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BETHLEHEM: black, any gender, loses faith
NAZARETH: black, any gender, 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.

BETHLEHEM

You ever looked into the future?

NAZARETH

The future belongs to God.

BETHLEHEM

Or the Warden.

NAZARETH

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

BETHLEHEM

Godlike.

NAZARETH

A God provides. The Warden restricts.

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

Go ask your God then.

BETHLEHEM

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.

BETHLEHEM

God said nah.

NAZARETH

So it seems.

BETHLEHEM

Yeah. You wanna play monopoly?

NAZARETH

Why? So I could go to jail twice?

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

It's your life.

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

As long as it takes.

BETHLEHEM

For what?

NAZARETH

For a miracle.

BETHLEHEM

Oh. You believe in those?

NAZARETH

...

BETHLEHEM

I said you believe in those?

NAZARETH

You don't?

BETHLEHEM

I'll believe it when I see one.

NAZARETH

Hmm.

BETHLEHEM

What?

NAZARETH

Nothing.

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

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

BETHLEHEM

Aight, ask them why He made you so pussy.

NAZARETH

NAZARETH looks at BETHLEHEM for the first time.

We have a problem?

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

You'll be here pestering me like me always.

BETHLEHEM

Now you can see the future?

NAZARETH

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

BETHLEHEM

What does that mean?

NAZARETH

Just don't think about it.

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

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.

BETHLEHEM

Are you real?

NAZARETH

I'm real.

BETHLEHEM

Are you sure?

NAZARETH

Yes.

BETHLEHEM

Don't fuck with me.

NAZARETH

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

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

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

BETHLEHEM

But tomorrow? Where will you be tomorrow?

NAZARETH

Here with you.

BETHLEHEM

And then what?

NAZARETH

And then we'll see.

BETHLEHEM

Get offa me.

NAZARETH

What the fuck do you want?

BETHLEHEM

I want you to be *here*.

NAZARETH

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

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

What are you talkin' about?!

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

I'm here. I'm always here.

BETHLEHEM

I don't want to be here.

NAZARETH

Me neither.

BETHLEHEM

It gets lonely without you.

The Prison Alarm sounds

NAZARETH

Shit.

BETHLEHEM

It gets lonely *with* you.

NAZARETH

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

BETHLEHEM

This isn't my first rodeo.

NAZARETH

Then act like it.

O.S PRISONER 3

I TOLD YOU I AIN'T GOT SHIT!

BETHLEHEM

They're close.

NAZARETH begins rolling up their prayer mat.

NAZARETH

No shit.

BETHLEHEM

Huh.

NAZARETH

What are you doing? Get ready!

BETHLEHEM pulls out a makeshift shank

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

Why the fuck do you have that???

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

You're going to kill yourself?

BETHLEHEM

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.

NAZARETH

STOP!

BETHLEHEM puts the shank to their neck.

BETHLEHEM

Aht. Stay right there. This could get messy.

NAZARETH

I'll call for the guard!

BETHLEHEM

Good. I wanted them to take me out.

NAZARETH

Don't do this!

BETHLEHEM

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

NAZARETH

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

BETHLEHEM

Nice try.

NAZARETH

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

O.S PRISONER 3

PIECE OF PIG SHIT! I'LL KILL YOU.

NAZARETH

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 the livestock looks 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 2025! I BELIEVE THERE IS A FUTURE! Please! Stay with me! Don't leave me here alone! I NEED YOU!

BETHLEHEM

You'll play monopoly with me?

NAZARETH

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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