

DEATH ROW

"RUSTY'S LAST DAY"

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DEATH ROW
"RUSTY'S LAST DAY"

ACT ONE

SCENE A

FADE IN

INT. PRISON STAFF ROOM - MORNING
(JED, GEORGE, SALLY, TRENT, RUSTY)

THE ROOM WHERE THE PRISON STAFF CONGREGATES IS LARGE AND CONTAINS MANY DESKS AND FILE CABINETS. A SIGN AT THE ENTRANCE READS "APPLETON CORRECTIONAL FACILITY: IF YOU'RE ON DEATH ROW, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE." THE CLOCK ON THE WALL READS 8:00. GEORGE, A GUARD WHO HAS SEEN IT ALL, SITS NEAR THE COFFEE MACHINE DRINKING A CUP OF COFFEE AND READING THE PAPER. JED, THE PRISON'S GRIZZLED EXECUTIONER, ENTERS WEARING A LONG WHITE COAT AND HOLDING TWO OPEN BEAKERS FULL OF COLORFUL LIQUID.

JED

Morning, George. Big day ahead of us today, eh?

GEORGE

That's putting it mildly. I can't believe ol' Rusty is finally getting the lethal injection. Never thought

I'd see the day. He's been here 20 years, almost as long as I have.

JED APPROACHES THE COFFEE MACHINE TO GET A CUP, BUT REALIZES HE DOESN'T HAVE A FREE HAND TO POUR THE COFFEE.

JED
(extending one of the beakers to George)
Hey, George, will you hold this for a minute?

GEORGE
(taking the beaker)
Oh, yeah, sure. No problem.

JED BEGINS POURING HIMSELF A CUP OF COFFEE.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
(examining the beaker)
Hey, Jed, what is this stuff, anyway?

JED
Oh, that? That's sodium pentothal. I'm gonna need that for the lethal cocktail tonight.

GEORGE
(shocked, he drops the beaker on the floor)
Geez, Jed. You can't go handling people hazardous substances without a warning.

JED
Oh no, George. Now look what you've done. Where am I going to get some more sodium pentothal for the execution? I guess I'm going to have to go out to the WalMart on Route 46, that'll take me over an hour.

GEORGE
(getting some paper towels and starting to clean up)
I'm sorry, Jed. I didn't mean it. You just took me by surprise. I'll

clean this up. Hey, this burns a little.

JED

Oh, don't worry about it. It isn't your fault. It's just this lethal injection stuff is so complicated. I haven't even figured out what exactly I'm supposed to put in this cocktail. Things didn't used to be this complex. Back in the day, you just pulled the switch and sizzle, sizzle, that was it. I mean, sure, sometimes the guy didn't quite lose consciousness for half an hour, but, hey, them's the breaks.

GEORGE

(looking at his hand, now smoking)

Do we have any aloe vera gel around here somewhere?

SALLY, THE PRISON'S CHEF, ENTERS WEARING A LARGE WHITE CHEF'S HAT AND CARRYING A STACK OF COOKBOOKS.

SALLY

Good morning, everyone.

JED

Hi Sally.

GEORGE

Hey there, Sally. What's with all the books?

SALLY

(putting the stack down with a thud)

They're cookbooks. I've finally got the chance to make a real final meal around here, and I'm going to make Rusty something he'll never forget. Well, I guess that's not the right choice of words, but you know what I mean.

GEORGE

I'm not sure, Sally. I've known Rusty for twenty years, and all that time he's talked about how he wants his final meal to be a simple cheeseburger, fries, and a coke from McDonald's.

SALLY

Oh, no way. I didn't get my degree at the Culinary Institute of America, spend six months studying in Paris under the best chefs in the world, and make grilled cheese lunches here for five years waiting for a chance to make one four star final meal that would get me on the Food Network just to buy this guy a McDonald's cheeseburger. No, sir. This guy's having the meal of his life tonight. (PAUSE) So to speak.

SALLY LEAFS THROUGH ONE OF THE COOKBOOKS.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Hmm, maybe he'd like some Coquille St. Jacques. Perhaps a nice arugula salad. I wonder if he likes sushi.

GEORGE

He's never going to go for it. Rusty is a steak and potatoes guy, nothing fancy about him.

SALLY

Look, who's this about? Him or me?

TRENT ENTERS. TRENT IS THE PRISON'S WARDEN, A LARGE, MIDDLE AGED, ATTRACTIVE MAN WHO DEEPLY BELIEVES IN THE JUSTICE OF THE DEATH PENALTY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS JOB, EVEN THOUGH HE HAS DEVELOPED SOME ADMIRATION FOR A FEW OF THE INMATES.

TRENT

Everyone ready for the big day?

JED

(surfing the web)

Hey, boss, do you know exactly what goes into this lethal injection?

TRENT

What? Are you kidding?

JED

No. I'm trying to find some information on the world wide web here, but I'm not good with computers. I know that one of the poisons is supposed to stop the kidneys. Or is it the lungs?

TRENT

You mean you've been sitting around this prison for five years waiting for our first execution and you haven't prepared for it at all?

JED

Hey, I've had a lot of solitaire to play. Now are you going to help me here or what?

TRENT

I don't know the first thing about chemicals. That's your job. And you better figure it out by midnight, that's all I've got to say. Everything else around here ready to go?

SALLY

Boss, do you think that Rusty would enjoy a nice dish of poached Chilean sea bass topped with a red pepper and cilantro coulis? With a side of baby carrots and artichoke infused cous cous?

TRENT

(looking at Sally in disbelief, then at George)

Is she serious?

GEORGE

I don't know, boss. But everything looks like it's ready to go. Father McConnell should be over sometime after his three martini breakfast to get Rusty ready to meet his maker, and we're expecting Spaulding, Rusty's court appointed lawyer, any time now. I guess they're going to file one last appeal with the Supreme Court.

TRENT

Well, good luck with that. The Court almost never stays an execution. And that's when the prisoner has a lawyer with actual criminal training. This Spaulding, what is he, a tax lawyer or something?

JED

Remember when Spaulding filed that tax return with the appeals court instead of a brief?

TRENT

(shaking his head)

Poor Rusty never had a chance.

SALLY

Do you think he would enjoy a Baked Alaska for dessert? But then again, that could take a while to make. Hey, boss, can we delay the execution to like one a.m.?

TRENT

Are you serious?

SALLY

You're right. Better make it two a.m.

SALLY LEAVES.

JED

(finding something on the
web and scribbling on a pad
of paper)

Aha! Here it is. "How to Make a
Lethal Cocktail." Hmm, let's see.
Ingredients. Sodium Pentothal,
Demoral, Morphine, and Immodium. All
right, I think I've got it. I just
have to go pick up a few things.
I'll be at WalMart, but I'll be back
by lunch. Don't execute anyone
without me. Ha, ha. Get it? You
can't execute anyone without me.
Because I'm the executioner. Get it?

TRENT

What's he talking about? What's
going on around here?

GEORGE LOOKS AT HIS HAND, WHICH IS NOW BRIGHT RED AND
SLIGHTLY ON FIRE.

GEORGE

Hey, Jed. Do you think you could
pick me up some bandages while you're
out?

TRENT

(giving up on figuring out
his employees and turning
his attention to a file)
George, is today the day that the new
guy shows up?

GEORGE

Who, Harry Harrison? Harry Harrison
who killed his whole family with an
ordinary office stapler? You bet.
They're bringing him here sometime
before lunch. Should I put him in
Cell Four?

TRENT

Is that the cell that Johnny was in
before those pesky DNA experts quote
unquote exonerated him?

GEORGE

No, Johnny was in Cell Six. You know, the solitary confinement cell with no lights and all the poisonous spiders? Marvin was in Cell Four. That was before the real murderer confessed to the police after twenty-five years.

TRENT

Oh, yeah. That's right. I remember he had this portable television and everyone gathered around to watch Reagan's first inauguration. Anyway, I guess Cell Four will be fine for Harrison.

FROM OUTSIDE THE PRISON, THE SOUND OF LOUD PROTESTING AND CHANTING IS HEARD.

TRENT (CONT'D)

What is going on out there?

TRENT AND GEORGE LOOK OUT THE WINDOW. THEY SEE A LARGE CROWD PROTESTING THE IMMINENT EXECUTION. THE PROTESTORS HOLD SIGNS AND CHANT. THEY ARE LED BY STEPHANIE, AN ATTRACTIVE AND HEADSTRONG WOMAN IN HER MID-30S WHO IS AN ARDENT ANTI-DEATH PENALTY ACTIVIST. SHE IS WHIPPING THE CROWD OF PROTESTORS INTO A FRENZY, IN FRONT OF A LINE OF TELEVISION CAMERAS.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Oh, great. We're going to have to put up with this all day.

GEORGE

And I heard they're planning a candlelight vigil for midnight too.

TRENT

Terrific. Just what we need, a bunch of mamby pamby ACLU liberals who don't understand anything about anything making our life difficult.

GEORGE

They are just exercising their first amendment rights.

TRENT

First amendment, shmirst amendment.

GEORGE

Yeah, good point.

TRENT

She is pretty cute though.

GEORGE

What?

TRENT

Oh, nothing.

FROM THE ADJACENT CELLBLOCK, LOUD VOICES ARE HEARD.

RUSTY (O.S.)

All I want is a cheeseburger and
fries.

SALLY (O.S.)

But I studied at the Culinary
Institute of America. I spent six
months in Paris.

TRENT

Oh, not again.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE B

INT. CELLBLOCK-MOMENTS LATER

(RUSTY, SALLY, WINSTON, PATRICIA, GEORGE, HARRY, GARY)

NEXT TO THE LARGE ROOM WHERE THE PRISON STAFF CONGREGATES IS THE PRISON'S SMALL CELLBLOCK. THE CELLBLOCK HOLDS FOUR CELLS, THREE OF WHICH ARE CURRENTLY OCCUPIED. IN ONE CELL IS RUSTY, AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAN IN HIS EARLY SIXTIES WHO HAS BEEN ON DEATH ROW FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS AND IS PRACTICALLY LIKE FAMILY WITH THE PRISON STAFF. A SECOND CELL HOLDS PATRICIA, A SHORT, WHITE-HAIRED OLD LADY WITH GLASSES WHO IS THE STATE'S ONLY FEMALE DEATH ROW INMATE. IN THE THIRD CELL IS WINSTON, A 1972 GRADUATE OF HARVARD LAW SCHOOL, WHO IS PRESENTLY QUITE INSANE. SALLY IS IN FRONT OF RUSTY'S CELL, TRYING TO CONVINCE HIM TO LET HER MAKE A GOURMET FINAL MEAL.

RUSTY

I don't care if Francois Mitterand presented you with the Legion of Honor, I don't want foie gras stuffed prunes for my last meal on this earth. I haven't had a McDonald's cheeseburger for twenty years, and that's what I want for my final dinner.

SALLY

I just don't understand. I'm offering to make you a delicious gourmet meal that you could only get by paying over a hundred dollars in a trendy New York restaurant, and you want a fast food meal that anyone could get in any tiny town in the country for less than three dollars.

RUSTY

But that's just the point, don't you see? Anyone can get that meal, except for me. And I've been craving it for two decades.

SALLY

What am I supposed to tell the Food Network guys? They're supposed to be here any minute to start filming my preparation for their "Save the Best for Last" special. That was going to be my ticket to a real chef's job in a real restaurant.

RUSTY

Look, I know you're still disappointed that this prison chef job was the only chef's job you could land after all your fancy training, but this meal is about what I want, not about what you want. If it will make you happy though, you could have them supersize my fries.

SALLY

Ugh.

WINSTON

Pineapples are one of my favorite vegetables, though rutabagas come in a close second.

SALLY

Winston, we're not talking about pineapples right now.

WINSTON

My uncle was, in some important respects, a panda bear.

PATRICIA

Oh, for goodness sakes, Winston, can't you control your raging insanity for just one day? Give poor Rusty a break on his last day, won't you?

WINSTON

His ears were fluffy, and he ate mostly bamboo shoots.

SALLY

So this is your final decision?

WINSTON

Not exclusively bamboo, but mostly.

RUSTY

I'm afraid it is.

SALLY

Fine. Have it your way. How many ketchup packets do you want with those fries? You want salt?

PATRICIA

Hey, while you're arranging to take care of our basic needs, could you find out what happened to my *Soldier of Fortune* subscription? I haven't gotten an issue in months. I have to keep up on the new developments in assault weapon technology. You know, just in case my appeal goes through.

SALLY

Forget it. That subscription was taken away for a good reason.

PATRICIA

Hey, nobody actually proved I was running an international weapons syndicate from my jail cell. And anyway, that thing's been shut down

ever since Yuri was nailed by
Interpol.

GEORGE ENTERS, HIS INJURED HAND WRAPPED IN ICE, LEADING NEW
PRISONER HARRY WITH HIS OTHER ARM.

GEORGE

All right, Harrison. Say hello to
your new home for the rest of your
life.

HARRY

Oh, I won't be here long. I'm
actually innocent. My lawyer is
confident about my case, so I'll
probably be out of here in a week or
two.

GEORGE

Oh, is that right?

HARRY

Yeah, so if it's OK, you don't have
to put me with all the real
criminals. You know, if you can just
put me in the, uhh, the innocent
section of the prison, that'd be
great.

GEORGE

Oh, sure. Of course. The innocent
wing. Right this way.

PATRICIA

Hey, who's the new guy?

GEORGE

Patricia, everyone, this is Harry
Harrison. He was convicted of
killing his whole family with an
office stapler. But you probably
don't want to invest too much time
getting to know him, because he
informs me that he's innocent, so he
won't be staying long.

RAUCOUS LAUGHTER ALL AROUND.

PATRICIA

Innocent, huh? Yeah, I'm innocent too. Aren't you innocent, Rusty?

RUSTY

Oh, yes. Yes, ma'am. Innocent as a newborn babe.

WINSTON

I'm innocent. Innocent as a newborn blueberry.

GEORGE

Well, Harry. Looks like this is your lucky day. It appears that everyone here is innocent. So you should fit right in. Here you go, Cell Four. All the amenities. Desk. Cot. Two foot by two foot window. Toilet. Enjoy.

GEORGE PUSHES HARRY IN HIS CELL AND LOCKS IT.

HARRY

No, I don't think you understand. I'm really innocent.

GEORGE

(giggling)

Really innocent. That's a good one.

GEORGE LEAVES. HARRY LOOKS AROUND AND NOTICES EVERYONE SEEMS DEPRESSED.

HARRY

Hey, what's everyone looking so down for?

PATRICIA

Today is Rusty's execution day. He's only got fifteen hours left to live.

HARRY

What? You mean, they actually execute people around here?

RUSTY

What'd you think this place was, a country club?

HARRY

Well, I never thought they'd really go ahead and kill someone. Good thing my lawyer's going to get me off.

RUSTY

Yeah, right.

PATRICIA

Speaking of lawyers.

GARY, RUSTY'S INCOMPETENT LAWYER, ENTERS. HE IS RUMPLED AND FRAZZLED. HE CARRIES A MESSY STACK OF PAPERS, FILES, AND BOOKS.

RUSTY

Hey there, Spaulding. I sure hope you've figured something out that'll stop my execution.

GARY

(dropping the pile of stuff)
You know, I think I may have identified a theory that could be of some help.

RUSTY

That's great. Let's hear it.

GARY

Well, I've just started working on it. But I'm sure that with a little more research, I'll definitely be able to whip something together by next month.

RUSTY

What? Next month? But they're going to execute me tonight.

GARY

(looking at his watch)
Are you sure?

RUSTY

Yes, I'm sure. I think I would know.

GARY

Well, then. I guess we better get started. (FUMBLING AROUND IN HIS POCKETS). Anyone got a pencil?

RUSTY DROPS HIS HEAD INTO HIS HANDS IN DESPAIR.

ACT II

SCENE A

INT. CELLBLOCK-THREE O'CLOCK
(RUSTY, GARY, WINSTON, PATRICIA)

ON A TABLE SET UP OUTSIDE RUSTY'S CELL, GARY HAS SPREAD OUT LEGAL BOOKS AND PAPERS. HE IS DISHEVELED AND IS CLEARLY DESPERATE. RUSTY SITS INSIDE HIS CELL TRYING TO HELP GARY, BUT HE TOO IS LOSING HOPE.

RUSTY

We've been working for hours now, and you still haven't figured anything out for our final appeal. It looks like I'm doomed.

GARY

Now, now. Don't panic. I think you're right that we don't really have any more state law arguments. (PICKS UP BOOK AND LOOKS AT THE SPINE). We are in Virginia, right?

RUSTY

Oh boy.

GARY

But maybe we could make an argument based on the federal Constitution. I think there are some important amendments in that. Now, what were they again? (PICKS UP ANOTHER BOOK).

Something about illegal searches or something.

RUSTY

Did you even go to law school?

GARY

Yes, I went to a law school. It might not have been (MAKES AIR QUOTES) accredited, but I did pass the bar and can practice in several states. I'll even be able to practice in New York again once my (MORE AIR QUOTES) probation period is over.

RUSTY

So how come you don't know what the Constitution says?

GARY

Hey, I'm a tax lawyer. I can't help it if the court appointed me to challenge your execution even though I've never worked on a criminal case before in my life. It's not like lawyers are lining up to take capital cases for nearly no money. I mean, if you'd like to hire Johnny Cochran, I can get you his number. I'm sure he doesn't charge too much.

RUSTY

All right, all right. Let's think. Hey, can't we argue that it was illegal for the police to search my house without a warrant?

GARY

Well, that would be a good argument, but I'm afraid we waived that one when I didn't argue it on appeal in the lower court.

RUSTY

Oh, you mean when you filed the tax return instead of my brief?

GARY

Look, I've apologized for that already. I don't know what else you want from me.

WINSTON

Why don't you argue ineffective assistance of counsel? Violation of Rusty's sixth amendment rights. Spaulding was incompetent for not filing the brief. Strickland versus Washington.

GARY

What?

RUSTY

Oh, don't pay any attention to him. He's crazy.

GARY

No, that's a great idea. Why didn't I think of that?

WINSTON

Because you're incompetent?

GARY

Yes. That's right. I'm completely incompetent. How could anyone be put to death if they're represented by someone as unfit and inept as myself? That's what I'm going to argue. I think this just may work. Hey, how did you come up with that idea?

PATRICIA

It's a little known fact that Winston graduated magna cum laude from Harvard Law School in 1972. Of course that was before he went nuts and hacked up the Lieutenant Governor.

GARY

Wow. Who would have guessed it? Ineffective assistance of counsel.

Great idea. Hey, what was that case you mentioned again?

WINSTON

I was born on the moon.

GARY

Never mind. I'll find it. All right, I better get back to my office and write this up if I'm going to get it to the Supreme Court on time. You just sit tight. I'll be back later this evening. I think we might have some hope.

GARY GATHERS HIS MATERIALS AND LEAVES.

RUSTY

Nice job, Winston. Thanks.

WINSTON

I'm my own father you know.

CUT TO:

ACT II

SCENE B

INT. PRISON STAFF ROOM - SIX O'CLOCK
(JED, GEORGE, SALLY, TRENT, PATRICIA, MCCONNELL)

IN THE STAFF ROOM, GEORGE SITS AT HIS DESK EXAMINING HIS BANDAGED HAND. SALLY IS AT HER DESK WITH HER HEAD ON THE DESK. JED IS AT HIS DESK MIXING VARIOUS CHEMICALS IN DIFFERENT BEAKERS AND CONSULTING THE COMPUTER FOR GUIDANCE.

JED

OK, I think I might have it. Two parts sodium pentothal, one part Immodium, one part blue food coloring. Then add this mixture, and that's it. I sure hope this works. I guess we won't really know until midnight, though, will we? We didn't have this problem back when we used the noose. I mean, sure sometimes the guy would just hang there for a half an hour before he suffocated, but hey, them's the breaks.

GEORGE

My hand is killing me. Jed, do you have any chemicals over there that might numb this pain? Those six aspirins didn't seem to help.

JED

Oh, sure. Let's see, I think the Demoral should do the trick. Here,

drink this (HOLDS UP BEAKER WITH BLUE LIQUID).

GEORGE APPROACHES JED'S DESK AND TAKES THE BEAKER. AS HE IS ABOUT TO SIP FROM IT, JED STOPS HIM.

JED (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry, not that beaker. I think that's the one with the lethal cocktail in it. Here, try this one. (HOLDS UP BEAKER WITH RED LIQUID).

GEORGE

(relieved but also worried)
Are you sure this time?

JED

Am I sure? Of course I'm sure.

GEORGE DRINKS FROM THE BEAKER.

JED (CONT'D)

I think.

TRENT ENTERS AND HANGS UP HIS COAT.

TRENT

Wow, did I have a great dinner.

JED

Where'd you go, boss?

TRENT

I went to that new French place that just opened up on the other side of town. Boy was it delicious. They've got the best chef in the whole state.

SALLY LIFTS HER HEAD OFF THE DESK, SQUEALS, THEN DROPS HER HEAD BACK TO THE DESK.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Oh, I'm sorry Sally. I didn't mean anything by that. You're a great chef too. Hey, what happened to the Food Network people? Weren't they going to film your last meal?

SALLY

They left. Turns out they didn't really want to film me going to the McDonald's on Route 75 and buying a cheeseburger and fries.

TRENT

Oh, that's a real shame. Well, don't get too down. There are plenty of other death row inmates. And I doubt the new Governor will be giving any of them clemency. She's a real tough cookie that one. Point is that you'll have plenty of other chances to make a great final meal. You just have to be patient.

SALLY

Yeah, I guess you're right.

TRENT

(smacking his lips)

Boy, I can still taste that cognac infused chocolate eclair. Wow.

SALLY

Ohhhh.

FATHER MCCONNELL ENTERS, WOBBLING UNSTEADILY.

MCCONNELL

OK, where's this prisoner I'm supposed to counsel?

TRENT

Hey there, Father. Nice to see you. Rusty's back in his cell. That's where we tend to keep the prisoners.

MCCONNELL

Great. I better get back there. Don't want anyone spending the rest of eternity in hell on my watch.

GEORGE

So, Father, you have a liquid lunch today?

MCCONNELL

Look, if you had my job, you'd drink too.

MCCONNELL WALKS BY JED'S DESK ON HIS WAY TO THE CELLBLOCK. HE SEES THE BLUE BEAKER AND PICKS IT UP.

MCCONNELL (CONT'D)

Ahh, a Blue Hawaii. Very tropical.

HE DRINKS IT AND LEAVES.

JED

Well, I guess we're going to find out whether the lethal cocktail works.

SOUNDS OF LOUD PROTESTORS ARE HEARD OUT THE WINDOW. THEY ARE CHANTING "DOWN WITH THE WARDEN" OVER AND OVER AGAIN. TRENT LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW AND SEES STEPHANIE LEADING THE CHANT.

TRENT

(heading for the door)
All right, that's it. Now it's personal. I'm going out there.

CUT TO:

ACT II

SCENE C

EXT. OUTSIDE PRISON - MOMENTS LATER
(STEPHANIE, TRENT, FEMALE PROTESTOR)

TRENT ANGRILY APPROACHES THE CROWD OF PROTESTORS LED BY
STEPHANIE, WHO IS CHANTING "DOWN WITH THE WARDEN."

STEPHANIE

Oh, look everyone. Here he is.
Trent Hatfield, the prison warden.

THE CROWD BOOS.

TRENT

The Constitution may give you the
right to protest the execution, but
protesting me is going too far. I'm
just doing my job.

STEPHANIE

Did you hear that everyone? He's
just doing his job. He's just
carrying out the state's immoral and
inhumane punishment.

THE CROWD BOOS MORE.

TRENT

The voters of this state have
overwhelmingly approved of the death
penalty. And I am proud to be the
one who makes sure they get what they
want.

STEPHANIE

Oh, sure. Even if it means occasionally executing an innocent person or two.

TRENT

That's why we have appeals. That's why it takes fifteen years before someone is actually executed. All those people let off death row because they're innocent just prove that the system works.

STEPHANIE

Can you prove that no innocent person has been put to death?

TRENT

No. Can you prove that one innocent person has been put to death?

STEPHANIE

(frustrated)

Down with the warden. Down with the warden.

THE CROWD TAKES UP THE CHANT.

TRENT

Fine. I see there's no reasoning with you. Enjoy wasting the rest of your day. I have work to do.

TRENT RETURNS TO THE PRISON. THE CROWD CONTINUES TO CHANT.
A FEMALE PROTESTOR APPROACHES STEPHANIE.

FEMALE PROTESTOR

Great job, Stephanie. You really showed him, that big dumb meathead.

STEPHANIE

Yeah. He is kind of handsome though.

FEMALE PROTESTOR

What?

STEPHANIE

Oh, nothing.

ACT II
SCENE D

INT. CELLBLOCK - NIGHT

(HARRY, PATRICIA, WINSTON, SALLY, RUSTY, MCCONNELL, TRENT,
JED, GEORGE, GARY)

THE ENTIRE PRISON STAFF IS SITTING AROUND IN THE CELLBLOCK
WAITING FOR A CALL FROM THE SUPREME COURT ABOUT RUSTY'S
FINAL APPEAL. THE CLOCK ON THE WALL READS 11:45.

HARRY

(leafing through brochures)
Hey, which Hawaiian island do guys
think I should spend Christmas on,
Maui or the big island? I mean, the
big island has those cool volcanoes,
but Maui has the great beaches.

PATRICIA

What are you talking about? You're
on death row. You'll be lucky if you
get an hour in the exercise yard for
Christmas.

HARRY

Speak for yourself. With my lawyer,
I'll probably be out by Halloween.
Hmm, maybe I should go on an African
safari instead. I've always wanted
to see a giraffe in the wild.

WINSTON

I'm a giraffe.

SALLY

No you're not.

WINSTON

I'm kind of a giraffe.

RUSTY

(finishing up his
cheeseburger)

Boy, was that delicious. (BELCHING).
Whoa. Does anyone have an antacid?

SALLY

I guess you're regretting your choice
of a last meal now, huh?

RUSTY

Oh, no. It was worth it. I mean, my
heartburn is only going to last
fifteen minutes anyway. Hey, Father,
are you going to make sure I'm saved,
or what?

MCCONNELL

(groaning)

I'm so constipated.

TRENT

Jed, I really hope you've finally
figured out this lethal cocktail.
It's going to be real embarrassing if
all Rusty gets out of it is a severe
case of gas and bloating.

JED

Don't worry, boss. I just had the
proportions wrong. There is a good
chance that it's going to work now.
You know, we never had these problems
back when we just used the rack. I
mean, sure, sometimes it took several
days for the guy's body to pull apart
into several pieces, but, hey, them's
the breaks.

EVERYONE GRIMACES. GEORGE LAUGHS.

TRENT

What's with you? What's so funny?

GEORGE

I have no idea. I'm so high. I love Demoral. (LOOKS AT HIS BURNT UP HAND). Look, my hand's all burnt up. Ha, ha.

GARY ENTERS. HE'S VERY EXCITED.

GARY

OK, I just talked to the clerk at the Supreme Court. They're going to hand down their decision any minute now.

TRENT

(approaching the phone on the wall)

All right. I guess I'll get ready to answer the phone.

EVERYONE IS QUIET FOR A FEW MOMENTS. EVERYONE IS ANXIOUSLY WAITING FOR THE PHONE TO RING. A PHONE RINGS. TRENT ANSWERS THE PHONE ON THE WALL.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Hello? Hello?

THE PHONE KEEPS RINGING.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Hello?

GARY

(realizing the ring is coming from his cell phone)

Oh, that's me. (ANSWERS HIS PHONE).

Hi, honey. Yes, I should be home soon. I'm sorry I'm so late.

(PAUSE) I wub you too. (PAUSE) No, I wub you the best.

EVERYONE GROANS.

GARY (CONT'D)

I've got to go honey. Bye. (HE HANGS UP). Sorry about that.

MORE ANXIOUS WAITING. THE PHONE ON THE WALL RINGS. TRENT ANSWERS IT.

TRENT

Hello? Oh, hello there Chief Justice. You have? You've reached a decision on Rusty's appeal? Great, what is it? Oh, wait, can you hold on? I've got call waiting. (CLICKS PHONE). Hi. What? Really? A credit card with no annual fee? And only 23% interest? Sign me up.

EVERYONE GROANS.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry. Can you call back? I've got an important call on the other line. Thanks. (CLICKS PHONE). Hi, Chief Justice. Sorry about that? OK, what's the decision? Really? All right. I'll let everyone know. Thanks a lot. Good night.

TRENT HANGS UP.

SALLY

So, what is it?

TRENT

Well, it turns out I can get a Discover Card at a low annual rate and get one hundredth of a percent cash back.

JED

Not that. Rusty's case.

TRENT

Oh, yeah. Right. The Supreme Court granted the stay. They sent the case back to the appellate court to consider whether it was illegal for the police to search Rusty's house without a warrant.

EVERYONE ERUPTS IN APPLAUSE AND CONGRATULATIONS FOR RUSTY AND GARY.

RUSTY

All right. I guess I'm going to be here when my grandson is born next month after all.

TRENT

Don't get too comfortable, Rusty. The execution will probably be set again before you know it.

RUSTY

Oh, that's OK. At least I'll get to eat another McDonald's cheeseburger.

SALLY

No way. I've got a few months now to convince you to let me cook you a delicious last meal.

RUSTY

All right, I guess I'll let you try to convince me. No promises though.

SALLY

I better give the guys at the Food Network a call and let them know the special is back on.

JED

And I have a little extra time to make sure I've got the formula for the lethal cocktail right.

JED HOLDS UP A BEAKER FILLED WITH A GOLD BUBBLING LIQUID. FATHER MCCONNELL EYES IT ENTHUSIASTICALLY.

MCCONNELL

Mmm, champagne. I'll drink to that.

HE DRINKS FROM THE BEAKER, GROANS, AND COLLAPSES. GEORGE CACKLES MANIACALLY.

TAG

INT. INSIDE OF OLD SPARKY'S BAR - ABOUT 1 O'CLOCK A.M.
(TRENT, SALLY, JED, GEORGE, STEPHANIE)

OLD SPARKY'S BAR IS THE NEIGHBORHOOD WATERING HOLE WHERE THE PRISON STAFF HANGS OUT AFTER WORK. A NEON ELECTRIC CHAIR SIZZLES ON AND OFF BEHIND THE BAR. GEORGE, JED, SALLY, AND TRENT ARE AT THE BAR DRINKING.

TRENT

Well, it looks like Father McConnell is going to be all right.

SALLY

Yeah, the doctor said he just needs a good strong enema and a little rest, and he'll be good as new.

JED

I guess it was a good thing Rusty's execution didn't go forward. That would have been embarrassing. I wonder what the problem was. Maybe too much food coloring? You know it didn't used to be this hard.

GEORGE

Yeah, yeah. It was so much easier back when you just threw stones at the criminal. We know, we know already.

JED

Well, it was easier.

STEPHANIE ENTERS THE BAR AND TAKES A SEAT NEXT TO TRENT. SHE GETS THE BARTENDER'S ATTENTION.

STEPHANIE

Hi. I'll have a bourbon, straight up.

TRENT NOTICES STEPHANIE.

TRENT

Oh, you. Great. I bet you're pretty happy tonight with the stay and all. I guess you're celebrating, huh?

STEPHANIE

(downing her drink)

No, I'm not happy. I mean, I'm happy that Rusty didn't get executed tonight, but I'm not happy that we still have the death penalty and that hundreds of people are going to be executed this year in the United States.

TRENT

I don't get it. What's the big deal? Look, it's an eye for an eye. You've got to meet killing with killing. How else can there be justice?

STEPHANIE

Even if that was right, our system is so flawed that it can't be just. I mean, all the studies show that the death penalty is carried out in a racially discriminatory manner and that defendants don't get trained lawyers.

TRENT

I know the system's not completely perfect, but no system of justice ever is.

STEPHANIE

Well, are you proud that the United States executes more people per year than every country other than China and Iran?

TRENT

(takes a drink and considers
the question)

No, not particularly. But what about
you? Are you against the death
penalty in all cases? What about
Timothy McVeigh? He killed over 200
people, many of them children. Do
you think he didn't deserve the death
penalty?

STEPHANIE

(pauses to consider the
question)

Well, I don't know. Maybe he's
different.

EVERYONE AT THE BAR IS QUIET, THINKING ABOUT THE DEATH
PENALTY. SUDDENLY, TRENT AND STEPHANIE SPEAK TO THE
BARTENDER AT THE SAME TIME.

TRENT

Bartender. Another drink. And make
it a double.

STEPHANIE

(at the same time as Trent)

Bartender. Another drink. And make
it a double.

FADE OUT.