**Twelve Hours**

By Dave Carley

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Twelve Hours packs a lot of humanity into 90 minutes of gripping theatre... Eight beautifully written characters are vividly realized... This simply staged piece about a seemingly imminent death paradoxically brims with life. (Columbus Dispatch)

A powerful and engaging work... a moving theatrical experience. (Ohio Jewish News)

Twelve Hours is the story of Jimmy Stanton. Convicted of the rape and murder of a young woman, Jimmy is facing his last hours on Death Row. As Jimmy’s story unfolds, so do those of the people whose lives he has impacted - from the sister of the woman he killed, to the Governor who has just a few hours to decide if Jimmy’s execution should be commuted. *Twelve Hours* goes into the hearts and minds of ordinary people affected by a terrible crime, and the extraordinary and cruel punishment that results.

**Staging**

No set is needed. The time is now. The staging is naturalistic and the characters speak to the audience. The only exception to the naturalistic staging is Jimmy’s piece at the end.

**The Characters**

(In order of the time of their appearance in Jimmy’s last half day)

Lewis James – mid-40s - Prison warden – 7 pm

Barry – 35 - Lawyer – 11 pm

Augusta Dickson Hall – 70s - Demonstrator - Midnight

Krysta Jolic *(Yolich)* – 30 – Doctor – 1 am

Jennifer – 24 – Sister of deceased – 3 am

Rick – 30s – Executioner – 4 am

Vaila Stanton – 45 to 55 – Jimmy’s mother – 6 am

Phil Estevez – 40 – Governor – just before 7 am

Jimmy Stanton - 23 – just after 7 am

**A Note**

I’ve kept some things – most notably language and locale - non-specific, in an effort to keep things universal. Odds are, the prison is in the South but I haven’t written accents, nor have I mentioned a specific state. I do identify the race of Jimmy because, among its various biases, the death penalty is used disproportionately on African Americans.

**Play History**The first monologue, that of Lewis, was produced at Forward Theater, Madison, Wisconsin, in November, 2012, with the following artistic team: Michael Herold (Lewis), Annelise Dickinson (Director) and Jennifer Uphoff Gray (Artistic Director, Forward Theater). It subsequently toured the Madison area in early 2013.

*Twelve Hours* premiered at The Garden Theater, Columbus, Ohio on March 28, 2014. The co-production between Short North Stage and Wild Women Writing was directed by Katherine Burkman. The cast consisted of David Fawcett (Lewis); Stephen Woosley (Barry); Ellen Nickles (Augusta Dickson Hall); Emily Bach (Krysta Jolic); Nick Lingnofski (Rick); Chiquita Mullins Lee (Vaila Stanton); Glen Garcia (Phil Estevez); and Taylor Martin Moss (Jimmy Stanton). (The role of Jennifer was added after the premiere.) Barbara Singer was Assistant Director and Geoff McTurner was Lighting and Music Designer. Production Assistants were Rose McGrath and Allan Burkman.

**Acknowledgements**

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**Dedication**

For Kathy Burkman

**Twelve Hours**

By Dave Carley

**1. LEWIS JAMES**

**7 pm, the evening before.**

*Lewis is the prison warden. Forty-fifties. The setting is a small room on death row. The only furniture is a table and, on it, there are some burger shells and wrappings, a couple of shake containers, and a plate of uneaten greens. The room has a window; it can be suggested. The playing space and lighting should be as claustrophobic as possible.*

**LEWIS:**

*(LEWIS can sit, fuss with the cartons on the table, and pace. Once or twice he may look out the window, as if expecting to be able to see the demonstrators on the side of the highway.)*

I knew you couldn’t eat four burgers. Your mother said mind what I give you, your eyes are bigger than your belly. Keep that last carton. I want you to take it back to your cell.

Your mother knew you’d ask for crap. She made me promise I’d give you something healthy. What could I say? “Mrs. Stanton, it’s a little late for healthy.” She said you should have greens and make sure you got the pot liquor. You have no idea how much trouble that gave me and my wife.

You just can’t order in greens and pot liquor. You have to make it. But I promised, so making it fell to me. Or, to be exact, to the wife. But here’s the problem. Maureen’s from up north, they don’t do greens. And yeah, I grew up here but my family, well, greens wasn’t something we ate either.

We bought collards, kale, turnips. Our first go, we boiled it like your mother told us but it stunk up the house so bad Maureen threw it out in the backyard before we even tasted it. She said, “How can they eat this stuff; you can’t get past the smell!” Then I looked up how to cook greens on the internet and it said it’s *supposed* to smell, so we went back to the store, bought more collards and kale and, oh yeah, because of the internet I knew it was just the turnip tops you use, not the whole thing. Learning curve. This time it didn’t seem to smell so bad. So we ate some, it tasted good, then we mopped up all the pot liquor and - excuse me saying this while you’re digesting - we no sooner finished eating it than it cleaned us both out. I said to Maureen, “Seems like we just enjoyed that meal twice.”

Then I remembered your mother had said throw in some salt pork and we did that, so this try is even better. But apparently you’ve got no room after three Big Macs and two shakes.

You know your mother wanted to be outside, out there, with – them - but then she took ill last week and it wasn’t possible for her to come back. She’s gonna be OK. She’s got a lot of support.

Leave that last burger. You have to carry some food back to your cell, I’ll explain why, leave some, Jimmy, pay attention.

You’re not the first one to ask for Big Macs. I read someplace that John Wayne Gacy, he was a serial killer, he ordered shrimp, a pound of strawberries and bucket of KFC. Timothy McVeigh, the guy who blew up that building in Oklahoma City? Two pints of mint chocolate chip ice cream.

Troy Davis, over in Georgia, he said he didn’t want a last meal at all, he said whatever supper they served him *wouldn’*t be his last. He might’ve been thinking that he was going to get commuted. But I suspect he meant he’d be shortly sitting at a table with the Lord. I hope that’s what Davis was thinking because the President didn’t order a delay on his execution.

*(Goes over to window, looks out.)* You can’t see them from here. They’re out at the front gates, all along the highway. If the window opened you’d hear them all right. They’ve been chanting and singing hymns all weekend. Whites, blacks… there’s more clergymen out on that highway than you’ll ever find in heaven. A lot of TV. Wherever there’s misery there’s a TV reporter. Yeah, and there’s some other – types - across the road from them - they want their time on camera too.

I wish you could hear the hymns. Your mother said you weren’t one for church but I hope she’s getting some strength from seeing them on TV, singing.

Jimmy, I’ve gone over your case, frontwards, backwards, I’ve read every legal opinion. I like you, son, but I know you did what they said you did, maybe just not the way they said. I really doubt you were the ‘instigator’ because in my opinion you don’t have the smarts to be that... I think your lawyer could’ve worked that angle better. But I’m a warden, not a judge - I do as I’m told.

Mostly. But I’m getting to that.

In this state, if you’re convicted for murder you can get death, that means lethal injection. We had the electric chair when I started here, we called it Old Sparky. But it’s been injection for quite a while. So those idiots out there **y**elling for you to ‘fry’ are twenty years behind times.

Lethal injection’s more humane. So they say.

I want to tell you what’s going to happen tomorrow morning. Then I’m going to ask you to make a choice. Pay attention to me, Jimmy. Jimmy, for God’s sake, listen to me!

Tomorrow, just before 7, the chaplain will come to see you, pray with you. Then we take you to a special room. There’s windows in it but they’re one-way, you can’t see who’s on the other side. I’ll be there with you. You’ll lie down on something called a gurney, it’s like a table. We’ll clean your arm and a special nurse puts in two IV lines. Intravenous. Two, in case one fails. It hurts a little, no worse than a needle. Then what happens is we inject you with three drugs, in order, one two three. The first makes you unconscious. Believe me, you want that. The next paralyses you. And the third one stops your heart. It goes in that order. Unconscious, paralyzed, heart stops. One two three.

Oh, before the nurse starts the injection, we pull back the curtains on the windows so the witnesses can see everything. We have to have witnesses; it’s the law. I don’t know why any normal person would want to watch another person die, but that’s me. And actually, the last governor allowed so many executions, we’re running out of volunteers. I wanted to ask the new governor if he’d come and watch. If he won’t commute, he should watch.

You can say some last words. I know you’re not really – eloquent – but if you could say something like ‘I love you Ma’ or ‘I’m going to be with Jesus now’… I’ll write it down and give it to your Mother. Think about it. Then I give the signal and the injections start, you’ll go unconscious, you’ll be in heaven in seven minutes.

Jimmy, put the burger down and mind me. That first injection, the one that’s supposed to make you unconscious? Some people don’t think it works. They think maybe you’ll still feel everything that follows. We’re human, the nurse could make a mistake, he might not give enough drugs, how do we actually know what’s not enough? The guy who invented the process we use in this state, name of Jay Chapman, he saidit didn’t occur to him there’d be complete idiots administering the drugs. Well, I’m not an idiot and neither’s the nurse but we’re not experts either. We’re going to have a doctor there too, you know her, Doctor Jolic*,* she’s coming later to see you, but even she can’t be sure this is - Do you understand what I’m saying? It might look like you’re having a painless death but maybe you aren’t. You’ll be trapped, you won’t be able to see or shout but you’ll FEEL, Jimmy, you get what I’m saying? You’ll *feel*.

That’s tomorrow. Tonight, soon as we’re done talking, you go back to your cell and wait. The governor may still commute your sentence. It happened sometimes with the old governor. But Jimmy: I don’t think Governor Estevez is going to do it. It’s less than a year to elections and if he backs down he’s going to look like a weakling.

But do you understand me: in the next few hours, he could call, and you’ll be saved. Or he doesn’t call, you’re on the table and, like I say, it could go bad.

*(Pause.)* I’m giving you another option.

*(Produces a pill.)* This is what they call a suicide pill. No one knows I have it except my wife. No one knows I’m giving it to you except her. We talked this over the whole time we were making the greens, all three times.

This will kill your brain in a few minutes. It’ll happen fast. Once your brain is dead, the rest of you will shut down before an hour’s up, you won’t feel anything. You can take it tonight, when you’re back in your cell. I don’t have you on watch, the guards are only looking in on you every now and then, no one will ever guess you have a pill like this. No one’ll ever be able to prove it was me who gave it to you. You’ve had so many visitors, and I’ve been letting them see you without supervision on purpose; I’m going to get shit-on for not observing protocols but that’ll pass.

*(Puts pill in one of the shells.)* If you decide *not* to take it, leave it in the carton, someone will throw it out with the pill in it and that’s that.

You’re a good boy, God will tell you what to do. If he says take this, put it in your mouth and chew it, you have to chew it first, bite on it real hard, then swallow. You take it Jimmy and know, know that we’re thinking of you. Your mother and me and my wife and a million people outside these walls, we’ll all remember you.

*(Leaving.)* I’m going to get the guard now. Take the carton with you. *(Stops.)* God bless you, son. God bless us all.

**2. BARRY
11 pm, the night before**

*Barry is in his early 30s, alone and drunk in a bar. He’s not quite falling-off-the-stool drunk yet, but he’s on his way.*

**BARRY:**

Leave it on leave it on leave it on. I want to watch the news. Just the first part. Hit me will
you. One more. And leave it on - I want to see if the governor’s commuting. It’ll be top of the hour, then you can switch to – yeah, Jimmy, Jimmy Stanton, you know, you know, the guy the shitstorm’s about. They’re offing him tomorrow morning, what planet have you been on? Dude, CNN’s in town, Fox is in town, British fucking BBC is here… Why do I care? WHY DO I CARE? Why do I care? I was his fucking lawyer! Yeah, now you recognize me. Jimmy Stanton’s legal wizard, up close and personal.

Listen, if I was in private practice, I mean a real firm, not taking public defender shit, I’d be making a 100 thou more than I am right now. Minimum. You wanna know what they pay public defenders in this state? I won’t tell you, I’m embarrassed, it’d make you cry. Fifty thousand. I’m still paying off my student loans! You want to know what I drive? I’m not telling it’s so pathetic. Toy-fucking-ota. Corolla. Used.

*(Makes ‘Loser’ sign on his forehead.)*

I almost was a real lawyer. Downtown firm, partner-track, then they gave me a file, shoplifting case, rich bitch, hot. Rich, hot, cuckoo. I didn’t know the cuckoo part. Cuckoo hot rich bitch walks into Tarjhay, tries walking out with a cart full of underwear… I got her off, you don’t need to know how, I was good, I used to *win* cases then and um, what do I do after I get her off? I sleep with her. Grateful client sex. That’s a no-no. No no no no. Cuz it turns out Cuckoo lady’s not so cuckoo, she sues the firm, I get turfed and blah blah blah one thing leads to another, and here I am: drinking in a shitty bar, no offense, it’s a nice bar, hit me, pal.

Four years ago only place I can get hired is public defender. And I wasn’t so – *(indicates drinking)* – not so bad, then, they were still hopeful I could get through a trial without going splat, so they gave me Jimmy’s case. Jimmy coulda been a way – back for me… His case coulda, lotsa potential, enough holes in the indictment, you coulda driven a Sherman tank through the holes in the indictment. Coulda coulda coulda.

But it’s a murder case man! You know how much pressure that is? Three black guys rape and kill a white girl and my client’s accused of being ringleader. They want a white defence lawyer, so they can deracialize it, that’s what they told me but what they didn’t say, what they wanted was a white drunk shit lawyer so he can lose the fucking case same time as he’s deracializing it.

Cuz the fix was in. The other two accused said Jimmy was the ringleader. They were like frick and frack, a fucking duet, word for word always, it was like they were the fucking Pips. Everything in sync. *Their* lawyer coached them to perfection. They said it was Jimmy who knew where the girl’d be, knew when she got off work. Tracked her. Was first in. Was the one who started hitting her. And there was DNA, and a parking lot camera’s got them on tape and it sure looks like Jimmy’s showing them where the car is and -

Jimmy had confessed but I got that thrown out because it wasn’t obtained correctly… Cops lied to Jimmy about what would happen to his mother if he didn’t cooperate. And that boy is some loyal to his ma, he spilled the beans right away, he was actually trying to make stuff up about himself he was so scared they’d hurt her… But they didn’t need the confession, they had enough.

You know that sound packing tape makes – zzzzippp? That’s what the courtroom sounded like when the prosecution was finishing. Zzzzipppp. Jimmy in a box. Tape the bastard shut. Tight. Zzzzip.

They had the wrong guy. Oh, he was there, Jimmy was on the scene, no mistake about that, he went along with it but there is no way in hell Jimmy had – I’m gonna throw some law at you – no way he had the mens rea. Not with the cards he’s been dealt. So the other two guys, the smart ones, the ones that sang together, they got what, life but parole, and it’s Jimmy who’s gonna *(Indicates TV.)* well, we’ll see, won’t we.

Something I was banking on: juries don’t like to convict when they think there’s a death penalty. I’m not making that up, it’s a statistic. They’re way way *less likely* to convict. That’s what I never understood about people wanting the death penalty – it’s like they’re saying, ‘OK, now we get to execute *some* fuckers, but at least 50% more of the fuckers on trial are also going to go free.’ It’s human nature. Juries don’t wanna send people off to be killed. It’s kinda final, you know. And God knows, mistakes have been made.

And oh yeah – here’s another legal term for you. ‘Death-certified’. Know what that means? It means the prosecution made sure when we were choosing the jury that nobody on it would have qualms about the death penalty. They got their ways of asking. I’d never done a murder case, no one told me what to ask. They didn’t look like death-certifiers to me, fuck.

Leave it on. Please. The news is in a minute. If it’s not the first thing, if we don’t see the governor top of the hour, it isn’t happening.

I should’ve called Jimmy to the stand, and I didn’t. I was worried that the D.A. in the cross examination would say, “So Jimmy did you kill her?” and Jimmy’d just say “Yes sir” and that’d be all she wrote. But I should’ve got Jimmy up on the stand, I could’ve got him so confused he wouldn’t know if he was coming or going, and there wouldn’t’ve been anyone on the jury that could’ve believed he had anything to do with planning. Shoulda woulda coulda welcome to my life.

And – and I could’ve done more about his character. But you know how that works, for every person you find who swears he was a good boy someone else’ll say the opposite. Get this, I had this lady – get this – Augusta-Dickson-Hall. Triple name society lady. You’ve heard of her. So ‘Augusta Dickson Hall’ leaves a message on my machine, says she wants to be a character witness for Jimmy. I’m thinking, ‘Right lady, sure, you know Jimmy Stanton.’ But I’m going to call her back, there’s something about her voice, and I’m desperate at this point, I’m just about to call her and then her son phones me. Says I’m not to call her. That his mother doesn’t know Jimmy, she’s a cuckoo. Another rich cuckoo lady. But you get my point. Character witnesses cut both ways and, anyway, by this point in the trial, things had gone south, way way south…so I didn’t call her.

Jimmy never appealed. Everyone appeals everything. It’s an industry. But Jimmy didn’t.

OK, here’s the news. No, don’t need for sound – if the Governor’s on then – what the -

*(Pause.)* I don’t fucking believe it! A deer ran into a car wash! That’s the fucking lead? A deer running into a car wash?Put the game back on. I’m outa here.

*(BARRY picks up his car keys and leaves the bar.)*

**3. AUGUSTA DICKSON HALL**

**Midnight**

*Augusta Dickson Hall is 70 and change. She is at the highway vigil, holding a candle or a picture of JIMMY.*

**AUGUSTA:**

Our city is dichotomized. The division – it’s not something you see unless you choose to look. My father made us. Look. His mill was in the north-end, he made a point of taking us to see the facts behind our privilege. To get there, we had to drive through the other part of town.

Of course, that was then, this is now, that part of town is a lot different than it was, less of a community, more of a problem. If you ask me, it’s because they slammed that expressway through the heart of it. But I’m not here to lecture about urban planning.

I know Jimmy Stanton. That always surprises people. I know him, knew him, quite well. About a decade ago, I was part of a group of volunteers, we went into schools in the north-end. We were “The Help”. Trimmed in pearls and good intentions.

Jimmy was in seventh grade, and starting to cause trouble. I don’t know how on earth he got all the way to Grade 7, he couldn’t read much more than his name. They just wanted to pass him out of that place as fast as they could. Expectations - zero. They wanted a babysitter. He liked music, the school had gleaned that much about him in seven years. I was on the Board of the Symphony. So they matched us up. They plunked me in a room, gave me a CD player, and ushered Jimmy in… He was already a big fellow but I had no fear, I liked him from the start, he reminded me of my Donny in the oddest way.

My parents raised me to believe that the Arts – especially music – bring out the best in our natures. My mother’s side are Dicksons and you’ll see our name chiseled on every museum and concert space in town. Anyway, I thought a little music would be a good place to start…

I sat Jimmy down and played him Beethoven. If you can you believe it. I thought – the 7th symphony, 2nd movement, you know, *(Sings a bit – the duh duh duh duhh-duhh part.)* who can resist? One of the most powerful pieces of music ever written. We once hired a conductor for the Symphony – a German, he’d headed one of their best orchestras. At the Meet and Greet I suggested he program the 7th – and he actually rolled his eyes. You don’t roll your eyes at Augusta Dickson Hall. Not when you’re conducting in the hall her parents built. Not when she’s on your Board. Herr Conductor was back in Berlin - before you could say ‘schnitzel’.

But he and Jimmy had something in common. They both hated Beethoven. Jimmy said it hurt his ears. OK, I thought, when in the north-end… “What do you like, Jimmy?”

He said, “Fiddy Cent.”

Fiddy Cent. OK. Not sure what those words were. “Fiddy Cent?”

“Fiddy Cent!”

This went on for a bit – Fiddy Cent Fiddy cent. Until he started pointing at my purse and I thought, ‘Lord love a duck, first day as a volunteer, I’m getting mugged.’ And then I thought, ‘He’s nearly two hundred pounds and I’m not.’ So I opened my change purse and he pulled out two quarters and laid them down and pointed.

“Fiddy Cent!”

You laugh but this was all Greek to me. I said, fine, next session, we’ll listen to some Fiddy Cent. Made a quick call to my son. Turned out, Donny liked this Fiddy Cent too. Jimmy was 13 at the time, my Donny 30. Which says something about the respective development of the two boys. Donny gave me his Fiddy Cent CD and I brought it in the next week and played it. And you know what? MY ears hurt.

So music therapy was a bust. But I was also raised to believe in the value of conversation. Underneath all the layers of whatever life lays upon us, there are universalities. Of course, some people’s universals trump others. Especially if you own half the city. But you know something? Jimmy and I *could* talk, and we *did*. Mostly he recounted the plots of TV shows, but that was enough, just having to describe something, to get to the point of it… Most people can’t do that, you know. Sometimes he’d tell me about his mother. He sure loved her. I used to get a little twinge at that because I’m not completely sure my Donny would speak the same about me…

When Jimmy turned 14, that’s the age you can leave school in this state, how’s that for great expectations, 14, at 14 Jimmy vanished out of that school. I continued volunteering for another year, then I got busy on a couple of Boards and had to stop.

I clearly remember that day four years ago. I opened the paper – the rape and murder of that poor girl had been front page, and the arrests. There were pictures of the three young men splashed all over it and lordy, one of them was Jimmy. I can’t tell you how I felt, how - angry. I began following the trial, everyone in the city was, it became pretty clear Jimmy’s lawyer was incompetent.

I decided to be a character witness. I phoned the lawyer’s office and left my name… But that night, when I told Donny what I’d done, he was horrified. Horrified. In any event, the fool lawyer never phoned back.

This is my first demonstration. I prefer acting behind the scenes. When the new governor cut the state grant to the Symphony two years ago, here’s how it went: Donny and the Governor had palled around at college. Donny called and reminded him that I threw a garden party for him when he was running in his first primary. That I was rather fond of the Symphony. “Oops,” said Governor Estevez, and restored all the Symphony’s funding and even gave a special grant to the Dickson Museum of Arts.

So I asked Donny to talk to the Governor about Jimmy. About clemency. Donny said no. Not going to happen. Shaking Estevez down for the Symphony’s one thing, but a young man who raped and killed a white girl? He wasn’t lobbying his old fraternity pal about *that*. So here I am. At the side of a highway, thinking this may be the first time that Augusta Dickson Hall doesn’t get her way. I don’t like the feeling.

We’re still hoping the Governor will grant clemency, but time’s running out. He’s got all of seven hours. I don’t like it. He’s a pragmatic man. He can count votes just as well as the next politician. An election’s coming.

When this is over, I’m going to go and see Jimmy’s mother. I’ve never actually *walked* in that part of town. When I volunteered at Jimmy’s school, I’m embarrassed to say I drove there with windows up, doors locked. They had a special compound for the volunteers to park, there was a fence around our cars.

When I visit Jimmy’s mother, I’m going to make a point of parking at the far end of the street and walking, maybe that’s a silly dare to myself and I certainly won’t tell Donny where I’m going… but I believe, in my heart, that as a person of goodwill, with an open mind, with an abiding belief in the – decency – of those around her… I will be safe.

What on earth Jimmy’s mother and I will talk about, I haven’t a clue. But we *will* talk.

And *then* we’ll set about changing things

**4. KRYSTA JOLIC**

**Just after 1 a.m. the morning of.**

*Dr. KRYSTA Jolic (Yo-lich) is an anesthesiologist. She is standing outside JIMMY’s cell. She is holding a burger carton.*

**KRYSTA:**

I knew he was up to something. He kept opening this, closing it, the whole time I was in there talking with him. At first I thought he was checking to see if there was any burger left – but it was the way he kept looking – shifty. Like a kid hiding something. I said, ‘What are you looking at?’ He said ‘nothing’. Then he asked me what hurt more: to kill yourself, or have someone else do it. I knew right away. I just knew. I told him to give me the carton. I knew what I was going to find.

 *(KRYSTA reaches in and holds out the pill.)*

And now something horrible has become horribly complicated.

*(Closes carton, composes self.)* I didn’t know what to wear. Rick said dressing neatly was his way of showing respect. I hope this is good enough. If I wasn’t – going to be working – I’d have chosen the dress I wore the night I officially became a doctor. At the dinner my parents threw for me…

They were some proud that night. *Are* proud. They sure won’t be in a few hours. They’re the - classic Serbian-American success story, classic. Three daughters. Me, the oldest: anesthesiologist. Parents, right over the moon. My next sister, Anna, two years younger, a GP. Parents crazy with pride, every sacrifice justified. And then, my youngest sister, the one born here? Chelsea is lead guitarist for the Frozen Vaginas. Parents: *(Mimes parents stabbing themselves or horror-struck.)*

I’m resident at Grace. It’s where the state pen’s prisoners go for their treatment. Grace has a secure ward. It’s necessary. We get a lot of inmates. They get sick, drug overdoses, or wounded, knife wounds, a lot of them are just old with old people’s problems…

Grace is where I met Jimmy Stanton. He came in for dental work, his wisdom teeth were impacted, they had to come out, all four at once and I was putting him under. Nothing remarkable about that except what the staff was saying in the lounge before. ‘We’ve got budget cuts. Why are we doing major dental on him? He’s not exactly in a long-range situation.’

Except he could have been. There are guys in here who’ve been on death row for years. No reason for us to assume Jimmy would be any different. At the time of surgery we didn’t know he wasn’t appealing his sentence.

They rolled Jimmy in to me and, this is important for you to understand: I’m not one of those stupid people who get all stupid about prisoners, all ‘huggy-let-me-save-him I can see his inner light’, I’m not stupid that way. Except that I did. See something. In Jimmy. We talked a bit. He was nervous about how much removing the teeth would hurt and I made sure he knew he wouldn’t feel a thing, not till afterwards and then he’d have painkillers… Don’t look at me like I’m a fool.

Everything went well, the dental work, but afterwards, later, I heard he wasn’t appealing and his execution date began looming, the media uproar started, there was a Facebook group, a national prayer chain, then that big demonstration downtown at the state capital. Which I attended. And afterwards, signed up, gave money. Took all the literature on his case. Began reading up. Researching. Getting – obsessed. And walked right into the trap.

I signed up for clinic duty – the hospital sends us here, for minor work, we can do locals, I signed up for that. Coming here was an education. Going inside. I grew up sheltered. My parents spent their lives sheltering me and my sisters. The closest we got to the real world was being driven between tutors. Inside – that was an education.

Then one day the Warden, Lewis James, came to the clinic. To thank us. For doing our job. I met him. I told him I had treated Jimmy. He kind of got, I don’t know, guarded. Like Dad does when you ask him what life was like in Serbia, before immigrating, what he did in the army, he gets all stiff and careful. I asked if Jimmy was OK, how his spirits were. Lewis said pretty good, all things considered. Then – after a long pause - he asked me if I wanted to meet him.

That was step two of the trap. I met Jimmy the first time that day, in a non-patient context. Seven times since, counting just a minute ago. And he is just like I thought that first time I met him, at Grace. There’s a sweetness to him, a decency. I know what he did, I’m no bleeding heart, I’m not for a moment excusing him, I’m not forgetting there’s a young woman dead! But there’s a decency in him. At one rally they got his mother up to speak and, it was tough for her, but in about two minutes I understood where Jimmy got it from. I don’t know how he could have done what he did, except – he’s a boy. Mentally, a boy.

A boy on death row.

Next Lewis asked if I would meet with Rick. Rick is the one, the nurse who – carries out – the, the sentence. The one who is – administering the sedation to Jimmy. Lewis said he needed a doctor to oversee. I should have run for the hills but Lewis said, “I’m thinking of Jimmy. What is going to be done must be done right.” It was like a finger was pointing down from the sky. I did not want this. But I did want to meet with Rick. To know how he could do it. There is logic to this, bear with me.

The Warden sent Rick a message. A few days later Rick phoned me, we set up a – a meeting this past Monday. He didn’t want it anyplace near where he lived or worked, I knew a coffee shop on the west side…

That is so strange. He walks in to the restaurant, he’s so - All-American - I watched him come to the table and all I could think was, ‘*He’s* going to do this? He looks like he was just out tossing a football.’ He was nervous.

So to put him at ease, I’m asked him stuff like where did he work out and he started relaxing, and told me about a car he’s restoring. It’s so – bizarre. No one knows what Rick does here – or that he even works anyplace but the psych hospital. His own wife doesn’t know. He – I don’t know how he can do it – but he’s really, really, really normal. He’s also the one who finds Jimmy’s veins and hooks up the lines and sets the first drug and then the second and the – OK, OK, this is a guy, yes he’s a nurse, but he works from a manual, he has a MANUAL, this is the guy who the State uses, and yeah, I am sure he is smart but he’s consulting a book. And he did NOT want to talk about that. It’s just insane.

Lewis had laid the perfect trap. I took ten years to become what I am and there is no way that Rick can be as good as I am at it. You see where this is leading. Lewis wants me to *help*.

I’ve taken the Hippocratic Oath. The state Anesthesiologists Association specifically forbids us to be involved in anything to do with the death penalty. On the other hand, state law requires that the death penalty be administered in the presence of a *physician*. Apparently just not an anesthesiologist. Even though we’re the most logical. The Association’s position is: this is not a medical task. But if hooking a guy up and injecting him isn’t medical, what is?

I could lose my license in this state. But don’t I have some kind of duty to be there to make sure it’s painless rather than some kind of butchery? How can it be unethical to make sure Jimmy doesn’t suffer? I’m not deciding he should *die*, I’m just making sure we’re not treating him like a, like a, like a dog we have to put down. You want some stats? In the three-step process this state uses, at least 3% of executions are botched. The guys *feel* the drug that’s supposed to stop their heart. They spend their last minutes in agony. 3%. Probably it’s way more than that. How could we know? No one lives to tell. And look what just happened last year in Ohio. That guy was in agony for fifteen minutes.

*(Looks at pill.)*

When I met with Jimmy, last week, he asked me if I would be there, this morning. Jimmy asked me to be there. He was asking me for my help. Giving me his trust. Try saying no to that.

Do I supervise? Do I do more? Do I give this back?

*(Shakes head.)* It broke my heart to take this from him, it’s his last bit of power. His ticket out. But I can’t, not while there’s a chance, there’s still six hours...

 *(KRYSTA puts the carton down, keeping out the pill. She puts the pill in her pocket. She looks in the door where JIMMY would be, then turns and starts walking away.)*

**5. JENNIFER**

**3 a.m., the morning of.**

*Time: Right after the CNN interview. Jennifer is the victim’s twin sister. She’s neatly dressed, very presentable. She holds a framed picture of her sister.*

**JENNIFER:**

Then he puts on that big sympathy look and sticks me in the gut. “Tell us your story, how do you feel, will this be ‘closure’ for you?” But what he really wants is me to get all vindictive. Give him some great TV.

First of all, there’s no such thing as ‘closure’. That’s like a swear word to me. Anyway, you think I’m dumb enough to walk into that trap? ‘Oh yeah, Mr. New York Media, fry Jimmy Stanton and I’ll sleep better at night.’ As if.

I don’t want closure, I want revenge. Does that make me a monster? No, it makes me human.

Do I like standing with these people, with them yelling for Jimmy to burn in hell? Most of them don’t give a flying you-know about my sister, they’re here to get on camera, or vent because their lives are pathetic or they’re racist… whatever. I do-not- like standing here. But I’m not standing on that side of the road either. The people over there are scared of me. Of my anger. Of the truth of it. They’ve got the cops keeping us apart. Them – and the truth.

They so busy taking their pictures for Facebook, singing their hymns for God, doing their witnessing for Stanton – they should witness *my* pain.

There are *some* on this side who’re like me. People who’ve had horrible things done to them, to their families. We’re scared. Scared we live in a state where you can kill someone, then spend a million dollars hiring lawyers to prove that you shouldn’t get off because of some legal error. And – in the meantime – force families to relive their pain, month after month, year after year, it’s torture, it’s absolute torture, I have had nearly four years of my skin being pulled back and scraped raw – and that’s without appeals. Four years. Try four years of that, Mr. New York.

Melanie was my twin. She was barely 20. A year older than Jimmy. Mel and I were living at home, spending the year saving up because we were going to move, we were saving to move west, there isn’t a lot of work here, not work we’re interested in, tech, we’re both geeks, *were* geeks, so we were both living at home and working extra jobs…

The manager of the restaurant asked me to stop mentioning its name on TV. My sister gets raped and killed and he’s worried about burger sales. It was a McDonalds, OK. And that’s a completely irrelevant detail except for two things: That’s where Mel worked nights. And they had a security camera in the parking lot. It couldn’t save her but it caught him.

It caught Jimmy leading the other two over to her car. It caught the other two taking her by the arm, shoving her in the car, driving off. If you weren’t watching carefully you *might* have thought it was four friends. Except it was three on one, and two kinds of people that around here don’t go for burgers together.

That night, when the time came for Anita to come home passed, we waited another half hour, then we called her cell and it didn’t pick up. Then the restaurant, they said she’d left, so we called the police right away. We were that fast because it was so out of character for Melanie not to come straight home. And the manager – I have to give him credit - he was just as quick too, he pulled the security tapes, he knew which camera because of where she parked, he saw what he saw, phoned the cops right away. But Jimmy and the other two were faster. And by the time the cops found them it was too late for my sister.

The trials were fast too. Three guilty verdicts – two of them for life and for Stanton, the ringleader, death.

The only good thing I’ll say about Jimmy Stanton is that he has never appealed. I don’t know why, he had the option. Maybe he’s got a conscience. He’s taking it the way he should. We had to give impact statements at sentencing, that was an ordeal, but we haven’t had to relive this thing again and again and again, not in court anyway. There’s a woman here tonight – over there – that one, that picture she’s holding is her daughter. She was murdered by a guy who’s in there on death row, a boyfriend thing, so far he’s made three appeals that’ve taken six years. How many millions of dollars has that cost us? How many tears has it cost her?

Until you’re standing on my side of the highway – and I wouldn’t wish this on anyone - you will not understand what this pain is. You stand over there being famous in your shirt that stays pressed in this humidity and your shiny shoes that cost the same as what Melanie made in an entire week at that job that killed her. First you make your little sneering joke about where can you get a good cup of coffee around here, what, you thought joking about coffee would make me what – open up? Cuz then you asked me about closure.

You asked me what I think the death penalty does to society. To the people who have to carry it out. How about asking what murder does to society? To the people who have to carry on? *(Holds up picture of Anita.)*

Death is the end. My sister is dead, a big part of me died with her. The only way to square this circle is for Jimmy to die. Is that an eye for an eye? Totally. Is that Biblical, like some people here are saying? I don’t know, I don’t have a relationship with God anymore.

I won’t rest till he’s dead. And you know what else. I won’t rest after, either. *(Scoffing sound.)* ‘Closure’. How stupid, how heartless do you think I am?

**6. RICK
4 a.m.**

*Rick is a psychiatric nurse. He is wearing a T Shirt, neat pants, good shoes. Well-groomed, fit, clean-cut. He is ironing a white surgical coat. It’s a precise, obsessive exercise that continues through his speech.*

**RICK:**

I get word she wants to talk to me. The warden gave me her number. Up to me if I want to call. I don’t for a couple of days, don’t want to call, I try to hold off. But I keep her number in my locker at work. When you don’t toss a number right away, you know you’re - you’re going to call. Like you’re starting an affair.

I call from a payphone, yeah, totally paranoid. She asks where would be convenient to meet. Says she understands how – discreet – it has to be. The Psych Hospital where I work is on the east side, I live in Beaufort, that’s further east, I didn’t want to risk anyone seeing me... We agree on the west side, close to where she works. She knows a coffee shop in a strip mall, says we can get a table at the back.

I go out there right after work. Tell Jen I’m going to the gym. Tell my workout buddy I have to go home to Jen. Tell myself: this is just a meeting.

OK, this is the part I’m not expecting. But damn, she’s hot. She’s sitting at the back watching the door and when I walk in she kind of waves. Graceful. Like she’s petting something. Me, I start wishing. Back up. Jen and I got married as soon as I graduated from nursing and got hired on at the Psych. I dated other women – before Jen – but I never had the chance to, well, certainly not, not a hot lady doctor, I didn’t even know it was a fantasy until I see her waving at me.

So I’m walking over to her thinking how hot she is, and of course what she wants to talk about is the polar opposite of hot. What I’m saying is: I’m actually getting kind of sweaty, if you must know, ‘sweaty’ in the guy sense. Krysta’s slim, which I like, long hair, which I like, everything about her I like, she’s like a checklist of it. I keep hoping she’ll have to stand up for some reason so I can, OK I realize I’m sounding like a dog and I’m so not a dog, well I am a bit but not as much as I sound, I’m just telling this to show that this thing fucks you up. I mean, what she and I are about to do three hours from now.

I sit down, someone comes over, I order coffee, I barely notice the waiter or ordering and right away bang I start talking about Jen and my kids. Just like that. Spew. The man with the guilty thoughts, trying to save himself by talking about his wife. Who is at home thinking I’m at the gym. And Krysta is interested, wants to know what grades the boys are in, where Jen teaches… And, then: does Jen know I’m coming to meet her and does Jen know anything about what I do.

The answers being ‘no’ and ‘no’. As in ‘no-and-never’.

She says, “Oh.” Like this. “Oh.”

She tells me about her family, her sisters, one’s a doctor like her, one’s in a band, and she says she’s close to them, really close to her parents and how this, what we are about to do, it’s going to cause them – distress. Apparently she could lose her state licence. She tells me about her work at Grace, and her commitment to working up at the prison, I respect that, I mean, I work at the Psych hospital, I respect anyone who takes the tougher path…

She wants to talk about him. Uh uh. We’re not going there. What I say is, “The less I know the better.”

She says, “Oh,” again. As in, “Man up. If you’re going to do that to someone you should know who you’re doing it to.”

We all have our ways. Of coping. Here’s my way: I don’t ever learn about the guys. Even when not-knowing is impossible. This case was front page when he was at trial and now – out at the prison – the protests – that’s on the news, you can’t miss it. They were talking about it in the lunchroom today and I had to make an excuse to leave.

I say, “You’re the doctor, if you want to discuss things, procedure, whatever, or or take over some of the tasking, okay. I’m good at finding veins but if you want to - But stuff about him, background stuff, who he is, personal stuff, no. No.”

For the first time neither of us is talking. She’s kind of pulling on her hair. And my disgusting brain, you gotta know where it’s going. I mean, Jesus, she’s coming with me, into the chamber, she’s assisting me or maybe I’m assisting her, whatever, whatever, and now I’m imagining her hair over a pillow.

So of course I immediately haul out the pictures in my wallet, the boys, and my “project”. I’m restoring a car with my brother, a ‘72 Chrysler New Yorker. A barge. It’s so big I always say if I ever lose my job my whole family can live in the front and sublet the back seat… I start talking about a problem we’re having with the transmission and she gets this look and *(Ironic:)* I’m thinking, “Wow Rick, you really know how to turn on a hot doctor.”

But then she says, “You look like you work out.” Wham, I’m immediately, you know, again, back in age 19-land. I say, “Thanks, yes. I’m a psychiatric nurse, some size doesn’t hurt and I’ve just kept it up. I began because in high school I wanted to do mixed martial arts. But actually I don’t have a great capacity for pain.”

Says the guy who’s gonna open up another man’s veins… Another “Oh” moment.

I say, “Look. I’m glad you’re involved. The old doctor, the prison doctor, he was an alcoholic shit, he didn’t know dick all. I asked him stuff, procedure, but he was afraid to say do this or do that, he pretty much left me on my own. He just sat there and I did everything. I know veins, I’ve memorized the protocol, you do things in order, one two three, it’s not rocket science, restoring a car is a lot harder.”

Fuuuck, I just compared offing a guy to restoring a Chrysler.

I say, “Here’s the drill, Krysta. Either you or I hook him up. If you want to, that’s fine, you’re the doctor, but I’ve done it before. Then I go behind the screen. If you want to pull the lever you can come back with me too, otherwise you stay out with the – patient.” I say ‘patient’ – it makes her happy I say ‘patient’. “You stay out with the ‘patient’ and the warden.”

“Once I’m behind the screen, the warden pulls back the curtain from the window so the witnesses in the next room can watch. And then I start the first drug.”

“No one wears a hood. No one wears a mask. No one knows I am doing it or where I am standing, other than you, the Warden and, oh, the Chaplain, he might be there. We go through the three stages, seven minutes maybe, then it’s over. Warden closes curtain, I leave.”

That’s when she asks what I really don’t want her to ask. “But why you?” And you answer that question – how?

Because the Warden knew my boss, who asked me? Because it has to be done and someone has to do it? Because I can put my brain on mute?

Oh, I know it affects me. I have trouble sleeping the night before. If I sleep. And then, during… I feel this – when I do it, start the first injection – this – rush – not a good one, not a good rush – but a rush. Then a flattening. Flat. I don’t like the feeling. I go out, drive around. Go home. Sleep. I feel – disconnected – not attached – to anything for a while, not Jen, not the boys, not my brother, not the car. Last time, I disconnected, three weeks. Then, that, starts to go away. I’ve done six, it’s been the same every time.

I say, “It has to be done. You know that too. The law says it has to be done and it has to be done right. Humanely. That’s why you’re coming in with me.” And she’s nodding. She gets me, I get her. I like her a lot right now. I maybe even love her right now. “We’ll do it right. You can supervise me every step. You don’t have to do anything more than watch. I wear a white jacket. Nice pants. I polish my shoes, night before. Iron the jacket the night before. He deserves that respect. It’s all I can give him, it’s all I can give - in the ten, fifteen minutes I’m in there with him. Respect. Don’t wear scrubs. Dress nice for Jimmy.”

First time I ever said one of their names aloud.

And then I stand up, we shake hands, I pay the bill at the cash, we walk out to our cars and then we stop and shake hands again and I say, “See you Friday,” and as I walk away I think how totally completely fucked that must sound, “See you Friday”, like we’re going on a date. Which quite frankly I wish to Christ we were.

OK, this is ready.

 *(Puts on white jacket. Black.)*

**7. VAILA STANTON**

**Nearly 6 a.m., the morning of.**

*Vaila is Jimmy’s Mother. She sits by a phone, or holding one.*

**VAILA:**

I told them ‘no phoning’. No one. No phoning. The door’s open, they want to come sit with me, they can. But no phoning. I shouldn’t even be here, I should be upstate, up there with him, but last week I collapsed, they took me away in an ambulance. Fastest way to get back to town. For sure the fastest way to get the hospital to look at me. Turns out, I got everything wrong: probably congestive heart, pre-diabetes, high blood pressure. Having your boy up there doesn’t make you healthy.

Half the street is up on that highway. My sister phoned last night before I said no more phoning. She said there were thousands, singing, praying, candles. I saw some of it on TV but then that girl, the sister of the girl Jimmy killed, she came on, talking to that reporter. I don’t ever need to see her again, so I turned the TV off fast. Not before I saw the signs people were holding behind her.

My sister said, “Don’t worry, we got them outnumbered hundred to one, just pray Someone’s counting.”

My sister and her kids are up there but none of them’ll be with Jimmy at the end, I told them, no, no, that’s not happening, no one is seeing that. The warden will be with him and a doctor Jimmy asked for, but I don’t want family seeing it. Don’t need anyone else ruined by this. Don’t want anyone coming back and telling me what they saw. Or not telling me. What I imagine is bad enough. Most nights lately, I lie there and that’s all I do, lie there and imagine.

It’s not going to happen, it is not going to happen. Governor’s going to call. I don’t want this thing busy when the call comes, imagine if he was calling me and it was busy.

I’ve talked with so many people about this. Met so many people. I know what to do. I tell them about Jimmy. He was good. A good boy who did a terrible thing.

Jimmy’s problem was ‘following’. He was like a baby duck. He’d follow people down the street, just because they were walking by. I was always looking for him, you could let kids outside in those days, and Jimmy was off someplace, following people, getting into mischief with them. Because he’d copy whatever was happening too, follow, copy, follow, copy.

Jimmy did a terrible thing and maybe I don’t have the right to expect this thing to ring. But I do. Everyone says the governor’s going to grant mercy. I met him in his office. It was – he was like my father, even though I’m older, I don’t know how to describe what I felt, I was in there telling him about my son, a murderer – and yet I was feeling proud. That’s how he made me feel. Proud to be the mother of a boy on death row. If you can make someone feel that, you’re some politician.

I don’t know why he’s waiting so long on this, maybe that’s part of the punishment, but I know he’s going to call. No, more likely the Warden will call. More sense it’s the Warden. Or, or someone from the governor’s office. Yeah, not the governor, he’s too busy. Aw, what else is he doing this time of morning? There are thousands of people on that highway, *someone’s* gonna call.

That meal. They give him whatever he wants and the fool asked for McDonalds. I said “Jimmy, don’t make me look like a bad mother.” He wanted burgers and not just one. Four! I told the Warden to cook him greens.

People will be coming by soon. I won’t be alone. The door’s open, light’s on, they’re just waking up now, people will be here in time, I won’t be sitting alone when it’s seven.

If you sat him down, if you got his attention, Jimmy could tell you what was right and what was wrong but the minute he stepped out there, outside, he forgot. The lawyer he had – let me tell you, you never smelled such liquor on anyone’s breath – he said I should get up in court and talk about Jimmy, tell the jury Jimmy was too stupid to tell good from bad. Jimmy knew right from wrong! I taught him!

Like I say, door opens, he’s off, at one time it was just to play but then this neighborhood changed, it’s worse now, worse. Wasn’t perfect before but it’s worse now. I’m not making excuses. But that expressway changed everything. Now, if you want to get to the other side of the ward, you have to walk three blocks north, then go through a tunnel and that is not pleasant, thank you. And, on the other side of the expressway, things are changing too. It used to be the worst part, but now it’s different. The old church, the place where Jimmy was baptized, it’s a restaurant now. Japanese. Everyone is young. White. Young and white. They all have little dogs. White people with little white dogs eating bits of raw fish. I feel like a tourist over there, in the place I grew up.

I swear, if they hadn’t put that highway in, Jimmy’d be upstairs right now, snoring. But they put that expressway in and all the bad from the west side squeezed here through that tunnel. Including those two boys Jimmy was with. But I can’t make excuses, Jimmy did a terrible thing, he deserves to be in jail, I can’t argue. He knows he did a terrible thing, every time I visit him he tells me so. He knows right from wrong. Four years I’ve been taking the bus up there and four years he’s told me how much he regrets what he did.

I used to be just Vaila Stanton and now for the rest of my life I’m going to be ‘Jimmy’s mother’. ‘That’ Jimmy’s mother.

But you know - in here *(Touches heart.)* I’m fine with that, I always will be, it’s who I am. But it makes it tough to go to the store and places. I have another sister in Chicago. After this, I could move there. Except this is my, our – our - home. If I leave here, he’ll really be gone.

*(Whispering to phone, as light fades.)* Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring.

**8. Governor Philip Estevez**

**Just before 7 am.**

*It’s early morning at the Governor’s mansion. Philip Estevez is holding a mug of coffee in one hand and a cellphone in the other.*

**PHILIP:**

This is my sacred time. Before the State is awake. My favorite time of day. Most days.

Cook’s here, downstairs. I can smell the bacon. The gardener’s out there, already hard at it too. But he won’t use anything that whines or buzzes until 8:15. That’s when my driver comes and takes me downtown.

Bobby’s phoning at 7. To see. See if I’ve made up my mind. Depending what I decide, he’ll connect me to the Warden. Who’s waiting up at the State Pen for my call.

I’m Governor because the people of this state made me quarterback for their dreams. Not all the people. Almost precisely half. Every black, every Latino, every white liberal. An election waltz that left out a whole bunch of dancers.

I knew this would come up, the issue of the death penalty. I made it three years before it raised its head, the wheels of justice creak that slowly in this state. But now Jimmy Stanton is minutes from his Maker.

Unless. *(Indicates phone.)*

I’ve read the Warden’s report, read it, reread it; he’s recommending clemency for good behavior. There’s two, three, four thousand people up there outside the prison right now wanting the same. Downtown at the statehouse we’ve got a room choking with bags of mail – people still actually write letters – mail from all over the world - another office full of computers dealing with the emails, Face book petitions...

Except.

*(Looking out window.)* He’s cutting back the lilacs, hand-clipping, in case I want to sleep an extra half hour. I’ve never seen anyone work like that man. He’s feeling part of this now, feels he owns a share of this, we, us, together... He’s clipping that hedge and he’s thinking, “I know Governor Phil is gonna save that boy.”

Nearly seven. Bobby’s at his desk outside my office, watching the clock. I said 7, he knows that’s when I start taking calls. I always picture him like this *(Finger poised, other arm raised, looking at his watch.)*

*(Turns back to room.)* The crime was disgusting. The police investigation - a farce. The trial a travesty. So-called evidence of premeditation. Jimmy Stanton can’t premeditate. But he was ruled mentally capable. In this enlightened state the onus of proof is on the *accused* to prove he’s *not* capable of mens rea and the public defender didn’t call Jimmy to the stand. Which I’m told would have satisfied the onus pretty fast. Any ten year-old who’s watched a TV crime show would’ve gotten Jimmy up there talking. But Jimmy gets assigned a washed-up alcoholic stooge for his defence because drunks are the only one who’ll work for the peanuts we pay.

There’s five guys on death row in this state and Jimmy’s up first. Because the others are all appealing. Hoovering up millions of dollars I could otherwise use to hire *sober* public defenders. The true hidden cost of having the death penalty? Appeals. Keeping them in for life would be cheaper than keeping them in lawyers.

So.

I’ve met with his mother. Her pastor brought her to my office, she was dressed like it was Easter. She made her case for Jimmy. She believed it was still possible for him to live a good life inside, “By the Grace of God”. She said she never expected him home again but she is prepared to live out her years taking the bus up to the State Pen every other Saturday to see him, if only I would…

But.

If I commute Jimmy, half this state will say I’m weak on crime. Including some, a few, enough, who voted for me before. The taint of that is something that they will smell all the way to the ballot box in November. If I commute – I could very well lose.

If.

My base doesn’t see this as a legal thing. It’s racial to them. Everything’s racial to them. Everything *is*. But it’s also economic. We finally got investors coming to this state, I’ve convinced them we’re moving forward, better infrastructure, improving school scores, tax incentives, there’s a governor who invites them for drinks under the lilacs … A governor who can talk in complete sentences. Paragraphs, if they so desire. If I don’t commute we’ll look like a state of unevolved crackers. But if I *do* commute, I may not be around in a year to keep the changes going.

6:58.

I went to an out-of-state university on scholarships. I wasn’t the first, but the footprints I was following sure were fresh. I was asked to join a fraternity. Now *that* door had never been opened for the likes of me, now I *was* trail-breaking. I joined. Made sure I was the most popular guy. Became president. President. And in my final year, when I was stepping down, two of my Brothers came to me, both wanting me to endorse them for the job. One of them was enough like me I could recognize the hunger, he was living my life. He was me. Following me. The other was an entitled guy from back here. Entitled yes, charming yes. Always calling me his “amigo”. His family employed half the city at one time. And there he was, asking for my support.

I thought about it all night. In the morning I knocked on the door of my hometown pal and I shook his hand and said ‘Amigo, we gotta stick together.’ I told myself the ‘we’ could simply be a thing of geography, not culture or background or, or desire, or need.

Four years ago, when I began running for governor, my amigo raised three million for me. His mother open up her mansion, threw a big garden party, every big shot in town was there. Having them onside, that was the difference between losing and winning. Back in the fraternity - I saw all that.

I am good at this. I am changing lives. *(Looks out the window at the gardener.)* My gardener - that’s the old way and I respect that. But his son – and my son - are going to have what I have, with no compromising. If I do the compromising now he won’t have to later. This state is changing. We’re moving forward. But if I lose the election it’s two, four, ten steps back. Not going to happen. Just not going to happen.

*(Phone rings. ESTEVEZ looks at his cell. Lets it ring.)*

**9. JIMMY STANTON**

**Just after 7 a.m.**

*JIMMY is in the execution chamber. He stands facing the audience. He is in prison garb. IV lines can extend from both arms (one’s a backup line) but otherwise he stands. He has received his first injection and, as LEWIS feared – though he would have no way of knowing this - it has not shut down JIMMY’s brain.*

*Possible staging: The others are visible, perhaps in semi-darkness. He is flanked by LEWIS and KRYSTA, who remained with him during the execution. RICK, who has pulled the lever to start the injection process, stands at one side.*

*JIMMY could be lightly miked. The impression should be that we are hearing the words he speaks in his head. The character who spoke the words to him might mouth the words as JIMMY now speaks them. Alternately, the reverse can happen: the words of the other characters are pre-recorded, and JIMMY can speak partially up and over it, in fragments.*

*The indented words that are JIMMY’s original words – fragments – should be heard as such, just fragments, perhaps coming over the other words depending on which choice is made for those words.*

*During JIMMY’s scene his arms slowly raise and his body contorts.*

*The music under is Beethoven’s 7th Symphony, 2nd Movement. It can be distorted and mashed with something by Fifty Cent. It rises throughout the following, not in its entirety, and at the end of the play, when JIMMY dies, it cuts out as stage goes fast to black*

**JIMMY:**

She’s gonna be OK. *(Lewis.)*

I’m gonna make sure it goes OK for you. *(Lewis.)*

 She’s going to be

The warden’s making you greens. *(Vaila.)*

Will I be there. Do you want me there? *(Krysta.)*

 Where is she

It hurts your ears? *(Augusta.)*

Who’d you get that from? *(Krysta.)*

 Why can’t I

I’ll be there in the room with you. *(Lewis.)*

I don’t understand what you’re saying. *(Augusta.)*

You won’t feel a thing, not till afterwards. *(Krysta.)*

Good morning Mr. Stanton. *(Rick.)*

 Will it hurt

I’ll be there. *(Krysta.)*

Don’t make me look like a bad mother. *(Vaila.)*

 Who will take care of her

No sir, I’m very good at finding veins. *(Rick.)*

Say ‘I love you ma.’ *(Lewis.)*

I am going behind that screen. *(Rick.)*

Or ‘I’m going to be with Jesus now’. *(Lewis.)*

You make me look like a bad mother. *(Vaila.)*

 No no

The Warden and Dr. Jolic will stay with you. *(Lewis.)*

Hold out your arm, sir. Thank you. *(Rick.)*

Don’t worry about me, I won’t be alone. *(Vaila.)*

And know that we are thinking of you. *(Lewis.)*

Jimmy. *(Rick.)*

*Music cuts out and with it stage goes to black.*

**The End.**