAJOR JENNIFER GOLDEN swivels to face the audience.)

MAJOR GOLDEN

Telling Ella that he father had been killed in Iraq was the most difficult thing I ever did. She was twelve years old and crazy about her dad. I knew I had to control my emotions—especially the day he was buried in Arlington Cemetery—all that pomp and ceremony—flag-draped coffin, Marines in dress uniform, taps and rifle shots fired. I kept my eyes on Ella and was surprised at how stoic she was.

Ella felt, at that time, that her father died for a noble cause. I'm not sure how she feels now. Ella seems to be wandering away from her upbringing. She has even supported some freakish actions in opposition to all that her dad and I have supported—the security of our nation.

When some peaceniks did a die-in at the Creech Air Force base back in 2009, I never would have guessed my own daughter would have taken their side. Before she left for her freshman year at LeMoyne University, she jolted me with comments and quotes from some of the yahoos who tried to enter the base. I told her they were all whacked-out hippie types or religious zealots. Amazingly, I'd found out that some of the protestors were Jesuit priests. I would expect that from bleeding-heart Franciscans, but the Jesuits are known for their scholarship, their thoughtful analysis of science, philosophy, the arts—not for this sort of action.

I graduated from Santa Clara, a Jesuit university. Same college that my head boss, Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta graduated from. And, that's where I met Sean Golden. We were both in ROTC. We could have taken ROTC at any one of over 100 Catholic colleges but we loved Santa Clara. We were taught Just War principles and we stayed on track—I chose the Air Force and Sean chose the Marines for a career track. Sean remained committed to his mission to honor and serve to the day he died in Fallujah—protecting his brothers as he tried to destroy the enemy.

Now, when I sit before my console and work with my team-mates to locate the enemy, Sean is always on my mind. The Air Force takes its work seriously. We're precise in our actions. All that talk about civilian casualties from drone strikes seeps out of media like Al-Jazerra and the Islamic fundamentalists.

Have we made mistakes? There may have been a few, but we've been taking out Taliban leadership and Al-Qaeda supporters with amazing accuracy. Remember who these dudes are—the crazies who took out the Twin Towers and killed thousands of our people. Why do you think NATO has forces in the Middle

East? The fundamentalists have attacked the UK and Spain and have hit embassies all around the world.

Ella knows all this and that makes me wonder what happened to her. She showed me a book her social studies teacher gave her—*A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn. I skimmed the book and quickly noted the revisionist twist so often given by radicals like Zinn.

Ella's teacher tried to get the Las Vegas school board to approve the book as a text for American history students. Thank God the board had their heads screwed on right. But the teacher bought a bunch of books and gave them to some of his brightest students and Ella was among them.

I was pissed and let the school district know how devious this guy was. They put a stop to it but it was too late for my kid. Ella was hooked.

When she told me she wanted to go east to LeMoyne, I checked out the school and noted it was Jesuit and had an ROTC connection. That was positive—in fact it left me with some hope for Ella. But then Ella told me she was going to enroll in the Peace Studies program. I worried about the sort of professor she'd get to turn her even further left.

Seeing how determined she was to go to LeMoyne, I talked to my commanding officer about a transfer to Hancock Air Base in Syracuse. My commander was delighted, not because he didn't like my work, but he actually was being pressed to send trained pilots from our established base in Creech to the new installation at Hancock. He even said he'd try to get me a bonus to fill the needed position in Syracuse. Things were beginning to work out. I still needed to keep Ella in my crosshairs, and it looked like I was going to be able to do it.

(MAJOR GOLDEN swivels to face the rear of the stage, and
SENATOR LEWIS swivels to face the audience.)

SENATOR LEWIS

It's my pleasure to be here with you and to share in the issues raised. As your Senator, I know that the less time I spend in Washington means more time with you, my constituents. Like all of you, I'm proud to be an American, and proud to be able to work closely with our brave men and women who serve our county so well.

The concerns Ella has vis a vis drones and American foreign policy are understandable. But I'm sure Ella is bursting with pride for her mom and dad. I congratulate Ella for questioning it all. Isn't that what all good citizens must do? And I applaud Major Golden for her sensitive manner in working with Ella.

As your Senator, I have been consistent in my support for the troops. I've voted as my predecessor did—always with love and respect for our men and women in uniform. And that love translates into the necessary funds to keep them safe in their mission, whether it be Iraq or Afghanistan or Pakistan. Aid to the military has always received my vote. Our men and women deserve our love and respect as we love and respect them for keeping us free.

From the war of independence from Britain to our wars with Mexico, our war between the states, our wars to calm the native people in this land and in other areas of our foreign interest like Cuba, assorted islands in the South Pacific, Korea, Vietnam, Santo Domingo, Cambodia, Laos, Granada, Panama, Libya, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan and.....have I forgotten any others?

(SENATOR LEWIS stops, looks at audience and waits for some answers. If anyone calls out, she acknowledges their contribution and then goes on)

Our Central Intelligence Agency has conducted a brilliant campaign against our enemies abroad. In June of 2011, President Obama's top counter-terrorism adviser, John O. Brennan, a New Yorker and Fordham grad, I'd like to note, reported that for almost a year "there hasn't been a single collateral death because of the exceptional proficiency and precision of our drones." Mr. Brennan went on to note that between May of 2010 and June of 2011, drones have killed 600 militants and not one civilian.

Major Golden must be proud of that revelation and I hope Ella brings that information to her Peace and Conflict Resolution classes at LeMoyne.

I need to reassure you that the serious economic problems of Syracuse and upstate New York are getting my attention. You need to know that help is on the way. Syracuse will soon be a leader in the robotics industry, and drone production and testing will have a central NY focus. As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have an opportunity to bring this work to my good people of Syracuse and other regions of New York. There is a huge growth of industries engaged in the design, production, and testing of unmanned aerial surveillance vehicles. As your Senator, I plan on taking that work here to Central New York. Thank you---and let's stay the course in 2014!

(SENATOR LEWIS swivels her chair to face the rear of the stage, as KELLY MAGUIRE swivels hers to face the audience.)

KELLY MAGUIRE

Thanks for allowing me to join this discussion. I'm impressed with the fluid speech from each of these women. I hope I can be as clear in what I'd like to say.

I don't have an official title like Senator Lewis or Major Golden. I guess Ella and I are simply citizens trying to figure out why so much of our national treasure of blood and money is directed to what is wrongly termed "defense." I'm not aware that the United States has been invaded by a foreign country since the Brits unloaded those poor soldiers onto a field in New Orleans back in 1815. Even that would not have occurred if they had electronic communication back then, for the war was declared over long before the young men were pushed into the field of fire laid down by Andrew Jackson's troops.

What about Pearl Harbor, you ask? Well, Hawaii was not a state in 1941. It was a territory we stole from the Hawaiians back in 1898. And the criminal attack on the World Trade and Pentagon buildings back in 2001 was not precipitated by a foreign government, even though the Bush administration pretended that it was an Iraqi plot.

The United States Defense Department is the big lie and the military is the sacred cow of our nation. Military spending sucks resources that should be shared by all Americans. To maintain the fear factor that allows our people to accept so-called "defense spending," new enemies are made constantly. The Senator noted that very well, and most Americans likely will vote and vote and vote for more military spending. I've seen the Senator's smiling face on front page stories of new contracts for helicopters, ships, planes and yes, our new war toy—drones.

The truth is that we have a Department of War, not Defense. Some would say a Department of Offense, for of those countries the Senator listed, note that not one of those nations invaded the United States. Just imagine Iraqi or Vietnamese or Afghan troops patrolling our streets, knocking down bedroom doors, dragging out our loved ones, our neighbors, beating them to the ground and often killing them.

America is addicted to war and thankfully, Ella Golden has been able to rise above the indoctrination of home, school, media and government to recognize our need to praise the military and pretend they are keeping us free.

"Join the military, go to foreign lands, meet people and kill them" is what recruiters should tell prospective recruits. But the lies sweep through our whole culture. School teachers invite returning military into their classrooms and little children are taught to look with pride upon our trained killers.

But wait, there is more. Soon we will not have to send our trained infantry or air force or navy into foreign lands where they may themselves be injured or killed.

Oh no, we don't want that to happen to our people. So, let's concentrate on a new type of warfare being tested now in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Instead of sending in snipers to assassinate those we call the "insurgents," we can now send unmanned assassination vehicles —drones—to kill them.

And who are the insurgents? They are the enemy—the indigenous people of any region where we decide we have interests. Insurgents are those who are defending their own families, towns, villages, cities against foreign troops—almost all American troops.

I've been in Pakistan and Afghanistan many times and I've seen the results of the Predator. It is not a pretty sight to see homeless, orphaned children with charred bodies, missing legs and arms. The claim is that our targets just take out the bad guys and if the so called bad guys are at a wedding or funeral or religious festival and some collateral damage happens—well, that's their problem, not ours.

Drones such as the Predator and Reaper that Major Golden fires take out more than so-called insurgents. They take out families. Thankfully, Ella is taking a course away from this mindset—or at least, I hope she is.

(KELLY MAGUIRE leaves the stage, followed by the other actors. .End of Act I.)

ACT II

Actors return to their four swivel chairs, this time all turned to face the audience. KELLY MAGUIRE, MAJOR GOLDEN, SENATOR LEWIS, and ELLA GOLDEN take their seats in their respective chairs. As each character speaks, she may get up and move around, always returning to the same chair.

ELLA

(smiling, looking at her mother)

Mom, I'm really not upset that your transfer from Nevada to Syracuse was approved.

(turns to the audience with eyes cast upward)

If only that were true.

MAJOR GOLDEN

Ella, it's not like I'm in your face. You're at your dorm in LeMoyne and I'm at my job or home.

ELLA

Yeah, right. Your job at Hancock is just five miles from LeMoyne. Thanks for putting us in a war zone!

(looking at the audience)

And I thought I had a discharge from the Air Force culture—now Major Mom is back on my door step.

MAJOR GOLDEN

Ella, I promised I'd keep my distance. Maybe you're not the only reason I'm here, you know. I happened to tell my commanding officer at Creech about your selection of LeMoyne and right away he said my expertise was badly needed at Hancock. He offered me a transfer with a substantial bonus—how could I refuse?

SENATOR LEWIS

New York is pleased to have you both. Our educational opportunities are among the best in the nation and our military is economically important to our state. So a hearty welcome to both of you westerners.

KELLY MAGUIRE

Ella, I can't tell you how pleased I was to learn you've chosen the Peace Studies program at LeMoyne.

MAJOR GOLDEN

I agree. Everyone wants peace. My whole life has been devoted to keeping the peace.

SENATOR LEWIS

Mother and daughter aren't far apart on this. I bet Ella will find that out with her studies.

KELLY MAGUIRE

(with a chuckle)

Yes, I remember the Reagan administration's decision to name their flagship missile the Peacemaker. It had ten re-entry missiles for ten different targets, each with a nuclear explosive power 20 times that of Hiroshima.

MAJOR GOLDEN

That's precisely my point. If we have that kind of power no one is going to mess with us.

SENATOR LEWIS

And no one has attacked us, Ms. Maguire. The Peacemaker is a symbol of restrained power. We have not used it, but the threat of its use helped create a peace between us and the former Soviet Union.

KELLY MAGUIRE

And now Russia holds thousands of nukes and the spread of nuclear weapons has spread to the United Kingdom, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea—and others are gearing up. The international buildup led by the United States can destroy whole cities—hundreds of thousands of families around the world. It's insane.

MAJOR GOLDEN

I have to admit I am concerned about so many countries having such massive nuclear capabilities. I worry that some day one of our leaders will go bonkers and unleash their nuclear arsenal.

KELLY MAGUIRE

But you don't have any concerns about sitting before a monitor and calling for a killing strike on so-called insurgents in Pakistan, Afghanistan or Iraq?

MAJOR GOLDEN

(smiling) We don't do Iraq any more.

ELLA

Mom, that's kind of sick. "We don't do Iraq anymore". Kelly was asking you about your concern with targeting and firing at people anywhere.

SENATOR LEWIS

Ella, we are in a war. Terrorists have thrived in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Your mother is fulfilling the covenant she made with the United States Government when she enlisted in the military. If ordered to fire on the enemy, she does her duty.

KELLY MAGUIRE

So, Major, are you saying you do not have a problem with firing the Predator at selected targets, but you would not be able to pull the nuclear trigger?

MAJOR GOLDEN

Correct. I'd resign rather than be part of the nuclear force team. When we do a kill we do it selectively. Our intelligence finds the target, we verify it, double check the target and on command, the drone missile is piloted to destroy the enemy.

KELLY MAGUIRE

Do you ever take into consideration the people surrounding the so-called enemy or insurgent?

MAJOR GOLDEN

Of course! Please don't take me for some crazed gunner out there, just dying to watch things explode like some Hollywood movie. When we fire, we know we're targeting the bad guys like the Taliban and Al-Qaeda who are plotting and planning to hurt Americans and others who don't share their beliefs.

SENATOR LEWIS

I've been to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. I can assure you, Ms. Maguire, that our intelligence gets better by the day. We have been pin-pointing the enemy with our reconnaissance drones. The work of our drone teams is incredible. Drone cameras can zoom in on facial features—we know the people we target.

KELLY MAGUIRE

Have you traveled to the countryside and conversed with the native population?

SENATOR LEWIS

I returned just last month from a tour that allowed me to speak to tribal leaders, our own men and women on the ground and officials of the respective governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. I observed some of the results of drone targets and was pleased to learn that no collateral damage took place in over the past year.

KELLY MAGUIRE

Yes, I just read in the *NY Times* that the Central Intelligence Agency said not one civilian was killed from May of 2010 to June of 2011. Pretty incredible. If it were true. You know, don't you, it's a total lie.

SENATOR LEWIS*(smiling)*

And your information overrules the CIA?

KELLY MAGUIRE

When the CIA doesn't tell the truth! Senator, I've been in Afghanistan for extended periods several times each year for the past five years. The number of Americans in Afghanistan is huge. Those not in military uniform usually identify themselves as "Contractors." Are some CIA? Quite likely. The Americans I've met in Afghanistan are quite upfront in saying that some collateral damage is inevitable.

MAJOR GOLDEN

So you've never witnessed collateral damage.

KELLY MAGUIRE

I've not only spoken to civilian victims, I've been in the tents of survivors. I've heard their stories over and over in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Whole families killed, children left without arms, without legs, with faces damaged beyond recognition. These are the people the US military calls collateral damage.

ELLA

One of my peace studies professors showed a CBS *60 Minutes* interview in which the well-respected Human Rights Watch organization reported that 30 civilian deaths are acceptable to the US military to kill one "high value asset."

KELLY MAGUIRE

When I go into the countryside in Pakistan or Afghanistan, I don't have armed guards at my side or armed US helicopters hovering in a protective position. I've put my life on the line in places like Waziristan, a Pakistani tribal area near the border of Afghanistan. I was in Damadola where the CIA secret war machine tried to kill a high level al-Qaeda fellow. Their Predator, fired out of Langley Air Field in Virginia, missed the al-Qaeda guy altogether but killed 18 local civilians.

Native people and journalists tend to tell the truth versus cover up comments of intelligence sources and the military. Safdar Darwar, a friend and Pakistani journalist, explained to me the sight he came across after a Predator hit a village. He said: "Their bodies, carbonized, were fully burned. They could only be identified by their legs and arms. One body was still on fire when we got there." Then he learned the charred and mutilated corpses were relatives of his who lived in the village.

SENATOR LEWIS

Ms. Maguire, I think I'll stand by my inside information on civilian casualties. I only wish you had clearance to learn the truth from our own people, not individuals on their home turf.

ELLA

Senator Lewis, are you saying that we should not believe people in the country where our drones are aimed, but just our military and CIA informants? You must be aware of the US Government lies exposed by Edward Snowden?

SENATOR LEWIS

Ella, I refuse to comment on this traitor to American secrets. Mr. Snowden is in hiding because he doesn't have the courage to come back home and face the awful music of his treachery. As for native people, of course we work and speak to them. The fact is, most of our information comes from tribal leaders and informants who fear the actions of extremists. They help us target the bad guys.

ELLA

One of our professors pointed out that our intelligence often comes from warring factions within tribal groups—a lot of jealousy and finger-pointing. And there's also the matter of the CIA cash that feeds those who do the finger-pointing.

KELLY MAGUIRE

Exactly, intentional targeting of competing tribal leadership can reap a bundle of cash for the accusers.

Edward Snowden needs to come home to a ticker tape reception. He deserves a Medal of Honor for exposing lies of war that Bush & Cheney and the war hawks told the American people. I hope your peace studies course examines Wiki leaks, Ella.

MAJOR GOLDEN

Ella, you heard this in school? I think LeMoyné needs to screen the so-called experts who make such accusations to college students. It seems like your professors on the far left side of the issue, with no rational voice to balance their extremism.

KELLY MAGUIRE

Major, have you considered the possibility that the position of the United States is extreme? The last I looked around I didn't see any Afghan or Pakistani troops on our soil, and I've never witnessed Afghan or Pakistani fighter jets or incoming drones on our wedding parties or funerals or family gatherings.

MAJOR GOLDEN

Ms. Maguire, you seem to forget the long string of attacks made upon our embassies abroad, the thousands who died at the hands of Al-Qaeda in this state of New York just ten years ago, to say nothing of the attack on the

Pentagon, the protective heart of the American people—have you some sort of peacenik amnesia?

ELLA

That's not a fair comment, Mom. Kelly has put herself on the line—and not for pay or patriotism, but basic human rights and justice. We've discussed the drone issue in class. A poll was taken before our discussion and 65% of the students thought it was okay to use drones. After the details were discussed, the professor said let's spend some more time on this issue. After the next class, a poll was taken and 70% of the class said it was not okay. I was one of the converts. I tried defending the drones because I felt I owed it to you and your dedication. But I can't support your mission any longer.

MAJOR GOLDEN

Shortly before Gen. Petraeus resigned to become head of the CIA in May of 2011, he said: "Every loss of innocent civilian life is a tragedy for the family involved and diminishes our cause." We all know that accidents can happen. Attacks on people of the west by Al-Qaeda have not been accidents. The thousands of our people who have died at the hands of terrorists did not die accidentally. Conversely, the United States Government has never intended to harm civilians. In our attempt to destroy evil, accidents can occur.

SENATOR LEWIS

We need to be thankful that we live in a democracy and are able to discuss issues like this. This is not the case in many Middle Eastern regions.

KELLY MAGUIRE

I agree with that point, but how many people are actually talking about the terror we use against people in the Middle East. Americans overwhelmingly didn't want to go to war with Iraq back in 2003. Then Bush and Cheney and the war hawks started the mess. Almost immediately the media, corporations, military, government and churches cried out to support the troops. Americans are often suckers for the big lie. The false patriotism call wins-----My country right or wrong.

SENATOR LEWIS

And now we've won the war in Iraq. We're out of there and leaving behind a trained militia to keep the peace. The same thing will happen in Afghanistan if we stay the course.

KELLY MAGUIRE

Won in Iraq? Winning in Afghanistan? You're not serious, Senator, are you? We displaced two million people in Iraq and had the major hand in killing about a million more. Iraq is a mess, much more so than pre-2003, as bad as that may have been under Saddam. But to say we've won is like saying you won a hurricane or a tsunami. We lost, Senator. Not only lost the lives of Iraqi people

but the lives of thousands of our own forces—their families grieve, Senator. Their sons and daughters died in vain.

MAJOR GOLDEN

How dare you say that! My husband, Lt. Col. Sean Golden, was killed fighting for his country in Fallujah. That loving man was Ella's father. Your attitude disrespects not just Ella and me, but the American people, the Marine Corps and those Iraqi people we were protecting.

KELLY MAGUIRE

I have no desire to disrespect anyone. But a friend of mine, Ray McGovern, served the first Bush administration as a CIA analyst. McGovern briefed President Bush each morning during the first war upon the Iraqi people. Recently, McGovern wrote a piece that clarified the nonsense that our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan died for a noble cause and for our freedom. The title of his article that swept the internet was "They Died in Vain." Major Golden, I'm sorry to say your husband died in vain, but that is a truth that cannot be denied. Our men and women have been fed lies and have been asked to do immoral acts masked with false patriotism, and often this has cost them their lives.

ELLA

Kelly, that's as harsh as my mother's lack of feeling for the civilians killed by drones. I still have loving memories for my dad. I believe he died because he was doing his duty as a Marine officer. I believe he was a hero and you will never take that belief away from me. I can't imagine my father doing anything immoral.

SENATOR LEWIS

Nor can I. I'm proud of our service men and have consistently voted to provide funding for their mission.

MAJOR GOLDEN

(tearing up, her voice quivering)

There isn't a day that passes that I do not thank God for Lt. Col. Sean Golden. He was a model Marine; his men respected and loved him. He followed orders and gave his life for his country. What more can one ask?

KELLY MAGUIRE

We can ask for a speeded-up evolutionary change from our American obsession with following orders. I don't believe in the Just War theory but I'm sure that Ella has already studied it at LeMoyne. Sadly, I remember teaching it in a Chicago Jesuit High School. It's a lie whether it's taught from a Christian perspective or in a non-sectarian mode. No war is just, and modern war where most of the casualties are civilians makes a mockery of this medieval theory. We need to bury the theory with the dead civilians of Fallujah, including the children who popped out of doorways and were instantly killed by our Marines under order to kill any living thing that entered the streets—yes, dogs and cats included.

MAJOR GOLDEN

Say what your extreme views command you to say, Ms. Maguire. For me, I shall do my duty and have faith that my God and my country are ordering me to do the right thing. My Catholic Bishop assigned a Syracuse Diocese priest to assist our 174th Attack Wing crew here at Hancock. We are blessed and thankful that the Church recognizes our devotion to both church and state.

SENATOR LEWIS

Major, I *know* you're doing the right thing. While Ms Maguire and the professors of these peace studies programs mull over duty versus morality, the drone threats from outside this nation continue to escalate. I've been briefed and I know this to be true. Just imagine if we did something that the Chinese object to, say a blockade of Taiwan which we may some year have to do—just imagine the attacks on America by thousands of Chinese drones! And China is making drones, as are many nations around the world. This is a real threat and pie in the sky questions of morality go out the window once we are attacked. We need to be ready.

ELLA

Mom, you told me that the Predator is now out of production—so what's the next step?

MAJOR GOLDEN

We're doing training on the MQ-9 Reaper that has ten video cameras and can track multiple targets.

SENATOR LEWIS

As a member of the Armed Service Committee, I have inside information I can't reveal here. But I can tell you that the future of drones is huge. Our economy may be in trouble but the drone industry is hot.

ELLA

So you're talking jobs?

SENATOR LEWIS

Absolutely! For just New York State alone the work force in drone research and production will expand well beyond what it is today. That means more unemployed New Yorkers will be able to get work.

ELLA

And college graduates? What are you telling college students to do?

SENATOR LEWIS

Concentrate on the realities of life. Our economy is dependant on defense spending. Every one of our 435 congressional districts and every one of our 50 states have defense contracts. As we move away from boots on the ground and pilots in the air, drones will overtake all forms of military spending. We're into a new era of defense.

KELLY MAGUIRE

Yes, this new era has President Obama now saying we'll keep thousands of troops in Afghanistan to protect the drones. Wasn't it supposed to be the other way around? Seems the Pentagon spin about drones has been that they protect boots on the ground.

It's just too bad we're not into a new era of creativity. If we were, we'd be able to develop technology that is life-giving, not death-giving. But this seems to have escaped our political-corporate-military minds.

MAJOR GOLDEN

When Cain killed Abel, the arms race began. Making weapons is part of our nature, because self-preservation is the rule. Olive branches are pretty but they don't do much to keep you safe.

SENATOR LEWIS

The *Washington Post* wrote recently that "No country has ramped up its research in recent years faster than China. It displayed a drone model for the first time at the Zhuhai air show five years ago, but now every major manufacturer for the Chinese military has a research center devoted to drones." Don't you think American drone technology should surpass anything produced by the Chinese?

ELLA

Well, under normal circumstances I might, but I sense a conflict of interest here. This is a quote I found for a paper I'm doing on drones. "According to Open Secrets.org, Senator Lewis received \$10,000 for her 2010 re-election campaign from Lockheed Martin. Lockheed Martin is one of at least 50 companies making drones of various sizes and types and it produces Hellfire missiles used by Predator and Reaper drones. Lockheed employs 2,200 in Syracuse."

SENATOR LEWIS

Ella, I have no problem with divulging that. Corporations have a right to contribute to elections and the Supreme Court recently confirmed that right. This is the real world, Ella. You could help in the defense of your country. Your dad laid down his life and your mother has dedicated her service to our protection.

KELLY MAGUIRE

Ella is already helping by working to reduce the fear factor that politicians and the defense industry promotes. It's just ironic that she's coming out of a military mindset.

ELLA

I wish I could say that I really have come out of that mindset. I'm working on it.

MAJOR GOLDEN

Ella, there is nothing wrong with being part of the so-called military mindset. Ms. Maguire is entitled to her resentment. Maybe she suffers from missile envy.

KELLY MAGUIRE

(smiling)

If any institution exemplifies Freudian psychology, it's the military. Every military barracks and defense contractor office should have couches for psychoanalysis. The insanity would soon be exposed. We could begin switching to making and exporting life-giving products like we once did. But being totally nuts, we're content to find some solace in leading the world in weapons-making. Weapons are our most important export.

SENATOR LEWIS

Emphasis on protecting one's citizens is noble. I believe Ella needs some balance to her peace studies. The defense Industry needs keen young minds and that means more of our college graduates can find creative ways to be part of our plan. I'm initiating a federal program that will identify ROTC students who will be put on a fast track for drone training. I encourage students such as Ella to investigate the ROTC program offered to LeMoyne students at Syracuse University. I'd be happy to include you in the plan, Ella.

ELLA

I can't imagine my new-found attitude toward peace could be smothered by ROTC offers.

MAJOR GOLDEN

Ella, think about it. I promise not to interfere if you give it a chance. College costs are important. That's why I had hoped you'd go to one of the military academies. All expenses paid.

ELLA

Right, and total one-sided propaganda.

SENATOR LEWIS

You can continue with your peace studies at LeMoyne. As your mother has said, everyone is for peace. You can take your ideas from peace studies and use them at ROTC classes over the hill at Syracuse University.

KELLY MAGUIRE

Ella would be living a lie. The military is about training to kill; peace studies emphasize *not* killing. My suggestion to Ella is to avoid ROTC at all costs—that means principles as well as finances.

(All four players are now sitting—KELLY in the stage right swivel chair, MAJOR GOLDEN in the next chair, SENATOR LEWIS in the next, and ELLA at the end. As KELLY finishes her last line, all four actors swivel their chairs to turn their backs to the audience. Then one by one, they swivel back around and speak directly to the audience.)

KELLY

What do you think?

MAJOR GOLDEN

What do you think?

SENATOR LEWIS

What do you think?

ELLA

What do you think?

The End*

*Discussion is crucial to the success of the play. Some productions have had the actors stay in role to answer questions from the audience. This works well if the actors process the roles and have facts and figures to back up comments. What sometimes works better and takes pressure off the actors is to have a moderator and two 'experts'. One person in support of drones used to kill and one opposed.

Plan on have two hours for the play and forum discussion. The play takes about 50 minutes and discussion can go on for one hour and sometimes more depending on your time requirements.

Please do not perform the play without having talented readers/actors do the lines with good timing, passion and meaning. There are just a few lines that inject some humor into a serious topic but handling lines is the key to some laughs.

Some groups have a free will offering or actual ticket charge. No remuneration to the author is expected.

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