

C H A I R M A N & P U N C H

A one hour drama

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**ACT 1 SCENE II**

The door leading out has a soft warm glow under it - as if further beyond is a window to sunlight.

PUNCH comes in with a bowl of oatmeal - CHAIRMAN is exhausted and watches the action with a glazed, absent look.

PUNCH sits close and readies a spoonful - CHAIRMAN turns his head away from it.

PUNCH

There's no way you're not hungry by now.

CHAIRMAN

How long have I been here?

PUNCH

You have to eat.

CHAIRMAN

(turns to look at him)

And you have to demonstrate that it's safe.

PUNCH thinks for a moment, then mouths and swallows the spoonful. CHAIRMAN allows himself to be fed.

PUNCH

Did you sleep well?

CHAIRMAN

You know I didn't.

PUNCH

Stop being combative and oppositional.

CHAIRMAN

You're asking questions you already know the answer to.

PUNCH

To see if despite emotion you'd answer me straight, which you still can't.

CHAIRMAN

How do you think? You ran a strobe light into the room all night.

PUNCH  
Or all morning, you don't know  
that.

CHAIRMAN  
...What do you mean?

PUNCH walks to the doorway, on the floor is a power bar

PUNCH  
It wasn't for as long as you  
thought.

He steps on the bar, turning off the light that suggested  
distant sunshine.

PUNCH (CONT'D)  
(nodding)  
Simple, but...

CHAIRMAN's head falls limp. He then flings, and flails for a  
bit against his restraints - PUNCH allows, and ignores the  
futility.

CHAIRMAN  
Ow-SHIT! OW!

PUNCH  
There goes that last nail in your  
foot.

CHAIRMAN's foot is no longer nailed to the floor. PUNCH grabs  
a small towel and rubbing alcohol. He kneels to CHAIRMAN's  
feet.

PUNCH (CONT'D)  
I'll clean it, but I won't patch  
it. That's not how this works.

CHAIRMAN  
(panting)  
How long have I been here?

PUNCH  
Why do you keep asking that?

CHAIRMAN  
That's the point, isn't it? Make me  
go nuts not knowing the time of day  
or how long we've been down here?

PUNCH  
If we're even "down" anywhere-

CHAIRMAN

-oh fuck off with that-

PUNCH

Yeah, well - You get it, obviously,  
so why ask?

CHAIRMAN

(winces from alcohol being  
poured on the wound)

What more can I do? Honestly, what  
more?

PUNCH

Yeah...yeah, but it was the first  
thing you asked when you woke up,  
wasn't it? Not a lot of people  
would have wondered that first  
thing: Don't you remember being  
taken?

CHAIRMAN

No.

PUNCH

Then why wasn't that on your mind?  
That shit was interesting.

CHAIRMAN

I'm kidnapped and tortured - I was  
tied to a chair and confused.

PUNCH

Exactly. There was a standard  
"where am I" moment, but then you  
went right to wondering about the  
world outside.

CHAIRMAN

Haven't you done your homework on  
me? Didn't you consider people  
would be looking for me at some  
point? That you would eventually be  
caught? I'm a married man and a  
recognized member of my comm-

PUNCH

So, you woke up in a strange place,  
having lost time, and immediately  
wondered what the eta was on your  
search party? What did you picture?  
An army of people with cupped  
candles, marching through  
neighborhoods calling your name?

CHAIRMAN

You won't believe you have the wrong man. You just won't believe it. You clearly don't know much about my life, but you know you have the right man - boy do you ever kn-

PUNCH

It's absolutely you.

CHAIRMAN

Tell me who's out there looking for me, then. Who am I to you? Who am I?

PUNCH

If you had actually tried to piece together being taken, you'd know that nobody is looking for you.

(Shrugs)

Yet.

CHAIRMAN

(beat)

Then...it's been no more than three days!

PUNCH

Ah, fuck you.

CHAIRMAN laughs. PUNCH leaves the room.

CHAIRMAN

(calling after him)

I used personal days from work and lied to Linda! It was gonna be three blissful days with Paula at the cottage. I remember a good chunk of the drive up north but I don't remember the cabin - did you take me at a rest stop?

PUNCH comes back in and heaves a bucket of water onto the side table.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)

If nobody is looking for me, then I'm still on my romantic tryst, and the weekend isn't up yet.

(MORE)

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)

Linda wouldn't wait more than a day to assume I'm in danger and call the police, she's nervous and cautious like that - and Paula will just think I had to cancel last minute to keep up appearances - I've made apologies before. Unless you've...are we-

PUNCH

Alone?

CHAIRMAN

Yes

PUNCH

Yeah.

PUNCH paces.

PUNCH (CONT'D)

(shaking his head)

Well, this is a bit annoying.

CHAIRMAN

Oh?

PUNCH

I'm just saying: I put a little work into that - the whole "no sense of place or time" thing, and I feel like that was as clever and discreet as I'm ever gonna get. I feel like everything here on out, whether or not it's efficient, will be less...

(shrugs)

Impressive now - ugly, I guess. I don't know. Just ugly. Just a shame that we're left with ugliness. Less impressive.

CHAIRMAN

Less impressive than a colored light outside the doorway?

PUNCH holds up a towel.

PUNCH

Less impressive like "Bed Bath and Beyond".

CHAIRMAN clocks the towel and the bucket of water - the penny drops.

CHAIRMAN  
I'll pay you.

PUNCH stops moving.

PUNCH  
What are you talking about? Pay me  
to what, stop?

CHAIRMAN  
Yes. You're hired and this isn't  
personal, you said it yourself.

PUNCH  
Pay me how much?

CHAIRMAN  
Twice what you're making now.

PUNCH  
I could just name any number

CHAIRMAN  
Name any number.

PUNCH  
You don't have it

CHAIRMAN  
I can get it.

PUNCH scoffs. He moves again, this time to fasten CHAIRMAN'S  
head to the back of the chair - he uses the belt from his own  
pants.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)  
I can - matter of keystrokes - at  
work. I've done it.

PUNCH  
Bad boy, at it again! What did you  
do?

PUNCH reclines the chair and leans it backward - CHAIRMAN is  
dipped back, looking up.

CHAIRMAN  
I-I-Years ago, once-

PUNCH twists CHAIRMAN'S ear.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)  
Ow! Shit!

PUNCH  
 "Years ago"? "Once"?

CHAIRMAN  
 Okay! Just-Just don't...

PUNCH shakes his head, thinking.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)  
 (yelling)  
 C'mon! Just sit me up - sit me up  
 and we can talk more! I'll explain.  
 Talk to me a bit more!

PUNCH  
 You work at a bank, and you're  
 dishonest, I get it and don't need  
 the details...I just need you to  
 come out with it already.

CHAIRMAN  
 Wait! Hang on, hang on-

PUNCHY puts the towel over CHAIRMAN's face - he is incoherent  
 in his objection.

PUNCH  
 I had to use my pant belt for your  
 head - see what I mean by  
 unimpressive? I'm on a budget.

CHAIRMAN  
 (muffled from the towel)  
 A fucking budget???

CHAIRMAN is indeed, despite his restraints, making a good  
 effort to disturb the towel.

PUNCH  
 Stop struggling, man.

PUNCH dips his mug into the water.

CHAIRMAN  
 Lemme confess!! Let me CONFESS!

PUNCH replaces the chair upright, and removes the towel from  
 CHAIRMAN's head.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)  
 (catching his breath)  
 Thank you! Oh, thank you, fuck, oh  
 god, thank you!  
 (MORE)

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)

Thank you, thank you-  
(he begins to cry)  
Oh God...Oh my fucking god...

PUNCH

Come on, don't get bogged down in  
emotion - You had something to say?

CHAIRMAN

(a sobbing mess)  
Please don't waterboard me! Please,  
fuck, oh god - I just - I don't  
know, I don't KNOW - I just don't  
fucking know what you want to hear -  
what I'm supposed to say - what's  
going on - please!!!

CHAIRMAN calms slightly, catching his breath inside PUNCH's  
deafening silence.

PUNCH

...I kinda feel like I have to,  
now.