

Goodnight.

by
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Man 1/Doctor	A Man or woman put into a (presumably) fascist prison for undisclosed crimes./ A Doctor on staff by the government operating the prison.	20+	Any
Man 2	A man or woman who has been in the prison for some time and looks very similar to MAN 1	20+	Any
Guard	A prison cell guard, which can be a stand in or a voice over role with their actions implied by MAN 1 miming.	Any	Any

SETTING DESCRIPTION

LOCATION

TIME

Prison cell

Ambiguous

Early 1900's

The play takes place in a prison cell with stereotypical bars which go above the actors' heads. The door is up stage and there are two beds within it on the left and right side of the cell. There are a few things within the cell such as a notebook for MAN 2, a bucket or two filled with water, and various cigarettes or cigarette butts MAN 2 has smoked or will smoke strewn about the cell.

Dedicated to Michael

For reminding me.

ACT I

SCENE ONE

The stage is set in the dark with a prison cell center stage with two small beds, one on each side.

You can hear a struggle of a prison guard bringing MAN 1 into the cell and throwing him onto the ground.

GUARD

Keep it down in here.

Lights come up with MAN 1 getting up off of the floor.

MAN 2 is sitting on his bed. His pondering was interrupted by Man 1 being thrown into the cell and is now trying not to give him attention, but since he wasn't actually doing anything, and his journal is out of reach, finds it hard to ignore him entirely.

MAN 1

Hey.

No response.

What are you in here for? I feel so cliché asking that. It's okay, you don't have to answer. How long have you been here? What? Are you just not going to talk to me at all?

MAN 2 looks at MAN 1 and then back down.

MAN 2 finds a cigarette around the cell and lights it.

Our time in here is going to feel a lot longer if we talk about anything. Would you rather sing? I always wanted to be an opera singer, but I don't have any classical training or anything.

MAN 1 starts to sing operatic gibberish in another language.

A loud bang is made by the prison guard.

GUARD

Shut the fuck up in there!

MAN 1

Fuck, all right! I'll stop. Everyone's a critic, know what I mean?

Pause.

Well if you're not going to talk to me, then I'll just talk for you.

MAN 1 says these lines as if having a conversation with himself gesturing back and forth mimicking MAN 2.

Hi.

Hi.

What's your name?

Breaks delusional conversation to actually ask MAN 2

Is Carlos a good name for you? Okay.

Carlos, yours?

Eh, if I told you I'd have to kill you.

Ha, ha, ha, well in here that might not be too bad of an offer.

So, what are you in here for?

I don't know...

Analyzes MAN 2 to see if he can accurately guess his crime.

Probably murder or something like that based on my personality.

MAN 2

(Breaking the back and forth.)

I've been here for 6 months... okay? I was here for 4 and a half years before that, spent 9 months away, and now I'm back.

MAN 1

Really? Where were you?

MAN 2

Don't push it.

MAN 1

I'm sorry, I didn't know you were so touchy.

MAN 2

In my experience, talking can only lead to prolonging the time, so if you don't mind I'd rather be left alone, okay? Great? Thank you, goodbye.

MAN 1

Ponders for a moment.

Pause.

No, actually, I don't like that.

MAN 2

Look, I'm not going to tell you what I'm in for.

MAN 1

Oh, all right, a bit of mystery. Good idea. That will keep things more entertaining... let me see if I can guess... incest? No? Public nudity? Hm. Corrupting a minor?

Laughs.

Assassination of a public official?

MAN 2

Look, if you're going to keep talking can you at least hand me my book?

MAN 1

What book?

MAN 2

It's behind you on your bed.

Gestures behind MAN 1

MAN 1

If it's your book then why is it on my bed?

MAN 2

I left it there. I didn't expect them to put you in here with me.

MAN 1

Hmm, Neat-zes-che, sounds NEAT. I'll bet one of the guards left it for me as a welcoming gift.

MAN 2

I told you, I left it there.

MAN 1

Does it have your name on it?

MAN 2

Just give me the fucking book and stop being a fucking child.

MAN 1

Tosses book.

God. You're welcome.

MAN 2 puts the cigarette out.

MAN 2

Begins to read and then pauses.

And it's pronounced Nietzsche, not Neat-ze-sche. You didn't even mispronounce it like everyone else does.

Continues to try to read.

MAN 1

Is it good?

MAN 2

Pause.

Yes.

MAN 1

What's it about?

MAN 2

It's more than what it's about. Not every book is a story.

MAN 1

It doesn't have a story? How can you read a book with no story?

MAN 2

I didn't say there wasn't a story. It's just about more than what happens.

MAN 1

Well isn't every story?

MAN 2

No, not like this.

MAN 1

Read me some.

MAN 2

No.

MAN 1

Don't think I'll like it?

MAN 2

Don't care.

MAN 1

Want me to sing again?

Inhales.

MAN 2

Don't do that!

Pause.

Look, it's not one of those you can just jump into the middle of. There's too much complexity behind it.

MAN 1

So complex you can't read it to me?

MAN 2

I purely don't want to.

MAN 1

Well, would you rather read it aloud or have me sing opera while you read?

MAN 2

Fine. I won't read.

Puts up the book and sits in silence.

MAN 1

So what do you do?

MAN 2

Why do you want to know?

MAN 1

I figure we should start somewhere.

MAN 2

Why do we have to talk at all?

MAN 1

When I was young my father always...

MAN 2

Realizing his mistake gets up and walks away during the line to distance himself even further from the conversation.

Whoa, stop. I'm sorry. I didn't even realize I was asking you a question that I cared nothing about, but that's on me, not you, so don't beat yourself up about it.

MAN 1

I'm only trying to make this as entertaining as it can be. You and me, wasting away in a cell... could use a little stimulation. We don't have to get deep, we don't have to talk about your work... is it why you're in here?

MAN 2 looks at MAN 1 again.

Sorry, too much. But we can keep it vain.

MAN 2

Fine, keep it vain.

Beat.

MAN 1

So do you like women or men?

MAN 2

(Exacerbated.)

Women.

MAN 1

Get any lately?

MAN 2

Are you taunting me?

MAN 1

A little. How long are you in here for?

MAN 2

I don't know....

MAN 1

Shit, your crime must have been pretty damn bad.

MAN 2

(Correcting him.)

Not everyone imprisoned is a criminal.

Oh. MAN 1

Don't ask again. MAN 2

Okay. MAN 1

Pause.

Do you have a favorite book? Is that vain enough?

MAN 2
(Genuinely ponders.)
I'm not one of those people who have favorites. I indulge in all of the finest writings to better myself. If I had a favorite it'd probably be... no, nevermind.

What? What's your favorite? MAN 1

I'm not talking about it. MAN 2

Oh come on, you can't just... MAN 1

Next question. MAN 2

Fine. When did you lose your virginity? MAN 1

What? MAN 2
(Caught off-guard.)

Come on. It may not be entirely vain, but it can't tell me anything truly important about you and it'll undoubtedly pass the time. MAN 1

MAN 2

I don't-

MAN 1

I'll tell you mine first. I was 17 and my older brother had just sailed off after he turned 18. His girlfriend Maria, whom he left behind, asked me to come help her go to the market and carry back her things. At first, I didn't want to, but my mother told me I needed to help women who didn't have husbands, so I agreed. On our way back she led me into this shed which she said led to a shortcut, but then she dropped everything and talked about how romantic this abandoned old shed was. I completely disagreed, but I didn't say anything. Then she said I looked just like my brother and then she kissed me. Your turn.

MAN 2

I was 20. She was my girlfriend for many years, many years.

MAN 1

Well, what happened?

MAN 2

I don't want to talk about this anymore.

MAN 1

Oh well, we can...

MAN 2

I think I'm just going to go to sleep.

Lays in bed and faces away from him.

MAN 1

Oh, well, goodnight.

No response.

Blackout.

SCENE TWO

*Lights come up on the same cell with only
MAN 2 in it.*

MAN 2 wakes up and looks around the cell.

MAN 2

Lines are either spoken or expressed nonverbally.

What the fuck? Where'd he go?

Gets up to look around MAN 1's cot.

His food is still here. Looks like he only ate half of it. Maybe a little more than half.

Looks around more and finds nothing.

Sits down on his own cot.

Waits a little while.

Reaches under his pillow and starts to take out a notebook and pen.

Lines actually spoken again.

"A wall is a barrier, but I don't believe in barriers. Not of good. The righteous will always be unburdened by Those in power cannot keep truth away It is stronger than they are My mistake was being a wall. That false barrier of the unjust Cannot be contained through secrets. Only can it be battled against to Keep it at bay. It..."

Hears screams and turns quickly to see MAN 1 being thrown back into the cell, but very bloody on his sides with his shirt ripped and in his hands after being tortured for a while.

Oh my God, what happened to you?

MAN 1

Oh, they gave me a bath.

Falls, dropping his torn shirt on the ground.

MAN 2

Oh god, here, let me help.

Helps him slowly lie on his bed.

This is really bad. Let me try to clean you up a little.

Throughout this dialogue MAN 2 picks up MAN 1 torn shirt, rips it into two pieces, and wets them in a bucket of water.

Don't worry, it's clean.

Then cleans off some of the blood with one of the pieces of torn shirt and bandages him up with the other one, tying it around his waist.

Is that all right?

MAN 1

Yeah, just stings, but I can take it. How'd you learn this? You a doctor?

MAN 2

No, no, I'm not a doctor.

Pause.

My mom was a nurse actually.

Pause.

She taught me a few things when I was young. We were close, well, we got along well, and I spent all my time with her, but she never really talked about her... just what we did.

Smiles.

I remember all the things she taught me, but to this day I don't feel like I know anything real about her.

MAN 1

Why haven't you asked her?

MAN 2

Pause.

She died when I was 12.

No response. Finishes patching him up and sits back on the floor leaning against his cot.

You're quieter today. Haven't been talking my ear off.

MAN 1

Haven't been in the mood to talk as much.

MAN 2

Want me to read you some Nietzsche?

MAN 1

No, that's okay.

MAN 2

Pause.

I'm impressed with you. I've never seen someone beaten so badly on their first night. Very unusual, but you handle it like a man who's been beaten for years.

They both laugh a little.

MAN 1

You think?

MAN 2

What did you do to make them beat you like that so soon?

MAN 1

You'll never know.

MAN 2

No? The man who so far has almost entirely concerned himself with trying to find out what I did doesn't want to go on and on about everything he's done once he finally has an interested audience?

MAN 1

It's only fair I suppose.

MAN 2

I guess you're right then.

Beat.

MAN 1

Do you have any clean water?

MAN 2

Oh, yeah, I have a little left.

MAN 1

Thank you.

MAN 2

Yeah, of course.

MAN 1

Thank you for helping me.

MAN 2

Of course. You don't deserve a beating like that.

MAN 1

Well, for all you know, maybe I do, ha.

MAN 2

Ha, well, I suppose you could.

Beat.

MAN 1

I'm going to get some sleep. Is that all right?

MAN 2

Yeah, of course. I need to get caught up on my reading anyway.

MAN 1

Thank you.

MAN 2

Goodnight.

Short blackout.

The lights come up with both men sleeping.

They stay there a while until MAN 1 starts to roll over.

MAN 1

Ah!

Continues to scream in pain waking up MAN 2.

MAN 2

What happened?

MAN 1

Ah, fuck! Jesus Christ!

MAN 2

What happened?

MAN 1

I rolled over and landed on my wounds.

MAN 2

Oh fuck, let me help you.

Gets up and gently picks him up and gets him back in bed.

It's okay. Just breathe.

Analyzes the bandages and his wound.

I'm sorry. You're not going to like this.

MAN 1

What is it?

MAN 2

Your skin has started to attach to the bandages. I have to tear them off before it gets worse.

MAN 1

Okay.

MAN 2

It'll rip parts of your skin clean off when I do.

MAN 1

Pause.

Okay. Okay. Can you just give me a minute first?

MAN 2

Yeah, of course.

Long pause.

MAN 1

Okay, I'm ready.

MAN 2

Begins to prepare to rip the bandages, trying to place his hands on MAN 1 in a comforting way so he isn't hurt as badly.

There's a trick to it you know? Most nurses try to rip them off rapidly. One after another to make the pain supposedly not last as long, since it's over so quickly. With small bandages that's fine, but for more severe wounds you really need to give them a break to recuperate; minimize the pain. Really takes a veteran nurse to know that.

Starts to tear.

MAN 1

Screams in pain and then catches his breath.

Sounds like your mom was pretty good.

MAN 2

She was something else.

Pause.

I wrote my first book when I was 13.

Pause.

It was about my mom... that's my favorite book.

MAN 1

So you're a writer?

MAN 2

I've written.

MAN 1

Do you write in here?

MAN 2

I do.

MAN 1

Can I read some?

MAN 2

No.

Begins to tear again and MAN 1 begins to scream.

MAN 1

God Dammit! Fuck!

Beat.

Sorry.

MAN 2

Don't apologize.

Beat.

MAN 1

Have they beaten you?

MAN 2

Almost starts to laugh.

Yes. Yes, they've beaten me.

MAN 1

This bad?

MAN 2

Yes, much worse. Almost died once. Not my first night though, they built up to it.

MAN 1

Great, means I have something to look forward to then.

They both slowly break into laughter; MAN 2 first and then MAN 1 joins the laughter, but it starts to hurt his side.

Ah, fuck. That hurts.

MAN 2

Yeah, it probably will.

Tears the third of the bandages and MAN 1 screams.

It's okay. There's only one more and then I can bandage you up again.

MAN 1

Great, always more to look forward to. We should make this a regular thing. Every night you know? It'll be great... well, maybe every other night.

They both laugh a little bit.

MAN 2

Ah, it probably won't be too long until it's my turn.

MAN 1

Who will look after me whenever you're incapacitated?

MAN 2

Well, you should pay attention to what I do. Wounds like this you can treat yourself, but if it were much worse you wouldn't have the strength to bandage yourself without damaging yourself even further.

MAN 1

Well, maybe I can just get one of the guards to help me out.

MAN 2

Laughs.

You know what? I wouldn't count on it. All right, last one.

Tears.

MAN 1

Ah, fuck! Oh shit! Oh shit!

MAN 2

Here, I'll try to bandage you again.

MAN 1

Thank you.

MAN 2 takes the piece of the shirt he used to clean before and ties it around MAN 1's waist.

MAN 2

Here you go.

MAN 2 finished bandaging him up and then sits back against his cot again.

Long pause.

MAN 1

Can I ask you something?

MAN 2

Depends, do I have to answer?

MAN 1

Did your mother die in the war?

MAN 2

Shocked.

Oh.

MAN 1

Sorry, it's just that she clearly died around that time, I thought she probably ...

MAN 2

Yeah. She died in the war.

Pause.

That's how she died.

MAN 1

I'm sorry.

MAN 2

Under his breath.

Yeah, well... sorry doesn't bring her back.

Pause.

Looks at MAN 1 and then immediately away.

Sorry. Thank you. I don't mean to deflect. I appreciate what you said.

Pause.

You should get some more rest.

MAN 1

Okay, yeah.

MAN 2

Goodnight.

MAN 1

Goodnight.

Blackout.

SCENE THREE

Scene opens on the same set with MAN 1 waking up. He looks at MAN 2 who is working in his notebook without noticing MAN 1 at all.

MAN 1

Are you drawing?

MAN 2

Deflecting.

No.

MAN 1

What are you doing?

MAN 2

Pause.

Drawing.

MAN 1

Can I see?

MAN 2

No, you can not.

MAN 1

Why not? What can a drawing tell me that's too personal?

MAN 2

You know, the reason why you don't already understand that is the exact reason why you can't pronounce Nietzsche.

Beat.

MAN 1

So you write... and you draw... do you sing?

MAN 2

No, not much of a singer.

MAN 2 lights a cigarette.

MAN 1

Well, I'm glad I have you answering questions now; even if I had to take a bit of torturing for you to talk to me.

MAN 2

Smiles.

Yeah? Was it worth it?

MAN 1

We'll see, so far I'm still entertained, when that ends maybe not, but it's okay for now.

Chuckles; then relaxes.

Do you have a favorite painter?

MAN 2

Thinks about it for a second.

I don't think he's been born yet.

Pause.

Or if he has, he hasn't risen yet. I think that's the tragedy of painters, is that they aren't always risen.

MAN 1

What do you mean?

MAN 2

I've not seen a painter who truly encapsulates what I believe painting is, what it should be.

MAN 1

Michelangelo wasn't a good enough painter for you?

MAN 2

I don't mean there haven't been great painters, and I'm sure there's even been a best. I can tell you that personally, I think Caravaggio's work showed much more emotion than Michelangelo's, but I appreciate Michelangelo for what he did.

MAN 1

Caravaggio? I can't say I know him.

MAN 2

*Tries to think of a way to connect
Caravaggio to MAN 1's mind.*

His paintings were very luminescent; from within. A huge contrast of the dark and the light. Do you know the painting "The Calling of Saint Matthew"? With the man sitting at a table on the right, and a beam of light hits behind a man with his arms out on the left, like this?

Emulates the painting, but opposite.

MAN 1

Oh, I have seen that one. He's your favorite?

MAN 2

I wouldn't say that. I told you I don't have favorites. And honestly, Michelangelo may be the best and greatest painter who ever lived, but my favorite is not necessarily what I feel is best. My favorite is just what I want. And what I want from a painter is true, raw, unadulterated emotion. Where's the tragedy in Michelangelo? Where's the ecstasy? He's painted those amazing scenes... and they're beautiful, but I don't get enough emotion from that.

MAN 1

Is that the type of stuff you paint?

MAN 2

I don't paint. I only draw. Painting makes too much of a spectacle and I try not to draw too much attention to myself these days.

MAN 1

I don't think you have to worry too much about making a spectacle in here.

MAN 2

Beat.

You're wrong.

Pause.

Puts out the cigarette.

MAN 1

Do you believe in fate?

MAN 2

*This hits an unexpected cord with MAN 2.
He tries to repress the emotions behind it but
ultimately fails.*

Ha, I'm trying not to.

MAN 1

What's that supposed to mean?

MAN 2

This grand illusion that there's so much more to this finite experience, it... it does more harm than good.

Walks away from MAN 1.

MAN 1

Harm? I don't think something like the belief in something more, in hope, could be harmful.

MAN 2

Well, it could.

MAN 1

How? Did something happen to you?

MAN 2

Turns back towards MAN 1.

God, will you not stop this incessant picking apart everything I say? Am I not allowed to

just have a belief that's different from yours without a myriad of questions digging into everything that I don't want to talk about.

MAN 1

I'm just talking about fate. This is not some meaningful question into what you've done. What could fate set you off like this?

MAN 2

Oh, what do you know? You're so clueless about everything. It must be fucking fate I end up in here with you of all people!

MAN 2 walks away from him thinking the matter is over.

MAN 1

Beat.

Oh, so you know everything, is that it? Is it? You've had all the worst experiences in all the world so you win the contest of worse life and nobody else can compete. You may have been through a lot, but I'm in here just as much as you are. I've fought, and I've killed, I've bled for what I believe in.

MAN 2

That's fine, but that doesn't mean I'm obligated to guide you through the question of fate.

MAN 1

You don't believe you're in here for a reason?

MAN 2

Look, just don't push me on this.

MAN 1

You don't think that with everything going on in this world, right now, that something is meant to come out of all of this?

MAN 2

What comes of this is what we make of it, and that's it! It doesn't matter beyond that.

MAN 1

Oh come on, everything is changing. All that we've known is coming to an end and a new era is beginning. Don't tell me you ended up in here for no reason. You have a part to play in it, just as much as I do, and you can't ignore that.

MAN 2

I warned you before, don't push it!

MAN 1

Moves closer in on MAN 2 and gets in his face.

What? You can handle every damn thing the world has to throw at you, but you can't handle when a little fate needs you to be a part of something?

MAN 2 throws himself on MAN 1 and then ends up in a fight on the floor scrambling around until MAN 1 lands a significant blow on MAN 2, humbling him enough to stop fighting.

They try to recuperate slightly distanced from each other.

MAN 2 starts to laugh, and then his laughing evolves into distraught.

MAN 2

I can't do hope anymore. I just can't do it again. I've given so much. Too much.

Pause.

I just need something real.

Beat.

MAN 1

Why won't you tell me what you do?

MAN 2

Stop asking me that. I'm talking, aren't I?

MAN 1

Yes, but I want more from you. Something real.

MAN 2

Well, this is all I can give to you.

MAN 1

Okay, but what is that to you?

MAN 2

What?

MAN 1

You're providing me with entertainment, I'm getting by, but what about you? We're probably going to be in here for a while, maybe till we die. It might help us survive in here if we develop a bond.

MAN 2

I'm not here to make friends.

MAN 1

I'm not talking about friendship. I'm talking about surviving. Any moment those guards could come barging in here take us out and beat us. I mean really, beat us. I don't mean how I was beat, I don't mean how you've been beat. I mean beaten down.

MAN 2

Dead?

MAN 1

No, not dead. I could give a fuck about dying. I'll bet you don't give a fuck whether you live or die, but I know they're not beating you to kill you, or you'd be dead already.

Slight pause.

Am I right?

MAN 2 doesn't quite nod, but MAN 1 feels the affirmation in the lack of response.

I'll bet they want something from you just as much as they want something from me. You've been here, what? 5-6 years? I've been in and out of prisons so many times I can't count it anymore. I can tell you there's more to surviving than just not dying. Too many

men are broken here, not because their bodies are broken, but they're beaten in here. I think maybe you need to survive in here. Maybe just as much as I do.

MAN 2

Pause.

I'm not going to say you don't have a point. But it's not that simple. I'll... I'll tell you I do a lot of things. I think going into detail about all of them probably isn't a good idea. I've written... that you know. And more than just books. I write what I need to. I write what I have cause to write.

MAN 1

Are you a part of a cause?

MAN 2

Can you be in here and not be a part of something?

MAN 1

What else have you written?

MAN 2

Most recently, plays.

Beat.

MAN 1

Did you act in them?

MAN 2

Slightly amused by the question.

I did at first. But I didn't feel it was prudent to continue considering the attention I got. And now I'm here, but maybe I'd have been put here sooner if I'd kept acting.. maybe later.

MAN 1

I wished I could've been an actor.

MAN 2

Really? That's funny. Actors used to be thought of as second-rate citizens, but things really changed.

MAN 1

I just liked to dream.

MAN 2

Writers are the true dreamers.

MAN 1

I know, but I was never really good at dreaming, so interpreting a writer's dream would've been enough for me.

Chuckles.

I had a dream I was here.

MAN 2

Is that what you meant by dreaming?

MAN 1

No, I meant it how you thought I did.

MAN 2

Okay, well you are here, so not much of a dream.

MAN 1

I mean before.

MAN 2

You dreamt about here?

MAN 1

Yeah.

MAN 2

Was I...?

MAN 1

You were here. I dreamt about this cell with you in it.

MAN 2

Slightly amazed.

What happened? Did we do anything? Have we done it?

MAN 1

No, I didn't dream that much. Just of the place. My dreams don't always move.

MAN 2

What does that mean?

MAN 1

I don't know. I don't know that it has to mean anything.

Beat.

Do you dream?

MAN 2

Me? Yeah, nothing like that though.

MAN 1

Ever written about it?

MAN 2

About my dreams? No. They're usually hectic and don't make much sense.

MAN 1

Maybe if you wrote it down it'd make more sense. It helps me sometimes.

MAN 2

I thought you didn't write.

MAN 1

I said I wasn't good at dreaming, that doesn't mean I didn't write.

MAN 2

Did you?

MAN 1

No. Not books or plays. But I wrote a few things for other people. Nothing creative though.

MAN 2

Well, you should try. Maybe you could write about your dream.

MAN 1

In a humorous manner.

What? The one about here? A play where it doesn't move and it's just the two of us in here? I can see the crowds pouring in now.

MAN 2

It's up to you.

MAN 1

Hmm. Maybe I will.

Slight pause.

Slight blackout.

The scene opens back up with MAN 1 standing up holding onto the bars upstage looking through them past the audience.

MAN 2 is very much into his writing in his notebook.

MAN 1

Do you think we could escape?

MAN 2

Completely taken out of his writing.

Oh, uh.

MAN 1

Have you ever tried?

MAN 2

Wishing to avoid the subject, but reluctantly realizes he isn't going to deflect this time.

Is this something you dreamt about?

MAN 1

Not literally.

MAN 2

Well, I think it's very unlikely. I think they keep us at a certain strength on purpose, not to mention it's not the simplest path out.

MAN 1

Maybe it's meant to be....

MAN 2

That's what I'm saying, they mean to keep us too beaten up to escape.

MAN 1

No, maybe it's meant to be... maybe we're meant to escape.

MAN 2

Saddened by the notion.

Why would it be meant to be?

MAN 1

There could be a bigger plan here. I can't believe I'm meant to be cooped up in here for the rest of my life.

MAN 2

Why would you be meant to do anything?

MAN 1

I just...

Beat.

MAN 2

You asked if I've ever tried before... I have. Don't count on breaking out of here.

MAN 1

Why? What happened?

MAN 2

It didn't work. They caught us way too easily.

MAN 1

Us?

MAN 2

I had another cellmate then.

Pause.

He was a friend.

MAN 1

What happened?

MAN 2

Pause.

We talked about escaping for a long time; he didn't want to, he said it was too risky, but I told him there are two types of people in this world, the strong and the weak. And if you have the will to adapt and make your surroundings work for you then there's nothing you can't do to overcome, and we can will ourselves out of here.

(Remembering.)

He disagreed.

He avoids eye contact with MAN 1 for a bit.

MAN 1

Did you try on your own?

MAN 2

No. No, I thought I was strong, but I was too scared to do it alone. I told him we all had a destiny that was set from the beginning, and neither he nor I nor anyone in this prison could change that. And if he believed it was truly meant to be, that he was meant to be on the other side of these walls... if he knew he was destined for something other than rotting in this cell, then nothing could prevent him from his destiny. And after a while, he believed me.

Beat.

The plan wasn't very complicated, maybe it should have been. I waited until the guards came. I knew they'd beat us if we tried to make a break for it, but I'd conditioned myself pretty well to be able to all but ignore a first blow. Then he could make a run for it, while I gave a retaliation blow and I'd follow right behind.

Pause.

Well, the night came. Just like I planned, the guard hit me, and he made a run for it. And I numbed out the pain at first, but he broke my fucking jaw in one punch. I didn't feel it at

first and was able to bring him down, but then the pain in my jaw hit me like a train when I was fighting the other guard. I fell for a moment and he got on top of me, but I threw him off and made a run for it, but at that point, it had taken too long, and when I finally ran away twelve guards had heard the commotion and surrounded me from my pathway out to right behind me. And I tried to break through, but there were too many of them. They beat the shit out of me.

Slight pause.

Every time one of them hit me or kicked me, I felt my jaw being pressed into the concrete.

Pause.

They tore me apart. I mean they literally tore my face apart, my own mother wouldn't have recognized me if they'd killed me.

Pause.

MAN 1

What about your friend? Did he get away?

MAN 2

Starting to lose control of his emotions.

No. He didn't get away.

Pause.

When I couldn't move anymore, I couldn't scream if I wanted to, my chest was so beaten in. They drug me away. Not into my cell, not into some other cell where they could keep a better eye on me, but along the exact path I had planned to run. I wondered what could be happening, why were they taking me outside, but the screams inside my mind drowned out every coherent thought in my mind. I was taken through the halls, through the door, across the courtyard, past the fences... they took me outside, as in outside of the prison. I mean, if I could've run I'd have been free.

Pause.

Then I saw... it all made sense... they threw me on top of him.

Pause.

I rolled off him and looked him right in the eyes. I wanted to close his eyes, and I tried, but I couldn't bring my hand close enough to his face. So I screamed. I screamed, and I cried, and I laid there. After enough screaming, I just passed out.

MAN 1

Pause.

I'm sorry you lost a friend. I'm sorry you lost a friend.

Pause.

Lights blackout.

The guard comes into the cell and drags off

MAN 1

MAN 2

He wasn't doing anything! I was the one talking! Why would you-

He's hit and stunted.

You fucking animals!

GUARD

Just shut up and come along.

The guard takes MAN 1 offstage.

SCENE FOUR

Scene opens with MAN 2 on stage without any light except a lit cigarette.

He reads the poem he is writing in his notebook.

MAN 2

"I don't want to be a victim a victim can only be passive, but I don't want to be passive. Choosing actions carefully is important to being active rather than passive. Don't get angry. Anger is how they control you. Don't be broken. If broken then they will mold you Stop, Don't fixate on them. Know yourself and believe. Don't lose yourself..."

The guard brings MAN 1 back into the cell and throws him on the floor.

Lights come up.

MAN 2 rushes over to MAN 1 filled with guilt.

I'm sorry....

MAN 1

Don't. Just don't.

MAN 2

I know I'm to blame...

MAN 1

No- no, I...

MAN 2

I was the loud one. I don't know why they didn't take me... it doesn't make sense. It makes no sense!

MAN 1

It wasn't your fault. It was mine. Accept that. I need you to accept that.

Looks MAN 2 in the eye and gets through to him.

MAN 2

Okay, okay. Well, let me help you out at least....

He starts to help MAN 1 into the bed but is stopped.

MAN 1

No, please don't. I know you want to help, and I wish you could, but right now you can't. I'm too weak for anything right now.

MAN 2

Okay. Okay, I can accept that.

MAN 1

Thank you.

Long pause.

Can you talk?

MAN 2

What do you mean?

MAN 1

I don't want to think about this; I need some release, so could you distract me, tell me a story. It doesn't have to be true, just something to focus my mind on.

MAN 2

Okay. I haven't told a story in a while...

Lights cigarette.

... but I'll do my best.

Note: This line may be improvised with the key points intact.

Men don't always wish to accept the truth laid before them. Sometimes it takes someone new to show them the light within the darkness their lives have become. This story is fictitious, but not all of it. The people of the town were real people. All of the ignorance and the cowardice in their ideals are, of course, all true. Unfortunately, the only part which didn't happen was the man who came to them. That's the only part I wish was true. The town was unaccustomed to newcomers, so when a new man came in and didn't seem to just be passing through, he was labeled as the outsider. The outsider had come from the cities where war was all around. A young boy who dreamt of fighting came to him and asked of the wars and the rumors he'd heard of their grandeur. "Are there many great battles where you come from?" the young boy asked. The outsider looked saddened by this and said, "I was like you once. I set out hoping to achieve glory in some great battles, but I found out that no battle is great..." The young boy's father overheard this, and being pleased with the outsider advising his son against the ideals of the outside world, he decided to listen more intently. "Men fight for different reasons, but they should never fight to make themselves 'great.' A man can only achieve greatness through opening his mind and seeing something more, only achieve greatness through opening his mind and seeing something more, only then can he truly be a great man." The father of the young boy joined in, and at this time many more of the townspeople had gathered around to listen to the outsider and the clamor now ensuing. "A great man is a man who can provide. A man who has a product to sell and can use that to keep his family alive and well." The outsider said, "Don't blind yourself with selfish concerns. The only way to grow is to know more, and the only way to know more is to share your knowledge with others and grow together." The conversation went on like this for some time with many of the townspeople joining in to give their perspectives mostly heavily in line with the father's, but a few new to having their own opinions did agree with the outsider. The

people of the town in large became so angry with the outsider that the concept of kicking him out and sending him back to where he came from came up. The idea grew as the crowd grew louder, and when the idea achieved its peak, they all went silent when the outsider said, "This is where I came from. I was born here, but I left as a child and went on to find truth on my own. When I was alone without being told what to believe I realized things far more important than my selfishness and decided to fight for those things. I went to the city and became a man as I opposed the ideals currently acting within the city. I did what I could, and many saw the truth, and that will never die. So I came back because I wanted to share what I had learned with the people from my home." The people were stunned. No one, but the outsider's father remembered who he was, but he was too ashamed to say so. And the rest of the town was too ashamed to even consider trying to make him leave, so he stayed, but not much had changed. But that's okay because the story isn't about the townspeople, the father, or even the outsider... it's about the boy. Though his father never understood the truth presented to him from the outsider, the young boy always remembered. He began to question things and create opinions, not only that but the reasons behind his opinions. He went on to not only surpass the ideals of the town, but became one of the great thinkers of his time and set out to change not the town, not the city, but the world. Only time will tell how he changes it.

MAN 1

Are you the boy? The boy in the story? Is that why you're here? You went out and got yourself thrown in here?

MAN 2

(Almost laughing.)

No, I'm not the boy. I'm the outsider... or I would be, but I don't have the courage to go back. I don't know if my father would recognize me if I did.

Slight pause.

The young boy is my brother. I worry about him.

MAN 1

You can still go to him. When you get out you can go see him and tell him about everything out here, show him your writings and your drawings....

MAN 2

I don't know that I'll ever get out of there.

Pause.

Even if I do, I'm afraid I'll only have bitter writings of a man locked up in prison so long there's nothing left worth showing, to show him. I'm not myself in here.

MAN 1

What do you mean?

MAN 2

This isn't what I'm like, this isn't the man I want to be. I was so cold to you when we met. You were only trying to help. I'm so sorry.

MAN 2 goes to MAN 1's side and holds his hand.

MAN 1

It's okay. We need each other.

MAN 2

I know. You came along just as I was starting to lose my mind, you really did. I was forgetting what I stood for in the first place, what made me different.

MAN 1

It's okay, really. This place can really get to you. It will break you if you're not careful. That's why you need someone else to keep yourself sane sometimes.

MAN 2

(Laughs.)

Thank you.

MAN 1

Thank you. You keep me sane too.

Beat.

MAN 2

Want to hear one of my old poems?

MAN 1

Yes.

MAN 2

This is the kind of work I'd like to show my brother. I lost most of my old writings in various raids and confiscations, but I've managed to keep this one through it all:

"Dreams of a man who's in between sleep keep the roses in the sky and music on the deep canals of the ears of the long lost children who are longing to come home. I dreamt the sound went mute, but I never stopped listening in. It'll come back one day. I know I won't always be alone. I tried to hear her listening with me But that's not the sound I'm supposed to hear Right now. So I listened again. This time I kept my premonitions at bay, those premonitions which I'd let deafen me in the first place. Then, between the noon and night the song of my mouth played as loud as I could hear. Even though I did not play it anymore. I followed the song and it brought me back once more to the sound which was slipped in between the dream and the reality And there she was. Just like the dream I left her in."

MAN 1

Wow.

Blackout.

SCENE FIVE

Scene opens with the two men sitting in the cell.

MAN 2 is writing in his notebook while MAN 1 ponders carefully.

MAN 1 breaks the silence.

MAN 1

Where were you?

MAN 2 looks up inquisitively during a brief pause.

You know, before here.

MAN 2

I was here for 4 years.

MAN 1

I know, you told me that, but what about the 9 months in between that you mentioned?

MAN 2

Oh, that.

MAN 1

I know it's a sensitive subject, but...

MAN 2

No, it's fine. It's just hard to talk about. I wasn't here, but I never really left.

MAN 1

What do you mean? Like, they put you by yourself or something?

MAN 2

No, I've been by myself on and off for the entire time I've been here, but they took me away to another facility.

MAN 1

What for?

MAN 2

It was a psychological facility; for mental health and all.

Pause.

MAN 1

Not sure how to react.

Oh, really? Why were you taken there?

MAN 2

Well, it started off as a ploy to get out of here. After I started to recover from the beating when I tried to escape; I thought that if I made them believe that I'd been beaten so badly, that I'd have enough brain damage to have no retention. So I wouldn't even be able to give them information, even if I wanted to, and maybe they'd give up and let me out.

MAN 1

You really thought they might let you go?

MAN 2

Not really, but I hoped they would be less guarded around me and would maybe transfer me somewhere else, and when they did, I would try to catch them off guard and make a run for it, again. But first I had to lose my mind... I tried to make them believe I was so unintelligible that I couldn't answer their questions.

Pause.

I also made them believe I saw people who weren't there.

MAN 1

Really? How many people?

MAN 2

Well, I guess it was really just one...

Lights begin to fade.

... I just talked to him when I knew the guards were listening.

MAN 1

So what did they do?

MAN 2

I thought they'd take me away... somewhere, just like they normally take people.

Pause.

But I just woke up chained to a bed....

*Scene blacks out and changes to a hospital,
but still remains within the cell.*

*There are still two beds, but MAN 1 is not
dressed as a DOCTOR with a clipboard
sitting in a chair that wasn't there before.*

*MAN 2 is now in the bed MAN 1 was in,
chained to the back of it.*

*The DOCTOR is in the corner filling out
some paperwork when MAN 2 wakes up.*

MAN 2

Where am I?

DOCTOR

Ah, you're awake? And you can recognize the environment now... interesting.

MAN 2

What the fuck are you talking about? Why am I chained to the bed?

DOCTOR

Without the bars, I thought you would try to run.

MAN 2

Look, where am I?

DOCTOR

You're in a hospital on the premises, not far from your cell.

MAN 2

Why?

DOCTOR

Why do you think?

An unsure gesture from MAN 2.

Would you like a cigarette?

MAN 2

Don't try to change the subject.

DOCTOR

I'm not. I intend to give you an answer, I thought you might want a cigarette, and I have many, though I don't smoke, so you can have all.

MAN 2

MAN 2 nods, affirming he wants the

Thank you.

DOCTOR

You're welcome.

Gives him a cigarette and the matches he has had the whole time.

*MAN 2 struggles to light the cigarette since
one of his hands is still chained to the bed.*

Your unintelligible ramblings brought you in here, but don't worry. I don't care if you have brain damage or not.

MAN 2

Do I have brain damage?

DOCTOR

I don't know, we don't have the equipment. But as I said, I don't care.

MAN 2

Then why am I here?

DOCTOR

I'll monitor your reactions to see if I can detect brain damage that can cancel "important" information.

MAN 2

What information?

DOCTOR looks at MAN 2 unenthused.

DOCTOR

As I said, I don't care. I want to know about your friend.

MAN 2

He died when we tried to escape. I don't remember much before that.

DOCTOR

No, not him.

MAN 2

Then who are you talking about? I don't remember any other cellmates I had before then.

DOCTOR

Not before, after... now.

MAN 2

Now?

DOCTOR

Is there anyone else here? Anyone more than you and me?

MAN 2

(Looks around.)

No... just us.

DOCTOR

Who was the last person here?

MAN 2

What are you talking about?

DOCTOR

These are reports of you talking to another person in your cell after you returned from intensive care.

MAN 2

Who?

DOCTOR

I want to know that.

MAN 2

Well, I can't tell you. I remember very little from after our escape attempt. Before and after.

DOCTOR

Okay. I'll pretend to believe you.

MAN 2

You think I'm lying?

DOCTOR

(Very matter of fact.)

Yes. Now let me check your vitals. Is that okay with you?

MAN 2

Do I have much of a choice?

DOCTOR

I want you to.

MAN 2

(Surprised.)

Oh. Well okay. Sure.

DOCTOR

*Provides an ashtray for MAN 2 to put his
cigarette while he is being examined.*

Sit up please and take off the shirt.

Noticing he's still chained to the bed.

The best you can.

Begins the process of checking his vitals.

I don't want you to look at me as one of them, because I'm not them. What happens there and what happens here are two entirely different things. I want you to trust me and I want us to trust each other.

MAN 2

What? So you can get "information" out of me?

DOCTOR

(Cheekily.)

What information?

MAN 2 gives him an unenthused look.

DOCTOR chuckles.

No. As I said, I don't care. I don't want you to think I am interested in these things. I want to learn about you.

MAN 2

And my supposed friend who doesn't exist?

DOCTOR

We'll see what we find out.

MAN 2

Okay.

DOCTOR

Your vitals are good. Which is good, because they really beat you a lot.

Looks at charts on a clipboard.

Do you still pee okay?

MAN 2

Is that supposed to be funny?

DOCTOR

Oh here you have to forget about all the shit, and if laughter works, that's good.

MAN 2

Well, I'm not really in the laughing mood. I'm kind of chained to a bed and all, which can put a damper on things.

DOCTOR

And if I take the chains off?

MAN 2

What?

DOCTOR

I told you, I want you to trust me. How can you trust me if I don't trust you? But promise you won't run. I can't stop you from trying, and I wouldn't... but if you try, I assure you won't make it.

MAN 2

Why? Is the door locked?

DOCTOR

No, the door is open, but people have tried to escape before and it doesn't work. You should know.

Has a smile that MAN 2 does not appreciate.

As I said, we're not far from your cell.

MAN 2

Okay, I won't try to escape.

DOCTOR

Unlocks the chains.

Better?

MAN 2

Yeah, thank you.

DOCTOR

Now, that friend?

MAN 2

I told you, I don't remember anything like that.

DOCTOR

Sighs.

Ah, I hoped you'd have a little more faith in me. I suppose it's still early though.

MAN 2

I don't know what you want from me.

DOCTOR

I just want you to be honest with me.

Pause.

You know, I used to be a prisoner.

MAN 2

Pause.

What?

DOCTOR

Not here of course. I was tortured for information a long time ago; can't put my arms all up anymore.

Puts his arms up a bit, but can't physically go much further.

MAN 2

Did you break?

DOCTOR

What do you think?

MAN 2

I guess they haven't killed you, and you're still here, so....

DOCTOR

I was very amazed at how far people could be pushed. The strongest men I knew broke in a month. Men lost their minds. Created fictions to forget where they were. My close friend in there talked to a man who was never there.

MAN 2

(Half sincere.)

You think I'm crazy?

DOCTOR

Do you think you're crazy?

Things start to heat up a little.

MAN 2

Aren't you supposed to be the authority?

DOCTOR

Maybe, but I'm interested in your mind and what happens inside.

MAN 2

What do you think is going on?

DOCTOR

I want to hear it from you.

MAN 2

Tired of keeping up the act.

Calm down okay?

Sighs.

I guess it doesn't matter now anyway if they're just dragging me here unconscious. I was faking it. Okay? Happy? Gonna have them torture me some more now? I honestly never would have imagined they'd ever have a doctor here.

DOCTOR

Why fake something like that?

MAN 2

I was hoping that they would assume I wasn't worth keeping around anymore since they'd believe I couldn't recollect enough to provide them with the information they wanted in the first place. Then maybe they'd transport me somewhere else like to be killed, or here even... and I could make a run for it, but obviously, it doesn't work when I'm taken here unconscious.

DOCTOR

So why fake having a friend there?

MAN 2

Pause.

What do you mean? I just told you.

DOCTOR

You already were acting severely brain-damaged, why add a psychological disorder? You only needed the neurological one.

MAN 2

I don't know. I guess I didn't really think it through that well.

DOCTOR

Was it real?

MAN 2

What do you mean? You know there wasn't anyone else in my cell.

DOCTOR

Just because something is in your mind doesn't mean it's not real.

MAN 2

Hey, don't try to twist this where I look like I'm fucking crazy.

DOCTOR

You were trying to do that.

MAN 2

Whatever man. You can't make me think that I'm fucking crazy for talking to someone who isn't there when I made the whole thing up in MY mind.

DOCTOR

How do you think these delusions occur normally if not in someone's mind?

MAN 2

Starting to get visibly upset.

Why are you trying to make me think I'm crazy?

DOCTOR

You're not crazy; I want to help you.

Tries to comfort MAN 2, but he resists almost violently.

MAN 2

Starts to stutter his words.

Get the fuck off me! Don't you- fucking touch me! What is this? You- y-you try to gain my trust, seem like you're different from them, and then try to fuck with me?

DOCTOR

I'm trying to-

MAN 2

I'm not fucking crazy! Get it through your thick fucking skull. You can't make me think I actually thought there was s-s-someone else in my cell! I faked it! I know that, hell you know that! I thought it up and did it. Maybe I went overboard and acted crazier than I had to, but you know what this is like... anything that could possibly get you out you fucking take advantage of, and it seemed like it might work.

DOCTOR

Be honest with me. I want the truth.

MAN 2

I've told you the truth and you're still acting like I'm crazy.

DOCTOR

Who was there with you?

MAN 2

No one was there! I'm, I'm- stop! I'm not falling for this! I'm not falling for this! I'm not gonna let you make me believe anything like that! You got me to think maybe you're not like them, you're not, you're, you're worse dammit! I know myself. I know my own brain. You can't make me believe it! I'm not falling for this! I'm not falling for this!

During this progression, the lights fade to black.

The scene returns to the make-up of MAN 1 and MAN 2 talking in the cell.

MAN 2 is trying to keep his composure.

I'm not falling for this...

Beat.

I know it doesn't make much sense. It still doesn't fully make sense to me, but I really broke in there. I resisted, but he broke me down. This place was so much more than I ever thought it would be. I mean, to pick me apart piece by piece... over months, make me believe that the fiction I created was real... I mean, I believed it.

MAN 1

How did it end?

MAN 2

(Regains himself.)

Thankfully after I had my "breakthrough" he kept me two more weeks and then I just woke up back here and it wasn't long after that that I realized how crazy all of it was.

Pause.

This is a dark place.

MAN 1

Just two weeks? That seems like a short time for them to put you back here.

MAN 2

Yeah, I think so too, but I'm glad, otherwise, who knows? I might still believe that shit.

MAN 1

Why do you think they would do that to you?

MAN 2

Like you said, this is where they break you. I think they wanted to strip me of my identity so I'd succumb easier. I'd feel less connection to anything that made me believe in something more... something worth keeping secrets for.

MAN 1

Beat.

Will you tell your brother about this?

MAN 2

Pause.

What? No.

MAN 1

Why not?

MAN 2

He doesn't need to see me as a broken man.

MAN 1

There's a lot of things we don't need.

MAN 2

What good would it do?

MAN 1

Is truth not what you want for him?

Pause.

How can he go on to show the world truth if you're not honest with him about where you're coming to him from?

MAN 2

I don't know. It's not like I'd ever be able to tell him anyway.

MAN 1

You don't know that-

Beat.

MAN 2

Hey, I think I'm going to get some sleep if that's all right.

MAN 1

Oh.

MAN 2

I don't mean to just disregard what you have to say like that.

MAN 1

Yeah.

MAN 2

You have a point and all, I just, talking about that took a lot out of me.

MAN 1

Yeah, of course.

Blackout.

SCENE SIX

Scene begins with MAN 2 on the floor next to his bed working on a new poem.

MAN 1 is sleeping and wakes up to notice MAN 2 and start the scene.

MAN 1

What are you working on?

MAN 2

(Very excited.)

I'm working on a new poem.

MAN 1

Oh yeah? Is it one like you used to or is it a bitter prison poem?

Laughs.

MAN 2

Neither.

MAN 1

Oh really? Now I'm interested.

MAN 2

It's something new I'm experimenting with. All this time I've been trying to resort back to the type of writer I used to be, but that only stunted me. I have to look to the future.

MAN 1

That sounds great.

Beat.

MAN 2

I owe you an apology.

MAN 1

Oh?

MAN 2

Another one.

MAN 1

Why?

MAN 2

I'm going to tell my brother about all this, the psych ward and everything!

MAN 1

Oh, wow.

MAN 2

I'm sorry. This whole time I haven't been giving you the credit you deserve.

MAN 1

Well, thank you.

MAN 2

You were right. Only the truth, not the convenient truth, but the tragic truth, the doomed truth we all want to ignore. The pure, honest, beautiful, fucked up truth. We can't have truth progress without being honest about our mistakes.

MAN 1

I'm glad you think so. And I wasn't trying to chastise you or anything. I only said what I said because I thought you believed it. I've been in here with you, and it seemed like the utmost honesty was important to you.

Beat.

MAN 2

I'm so glad you came here when you did.

MAN 1

Personally, I'd rather be out there, but you've definitely kept me entertained.

MAN 2

Laughs.

Yeah, I wish we both were out there.

MAN 1

Maybe one day.

MAN 2

No, we will.

MAN 1

You think?

MAN 2

I do. I know I'm meant for more than just sitting here in a cell writing shit no one will ever read.

MAN 1

I thought you said you weren't meant for anything; none of us were.

MAN 2

Fuck that prison cultivated cynicism. Maybe it's true that we don't all have some specific purpose, but I can't imagine my life without ever seeing my brother again. I've never felt something weigh so heavily on me. I have to see him again.

MAN 1

Do you think he'll still be in that town?

MAN 2

I have to believe he will be. Or at least that I'll be able to find him. I can't allow negative thinking to corrupt my mind, not again. What I'm working on is too important.

MAN 1

Oh, what is it exactly?

MAN 2

Truth. I mean it is pure. No lies to myself, nothing dishonest about it.

Beat.

I'm sorry. I feel like I keep going on rants like this.

MAN 1

I understand.

MAN 2

I just want things to be genuine.

MAN 1

I know.

MAN 2

And you're such a big part of that. You've been so genuine with me this whole time.

Beat.

MAN 1

Can I tell you something?

MAN 2

Of course. What is it?

MAN 1

I told you I wouldn't tell you what I did on the outside, but you've been so honest with me. I want to be honest with you.

MAN 2

Okay, sure.

MAN 1

I didn't tell you, because what I do... because it's not something I can really talk openly about in here.

MAN 2

Yeah, I know. I'm the same way.

MAN 1

No, you don't understand.

MAN 2

What don't I understand?

MAN 1

I started out in a movement. I won't name it.

MAN 2

Of course.

MAN 1

I was a kid. Was almost 18, but I really committed. I mean I started gaining recognition extremely fast, but I wasn't the only one. There was this other guy. He was gaining importance just as fast.

Pause.

I got a bad feeling from the guy, and not just a jealous vibe or anything. I mean I felt like he really had it out for me.

Pause.

And I was right.

MAN 2

What happened?

MAN 1

He framed me. He named my name when he was brought in for questioning.

MAN 2

This strikes a nerve he hadn't expected.

Oh.

Slight pause.

Fuck.

Looking very visibly upset.

MAN 1

What? Are you okay?

MAN 2

No, yeah. I just, don't worry about it, just continue with what you were saying.

MAN 1

No, it's okay. I can wait. What's wrong?

No response.

Were you named?

MAN 2

Nods in affirmation.

It was my girlfriend.

MAN 1

Oh.

MAN 2

The one I... the only one.

Pause.

That's why I don't like to talk about her. She was reckless and got caught. I guess she couldn't handle it.

Pause.

MAN 1

I'm sorry.

MAN 2

It's over now. It's in the past.

MAN 1

Still, that's so-

MAN 2

(Genuinely.)

Just continue with your story. It's fine.

MAN 1

Pause.

Comforts MAN 2. Takes a moment, then continues.

The prison I was thrown into after I was framed was nothing like this because I wasn't a huge threat at the time. It wasn't even two months before I escaped.

MAN 2

Did you go back?

MAN 1

I did.

MAN 2

Was he still there?

MAN 1

He was.

Pause.

He was surprised to see me, but I guess it was something he was ready for. He went to draw his gun the moment he saw me, but he didn't make it count, not really.

MAN 2

Is that the scar?

Gestures to his side where a visible scar is.

MAN 1

In and out right here. Slowed me down, but... I explained what he'd done afterwards and how I escaped. They understood, and before too long, it was like I had never left and before I knew it I was a major player. Making a difference in a way I never imagined.

MAN 2

So how'd you get back into prison?

MAN 1

Well, that's the ironic part. As much I did that these fucking scum would consider criminal, they got me for a real crime.

MAN 2

What was it?

MAN 1

Killing the man who framed me.

MAN 2

Oh shit.

MAN 1

They obviously knew what I was involved with which is why...

Just then the lights cut and the sound of the struggle of MAN 1 being taken away by the guard is heard.

MAN 2

You fucking bastards!

GUARD

Just come along.

MAN 1 is dragged away.

Blackout.

SCENE SEVEN

MAN 2 is alone screaming at the guards intermittently.

MAN 2

Let him go! You're all fucking monsters! You have no right! Come back and take me you half-witted pieces of shit!

Lights come back on.

The guard is heard bringing MAN 1 back into the cell.

Let him go!

MAN 1 is thrown on the floor upstage of the cots.

MAN 2 goes to MAN 1 on the floor and tries to comfort his body which is barely able to move.

Are you okay?

MAN 1 tries to speak.

Oh fuck, this is really bad... can you speak?

MAN 1 to speak and coughs.

Here, let me help you up.

MAN 2 helps MAN 1 onto the bed while he screams in pain.

MAN 1

Out of breath

I can't-

MAN 2

What is it?

MAN 1

I can't do this again.

MAN 2

I know. I know.

MAN 1

I'll die. I know it. If they take me one more time they'll kill me.

MAN 2

It's okay. I won't let them take you.

MAN 1

No, no. Don't get in between. They'll just kill both of us.

MAN 2

I can't just let them kill you.

MAN 1

They're going to kill me anyway. If I'm not giving up anything then I'm more valuable to them dead.

MAN 2

Maybe they'd trade you to get something in return....

MAN 1

No, they'd never let me go. Never. I know they're going to kill me. It's okay. I've served my purpose. I don't need to get out.

MAN 2

I'm so sorry.

MAN 1

Don't be sorry. I want to thank you for being here with me.

MAN 2

About to break out in tears.

Thank you.

MAN 1

Thank you.

They embrace.

MAN 2

Cries out towards the guards offstage.

Those fucking bastards!

MAN 1

Don't waste your energy. You still need it.

MAN 2

Gets up to yell towards the curtains.

No, I want them to hear. You can't scream, but I can. Come out here! Come and get me if you can! Can you not hear me? I'm waiting for you!

Pause.

Exacerbated.

Nothing... how can they not react to that?

MAN 1

It doesn't matter.

MAN 2

It doesn't make sense... why don't they take me?

Falls back down onto his knees near MAN 1.

MAN 1

Be careful not to get angry. You have to keep writing something beautiful for your brother.

MAN 2

If I ever see him again.

MAN 1

No, don't let them make you bitter. I know who you are and it's not from them. Don't be a product of what they do. Be a beacon, a light, in an otherwise dark and dreary world.

MAN 1 puts his hand on MAN 2.

How's your poem coming along?

MAN 2

Pause.

Really well actually.

Goes to pick up his notebook, but realizes it's not ready.

MAN 1

Tell me about it.

MAN 2

Well, I'm almost finished with it.

MAN 1

How much left?

MAN 2

Just one more line... I have to get it right.

MAN 1

Really? Well, do you have any ideas for it?

MAN 2

Pause.

No, everything I've thought of has been complete shit.

MAN 1

Read it to me.

MAN 2

No, I can't. Not until it's ready.

Pause.

It's for my brother.

MAN 1

Yeah?

MAN 2

It's really just a message to him, more than anything.

MAN 1

What's it about?

MAN 2

It's just me. Like I said, it's truth. I want him to know the true me. Even though I didn't grow up with him, he can understand who I am, and who I've become.

MAN 1

I'm sure he'll love it.

MAN 2

Thank you.

Pause.

MAN 1

You know there was something beautiful I saw, while I was being beaten.

MAN 2

What? What was it?

MAN 1

It was at the session of beatings they gave me. It was a brief moment. I fell onto the floor and I landed on just a pool of blood spilled out across the floor. My face, just covered in my own blood, but for a moment I looked into the blood. It was so still... and it had this glisten to it. It was like a cold mirror shimmering to my face. And in that moment I saw a reflection in it. At first, I couldn't make it out, but then I saw it.

MAN 2

What?

MAN 1

It was you. I know you weren't there, but I saw your face looking back at me.

Pause.

It was really beautiful.

MAN 2

Wow.

Beat.

MAN 1

I wonder what the last thing I ever see will be.

MAN 2

Don't talk like that.

MAN 1

It's okay. Death is a part of truth. It's a part of life. Don't be afraid of it.

Pause.

It's beautiful that in of all that, you can still have a brief moment of clarity.

Pause.

What do you think you'll dream before you die?

MAN 2

*Reluctantly indulging MAN 1's morbid
wonderings.*

I don't know. I don't know what to expect. I've always wondered if that one moment goes on and on like an ocean or if it's just a moment frozen in time.

MAN 1

Maybe it's different for everyone.

MAN 2

I hope it's something beautiful. Something beautiful enough to make me forget about dying for just that moment.

MAN 1

Me too.

The lights go out.

MAN 2

*MAN 2 realizes the guard is coming back to
take MAN 1 for the final time.*

No, not again! It's too soon. Let him rest!

GUARD

Shut up and come along!

MAN 2

You murderers! You're all fucking murderers!

GUARD takes MAN 1 off stage in the dark.

A red light comes up and shows MAN 2 on the floor laying there lifeless.

The light comes back on again with no one on stage.

After a moment MAN 1 comes out and walks past the cell on the apron of the stage.

MAN 1

"This poem is for my younger brother The last memory I have of my mother, my last memory. Last night it felt like a dream, I can barely write it anymore; Who knows if these words will ever find a page; I dreamt I was in prison with a man I've never met. He didn't look just like me, But similar. I wanted to ask who he was, but I couldn't move. Nothing moved. We stood there seemingly petrified leaning against separate sides of the cell Still. All I wished was to break free from this imprisonment and get to know him. I woke up this morning and dreamt I could move. But it wasn't me. It was as though I separated a piece of myself to break from my mind to save me from this prison I'm in. Maybe if I never make it out - he will carry on my work and tell the world of the truth I found. I can hope all I want. But for now I'll keep dreaming..."

The lights blackout.

The lights come back up with MAN 1 and MAN 2 leaning against separate sides of the cell.

They hold.

Blackout.

The End.