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PREVIEW: AFTER ALL THIS

By

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Cast of Characters

Richard: a man imprisoned in a Soviet jail, mid 40s

Synopsis

Richard, imprisoned for his faith in Communist Romania after the end of World War II, is in a small cell with no light underground. His only connection to the outside world are the regular beatings he receives at the hands of the guards, and the short messages he taps out in Morse Code to other prisoners.

Set

A small cell in a Soviet prison in Romania.

When

1950s

Note

Production History: The following monologue is adapted from a scene of the full length play ***We Are the Body*** which premiered in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada in 2015 and toured Western Canada to Calgary and Saskatoon in the same year. The World Premiere was produced by Burnt Thicket Theatre.

Props (1)

A small rock

Act 1

Scene 1

Lights up on RICHARD. He seems an old pile of rags on the platform.

Richard

“How long, Lord, will you continue to ignore me? How long will you pay no attention to me?”

He stands, with much effort.

Richard

“Revive me, or else I will die!

The effort has made him very weak.

Richard

“My enemy will say, ‘I have defeated him.’ My foes will rejoice because I am shaken.”

He takes to tapping a short message against a pipe in his cell with a small rock.

Richard

Elsie, my daughter. Are you there?

Silence.

Richard

Micah. Child. Anyone? To fill the silence. To pass the time.

It’s what we have here. Time to think.

How long, Oh Lord. You see? It’s the question the mind asks first. Even in a country where we say there is no God. “How could he?”

It’s all been taken. My right to do what I want. To be where I want. Gone. I have nothing left. My family. My vitality. My dignity - ha!

Just time.

To think. To remember. Time to pray and I don’t pray. The great tyranny of time now rules my life and the great cruelty is that there is so little to do with so much of it.

And so I think How could God? Like the psalmist wrote. And that’s the trick, you see? How could God, as if this was his doing! How could God, as if the hand that strikes me until my ribs break were God’s own hands. As if the hand that put its finger to the wick submersing me in darkness was his.

It’s the cruelest question they have asked and they ask it repeatedly. “How could God, if he is real, allow all this?” And then they crack the whip. “If this God you so blindly obey, if he exists and as you assure us, if he loves you, why does he allow your bones to be broken, your beard to be plucked, the candle that is your meaningless life to be so easily snuffed?”

There is no arrangement of words I can give them that will answer this question. I’ve tried. There is no word that will stay their violent hand. If it existed I would have shouted it from the depths of this cell.

And then one night, as I lay on my back, conducting a sermon in my head, memorizing it so I could tap it out in Morse Code to encourage my brothers and sisters, awake like me in the dark.

One night it came to me. I had a sudden flash, more firm and striking than any Soviet fist.

He starts to laugh, the laugh turns into a painful cough that racks his body. He holds his side in agony but laughs again.

Richard

I had already given them all the proof of God’s existence I could and there was no more I could do to make the point. I have taken every beating. Broken every bone. With every cut to my skin and every drop of blood I have proven that God exists.

The following statement is the most honest statement he has ever made in his life.

Richard

How could I be alive, after all this? Because no man could otherwise withstand such suffering.

His tears become laughter.

Richard

But I trusted in your steadfast love. “May I rejoice because of your deliverance!”

One can only laugh at this.

End scene.



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