

# **PFV**

**(Potential For Violence)**

**a one-act play**

by

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(C) Sydney 1991

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# PFV

was first performed by

**Stageworks Theatre**

at

**Belvoir Street Theatre - Downstairs, Surry Hills, Sydney,**

**on the 3rd of July, 1992,**

with the following cast:

THE BOY: **Jeremy Shaw**

THE MAN: **Ken Welsh**

The production was directed by **Patrick Guerrero**  
and designed by **David Waller**.

“O Vengeance !”

**- Hamlet**

## **Characters**

THE BOY

THE MAN

## **Time**

Summer.

The play takes place on an extremely hot, windless day and night and the following morning.

## **Scene**

A single room shack, somewhere in the outback.

A simple barren room with a dusty floor.

Upstage right a door leads out on to a decaying verandah. To the left of the door is a window with a broken pane. Through it we see the desolate outback countryside – red earth, yellow grass and dying trees – stretching away to the horizon.

Upstage there are a scattering of empty beer cans and a half empty carton. Amongst these are some torn political posters and a few books.

**Scene 1. Noon.**

WE FIND OURSELVES IN A SIMPLE BARREN ROOM WITH A DUSTY FLOOR.

IN FRONT OF THE WINDOW, ON A STURDY WOODEN CHAIR SITS **THE BOY**. ABOUT 18 YEARS OLD IN JEANS AND FADED SINGLET, HIS HAIR IS UNKEMPT AND HIS SKIN UNTIDY BUT HIS EYES ARE ABLAZE WITH UNKNOWN PURPOSE. HE SIPS FROM A CAN OF BEER.

BEHIND HIM ON THE FLOOR ARE THE REMAINS OF A CARTON AND A SCATTERING OF EMPTIES. **THE BOY** STARES INTENTLY AT ANOTHER SIMILAR CHAIR DOWNSTAGE RIGHT, WHICH IS HOLDING **THE MAN**.

**THE MAN** IS SITTING ON THE FLOOR, LEGS STRAIGHT OUT AND HIS BACK PRESSED FIRMLY AGAINST THE FRONT OF THE CHAIR. HIS ARMS ARE TIED AROUND THE LEGS OF THE CHAIR WITH THICK OLD ROPE. HIS WRISTS ARE GRAZED AND BLOODY FROM THE GRATING OF ROPE ON SKIN, HIS SHOES ARE SCUFFED, HIS PANTS MUDDY AND HIS SHIRT STAINED WITH SWEAT.

**THE MAN'S** EYES ARE COVERED BY A LARGE CRUDE BLINDFOLD AND HIS MOUTH IS STUFFED WITH A GAG. **THE MAN** IS NEITHER OVERWEIGHT NOR BALDING BUT WE REALISE HE MUST BE OVER 20 YEARS OLDER THAN HIS "COMPANION". IT IS POSSIBLE, BUT NOT PROBABLE, THEY COULD EVEN BE FATHER AND SON.

THERE IS A LONG SILENCE, SAVE THE NOISE OF THE BUSH. **THE BOY** CONTINUES TO STARE INTENTLY AT THE MAN, OCCASIONALLY SIPPING HIS BEER. EVENTUALLY WE REALISE THAT **THE MAN** IS ASLEEP.

**THE BOY** STANDS AND WALKS TO THE DOOR. HE OPENS IT WIDE THEN SLAMS IT LOUDLY. **THE MAN** JERKS INTO LIFE AND WRITHES VIOLENTLY, DESPERATELY TRYING TO FREE HIMSELF.

**THE BOY** SLOWLY MOVES CLOSER TO **THE MAN** WATCHING HIM STRUGGLE. GRADUALLY **THE MAN**, OVERCOME BY PURE EXHAUSTION, CEASES TO MOVE. **THE BOY** STANDS OVER HIM.

SILENCE.

BOY: You are extremely impolite. In fact you border on rude. In some countries your behaviour could even be classed as unpardonable. You would be outcast, discarded, solitary. I, on the other hand, would be a man to be respected. I have made an effort. I have spoken to you, chatted with you, shared stories and anecdotes - I have endeavoured to entertain. And you, you have not even had the decency to repay my kindness in the slightest. For an entire day and an entire night, through a most enjoyable road trip, a delightful bush stroll and a serene evening of reflection you have not deemed me worthy of a single syllable. Not one

BOY: (CONT) utterance. Nothing. I have questioned you, cajoled you, tickled your fancy with tidbits of delight and you cannot even summon up the crudest of replies. You have remained defiantly speechless. At first I was bemused, enticed, somewhat beguiled by your lack of response, but as time passed, as your silence continued, my mood began to alter. I started to become annoyed, angry, increasingly pissed off. Now I find myself at boiling point. My benevolent nature has been stretched to the limit. If your silence is not broken soon I may be forced into a most unpleasing act. A split second of retaliation. A gift of pain. [SHORT PAUSE] But then, I am a docile person. Violence is not something I enjoy or encourage. So I am willing to give you one last chance. An opportunity for salvation. A hope of forgiveness. Just say something, anything. No matter how puerile, no matter how obscure. One intelligible sound and your totally unacceptable behaviour of the last twenty four hours will be ancient history. The slightest flicker of a response. I'm asking you nicely. I'm pleading with you. I'm on my knees begging. Just a little sign. One hint that you possess a single cell of humanity.

**THE BOY** PAUSES AND WAITS ON HIS KNEES FOR A RESPONSE FROM **THE MAN**. AFTER AWHILE **THE MAN** EMITS A MUFFLED MOAN. A PAUSE. **THE MAN** MOANS AGAIN. SILENCE.

BOY: What was that? What was that erroneous dribble? Was that speech? Was that the just reward for my countless endeavours? [STANDING] Disappointment. Rejection. Betrayal. A chance, a hope, an act of charity - abused, disgraced, spat back in my face. Now I'm really peeved. I'm disgruntled. I'm irritated. I am urged into action. Prepare for punishment.

**THE BOY** GOES TO THE BACK AND RUMMAGES THROUGH THE CANS. **THE MAN** JERKS IN HIS ROPES WILDLY, DESPERATELY, TRYING TO BREAK FREE. **THE BOY** CONTINUES TO RUMMAGE LOUDLY THROUGH THE CANS SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING.

SUDDENLY, AMIDST THE STRUGGLING, **THE MAN** RAISES ONE LEG AND BANGS IT ON THE GROUND HARD. THE RUMMAGING CONTINUES. **THE MAN** BANGS HIS LEG ON THE FLOOR AGAIN. **THE BOY** STOPS AND LOOKS UP, LISTENING INTENTLY.

BOY: What was that? Do my ears deceive me? What did I hear?

THERE IS A SILENCE. **THE MAN** RAISES HIS LEG AND BANGS IT ON THE GROUND ONCE MORE. **THE BOY** SIGHS.

BOY: Enlightenment has come. Salvation has been earned. An effort has been made. Small, insignificant, hardly noteworthy but an effort has been made. You have justified my patience. My tolerance is restored, somewhat momentarily one imagines, but restored. Congratulations. Well done. You deserve a beer.

**THE BOY** TAKES A BEER FROM THE CARTON AND PLACES IT ON THE FLOOR WELL IN FRONT OF **THE MAN**.

BOY: I'll just leave it here for you. Enjoy.

**THE BOY** RETURNS TO HIS CHAIR AND SITS. HE RAISES HIS CAN OF BEER.

BOY: Cheers.

HE DRINKS.

BLACKOUT.

## Scene 2 - Afternoon

**THE MAN**, STILL BOUND, GAGGED AND BLINDFOLDED, SITS DOWNSTAGE WITH HIS HEAD RAISED, STRAINING FOR A SOUND. **THE BOY** IS ABSENT. A LONG PAUSE.

**THE BOY** ENTERS FROM THE VERANDAH WHERE HE HAS BEEN READING IN THE SUN. HE IS BARE CHESTED AND HIS SINGLET HANGS FROM HIS JEANS. HE STANDS LOOKING AT THE MAN AND DROPS THE THICK BOOK IN HIS HAND ON TO THE FLOOR. **THE MAN** TENSES.

SUDDENLY, FOR NO APPARENT REASON **THE BOY** GOES TO **THE MAN** AND REMOVES THE GAG. HE THEN RETIRES TO THE BACK OF THE STAGE. **THE MAN** RELAXES SLIGHTLY AS **THE BOY** MOVES AWAY. **THE BOY** WAITS, THEN:

BOY: Thank you would be a start. But then how could anyone expect a man like you, a man devoid of etiquette, to suddenly discover a code of conduct. [APPROACHING **THE MAN**] Oh dear. Look at you. You're suffering. You are in pain. Your mouth is dry, your lips are parched, your whole body is screaming out for some water, some liquid, something to ease the throbbing in your head. A beer, a cleansing ale, how good that would taste. How magnificent that would make you feel.

**THE BOY** PICKS UP THE CAN IN FRONT OF **THE MAN** AND OPENS IT. HE MOVES SLOWLY CLOSER TO **THE MAN** AND HOLDS THE CAN INCHES FROM HIS MOUTH.

BOY: The froth bubbling out. The ice cold ale begging to be drunk. Satisfaction guaranteed. [PLACING THE CAN AGAINST **THE MAN'S** CHEEK] Feel it on your skin. Imagine it rolling down your throat and quenching the fire in your stomach. You can smell it, you can hear it, you can almost taste it.

**THE BOY** PULLS THE CAN AWAY AND DRINKS IT HIMSELF.

BOY: Almost.

**THE MAN** LETS OUT A GROAN OF ANGUISH. HE MOVES HIS MOUTH TRYING TO FORM A WORD.

BOY: What's this? His lips are moving, his mouth is opening and closing but no sound is coming out. A new experience for him. A strange experience, something most unpleasant. He wants to speak, he's desperate to speak but he can't. He strains, he concentrates, he summons up one last effort and right from the bottom of his gut the word comes:

MAN: [HOARSE, BREATHY] Why?

A LONG PAUSE.

BOY: Why? [PAUSE, THEN ANGRY] Why? [STANDING] Well excuse me. Pardon my ignorance. I didn't know you were a member of the Holy Trinity. I was unacquainted with the fact that you are a saint. Have you never done anything in your entire life for which you should be now thus treated? Are you perfect? Is your past spotless? Think. Think back. Remember, if you will. Is there nothing? Nothing at all? One single moment which would justify your current predicament? One event for which you always knew that some day, sometime you'd be brought to judgement?

A LONG PAUSE. **THE BOY** WAITS, THEN:

BOY: Nothing? Well then, I apologise for the inconvenience. I am obviously guilty of a terrible mistake. If you are completely innocent, if you have never committed any crime, if you are totally without sin then let's get this over with. You will pass undeterred into the Kingdom of God. Yours will be everlasting peace. The rope is waiting. The ceremony can begin. Lets not hesitate.

**THE BOY** PULLS THE CHAIR OUT FREEING **THE MAN'S** ARMS, BUT STILL LEAVING THEM BOUND AT THE WRISTS. **THE BOY** PLACES THE CHAIR IN THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM UNDER THE ROPE.

MAN: What are you doing?

BOY: I'm placing the chair under the rope. The rope hanging from the ceiling. The rope with a noose in the end.

MAN: What is this all about? What have I done?

BOY: You said you've done nothing. Did you make a mistake? Are you hiding something? Better be quick. Little time remains.

**THE BOY** PULLS **THE MAN** UP ON TO HIS FEET.

MAN: What do you want from me?

BOY: I don't want anything. I am an angel sent by the Lord to bring you to his side. You who have never sinned.

**THE BOY** PUSHES **THE MAN** UP ON TO THE CHAIR.

MAN: You can't do this !

BOY: I'm standing you on the chair. Now I'm putting the rope around your neck. Nice and loose. You won't even feel it until it pulls tight.

MAN: Why are you doing this?

BOY: That is for you to tell me. Quickly. The countdown is beginning.

MAN: There's nothing. I have done nothing. What do you want?

BOY: I want the truth. I want you to remember.

MAN: What do you want me to remember ?

BOY: Something you can never forget.

MAN: But what?

BOY: Too late. The countdown shall now begin. You who have not sinned, you who have never committed any crime, you who have never brought pain on anyone - your Lord and master is waiting. Ten ...nine...

MAN: [OVER COUNTDOWN] Listen. Is this about money ?

BOY: Eight...seven...

MAN: Who are you ?

BOY: Six ...five...

MAN: Why are you doing this ?

BOY: Four ...three...

MAN: This is insane. I have done nothing.

BOY: Two ...one...

MAN: Stop ! Please !

**THE BOY PUSHES THE MAN OFF THE CHAIR. THE MAN FALLS TO THE GROUND. THE UNTIED END OF THE ROPE FALLING DOWN AROUND HIM.**

BOY: Oops. Forgot to tie the rope. Maybe next time.

**THE MAN LIES ON THE FLOOR SHAKING. THE BOY STANDS OVER HIM. LIGHTS FADE.**

**Scene 3: Sunset**

**THE BOY HAS TURNED HIS CHAIR AROUND AND HE SITS ASTRIDE IT FACING THE AUDIENCE. THE MAN LIES FACE UP UNDERNEATH THE CHAIR, HEAD FIRST TO FRONT, STILL BLINDFOLDED. THE BRACE, BETWEEN THE TWO BACK LEGS OF THE CHAIR, IS PINNED AGAINST THE MAN'S NECK. THE BOY IS DRINKING A CAN OF BEER. THE GAG HAS BEEN REMOVED.**

BOY: I'd like to tell you something. It's quite personal, but I think we've reached a stage in our relationship where we're ready for a little intimate exchange.

MAN: I'm listen -

**THE MAN IS CUT OFF BY THE BOY ROCKING FORWARD ON HIS CHAIR AND PUSHING THE BRACE DOWN ONTO THE MAN'S NECK CHOKING HIM.**

BOY: No interruptions. (SLIGHT PAUSE) When I was fifteen years old they realised that hope was hopeless. Foster parents could not be found or would not come forward, so, in accordance with the laws governing such matters, I was to be made a Ward of the State. But first I had to be assessed. It had to be determined which of the Minister's institutions would be my home for the next three years. So one Monday morning I sat in a room on a chair, not unlike this one, and waited. After a time a man entered. As he sat opposite me, behind the large metallic desk, my worst fears were confirmed. He was ... obese. His chocolate brown slacks were bulging at the seams and the third button on his filthy cream shirt had popped, allowing a horrid portion of hairy white flab to emerge. The angular pattern on his tie was almost impossible to discern amongst the greasy breakfast stains and oily remnants of morning tea. But these horrors paled as one took in the hideous reality above. A huge boyish face saturated with sweat, acne scarred and a heat rash coming on. Dumb bloodshot eyes attempting to hide behind chunky black rimmed glasses. An overgrown moustache and a matt of unwashed hair, both liberally sprinkled with dandruff, completing the disaster. It was lucky I had not eaten for I feel the sight may have been too much for my tender stomach to bear.

**THE BOY LEANS FORWARD CRUSHING THE MAN'S NECK UNDER THE BRACE. THE MAN CHOKES VIOLENTLY, GASPING FOR AIR. EVENTUALLY THE BOY LEANS BACK.**

BOY: We began with questions of a general nature, ascertaining my knowledge of the world around me. Politics, places, people - multiple choice and short answer. I was confident I performed well. My quiz master noted my answers on specially prepared sheets, adding the occasional observation in his cryptic black scrawl. Then the questions

BOY: (CONT) started to take on a more personal flavour. My feelings about my mother and my father - a strange question really, considering the circumstances - my Aunt and Uncle – to that point I was unaware I had any - and lastly my brother.

**THE BOY ROCKS FORWARD AGAIN. AS THE MAN CHOKES THE BOY POURS SOME OF HIS BEER INTO THE MAN'S MOUTH. EVENTUALLY THE BOY ROCKS BACK. IT TAKES SOMETIME FOR THE MAN TO RECOVER.**

BOY: For this moment I thought I was well prepared. I realised how important every gesture, every expression, every syllable was to my placement. I had decided at all costs to remain calm, docile, polite - but something in those seconds gave me away. A tensing of the hand, a glint in the eye, the beads of sweat forming on my forehead - something betrayed my inner self. The fact that deep down what I most wanted to do was reach over and rip his heart out of his chest. (PAUSE) The interview ended shortly after. "I am pleased" he said, "a sterling effort" he continued, "most impressive" he finished. But then, I saw it. In the bottom left hand corner, in tiny almost indecipherable lower case, his final judgement. P - f - v: Potential for violence. And that, was that. All chance of salvation vanished instantly. My fate was sealed. I had been hoping for placement at a Family Group home by the sea, where a pseudo-mum and pseudo-dad could speed my rehabilitation. but instead I was to be sent to an Adolescent Detention Centre, a boys' home, a place where my dangerous tendencies could be kept in check. A rat, amongst the other rats, fighting for survival on a sinking ship. Strangely, at that moment I was not, as one would expect, filled with hatred for my assessor, but rather respect. He had managed to see through my charade. He had made a correct evaluation, for something had happened three years earlier that did cause me to be somewhat ... unstable.

**THE BOY ROCKS FORWARD AGAIN, BUT THIS TIME HE LEANS FURTHER DOWN ON THE CHAIR, PUSHING THE BRACE HARDER ON THE MAN'S NECK. THE MAN CHOKES AND COUGHS VIOLENTLY. THE BOY LEANS STILL HARDER UNTIL SURELY THE MAN CAN TAKE NO MORE.**

**SUDDENLY THE BOY ROCKS BACK. HE TAKES THE CHAIR OFF THE MAN AND DRAGS HIM OVER TO THE RIGHT HAND WALL. HE PROPS THE MAN UP AGAINST IT THEN TAKES A FEW STEPS BACK AND LOOKS AT THE MAN.**

BOY: The time has come for you to see the light.

**THE BOY TAKES OFF THE MAN'S BLINDFOLD.**

BOY: (HOLDING OUT HIS HAND) Good afternoon. Nice to meet you. I'd shake your hand but I see you're somewhat incapacitated. (RAISING BEER) A toast, to our anniversary.

**THE BOY DRINKS. THE MAN LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM.**

MAN: Where are we ?

BOY: In the country. Somewhere. You don't really need to know. Let's just say we're not too far from ground zero.

MAN: Look, if it's money you're after my wife will be happy to pay any amount you ask for.

BOY: My objectives are not monetary.

**THE BOY DRINKS AGAIN.**

MAN: (REFERRING TO BEER) Can I have some ?

BOY: Manners.

MAN: Please.

BOY: That's better.

**THE BOY GOES TO THE MAN. HE KNEELS THEN ROUGHLY POURS THE CAN INTO THE MAN'S THROAT. THE MAN COUGHS VIOLENTLY.**

BOY: Spot of bother eh? Never mind. The first of the day always goes down a bit rough.

MAN: Listen, may I say something ? What you're doing, it isn't very sensible.

BOY: I'm not a sensible person.

MAN: I am an important man.

BOY: How nice for you.

MAN: People depend on me. I'll be missed. In fact you could've been seen. The police could've traced us out here. TRG teams may be converging at this very moment. End this now while you still have the chance.

BOY: TRG teams ? Converging ? Goodness me. I better run to the window and ascertain my precarious situation.

**THE BOY RUNS OUT ON TO THE VERANDAH.**

BOY: (CALLING) Hello. TRG teams. Hordes of converging police. (WAVING ARMS) Yoo - hoo, we're over he -re. (RETURNING) Sorry. Bad news. No one's coming to help. It's just you and me.

MAN: They may not be here yet, but soon we will be found. A search will be in progress.

BOY: Undoubtedly, but I think I'll have time to do what needs to be done.  
[PAUSE] What's her name?

MAN: Who?

BOY: The one that catches the train in the morning.

MAN: [ANXIOUS] Rebecca?

BOY: Rebecca. That's nice. I thought it'd be something like that. Samantha, or Patricia maybe. Something feminine but strong at the same time. What about the little one? With the cute blonde curls. How old is she now? Seven?

MAN: Lisa.

BOY: She catches the bus, except on Tuesdays and Thursdays when your wife drops her off on the way to her Aerobic class. I've been watching you.

MAN: You won't ....

BOY: Of course not. Unlike some people I won't bring families into it. This is between you and me. [BEAT] I read an article about you recently. They say you're going to be the next Premier.

MAN: That depends.

BOY: On what?

MAN: I'd have thought that would be obvious.

BOY: Let's just say if I don't inflict too much damage. On what does it depend ?

MAN: The usual things. The polls, what kind of numbers I can get, what the current leader can be pressured in to doing.

BOY: And I guess being a dangerous criminal would effect your leadership ambitions somewhat.

MAN: There seems to be some mistake.

BOY: No mistake.

MAN: I'm not a dangerous criminal.

BOY: Aren't you? I wonder what the papers would make of it. I can see the headlines now. "Youth Minister's Secret Shame". "Family Affairs Boss in Tragedy of Torment". Your personal opinion poll might take a bit of a nose dive. [Don't worry. If I do let you live, and that's a big if", I'm not going to tell anybody about your little misdemeanour. It's much better if only you know, then everyday when you wake up only you'll know your life is a complete lie.

MAN: I don't know what you're talking about.

BOY: (LOSING HIS PATIENCE) I'm not buying this !

MAN: I'm sorry, but I just don't understand.

BOY: You know, you should be in the dictionary. There should be a big photo of you under the word "hypocrite."

MAN: Hypocrite ?

BOY: I thought your job was to look after our citizens of tomorrow. Then I guess it could be said you did that quite well.

PAUSE.

MAN: Look, why don't you tell me what this is all about ? Perhaps I can help.

BOY: You've helped quite enough already.

MAN: But you have me at a disadvantage. You know the context of our conversation. I unfortunately do not.

BOY: Have you considered that you might never know ? I may decide not to let you in on my little secret. I might just kill you right this second and you will go to your grave never knowing the reason for your death or even the identity of your killer.

MAN: You won't do that.

BOY: What makes you so sure ?

MAN: You're far too clever for an act of senseless violence.

BOY: Am I ? You weren't.

PAUSE.

MAN: Stalemate.

BOY: I don't know about that. I still have many options open.

MAN: Of course, but if you don't fill me in on why I'm here then our dialogue can progress no further.

BOY: You know why you're here.

MAN: No. I don't.

BOY: Stop lying.

MAN: I'm not lying. I don't have any idea.

BOY: None at all ?

MAN: No.

BOY: Well then, you better start thinking because if I don't start hearing what I want to hear very soon things could get ugly. Understand ?

**THE MAN DOES NOT RESPOND.**

BOY: Understand !

**THE MAN NODS.**

BOY: Good boy.

**THE BOY PATS THE MAN ON THE HEAD.**

**BLACKOUT.**

**Scene 4. Night.**

THE ROOM IS ILLUMINATED BY A NAKED LIGHT BULB.

**THE MAN** IS LYING FACE DOWN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FLOOR. HIS FEET AND HANDS ARE BOUND. **THE MAN** SLOWLY DRAGS HIMSELF ALONG THE GROUND.

**THE BOY** STANDS ABOVE HIM, BEER IN HAND, WATCHING.

BOY: Keep it up. You're doing splendidly. I wonder if there's a world record for this particular event. Perhaps the proper authorities should be contacted.

**THE MAN** STOPS.

BOY: Oh dear. The horse's faltered. Has he gone lame ? Is it a broken leg ? They might have to put him out of his misery.

**THE BOY** STARTS TO MOVE TOWARDS **THE MAN**. **THE MAN** RESUMES HIS JOURNEY.

BOY: He just needed a little encouragement.

MAN: (CONTINUING HIS JOURNEY) May I speak ?

BOY: Have you figured it out yet ?

MAN: I have a question.

BOY: But I don't have any answers. It is you and only you who holds the key.

**THE MAN** REACHES THE LEFT WALL. HE HITS HIS HEAD AGAINST IT SOFTLY.

BOY: Twenty - five ! Congratulations. You're almost there. Only seventy-five more to go.

MAN: How much longer can you go on with this ?

BOY: Endlessly. Forever and ever. I will continue indefinitely until your memory improves.

MAN: But don't you understand. I didn't do anything.

BOY: No, you didn't do anything. You did something. Something quite specific.

**THE BOY** CROUCHES NEXT TO **THE MAN**. **THE MAN** SLOWLY BEGINS TO TURN HIMSELF AROUND AND HEAD BACK TO THE RIGHT WALL.

BOY: And don't think that perpetually crying ignorance will save you. Sometime soon I'll just lose my patience and terminate you regardless.

MAN: Listen, whatever happened to you I had nothing to do with it alright ?

BOY: Yes you did.

MAN: Why won't you believe me ?

BOY: Because you're not telling the truth.

MAN: I am telling the truth. The whole truth, and nothing but. You're the one withholding information.

BOY: You've got all the information you need (TAPPING **THE MAN'S** HEAD) right here, inside your skull.

MAN: You're insane.

BOY: That depends on your point of view.

MAN: I'm starting to think the reason you won't tell me is because there is no reason. You haven't got any motives. I'm just an innocent victim.

BOY: I have my motives.

MAN: Maybe you do, but I'll bet they have nothing to do with me. If you had any guts at all you'd let me stop and talk this out.

**THE BOY** CONSIDERS.

BOY: Alright. You may take a brief pitstop, if you think you're really that smart. The man who lives a lie thinks he's going to bluff this one out.

MAN: May I also re-fuel ?

BOY: Extended metaphors. We are doing well. (PLACING BEER IN FRONT OF MAN) Stick that in your tank.

**THE MAN** QUICKLY GETS THE CAN OPEN AND BEGINS SUCKING THE BEER OUT OF THE TOP. **THE BOY** KICKS THE CAN AWAY.

BOY: Greedy guts. You'll get indigestion.

**THE MAN** SCREAMS IN FRUSTRATION.

MAN: You bastard !

BOY: Temper, temper. Getting a bit hot under the collar are we ? And all because of you're defective memory.

MAN: I can not remember what I didn't do.

BOY: But you can remember what you did.

MAN: Look, if this is about your time in the detention centre I wasn't even in charge back then. That system of assessment doesn't even exist anymore. One of my first acts as Minister was to replace those outdated processes of evaluation. Mis-placements of the type that happened to you are a thing of the past.

BOY: This is not a press conference.

MAN: I'm sorry, but you see I wasn't responsible. Still it was a grave error. No wonder you're angry.

BOY: It is not that decision that ails me. I should never have been there in the first place. I should never have come up before Mr Fatso Public Servant 1999.

MAN: Yet your time in the centre must have been difficult.

BOY: Yes, it was "difficult". But looking back I'm glad they put me there. It was good training. For the big league.

MAN: Prison ?

BOY: That's a very outdated term, but yes I have been in, and out, and in and out. Now I'm out but soon again I could be in.

MAN: I assure you your case will get the best possible hearing.

BOY: There we go again. Delusions of grandeur. It's pitiful really. You don't seem to realise you are not in a position to assure me of anything. You're the one on trial here and I'm the judge, jury, and executioner.

MAN: But what's my crime ? Why am I brought before the court ? If this isn't about your wrongful placement then there's nothing at all that even remotely links us.

BOY: I wouldn't be so sure. I was there.

MAN: Where ?

BOY: Give it up. You don't play the fool very well.

MAN: I'm not playing anything.

BOY: Do you know a very helpful old lady from State Headquarters called Betty Riley? Well she knows you, and more importantly she remembered you.

MAN: So this is politically motivated.

BOY: I think you're flattering yourself.

MAN: I admit it would be difficult to believe even the ALP could stoop to such methods but it is not beyond the realms of possibility. I am a key figure in a successful government. I have a high public profile.

BOY: I know. I've seen your campaign ads.

MAN: I would be difficult to replace. With an impending election my timely disappearance would throw our campaign into turmoil, aiding the opposition's cause considerably.

BOY: I've never seen myself as a political activist before. It's quite thrilling thinking that I could change the destiny of a nation. But sadly, it is also untrue. This is a completely personal act of vengeance.

MAN: So what's some clerk at State Headquarters got to do with it ?

BOY: Information. For years something was hidden.

MAN: What ?

BOY: Something of importance. Something that took a long time to emerge. The number plate.

MAN: So a car is involved.

BOY: No. A tricycle, with a number plate that I couldn't remember.

MAN: So what happened ? You had a vision, a spiritual awakening where all was revealed ?

BOY: You do seem to enjoy pushing your luck.

MAN: Too much perhaps.

BOY: Perhaps. (PAUSE) I knew the information was in here, somewhere, locked deep in my subconscious. It was just a matter of bringing it to the surface. Each night in the dorm or my cell I would retire to bed and relive that day, think through every second, praying that during sleep those magical numbers and letters would swim into view and I would awake with them on my lips. I spent days writing out different combinations on reams of foolscap paper - three numbers and three letters, again and again. Hoping, searching, squeezing my memory but still nothing. Then one day I was assigned the task of

BOY: (CONT) washing the Federal Minister's car. He was on an "Inspection Tour". After the wax and polish I was giving the number plate a final rub down and there it was - the red Z.

MAN: So what ? A Commonwealth car. They all have them.

BOY: But the one I remember was special. Very special. Instantly I was back on that hill, wedged against that tree, peering through the branches at another red Z. ZNE 342. My search had ended.

MAN: Look, if you're trying to blackmail me -

BOY: Mine is a quest for justice.

MAN: A very misguided one. All you know is the guilty party, whatever they're guilty of, were driving a Government car. Do you know how many people drive those cars ? There's thousands of them. And how long ago was this ? Is there any other particular reason I'm here or did you just select a politician at random ?

BOY: Shortly afterwards I managed to trace the number plate to a vehicle which used to be on your party's fleet and soon after that I discovered it was used by a delegate to travel to and from the Annual Conference on the day in question. Then, thanks to a helping hand from Mrs Riley, I found out that delegate was you. It took some time and considerable effort but in the end here we are. See, chance is not involved. You were responsible.

MAN: This is ridiculous.

BOY: Don't tell me you still don't get it ?

MAN: No I don't.

BOY: Then figure it out. You're a "dynamic junior minister". You have the "facts and figures at your fingertips". You "understand the electorate." Enlighten us: why - are - you - here ?

MAN: I don't know.

BOY: Then perhaps we could do something to help jog your memory. Take a little excursion, back to the place where it all began. It's not far. Just a couple of miles down the road. We could walk, or maybe I could walk and you could crawl on your hands and knees. Or, better still, I could tie you to the back of the truck and drag you the full distance. Mind you there's not much to look at. Some dusty gravel, yellow spindly grass and a little lost tree with a broken bough. Still it might prove rewarding. The criminal returned to the scene of the crime . It may bring forth a virtual torrent of confessions.

**THE BOY MOVES UPSTAGE AND TURNS TOWARDS THE WALL.**

MAN: So we know where. We also know how , but we still don't know who or what. Or at least I don't. The question is do you ? Or are you just making this up as you go along ?

BOY: Maybe I am ...

**THE BOY TURNS. HE IS HOLDING A FLICK KNIFE. HE PUSHES THE BUTTON AND THE BLADE SPRINGS UP.**

BOY: And I wonder what happens next.

**THE LIGHTS FADE.**

**Scene 5. Later.**

THE LIGHT BULB HAS BEEN SWITCHED OFF.

**THE BOY** SITS AGAINST THE BACK WALL, ILLUMINATED ONLY BY MOONLIGHT.

**THE MAN** LIES FACING THE AUDIENCE, DOWN RIGHT. HIS FEET AND HANDS STILL BOUND. HE IS MOSTLY CONCEALED BY SHADOW

AFTER AWHILE **THE BOY** SPEAKS.

BOY: When I was young I thought my brother was also my mother and father. In fact the words mother and father were foreign to me. The very notion that I had been conceived, born and then raised by two adults is something I have become familiar with only recently. I believed that I had just come into being and that life as it was, was life as it was meant to be - carefree, delightful and easy -alone with my brother on a farm in the country. And no wonder I didn't miss my parents, my brother was magnificent. Whatever the circumstances of their departure he had comes to terms with it brilliantly and taken on their roles effortlessly. To me he was like a god. I didn't need anyone or anything else. I wanted for nothing. Our days began before sunrise with a cold shower and a hearty breakfast, then we'd feed the chickens and milk the cows, before carrying out the rest of our carefully assigned daily tasks. Our chores completed we'd run through the pastures screaming at the top of our voices and collapse gasping for air on the riverbank. Some afternoons we'd spend fishing and then cook the catch in the open air. This was life . Just my brother and I - happy, healthy and together. For all I knew their wasn't another soul in the entire universe. Then one night as I sat in front of the fire enjoying a dinner of fresh apples and pears acquired from the orchard next door, I heard a distant banging coming from the back shed. Little did I know that this was the beginning of the end. Every night as I fell to sleep I'd wonder what my brother could be doing. "I'm working on something special" he would say, "you're not to come in. It'll be ready soon." "When ?" I'd plead. "When ?" "When it's finished." Finally, I was woken up one morning by a terrible roar coming from outside my window. At first I was terrified but as I slowly pulled back the curtain my spirit filled with joy. There sat my brother on what he called a "motorbike". He'd built it all by himself from bits and pieces he'd found piled up in the shed. The fuel tank was bright red and the seat shiny black. I ran outside and jumped aboard. My brother turned the handle, and we were away. Flying through open paddocks, screeching along dusty backtracks, bouncing over hills and gullies. This was heaven. Unfortunately our bliss was shortlived. My brother was unfamiliar with the terrain. The dirt track we were on narrowed suddenly at a sharp corner. My brother slammed on the brakes but it was too late. The front wheel hit a rock and we were thrown off. I remember sailing through the air effortlessly before crashing into a huge trunk, then slowly slipping down. I couldn't move,

BOY: (CONT) but worse was to come. My brother was by my side: "Are you alright ? I'll get some help." "Don't" I wanted to cry out, "don't leave me. I'll be okay." But the words would not come. I watched as he walked down the hill towards a gravel road about twenty metres away. He limped badly and there was blood behind his ear. As he reached the road I heard what I later understood to be a car hurtling towards him. "Please help me. My brother's hurt." He was standing in the middle of the road waving his arms. "Please help us." The driver didn't even slow down. Actually he seemed to speed up. The sound was unbearable. My brother rolled over the bonnet and slumped onto the ground at the side of the road. I knew instantly that he would not get up. I heard the car stop and a door open. Somehow I managed to twist my head around and there, through the scrub, I could just make it out. Three numbers, three letters on a black and white number plate. The door closed. The car drove away. Sometime later, a day, two days, maybe a week, I was found by the owner of the property next door. My brother had been discovered shortly before me. I woke up in hospital two weeks later with an unbelievable throbbing in my head. I had even missed the funeral. It was determined my brother had died from internal injuries suffered in a motorcycle accident. The police would hear nothing about a white car from a twelve year old boy who couldn't remember the number plate.

LIGHTS FADE.

**Scene 6. After midnight.**

THE LIGHT BULB HAS BEEN SWITCHED BACK ON.

**THE MAN**, STANDS AGAINST THE RIGHT HAND WALL.

**THE BOY** SITS ON A CHAIR A FEW METRES AWAY, STARING AT HIM. **THE BOY** IS HOLDING THE BLOODIED KNIFE.

**THE MAN**, TOTALLY EXHAUSTED, BEGINS TO SLIDE DOWN THE WALL.

BOY: (INDICATING KNIFE) Uh - uh. Not yet.

**THE MAN**, WITH DIFFICULTY, MANAGES TO STAND AGAIN.

MAN: Enjoying yourself ?

BOY: (SUDDENLY EXPLODING) Shut the fuck up. I'm sick and tired of your jabbering. I only want to hear you say one thing.

**THE BOY** MOVES AWAY.

MAN: You know, you should've been an actor.

BOY: In your current situation sarcasm is not advised.

MAN: Forgive me, it's just you have a strong voice and good presence. If you were on the stage it would be difficult to look elsewhere.

BOY: You're a very good crawler, but then you've had a lot of practice.

MAN: Yes, I too have difficulty accepting compliments. Low self esteem , that's one of your problems. Still there is a touch of the actor in you. Or perhaps you could've been a poet. You have many poetic inclinations.

BOY: I also have many violent inclinations.

MAN: I've noticed.

BOY: I haven't even begun.

PAUSE.

MAN: Look I'm sorry to go on –

BOY: Be my guest.

MAN: But it really is such a waste.

BOY: Yes, it was.

MAN: I'm talking about you. You're obviously a very intelligent young man. You have an excellent control of language.

BOY: I read a lot. I find escape in words on paper.

MAN: Exactly. You have so many skills and attributes, yet you're just throwing your life away.

BOY: I'm achieving what I set out to achieve.

MAN: What are you achieving ? You're giving in to a destructive obsession.

BOY: It's much more than that.

MAN: No it's not. It's an obsession for revenge and it's eating you up. Look at yourself. Can't you see what it's doing to you ? It's destroying you.

BOY: My lust for vengeance may shortly be satisfied.

MAN: If you kill me, then what ? Then you're a murderer. You've taken a life. How can you exist with that on your conscience ?

BOY: How can you ?

MAN: My conscience is clear. I live, just like you.

BOY: Live ? I don't live. You don't understand do you ? What happened to me out on that road ten years ago, it killed something deep inside.

MAN: Okay, you've suffered. No one's disputing that. But do you think you're the only one who's ever lost someone ? I spent two years watching my father being eaten away by cancer, but I survived. I pulled myself together and I went again. Now it's time for you to do the same.

BOY: Well I can't and soon, perhaps, neither can you. We are the dead. Trapped by a past we will never be able to forget. Trapped by distant events that forbid us a life. You have had temporary relief but now I will force you to remember. Now you will reside in hell forever too.

MAN: What is wrong with you ? You have ears but you don't use them. I'm sorry about what happened to your brother but I didn't do it. I am innocent.

BOY: You're right. I don't listen. I can't. Because you're dangerous. The way you use words. The way you manipulate. I can't let you prattle on undeterred. I might start to believe I did it.

MAN: Why can't you accept the truth ?

BOY: Because you're lying. You're a politician. You lie for a living. Everyday you tell untruths to survive. To keep your political career afloat. That's all you're doing now. But this isn't politics, this is real life, and you're treading on very dangerous ground.

MAN: Yes you're right. I am a politician, and what I do everyday is face the facts. And in this case all the facts point towards my innocence.

BOY: Facts can be misleading. Just like you. You know who you remind me of ? The little boy who told a fib. He got caught so to try and wheedle his way out he told another. And then another and another and another. Pretty soon he'd told so many fibs he got confused. He couldn't remember where the lies stopped and the truth began. In the end his whole life was just one big lie.

MAN: I'm not the liar. You are. You say you're on a quest for justice but all you ever do is stand around whingeing.

BOY: You just don't know when to shut up.

MAN: If you really wanted action you'd stop feeling sorry for yourself and do something about it.

BOY: I am doing something.

MAN: Trying to force a false confession out of an innocent man ?

BOY: I keep telling you , you're not innocent.

MAN: But what if I am ? Think of that. What if all this time you've been wrong ? What then ? What you're doing now, it's totally negative. At least you could take a positive step. Just in case.

BOY: Like what ?

MAN: You could let me help you.

BOY: You've done enough.

MAN: Just listen to me would you ? What've you got to lose ?

### **THE BOY IS SILENT**

MAN: I have a lot of support within the Police force. We could set up a special task force, to track down the person responsible for your misfortunes. You could have the best detectives and forensic experts put at your disposal. The cream of the state's law enforcement officers. Think of that. All of them working towards unlocking your ancient mystery. Discovering the identity of the person or persons who took your brother's life. Imagine. Trained

MAN: (CONT) specialists, all one hundred percent focused on helping you obtain justice. I could have everything organised within days. We'll forget all of this ever happened. I'll never mention it to another soul. Tell the authorities I was blindfolded the entire time. I didn't know where I was, who was holding me captive. You'll be in the clear. We can work together on this. Just like mates. Brothers. You and me. Solving the puzzle, healing the past. Let's start right now. Untie me. Don't waste one more second. Everything will be alright, if you just let me go.

BOY: You must think I'm a complete idiot.

MAN: On the contrary. You've heard me say I think you're very clever. That's why you'll see this offer for what it is. A genuine promise of help. An open palm extended. That's why you'll grab it with both hands.

BOY: I don't know. All those man hours. All that taxpayer's money. It seems a bit of a waste.

MAN: Not at all. Catching a criminal. It's a very valid cause.

BOY: Not when I already have the guilty party right here.

MAN: (ANGRY NOW) How can you be so stubborn ?

BOY: It's one of my most endearing qualities.

MAN: Alright then. Let's settle this once and for all.

BOY: You're ready to confess ?

MAN: I can not confess to a crime I didn't commit.

BOY: I'm not asking you to do that.

MAN: Aren't you ? Okay, if you're so sure then let's take this before the court. Justice, remember ? That's what this is all about isn't it ?

BOY: Correct.

MAN: You've got a very strange way of going about seeking it.

BOY: The legal system is rather time consuming. And requires considerable financial outlay.

MAN: What's wrong with right here ? This can be our court. If you're really interested in justice you'd go about it in the proper manner.

BOY: My investigations were extremely thorough.

MAN: But not your hearing of the case. I have not been given one single opportunity to defend myself. Well ? What's wrong ? Scared I'll show you up for what you are?

BOY: I have my proof.

MAN: What proof ?

BOY: The records at Party Headquarters. It was there in black and white. On that day the car was allocated to you. Number: ZNE 342. User: Mr Lying Bastard. Purpose: City-country return.

MAN: But that's just it. The records are wrong. I couldn't possibly have been driving that car. (**THE BOY IS SILENT.**) Please. I appeal to your honour. Let me speak.

PAUSE. **THE BOY** TURNS HIS CHAIR AROUND AND SITS.

BOY: Proceed.

MAN: Thank you. Well, if we examine carefully the facts at hand we will see a number of problems with the prosecution's case .

BOY: What problems ?

MAN: Firstly, your Honour, the car in question allegedly had Z number plates. Now as we've already established only Commonwealth cars have Z plates. I'm a state politician. As you said yourself those cars belong to Federal members. I couldn't possibly be the guilty party because I would not have been driving one.

BOY: This was many years ago and there were extenuating circumstances.

MAN: But your worship, if I may continue, here we have problem number two.

**THE BOY** GESTURES FOR THE MAN TO CONTINUE.

MAN: If this was more than ten years ago then I wasn't even a member of the Liberal Party. I was still a practising Barrister. What would I have been doing at the State Council ?

BOY: Checking up on your investments, seeing your boyfriend, it doesn't matter - it was you.

MAN: But how could it've been ? If the respected Judge would exercise his impartial judgement, he would realise that the prosecution's case is literally riddled with holes. As we established the driver was in a Commonwealth car, so even if I was at the conference, which as we have also established was highly unlikely, I couldn't possibly have had access to one of those.

BOY: Yes you could. They've got heaps of cars on the fleet. You could've borrowed one.

MAN: It's precisely because of the type of incidents that happened to you they never release these cars to anyone but Federal members of Government. I hope the Jury is more open to reason than our Judge seems to be. Look, I understand how you must feel.

BOY: You understand nothing.

MAN: Maybe not, but I can imagine. You're angry. An injustice has been done. You want compensation. You want someone to experience the pain you're feeling. It must be very difficult to accept that you've got the wrong man.

BOY: I haven't got the wrong man.

MAN: But what proof have you got ? Absolutely nothing.

BOY: I saw your name. It was written in the book.

MAN: So what ? Some poor old confused clerk at Party Headquarters said that I was driving a car. She probably got her papers mixed up. She probably showed you last year's allocations.

BOY: I thought you said you wouldn't be driving a Commonwealth car.

MAN: Last year in fact I did use one to attend an emergency Cabinet meeting in the country but that was the one and only time. And of course I had a driver. Now, that's another thing your worship has forgotten to consider. Was it a sitting member driving the car or was it his driver ? Perhaps the car was on its way to pick somebody up. Have you considered that ? The Defence rests your honour. I'm sure if your worship will look at this rationally, divorce his emotions, he will see the only verdict that can be reached in this case is innocent.

PAUSE.

BOY: The Judge is confused, the Jury's locked, so that just leaves the Executioner.

MAN: But if the verdict is innocent he won't be needed.

**THE BOY GOES TO THE CARTON OF CANS. HE PULLS SOMETHING OUT.**

BOY: He knows that. He also knows something else.

MAN: What does he know ?

**THE BOY** TURNS. HE IS HOLDING A GUN. HE MOVES TOWARDS **THE MAN** AND HOLDS THE GUN UP TO HIS HEAD.

BOY: He knows this is a gun. He knows what it can do when fired at close range. He knows how easily a man's skull can disintegrate. He knows what it looks like. Extremely unpleasant. [BEAT] Well, that sure shut you up.

BLACKOUT.

**Scene 7. Dawn.**

EARLY MORNING LIGHT BREAKS THROUGH THE WINDOW. WE HEAR THE BUSH SOUNDS OF BIRDS AND INSECTS.

**THE MAN** HAS FALLEN ASLEEP, PROPPED UP AGAINST THE WALL. HIS WRISTS AND FEET ARE STILL BOUND.

**THE BOY** HAS PASSED OUT UNDERNEATH THE WINDOW, BEER CAN STILL IN HAND. HE LIES ON THE FLOOR PARTLY BLOCKING THE DOOR.

**THE MAN'S** EYES FLICKER OPEN. HE NOTICES **THE BOY** IS OUT.

VERY SLOWLY HE STARTS EDGING SILENTLY TOWARDS **THE BOY**. SUDDENLY HE BRUSHES A BEER CAN AND FREEZES. **THE BOY** DOES NOT STIR. **THE MAN** EDGES CLOSER.

THE GUN IS LYING NEXT TO **THE BOY**. **THE MAN** STRUGGLES TO TRY AND PICK IT UP. THE GUN SLIPS FROM HIS GRASP AND CLATTERS BACK TO THE FLOOR.

**THE BOY** BEGINS TO STIR. **THE MAN** DROPS THE GUN. HE STANDS QUICKLY AND STARTS TO BOUND TOWARDS THE WINDOW. HE TRIES TO RAISE THE PANE.

**THE BOY'S** EYES OPEN AND HE IS ON HIS FEET IN AN INSTANT. HE GRABS **THE MAN** AND HURLS HIM ONTO THE FLOOR. HE PICKS **THE MAN** UP.

MAN: Fucking bastard !

BOY: Language.

**THE BOY** PUSHES **THE MAN'S** ARMS ABOVE HIS HEAD. **THE MAN** SCREAMS IN PAIN.

**THE BOY** THROWS **THE MAN** ON TO THE CHAIR. HE QUICKLY GRABS SOME ROPE AND BEGINS TO BIND **THE MAN** TIGHTLY.

MAN: (YELLING IN FRUSTRATION) Why don't you just kill me ? Get it over with.

BOY: Patience. The jury hasn't returned yet.

THE BINDING IS COMPLETE. **THE BOY** CHECKS THE ROPES THEN HE SPOTS THE GUN LYING ON THE FLOOR. HE GOES OVER AND PICKS IT UP.

BOY: Suppose I shouldn't leave this lying around.

**THE BOY** GOES TO THE BACK AND PULLS OUT SOME BULLETS FROM AMONG THE CANS. HE BEGINS TO LOAD THE GUN.

MAN: Please. Don't be angry. I'm sorry, but you can't blame me. When I saw the door, and you asleep - I decided to -

BOY: Make a hop for it. Forget it. It is I who should apologise. For my lack of vigilance. It is the sworn duty of every prisoner to escape and the single purpose of every captor to try and prevent them. Although, I guess your actions could be seen as an admission of guilt.

MAN: Surely if I had something to hide I would have admitted it by now.

BOY: Perhaps.

THE GUN IS LOADED. **THE BOY** WALKS TOWARDS **THE MAN**. HE STANDS NEXT TO HIM. BEAT. **THE BOY** MOVES OVER TOWARDS THE WINDOW.

BOY: Ah, look at that sunrise. Another joyous day approaches. (TO **MAN**) Come on, chin up. Things aren't as bad as all that.

MAN: I don't think I can take much more of this. I keep thinking I'll never see my wife and kids again.

BOY: Next you'll turn on the tears. My heart bleeds for you. It is you who should've been the actor.

MAN: How can you be so heartless ?

BOY: My heart was broken long ago, and then over time it was systematically ground into dust. There's nothing there now. Just a hole. A black hole with an ebony stone at its core - a solid rock inscribed with a name.

MAN: It wasn't my fault.

BOY: Now, silence in the court. Time for the judge to consider your sentence.

MAN: But you just said the jury hadn't reached a verdict.

BOY: Oh. Excuse me. They're just coming in now. (TO JURY) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury have you reached a verdict ? (TO **MAN**) They have. Fingers crossed. (TO JURY) And what is that verdict ? (TO **MAN**) Sorry. Guilty.

MAN: But how could it be ?

BOY: Search me. You'll have to ask them. If you get a chance. Now, time for the fun part. Deciding your punishment. What fate shall befall you ? To start

BOY: (CONT) with I could just slit your throat, or I could do it in such a way that it'd take days for you to bleed to death. Imagine that, sitting there hour after hour, getting weaker and weaker, watching your life slowly drip away. Then again I could simply put the gun against your skull and blow your brains out - messy but effective. Or if I'm feeling really energetic I could administer a very appropriate punishment. I could slice your hands off so that you could never slip behind the wheel again or better still, tie you in the middle of the road and run you over with the truck several hundred times. Then there's mutilation. I'm sure I could manage scooping out your eyeballs without too much trouble. I might even cut out your tongue for good measure. Be a bit tough "shining" through Question Time then, wouldn't it ? Another factor to consider of course, is what do I do with myself once it's over ? Once I've completed what I set out to complete. Satisfied my vengeance. I'll have no reason to exist anymore. My purpose for being will no longer be valid. Will I have to kill myself afterwards ? Maybe I could make this an annual event. Returning on a yearly basis to inflict new torment, after all with your record it's hardly probable you'll seek aid from your friends in the Police force. Or, lastly, do I simply just let you go. There's hope yet. So then , what's it to be ? Death, mutilation, annual torture or freedom ? I bet I know which one you're hoping me to choose.

MAN: How can you do this ? Toy with someone's life. You're not god.

BOY: No. I'm his Right Hand man. The Arch Angel Gabrielle. The bearer of divine justice. I am here to see his will is carried out.

MAN: This is God's will ?

BOY: I believe I'm playing my part. Now, no more stalling. Time to make our choice. (BEAT) Well, there's no choice really. Prepare for the bullet.

**THE BOY PUTS THE GUN TO THE MAN'S HEAD.**

MAN: You can't.

BOY: Why not ?

MAN: I haven't confessed.

BOY: It doesn't matter.

MAN: But there is still doubt.

BOY: Doubt does not exist.

MAN: Yes it does. Inside your head. Admit it. You're not sure are you ?

BOY: My brother is dead.

MAN: And now you who sought justice for so long are about to carry out the greatest injustice of all.

BOY: There is no injustice.

MAN: Don't you care anymore ? Doesn't it matter whether I'm guilty or not ?

BOY: There is no question of guilt.

MAN: How can you say that ? You haven't got one single shred of hard evidence.

BOY: Yes I have. The records at Party Headquarters.

MAN: But I've already proved to you they're wrong. Everything says I didn't do it. Why can't you open your eyes and see you've got the wrong man ?

BOY: (STARTING TO LOSE CONTROL) I haven't got the wrong man.

MAN: Yes you have. And deep down you know it.

BOY: The court found you guilty.

MAN: You found me guilty. Any real court would've thrown the case out. You could be about to kill an innocent man. Doesn't that matter at all ?

BOY: A loved one is dead. They must be avenged. An eye for eye and a life for a life. Someone must pay.

MAN: But then you're murdering an innocent. Then you're just as bad as the person who did this to you.

BOY: I don't care.

MAN: But you do. You say there's nothing left. You say you have no heart or soul. But that's not true. You're a living, breathing human being, with feelings and emotions just like the rest of us. You care intensely. That's why you can't go through with this. You can't do something that you know in your heart is wrong.

BOY: It is not wrong.

MAN: Yes it is. And you know it.

BOY: This is justice.

MAN: Is it ? Well go on then. If you're one hundred percent sure. If you have absolutely no doubts then pull the trigger.

**THE BOY HESITATES.**

MAN: Well, go on. What's wrong ? What are you waiting for ? Do it. Kill me !

**THE BOY MOVES AWAY. SUDDENLY HE BELLOWS IN FRUSTRATION.**

BOY: This is not how I planned it. You were meant to be on your knees, giving a full confession. You were meant to be praying for forgiveness.

MAN: I was meant to be guilty.

**THE BOY SINKS SLOWLY TO HIS KNEES. PAUSE.**

MAN: Listen, I can't understand what you've been through –

BOY: No you can't. You can never imagine what it was like out on that road. Trapped against that tree, hour after hour. Drifting in and out of consciousness. Bleeding, thirsty, hungry - longing to die. Ants crawling all over you, insects flying into your eyes, bugs squirming up your nose. Forced to watch your brother rotting in the sun only metres away. You could never understand what that was like.

MAN: The time I have spent with you has given me some insight.

BOY: Yeah ? (STANDING) Well it's time for a little bit more.

**THE BOY GOES TO THE MAN AND PUTS THE GUN AGAINST HIS HEAD.**

MAN: What are you doing ?

BOY: Time to die, Mr Minister.

MAN: But I didn't do it.

BOY: Yes you did. I know it was you. Deep down I can feel it. It's like I can almost see you closing that car door.

MAN: But you didn't see me.

BOY: I don't care. Every single part of me says you murdered my brother.

MAN: But I couldn't have. It wasn't me. I wasn't there.

**THE BOY LOWERS THE GUN.**

BOY: Alright then. I won't kill you. I'll let you go. Just admit that you did it. Admit that you're guilty and I'll set you free. I've seen the error of my ways. Another death won't solve anything. All I want now is peace of mind. To

BOY: (CONT) know that I was right. I won't even press charges. It'll be over. Finished. You'll never hear from me again. Just tell me it was you. Just say "I did it".

LONG PAUSE. **THE MAN** CONSIDERS.

MAN: If only I could ...

**THE BOY** SCREAMS IN RAGE.

BOY: Then admit it anyway. I don't care if you didn't do it. Just say that you did. Just admit your guilty. I just want to know that someone is responsible.

MAN: I can't.

BOY: Then I'm going to kill you anyway.

**THE BOY** TENSES HIS HAND. **THE MAN** LOOKS STRAIGHT AT HIM. **THE BOY** HOLDS THE GUN AT **THE MAN'S** HEAD TRYING TO PULL THE TRIGGER.

HIS HAND BEGINS TO SHAKE. HE TRIES TO HOLD IT STILL BUT HE CAN'T. WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH HE TRIES TO PULL THE TRIGGER BUT STILL ....

EVENTUALLY **THE BOY** LOWERS THE GUN. HE WANDERS AWAY FROM **THE MAN**. HE STANDS STARING OUT THE WINDOW.

BOY: I don't know what to do. My whole life I have existed for this one moment and now I don't know what to do.

MAN: The time has come to move on. A terrible wrong has been committed. An injustice has been done. You are the victim of a dreadful crime but now you must learn to forgive. You must absolve the man who hurt you. You must learn to live.

BOY: But I've failed him. I was his only hope and I failed him.

MAN: Don't blame yourself. You didn't do anything wrong. Your brother's dead and nothing you can do will ever bring him back. It's time to accept that. You're doing the best thing possible now. You're giving up. What else can you do ?

BOY: There is only one thing.

MAN: Then so be it.

BOY: A bullshitter to the end.

**THE BOY** WALKS TOWARDS **THE MAN**. **THE MAN** TENSES. **THE BOY** WALKS PAST HIM AND OUT THE DOOR. PAUSE.

THERE IS A GUNSHOT OFF FOLLOWED BY THE SOUND OF A BODY FALLING TO THE GROUND, THEN SILENCE.

IMMEDIATELY **THE MAN** IS OVERCOME WITH RELIEF. HE STARTS TO LAUGH, HYSTERICAL WITH JOY.

HE SINKS TO HIS KNEES, STILL LAUGHING.

THE LIGHTS FADE.

**Scene 8. Outro.**

SPOTLIGHT. **THE MAN** IS DRESSING IN FRONT OF A MIRROR. HE PULLS UP A TIE AND PUTS ON A COAT. HE COMBS HIS HAIR.

AS HE DOES SO HE SPEAKS DIRECTLY TO THE AUDIENCE.

MAN: The Conference had not gone well for me. Halfway back into town the traffic on the highway got worse so I turned off on to a gravel track. It was hot, I was angry and driving too fast. I came around a corner and saw something on the road in front of me. At first I thought it was some dumb animal, so I accelerated. Suddenly, I realised it wasn't. I hit the brakes ...

A VOICE OFF CALLS TO **THE MAN**:

VOICE: Mr Premier, we're ready for you now.

MAN: Coming.

**THE MAN** CHECKS HIS APPEARANCE IN THE MIRROR. HIS FACE BREAKS INTO A BROAD SMILE.

BLACKOUT.

END PLAY.