

# THE BUCKET

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By: Jesus Alvarez, Viorel Capraru, Jason Christner, Sterling Cunio, Key Davis, Benjamin Pervish, Troy Ramsey, Phil Stockton August 6, 2018



*Jesus Alvarez, Viorel Capraru, Jason Christner, Sterling Cunio, Key Davis, Ben Pervish, Troy Ramsey, and Phil Stockton were awarded First Place in Drama in the **2018 Prison Writing Contest**.*

*Every year, hundreds of imprisoned people from around the country submit poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and dramatic works to PEN America's Prison Writing Contest, one of the few outlets of free expression for the country's incarcerated population*

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## **The Bucket**

### **Cast**

Captain Placard ————— Robert Phillips  
Inmate Interpreter/Jacobi ————— Viorel Capraru  
Warzone ————— Sterling R. Cunio  
Allen ————— Mr. Ben Pervish  
Malik ————— Troy Ramsey  
Max ————— Christian Hawkins  
Pedro ————— Jesus (Mariachi) Alvarez  
Depression ————— Robert Phillips  
JJ ————— Key Davis  
Jeff ————— Jason Christner  
Piano Man ————— Chip  
Guard Voice ————— Phil Stockton

## **Crew**

Assistant Directors ----- Sterling Cunio and Christian Hawkins  
Sound Technician ----- Chip  
Sound Design ----- Christian Hawkins  
Scenery/Signs ----- Robert Phillips  
Sign Assistant ----- JK  
Director ----- Phil Stockton

*Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty.*

*- Mother Teresa*

Many thanks to:

Karuna Thompson and Avrohom Perlstein for the tireless support. Dez and Chris for the many unsung efforts. Kelly Raths, CO Garber, T, Melissa Meychaux, and all the other actors and classmates, teachers and staff who cheered us on and told us what was what. And to the Monophonics, hope to see you on the inside.

This production is dedicated to those who get lost in the darkness.

!1.

THE BUCKET

!1.

CHARACTERS

INTERPRETER V

NARRATOR/CO Phil

SIGNMAN/DARK VOICE Bob

ARTMAN JK

MAX Chris

MALIK Troy

ALAN Smoke

PEDRO Jesus

WARZONE Dez

JEFF Jason

JJ Key

PIANO Chip

! 2.

*While the audience is assembling and getting seated, SIGNMAN and one other person are finishing drawing of the lines on the paper on the back of the cells. Once the audience is seated, the actors enter their cells. SIGNMAN and another actor will lay down tape, and create the silhouette of the solitary cell. The other actors are watching them. SIGNMAN and other actor put the bucket and mattress in the cell.*

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SIGNMAN walks onto stage holding a sign:

**SIGN:** OUR PERFORMANCE IS STARTING. PLEASE KEESTER YOUR CELLPHONES. SIGNMAN turns the sign around and it reads:

\*\*\*\*\*

! 3.

**SIGN:** CELL ORIENTATION

**Elements:**

Narrator on Mic, Interpreter helps out.

Ensemble Work

Props: Cardboard sign for interpreter

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*(Cheesy music plays while NARRATOR and the INTERPRETER walk us through the orientation. INTERPRETER wears a cardboard sign around his neck saying: INMATE INTERPRETER)*

NARRATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, we'd like to welcome you to our theatrical presentation, our show, "The Bucket."

INTERPRETER: What up do? My name is Bloodbath and I'll be your inmate interpreter, breakin' it down to you in layman's terms. Prison talk, feel me

NARRATOR: What you see before you is a two dimensional representation, a flattened image of a typical Solitary Confinement cell.

INTERPRETER: Yes, what you see before you is the concrete coffin, the SMH, IMU, DSU, the CNN, the BFF. This is the hole, the box, the Bucket. Pretty much nothing changes about the place but the name.

NARRATOR: Marked on the floor are the typical dimensions of a nine feet by six foot cell, in masking tape.

INTERPRETER: Nine by six cell and small as hell. Not big. I can barely do the James Brown in here, I can bang my head against four walls in four seconds. I'd show you if it had walls, there are no walls. Otherwise how would you see into the cell, know what I'm sayin'? It's theatre. Hey, ask the fuckin' director. I just work here.

NARRATOR: There are no windows, and the prisoner is surrounded by walls, other than the iron bars on the front of his cell.

INTERPRETER: Didn't I just say that? Walls. Other than that and the bars, they are also surrounded by cocks and socks, ass gas, and rude motherfuckers that never seem (to Jesus) to want to shut up when you're tryin' to sleep.

INMATE (JESUS): Man, kiss my ass, pendejo Bloodbath.

INTERPRETER: OK, sweet dreams to you too. Night-night. Hijo de puta.

NARRATOR: On the ground in our production, but typically approximately two to three feet from the ground, is a mattress.

INTERPRETER: The mattress also doubles as a yoga mat, for stretching and relaxing your body. (He does it) Aaah. Roll it up, sit on it for your meditation and quiet moments. (He does it) Nice. Unroll it and use it a shield for unwanted guests. (He does it).

NARRATOR: In the far upstage right corner you will see a bucket. For the purposes of our performances, this bucket will represent the steel toilet built into the cell.

INTERPRETER: Ah yes. The toilet. The toilet serves many purposes. I'm a Cleveland fan, and this is where I take the Browns to the Superbowl. Serious. (He reaches back and we hear the sound of a flushing toilet) This is also my ghetto-ass segregation unit cell phone. We empty the water out the bowl and talk through the pipes. My social life would be nothin' without it, you know what I'm sayin? Whenever I need someone to talk to I call on Tyrone and we talk all night. (He yells into the toilet) You have a collect call from inmate Bloodbath. Will you accept the charges?

INMATE. (KEY) Man, fuck you. I'm sleeping. Hijo de puta.

INTERPRETER (He yells into the toilet) Again? That's all you give me? You never accept my calls. We gotta talk. Damn. (To the audience) Oh well. Just another lonely night in the IMU, ICU, OPP, whatever.

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!6.

SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign

**SIGN:** WARZONE SCENE ONE – ANGER

**Elements:** Ensemble work

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(WARZONE WILLIE doing push-ups while side voice #1 is speaking)

INMATE (ALAN): Truly, each breath is a blessing, and even though we may be physically held in a place we don't want to be – we can still appreciate the beauty of our existence and

find meaning in our relationships, art and God. Life doesn't have to be perfect to be wonderful.

*(An irritated WARZONE jumps up and interrupts the old man.)*

WARZONE: HEY OLD MAN, SHUT THE FUCK UP WITH THAT BULLSHIT! All he ever does is talk about how good God is, how beautiful life is, how good people help people. MAN, SHUT THE FUCK UP! You sound like some old plantation slave nigga, preaching that pie in the sky after we die bullshit. Fool, there ain't no God, just this concrete hell. Ain't nobody fallin' for that shit. Old man, I was raised in the streets. I've seen mothers abandon their own babies for dope. Human beings is worse than animals and only the strong survive. Where's your proof of a loving god and beautiful life, huh? Where's your proof? Ain't none. AIN'T NO BEAUTY IN A WARZONE! Where all we do is shoot our enemies. Policeman shoot crook. Crook shoot crook. Soldierman shoot badman. And wild-ass kids run around shooting anybody. Where's your God in all that??

INMATE (TROY): What about Jesus? WARZONE Jesus? That cat ain't coming back to save anybody and if he did show up, he better have a bulletproof vest, otherwise he'll get nailed again. I'll pop him myself. Hey yo, you here this old slave fool talk about finding art in here? Ain't no art in the bucket, just a bunch of G.E.D. dummies sit around screaming about the politics of politicians who may one give a fuck about rehabilitation. Yet you trapped clowns sit around debating who's best for the country. Man, shut the fuck up with that bullshit. Fuck this government it ain't never cared about us. Call your slave shit art if you want to but really you just wasting your days coloring paper to keep from admitting you crazy. So I say it again: shut the fuck up with that bullshit, old man, so I can get some sleep.

*(WARZONE lays down)*

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! 8.

*SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign*

**SIGN:** ALAN – FRESH AIR

**Elements:** Sound effects – Music over the wall

Guard lines on mic

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*(ALAN laying in bunk, asleep)*

CO: Yard. (Pause) YARD!

*(ALAN wakes. He sits up, looks around, puts head in hands.)*

ALAN: Damn!

*(ALAN begins to brush teeth and wash his face. INMATE beats keys against bars.)*

ALAN: 10 to 10. You don't have to hit those keys, we're up. The 10 to 10 rule applies to you too. In case you don't know what that means, that means no noise from 10 at night until 10 in the morning, learn the rules.

CO: If you want to go to yard you'll take that agitation out of your voice.

ALAN: Dude, I don't care about the yard. I've been in your dungeon 8 months without yard. However, the law says that you have to give me fresh air every 30 days if I want it, and I want it.

CO: (Pause) Fine. Turn around.

*(Cuffs are put on. ALAN is escorted to yard.)*

CO: Have fun.

ALAN: I will.

! 9.

*(Walking around the yard cell the fresh air hits him and he smiles; relaxes.)*

ALAN: Being up so high, looking over the wall, the air up here is so much fresher. You can tell the difference from the yards that are not above the wall, man, that cell, the air in them are so stale and dry and dreary. I don't know how they can get away with not having a window in them. You have no fresh air, no view, no wonder some people go crazy. Look at me, I'm talking to myself. Must be going crazy too. I don't know how some people think that the view of homes, life, sound is cruel. I love to see and know that there is still real life out there, if this is cruel...

*(ALAN sniffs the air and smiles.)*

ALAN: Ooo-wee, smell that? BBQ! Oh my sweet God, that smells so good. This may be cruel, but if this is punishment, then punish me.

*(ALAN listens as music starts to play.)*

ALAN: Ooo-wee, that's a cut.

*(Prisoner starts to sing.)*

ALAN: Hey man, turn it up! TURN IT UP!

CO: Yard in. YARD IN!

ALAN: I just got out here.

CO: You had your fresh air Mr. 10 to 10.

ALAN: Man, fresh air hardly had time to reach over that wall.

CO: Fresh air's not going anywhere, neither's that wall. Back to your house, inmate.

ALAN: That's not my house, or my home. That's a cell. Call it what it is.

CO: Fine. You can turn around, cuff up, or we can come in and cuff you up. Your choice.

!10.

*(ALAN takes a deep breath, turns around and cuffs up. He returns to his cell. Back in cell he sits on bunk, looks around and places head in hands.)*

ALAN: Damn.

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!11.

*SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign*

**SIGN:** MALIK SCENE ONE – THE WALK

**Elements:**

**Questions:**

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*(MALIK walks around the cell as he talks, his hands shackled behind his back.)*

MALIK: Escorted through the cell block, the smell of human despair. *(He stops.)* Ooo-wee, unwashed armpits, defecation, soggy toes and spoiled booty mingle in the air. I keep my eyes forward because the convict code. Never look into another prisoner's cell. *(He stops.)* Fuck around, you might get stabbed or flashed with genitalia in anger. I don't want to see another man's genitalia or have to stab anyone so I keep my head forward. *(He stops walking and addresses the audience directly.)* This here? This is called the grave, or the tomb. Because in here you're dead to the general population. *(He walks in the cell, to audience.)* Looks like I'm gonna be here a few years this time.

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! 12. *SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign*

**SIGN:** MAX SCENE ONE – THE DEBUT

**Elements:** Props: Notebook, Pen Ensemble Work

**Questions:**

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*(MAX is sitting on a bucket, oblivious to everything. He hears something, he scribbles sit on a notepad)*

CO: Lights out!!

*(Muttering and rumbling from the other inmates "shut up, man" "Sshh" etc. MAX lies down, but as soon as he does, he gets back up again to write something on the pad.)*

INMATE: Come on man, show some respect.

*(Cell block quietens down)*

MAX: *(Quietly)* I feel undefeatable, like I could take on the world... *(He puts down the pad and sings from memory.)*

MAX: Nights go by and I cry, all by myself-so no one can see me. Time goes by and I try to find the reason why you left me, when you were never really here. If I could stop the hands of time on that moment you were mine, would I find the words to say, to make you stay?

I'd pull the stars down from the sky, when the day turns into night; Would you find your way to me, cause it's just another night that I'll be Alone,

Alone – it's just another night that I'll be...

*(The cell block noise fades slowly. MAX finishes the song as he lies back down)*

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*! 14. SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign:*

**SIGN:** MALIK SCENE TWO – An Awakening

**Elements:** Ensemble work

**Questions:**

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MALIK: One night, an inmate chose to end his life. He woke everyone up with a loud and chilling rendition of the lord's prayer. *(INMATE recites a piece of the Lord's Prayer.)* It freaked us out. Listening to the chaos around me, nowhere to turn. These officers had no vested interest in helping me turn my life around. *(He sits on the bucket.)* One day, I was reading, "As a Man Thinketh" by James Allen *(He is given a book)* and that's when it clicked. The sleep deprivation, inmates in conflict with each other, beating on steel toilets and hitting on the walls all night. I knew I didn't want this to be the rest of my life. So I began to treat my time in the graves as if I were in school. I started getting books *(He is given 3 books by an INMATE)* from the library and pencils *(He is handed pencils)* from the commissary and created courses for myself in subjects like political science, African history, and religion. But my real change came when I started to keep a journal. *(He is handed a journal and stands with the journal and pen.)*

I began writing any time I got angry at the other inmates and officers-hat I wanted to do to them and why. I wanted to kill some of them and others I just wanted to really hurt bad. To me they !15. were worthless pieces of shit who deserved a swift and painful death or to be beat down.



*(Movement among the INMATES, they encourage him, and he stabs the book with the pen and throws it on the ground.)*

When I went back a few days later I went back to read what I had written. It disturbed me. All of them had been inconsiderate no doubt, but was it a personal attack? Even if it was, did they really deserve to be harmed or killed? It's hard to express how much this process of examination began to change me. For the first time I could remember, I began to recognize my true self. Inside me burned that same rage – rage that had nearly cost an officer his life and me the rest of my life in prison. Rage that had consumed me to take a man's life while I was on the streets years ago. Fighting for my dignity and respect. Plenty of days, I felt like the grave would consume my spirit *(he gets the pen and paper)*.

I clung to my sanity and wrote my thoughts. I began to realize I had emotions I had never addressed.

I wrote about my mother. I wrote about... I wrote the thoughts. I wrote them all. I wrote my way out of prison.

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!16.

SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign:

**SIGN:** HALFWAY POINT (APPROXIMATELY). QUESTIONS SO FAR?

*If anyone has any questions, SIGNMAN will spend a couple minutes answering them. If he can not answer the question, he can turn to one of the actors to help him. He flips the sign to show the next scene.*

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SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign

**SIGN:** PEDRO – Hope and faith

**Elements:** CHORUS Work

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PEDRO: *(Working Out)* 198, 199, 200. Come on. One more. Come on. COME ON! *(Starts to pace back and forth.)* I can't do it. Man, I'm feeling so sad, so dark. I'm freaking losing my mind. What's wrong with me? I'm tired of this shit. *(He gets on his bunk and works on his dream catcher.)*

CO: Hernandez, roll up. Today's the day, you're done here.

PEDRO: What? Today? No, I can't.

CO: You can't? Why not?

PEDRO: It's just...too early. I have a schedule to maintain.

CO: What the hell schedule are you talking about Hernandez? You crazy? Fine by me.

!17.

*(CO leaves)*

PEDRO: I'm not ready. I'm not, I can't... *(He begins to cry.)* Man I'm not ready, I'm not fucking ready. It's just too much, I can't even deal with being in: here. What's gonna happen to me out there? Maybe I am crazy. *(He sits on his bucket and puts his head in his hands. DARK VOICE over the speakers and a dark presence walks on stage, wearing a mask.)*

DARK VOICE: I'm a dark cloud. I am not prejudiced, I take anyone. I am apathetic. I feel nothing, I care about no one. I will not give up. I may leave but I'll be back. I control you, I tell you what to feel. I take your concentration, I own your energy. I own your happiness. I am everything. I am forever.

PEDRO: *(Rocking back and forth.)* I'm not ready, I'm not ready.

INMATE 1 (JASON): Hey Pedro. You had a chance to get out and you didn't? You stupid or something?

PEDRO: I don't care. Leave me the fuck alone.

INMATE 2 (V): Man, you must be stupid, or scared.

PEDRO: I'm not scared, kiss my brown ass.

INMATE 3 (CHRIS): Hey Pedro, if you're scared talk to God.

INMATE 4 (STERLING): Hug your Bible, see if that'll save you!

INMATE 5 (SMOKE): Yeah, you know, the Bible saves everything.

*(Inmates laugh loudly, Pedro takes the Bible and punches it.)*

## **SECOND HALF (pages 11 - 22)**

PEDRO: I'm not scared. I'm just not ready.

!18.

So PEDRO was saved while being in solitary confinement. Yes, he did. One night an INMATE asked PEDRO "if you were to die tonight, do you think you'd go to heaven? PEDRO said "I don't know." The INMATE then asked "Would you like to find out?" PEDRO said yes. So they started praying and repenting. Asking Christ for forgiveness. The INMATE looks at PEDRO and asks "Pedro, do you believe that Jesus died for your sins on the cross?" PEDRO said "yes" and the inmate asked one last question, "Pedro, if you were to die right here, right now, do you believe you'd go to heaven?" With a smile from ear to ear, he said "absolutely." So all he needed to do was repent, believe, receive.

*(PEDRO takes his bible and stands in the center of his cell. Music begins and he steps out and begins to talk to the Audience about his revelation and Cell conversion.)*

JJ: Pedro. What you doin' man? It's too quiet. What's goin' on man?

PEDRO: Reading. Reading my bible.

JJ: What could that book possibly do for you?

PEDRO: Well, I don't feel depressed no more. I feel...faith and inspiration.

JJ: Oh yeah? How you feel that? How do you know?

PEDRO: It's like this. One day I saw these little ants walking in formation, carrying a heavy load. I dropped some hot water on them by accident. It splashed down on them. Some died right away.

Others panicked, running around, not knowing what to do. But this one little ant had faith. It kept walking forward with its heavy load. Ooh, aah! ooh! The ant walked on, burning it's little feet.

I got down on his level and told him "go little ant, go! You can do it, little ant, go!" I wanted to help it by picking it up and taking it to its hole. But I knew if I did I would just crush it. So I picked up a stick, and I put it over the water and into the hole. The ant hopped onto the stick and walked straight into the hole. So, that's the story, that's how God looks down on us, you see like ants. And with faith, he can help place his stick to where we need to go. So the question is, what type of ant you want to be? You want to be the ant that dies right there, you want to be the one who loses his way, or you want to be the one with faith, who makes it?

! 19.

INMATE 2: Can I get an Amen?

INMATES: Amen!

INMATE 4: Can I get a Hallelujah!

INMATES: Hallelujah!

INMATE 1: Haha, you're just another Bible fool.

PEDRO: I'm a fool? You're a fool. This little ant's no fool. This little ant is walking on, and walking out. Yo. CO? I'm ready. YO CO. I'M READY.

*(PEDRO stands in his cell ready to leave.)*

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! 20.

SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign:

**SIGN:** WARZONE SCENE 2 – SORROW, 27 YEARS

**Elements:** Ensemble work?

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WARZONE: 27 years ago today, I came to prison a young thug. Angry at the world, hostile to everybody. Man, I've spent the last nine years in the bucket and the ghost of innocents murdered, they haunt me. I'm tired of it man. Tired of the regret, the wasted potential. I'm tired of sleeping alone at night, no hugs, no kissing, no cuddling. I'm tired of being hungry, wishing for hot food not served through a hole in the door like some kind of feed trough. I'm tired of all the screaming and waking up everyday surrounded by hostility and misery. I'm tired of the hatred. It makes me weary. I'm tired of being a prisoner. Tired of not seeing the sun. My soul misses the moon. My humanity is stained and my existence is spent in a tomb. I am already everywhere I'll ever be.

It's over.

*(WARZONE hangs his head.)*

INMATE (CHRIS): Stay strong Warzone. Don't do it man!

WARZONE: Hey homie, aint' no need in trying to talk me out of it. If I'm destined for hell I might as well arrive on my own terms. Skip the cancers, the organ failures, and cheat the state out of a few decades. I just hope that some part of death is quiet and dark – some silence and escape these lights. Maybe in the afterlife I find forgiveness. If I can explain with a greater clarity that it was pain that caused me to hurt so many.

!21.

You want my stuff or what?

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!22. SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign

**SIGN:** JJ – US

**Elements:** Chorus Work

**Questions:**

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*(JJ sits on the bucket. He's looking at a real picture of Drew Barrymore. He hums a few bars from "Falling Apart." An imaginary phone rings, he mimes picking up the phone.)*

JJ: What's up girl? I've been waiting for your call. Huh. How was your day? Busy. How's the TV show? That's cool. Uh-huh. Been busy here too. Yeah, you know, *(he looks around)* just

bein' ...busy. *(He laughs.)* Uh-huh. Yeah. Oh yeah. You know that's right. Remember how you said I should share my feelings, get creative? Yeah, well I got something for you. *(JJ begins singing "Falling Apart" – The Monophonics.)* Why can't it just be easy The struggle, the struggle has gone on too long. And what's the use in dreaming Cause everyday, everyday I'm all alone Somebody please, will you help me Cause I'm falling apart, I'm falling apart...

!23.

You like that? Sometimes I like to think they wrote that for you. No, them, not me. I would've wrote it if I could, you know I would. What? Say what? You know those guys? Get out, you know them? Man, that's crazy. I guess all you famous people hang together down in Los Angeles, huh. Yeah. Oh, I know. *(JJ Doesn't pick up the phone again. From this point on JJ acts as if Drew Barrymore was in the cell with him.)* So... He's a friend, huh. That singer cat. What kind of friend? A good friend? What do I mean? I mean what kind of friend. I just want to know, that's all. Oh. OK. Casual. Casual as in friend casual, or as in let's go in the back room, you know, the one with the king size bed and the red silk sheets, and get casual. And then he can just touch you down there casually and – God damn it, girl. You fuckin' that guy? Huh? IS THAT IT? THAT'S WHY YOU AIN'T BEEN CALLING ME? Damn!

Ok. Ok, baby. Sorry. Yeah, baby. I know, I know, I'm workin' on it. I'm tryin'. It ain't easy. You know that. You know that. I don't take the pills, I told you that before. I take the pills and then you never call me or come visit. I miss you. Drew, baby, I see you on the TV, in those magazines, those... snapshots. I collect them all, you know I do. Cut them out every day that I can. This one right here's my favorite. *(Points to a space on the wall.)* You on the bike. Goin' some place. Maybe to come see me. And then this one, and this one. *(He reaches around, shows and touches some of her pictures on the wall.)* But the end of the day, they're all just pictures. Nothin' but. That's all they are, baby. That's !24. right. It ain't you. Yeah. We know that. They don't. They don't. But we do. But, you know, also, it ain't. all about you, I mean... What about us? OK, yeah. But. Listen to me. Just once. Just once, I'd like you to. Please. I'm asking you. I'm begging you. What about us?

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SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign

**SIGN:** JACOBI – FRIENDS? WHAT FRIENDS?

**Elements:** Ensemble work

**Questions:** Who is this guy and why does he need to say what he does?

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INMATE 1 (JEFF): Yo, new guy, what's your name?

INMATE 2 (SMOKE): Who you roll with, dude?

INMATE 3 (PEDRO): Who're your friends?

INMATE 2 (SMOKE): Hey man, you hear me?

JACOBI: Who do I roll with? Who are my friends? Huh. Shit. You see this cell? This is what I got, right here. *(He laughs.)* This is my friend for now. My Cell. With myself, man, what the fuck is this, it's way too soon for this shit. Are you for real? How about this shit, is this for real? *(He looks at the audience.)* Are you for real? Let's see here.

!25.

*(He steps out of his cell and addresses members of the audience.)* Are you my friend? What about you? You my friend? Man, I got no friends. This cell, the reason I'm here is because of my friends. This is the reflection of my reality right here. This cell is a better friend to me than the people who put me here. Look at this fuckin' place. Dirty little joke. Shit.

I had a friend one time. My so called friend dropped kites on me, got me hemmed up so his punk ass could steal my job.

Motherfucker.

Got a nice little place in the woodshop. All my own. I make nice furniture, man. Chairs and crap. Real pretty. Fancy as shit. Serious. Some dude told me the office ladies use them. Haha. That shit keeps me warm at night. *(He laughs.)* Yeah. Now I'm sitting under investigation for some bullshit my fuckin' "friend" faked to snake my place... *(Pause)* Truth is, he may get it.

*(Pause)*

So. Do I have friends? Hell yeah, but the friends you get is determined by the friendship you give. Hear me? Friendship requires sacrifice, time, energy. Things I been burned on. And I burn bright.

Hear me?

Trust. Shit.

Truth is, many of us are uncomfortable up close. We grew up in homes where intimacy was rare. Nowhere in sight. Communication was a form of control, and rules more important than relationships. As a result !26. we're "relationally impaired." Friends don't come easy. So let me ask you. Straight up. Are you my friend?

*(He steps back in his cell.)*

INMATE 2 (SMOKE): Damn man. I asked a simple question. *(He laughs.)*

INMATE 3 (PEDRO): Hey yo, ese, you need to chill. Therapy hours are over. *(Sarcastically)* Besides, we just want to be your friend. *(He laughs.)*

JACOBI: Yeah. Friends got me in here and they sure as shit ain't gonna get me out. I didn't come here with no friend and I'm sure as shit not going to leave with one.

INMATE 2 (SMOKE): OK man, whatever. Tomorrow will be a new day. Cause I know you ain't goin' nowhere. *(He laughs.)*

INMATE 3 (PEDRO): For real. Hey new guy!

JACOBI: Yeah.

INMATE 3 (PEDRO): Better get yourself a new speech ready. Tomorrow's question is: What is your name! *(INMATES laugh.)*

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! 27.

*SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign*

**SIGN:** MAX SCENE 2 – THE ENCORE

**Elements:** Ensemble Work

**Questions:** Lyrics?

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CO: Chow! *(Excitedly, MAX starts writing lyrics, moving from place to place to illustrate time.)*

INMATE (TROY): Hey, was that you singing last night? *(MAX keeps writing, singing softly.)*

INMATE (TROY): Hey American Idol! You talk? Or do you just sing?

INMATE 2 (DEZ): You got a song about a bitch?

INMATE 3 (ALAN): He is a bitch.

INMATE 4 (V): Let's hear something about a female.

INMATE 3 (ALAN): He wants to sing to his boyfriend.

INMATE 2 (DEZ): Yeah, let's hear something about some girl, man.

*(MAX puts his notebook down, makes a beat on the wall and sings.)*

All eyes on her when she steps on the scene She got them high heels on and walks like a beauty queen; !28. Dark hair and green eyes that take me by surprise, Every time I see her: look ma I think I caught a keeper; Five foot six and forty inch hips, silhouette is just ridiculous; just gonna kiss them thick lips, I can't resist, I must confess: I never seen anything in jeans that look a thing like she do; Hypnotized by the way she move She got that, ooh girl she got that-She got that ooh girl *(repeat)**(Some cheering and clapping from the guys.)*

INMATE 3 (ALAN): Hey man, I'm five foot six.

INMATE 2 (DEZ): I've got forty inch hips.

INMATE (TROY): Hey American Idol, what's your name?

MAX: Max.

INMATE (TROY): That was dope, for real. You out soon?

MAX: *(Softly)* No.

INMATE 2 (DEZ): How much time you got?

MAX: I got letters, I ain't got numbers.

INMATE 3 (ALAN): The fuck that mean? When you get out?

MAX: I'm not.

INMATE 4: You never gettin' out and you're singing about females? *(Laughs.)*

INMATE 2 (DEZ): I tell you what, I'll get out next year, I'm gonna fuck that bitch.

!29.

*(Cell block laughs, MAX goes back to writing.)*

CO: Lights Out!

*(MAX starts singing as he's writing. Gradually the noise gets softer and music begins to get louder. We see MAX step out of his cell, stepping out towards the front of his cell. He sings a song. As the music ends he steps back into his cell and it's quiet for a moment.)*

INMATE (JASON): Fag! *(Laughter in the cell block. MAX looks at the lyrics in the notepad, rips them out and crumples the paper.)*

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!30.

SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign

**SIGN:** JEFF SCENE ONE – KILL YOURSELF

**Elements:** Ensemble work Props: Portable lights Sound effects: Toilet flushing, electronic drone tone, electric guitar Guard Lines/noises on Mic

**Questions:**

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*(JEFF is sitting in his cell with a paper crane. He talks to the audience.)*



JEFF: I was 7 years old the first time my parents took me to the doctors for “it.” They didn’t know what “it” was, but the school nurse said I had to go. My parents didn’t think it was worth the trip, they were too busy. They were always busy. My dad, he was busy looking for work. My Mom, she was busy with her soap. And today, of all the days I could have picked to have a fit, was the day that... On General Hospital. My mom looked at me like I was a bad commercial. *(In his mother’s voice)* “For Goodness sakes. Why do I have to suffer just because you’re too afraid to have your picture taken? Your father paid a lot of money for the pictures. You asked for them.” I didn’t ask. “That money is coming out of your allowance” she said. I didn’t get allowance.

I said I was sorry. I said the camera hurt. It was too bright. Like the fluorescent’s always on. Relentless.

*(He walks to the back of his cell, and we transition into the cell with him. !31. Noises begin slowly from the INMATES. Coughs, etc.)*

*(JEFF has one of his tics)* I can see the cop in the control station. He just came back from a smoke break. I can tell because of the smell. The smell. The cops like to blow their smoke in my air vent. They must smoke on the roof, that’s where the air vent goes. No one else can even smell it, so it must just be my vent. My vent! They do that shit on purpose. I know they do. *(He tics.)* I smell everything that happens here, hear it too. Yes I do. The doctor said it was called autism. One said it was called ass-burgers with characteristic hypersensitivity. Ass-burgers, sounds like something on a menu. Can I please have the Ass-burgers well done with a side of shit sauce. Yum. I can smell it now. *(He giggles and tics. He coughs.)* Cigarette smell is making me nauseous. I can’t stand it anymore. *(He tics. Pause.)*

I’m smarter than they think. I know how to fight back against the smell. I figured it out. The first time I almost puked, but I got used to it. I have my defense, my countermeasures, I hardly smell them anymore. Now they have to smell my shit. It’s their own damn fault. If they fed us better food it wouldn’t smell so bad coming out. Smells like assburgers. *(He giggles.)* Don’t go thinking I’m crazy, I’m not. There’s technique involved, oh yes there’s technique. You gotta put it in the cracks. Nice and precise. Like the tiles in the bathroom floor. Around the door, down here, and here. Just like that. That’s where you put it. And not all at once, either. You gotta do it in layers, so they dry quicker. Nice and light. They gotta dry in between, or they smear and that would be gross. And you can’t skip places !32. either. You skip a place, their smell can get in. And keep your lines straight, that’s important, I can’t overemphasize that enough! *(He tics.)* Keep them straight and keep them proud.

*(Noises continue. Escalating slowly. A toilet flushes loudly.)*

JEFF: I can smell the sound, it’s louder than smoke, brighter than the lights.

INMATE 2 (TROY): Put some water on it. *(Toilets keep flushing with other sounds introduced.)*

INMATE 3 (SMOKE): It ain't me.

INMATE 2 (TROY): I just heard you flush

INMATE 3 (SMOKE): (to JEFF) Man, shut the fuck up. *(To INMATE 2)* It's my neighbor.

INMATE 2 (TROY): You best not be playin' with your shit again, you fucking nut!

INMATE 3 (SMOKE): You better not be!

INMATE 2 (TROY): Damn right, don't do it. Sick and tired of that shit, and I mean your shit. *(Pause)* Just fuckin' take care of business.

INMATE 3 (SMOKE): Yeah man, kill yourself.

INMATES: Yeah, man kill yourself. You piece of shit. Kill yourself, (etc)

JEFF: What? No, stop it.

*(Chorus begins, repeating "kill yourself." Other sound elements are introduced. Lights begin to shake.)*

JEFF: Stop it, stop it, stop it, stop it... ! 33.

*(Chorus grows with intensity and tears down the paper walls behind their cells. They take the lights and point them at JEFF, who is crouching on the floor. Sound reaches a crescendo, and JEFF covers his paper crane.)*

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!34.

SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign

**SIGN:** WARZONE SCENE 3 – PEACE, 43 IN

**Elements:** Ensemble work?

**Props:** Wheelchair

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*[A wheelchair is brought forward. WARZONE sits in it. WARZONE wheels into the cell in a wheelchair.]*

WARZONE: Good Morning all.

INMATES: Good morning, Warzone, what's up, etc.

WARZONE: How's everybody?

INMATES: All right, blessed, etc...

INMATE (SMOKE): How are them creaky bones today, Mr. Poet? You finished that poem yet?

WARZONE: As a matter of fact I did. Couldn't sleep last night...

INMATE (SMOKE): Man you never sleep any night.

WARZONE: I keep busy. Plenty to do. A busy mind lets the soul breathe.

INMATE (V): Whattaya got? Read it old man.

WARZONE: Well, I wrote this early morning. Let's see here, goes something like this:

In these concrete tombs  
that most call cells  
resistance becomes survival.  
Art and creativity  
Enable some to transcend negativity  
Sleepless nights  
The perfect time to write  
!35.  
Cold, hungry and alone  
I draw pictures of warm places  
With abundant food for many companions  
Barren environment void of stimuli  
One makes a garden of his mind  
Planting seeds and fertilizing self-actualization  
We sing songs of resistance  
Heard by none because we are the voiceless  
Transforming struggle to the substance of stanza  
Cell block scholars  
Handcuffed residency  
Master degrees of captivity  
Unaccredited doctorates of deprivation  
With colored ink from Sunday comics and coffee-stained toothbrushes  
We paint bright murals inside dark tombs  
Monk like meditation reveals  
Inner alchemy necessary to transform tombs to monasteries. Paranormal paradox  
Instead of being spiritual crushed  
We evolve in a box  
Thrown in the hole and told we'll never see the sun again-  
We are those who blow kisses at the moon.  
Indomitable wills create artistry out of sufferance,  
Even with handcuffs on wrist  
We can build peace from inside the belly of the beast  
And throw peace signs at the prison industrial complex.

Resistance is survival  
and love our salvation.

INMATE (AUDIENCE): HEY OLD MAN SHUT THE FUCK UP WITH THAT BULLSHIT!

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!36. SIGNMAN walks across the stage with a sign:

**SIGN:** JEFF SCENE TWO – THE SILENCE

*(JEFF walks on stage with his paper crane. He walks around, studies the cell for a moment, puts the crane at the front of the cell and then steps in, sits on the bucket and looks at the floor for some seconds. He slowly raises his head and puts his hands in a piano playing position. CHIP begins playing the piano and the INMATE plays the exact same song in the air. As he plays, after a few moments, the tape is removed from the floor by the ensemble. The bucket is turned around, the tape is thrown in and everything is removed.)*

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SIGNMAN walks across with a sign:

**SIGN:** THE END, CLAP WHENEVER.

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