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1994: clinton files

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dramatis personae

BETHLEHEM: black, fem, loses faith

NAZARETH: black, fem, gains faith.

A New York Prison Cell. 1994. BETHLEHEM & NAZARETH are in their cell. NAZARETH is praying on their prayer mat. BETHLEHEM is in their bed reading. Eventually they stop to stare at the ceiling.

BETH

You ever looked into the future?

NAZ

The future belongs to God.

BETH

Or the Warden.

NAZ

The Warden is not God. Not my God at least.

BETH

Godlike.

NAZ

A God provides. The Warden restricts.

BETH

Shit, I wish God would provide some Charmin. This toilet paper is tearing my ass up!

NAZ

Go ask your God then.

BETH

Sure thing.

BETHLEHEM gets up and goes to the bars

Hey! HEY!!!! I NEED TO WIPE MY ASS. Y'ALL GOT SOMETHING OTHER THAN SANDPAPER IN THIS BITCH?

(BEAT)

O.S PRISONER 3

SHUT THE FUCK UP.

BETH
God said nah.

NAZ
So it seems.

BETH
Yeah. You wanna play monopoly?

NAZ
Why? So I could go to jail twice?

BETH
Aight stop with the social commentary. It makes me sad.

NAZ
It's your life.

BETH
Sure it is. How long you gonna be? Don't your knees hurt?

NAZ
As long as it takes.

BETH
For what?

NAZ
For a miracle.

BETH
Oh. You believe in those?

NAZ
...

BETH
I said you believe in those?

NAZ
You don't?

BETH
I'll believe it when I see one.

NAZ
Hmm.

BETH
What?

NAZ
Nothing.

BETH
I'm tired of the stoic bullshit. I know you got something to say.

NAZ
I do. I'm saying it to my God.

BETH
Aight, ask them why He made you so pussy.

NAZ
NAZARETH looks at BETHLEHEM for the first time.
We have a problem?

BETH
Answer my question. Where do you see yourself in 15 years? I don't even know where I see myself tomorrow.

NAZ
You'll be here pestering me like me always.

BETH
Now you can see the future?

NAZ
All I know is yesterday and the will to make it to today.

BETH

What does that mean?

NAZ

Just don't think about it.

BETH

Easy for you to say! I can't sleep without thinking. I can't eat without thinking. I can't think without thinking! I can't even touch myself without thinking. Sometimes, I think I can stop, and then, I think I can't. It's like the key is stuck, and the engine is stalling. I'm stalling! In prison there's NOTHING to do but THINK. There's nobody to talk to... I read the same book THREE TIMES. And it always ends the same. Everyday, the same! Every night, the same! The days are beginning to blur! I haven't seen my mama in years. My sister! My family... I wish I could smoke at least, but that's what got me here in the first place. Fuck Bill Clinton! Fuck the Crime Bill! Fuck the warden! 15 years minimum sentencing? Just for possessing? I never hurt nobody. I wasn't even selling! I WAS TRYING TO SELF SOOTHE. GODDAMMIT.

O.S PRISONER 3

SHUT THE FUCK UP!!!!

NAZARETH gets up and crosses to BETHLEHEM

NAZ

Hey. HEY. Look at me. Look at me! Focus on me. Breathe. That's it. In. And out. Again. In. Out. Slowly. You're not alone.

BETH

Are you real?

NAZ

I'm real.

BETH

Are you sure?

NAZ

Yes.

BETH

Don't fuck with me.

NAZ

I'm not fucking with you. I'm real right now.

BETH

I'm not like you. I need more than now.

NAZ

I can't afford to think about a future that doesn't belong to me. Now is all I got.

BETH

But tomorrow? Where will you be tomorrow?

NAZ

Here with you.

BETH

And then what?

NAZ

And then we'll see.

BETH

Get offa me.

NAZ

What the fuck do you want?

BETH

I want you to be *here*.

NAZ

I can't be anywhere else but *here*.

BETH

No you're not! You're somewhere else!

NAZ

What are you talkin' about?!

BETH

Where do you go when you close your eyes? When you pray?

NAZ

I'm here. I'm always here.

BETH

I don't want to be here.

NAZ

Me neither.

BETH

It gets lonely without you.

The Prison Alarm sounds

NAZ

Shit.

BETH

It gets lonely *with* you.

NAZ

They're about to search us. We gotta get against the wall.

BETH

This isn't my first rodeo.

NAZ

Then act like it.

O.S PRISONER 3

I TOLD YOU I AIN'T GOT SHIT!

BETH

They're close.

NAZARETH begins rolling up their prayer mat.

NAZ

No shit.

BETH

Huh.

NAZ

What are you doing? Get ready!

BETHLEHEM pulls out a makeshift shank

BETH

I've been ready. For a long time now.

NAZ

Why the fuck do you have that???

BETH

Unlike you, I don't see a future for myself.

NAZ

You're going to kill yourself?

BETH

I'm going to *free* myself. You think God intended this? There is no God. And if there is an afterlife, it'll be a better Hell than the one we're in now.

NAZ

STOP!

BETHLEHEM puts the shank to their neck.

BETH

Aht. Stay right there. This could get messy.

NAZ

I'll call for the guard!

BETH

Good. I wanted them to take me out.

NAZ

Don't do this!

BETH

This cell isn't my home! It belongs to the State! Just like me, just like you! 15 years of this shit? Fuck that!

NAZ

NO. In 15 years, we're walking out together! Don't you get it? That's where I see myself! With you!

BETH

Nice try.

NAZ

We're in this together! I can't do this without you!

O.S PRISONER 3

PIECE OF PIG SHIT! I'LL KILL YOU.

NAZ

Down to my soul I believe in the divine! I believe in MIRACLES! I believe every pilgrim can be a prophet! I believe God is LIBERATION! Everytime I close my eyes, I see us FREE! I still pray after the flood! I still pray after livestock stare at me with flies in their mouths! With vacant looks in their eyes! I pray for strength to make it day to day! I believe we can make it to 2026! I BELIEVE THERE IS A FUTURE! Please! Stay with me! Don't leave me here alone! I NEED YOU!

BETH

You'll play monopoly with me?

NAZ

I'll play monopoly with you everyday for 15 years! 16 years! 20 years! 25! Til God, the true God, calls us home!

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