

**THE FALL**

INT. — JAIL BREAK ROOM — EVENING

Four MEN dressed in clean-pressed guard uniforms sit around a round metal table, smoke thick in the air. All of the men are 25-30 years old. The room is dimly lit, and overhead fluorescent lights cast an industrial glow. Two of the men have feet kicked up on chairs; one whistles a cheery tune. They drink coffee; preparing for the long shift ahead of them. A clock reads 11:28. The world outside the window is dark.

The nametag of the man whistling reads MICHAELS. He shuffles the cards from the last round, then holds the deck out to the man on his right.

MICHAELS

Peterson, cut it.

The man to his right, presumably PETERSON, grabs a few cards, setting them aside. The men toss coins onto the table.

The large metal door to the room forcefully swings open; we see the back of an imposing authority who looms in the doorframe, older than the men and large in stature. Feet shoot off of chairs, spines are straightened, faces grow attentive.

SUPERVISOR

Mayhew, you're up.

MAYHEW, the youngest looking of the bunch with a clean-shaven face and wide eyes frantically looks at him.

MAYHEW

No, sir — the 19th, correct? I have one more day?

The supervisor juts his head in the direction of the clock, hanging behind the men.

SUPERVISOR

Almost 11:30. You've got half an hour. It's done at 12.

The supervisor leaves the room, door slamming behind him. MAYHEW looks at the table. With a reluctant sigh, he tosses his cards toward the dealer and grabs his coin, a quarter, from the center of the table.

MICHAELS

See you on the other side.

PETERSON

First one's always the hardest.

Mayhew gives a half-hearted smile; turns away. He grabs a coffee pot from a counter in the room and pours himself a cup, his back to the table of men. He closes his eyes, taking a large breath before turning back to them, coffee in hand. He flips the coin once in the air, pockets it, and gently closes the door behind him.

INT. - EXECUTION ROOM - EVENING

A PHYSICIAN, 60s, dressed in a medical coat and thin-rimmed glasses, sits in a seat pressed against the wall of the room, empty chairs on either side of him. He reads a newspaper intently; a cup of steaming coffee sits on the ground beside his feet. Occasionally, he glances at his watch with boredom.

The only other man in the room, a PRISONER. He sits in a wooden ELECTRIC CHAIR in the center of the room. Leather bindings tie his feet to the base of the chair and his wrists to the chair's arms. His standard prisoner uniform hangs off of him, tattered and old. His face is worn and scruffy; he's probably nearing seventy years of age.

Mayhew swings open the door, then stops suddenly upon entering, eyes darting around the room. The door slowly shuts behind him, its quiet, mechanical clank the only noise in the room.

PRISONER (to Mayhew)

None for me?

Mayhew slightly jumps, pupils dilating. His mouth opens, but he doesn't respond; brows furrowed in confusion.

The prisoner nods his head towards the cup of coffee in Mayhew's hand.

MAYHEW

Oh. No.

Mayhew sets the coffee down on the floor by the door, then rolls up his sleeves. He keeps looking around, trying hard not to let his inexperience show on his face. He walks past the physician, accidentally bumping the coffee at his feet. It spills onto the cold, dusty floor, pooling on the linoleum.

MAYHEW

Sorry, I'm sorry.

The physician glares, picks it up, returns to his indifferent state. Mayhew eyes the prisoner uneasily, anticipating some sort of reaction. The prisoner stays still, keeping a curious gaze on Mayhew as best as he can while confined to the chair while Mayhew bustles around, examining the walls, the floor, the ceiling, anything except the prisoner.

PRISONER

Don't you want to know what it was?

Mayhew coughs, almost choking.

MAYHEW

Pardon?

PRISONER

It's nice of you to pretend like you don't — courteous. But you're walking around just fine, and I'm stuck to this chair.

Mayhew looks down, face flushed, avoiding the prisoner's watchful gaze.

MAYHEW

I don't want to know.

PRISONER

Does the not-knowing make it easier?

Mayhew opens his mouth to speak — he is unsure how to answer. The prisoner sees this — a smile of amusement fleets across his face.

PRISONER

You haven't done this before, have you?

At this, the physician looks up, bushy eyebrows raised expectantly. Mayhew stares at the floor, swirling around dust with the toe of his shoe.

MAYHEW

(softly) No.

PHYSICIAN

(sighing) Lord almighty.

The prisoner lets out a laugh, but before can say anything, Mayhew turns to the physician.

MAYHEW

Are we waiting on anyone else?

PRISONER

They've had about fifty years to come. You can go on ahead.

MAYHEW

Alright then.

Mayhew walks towards the prisoner, getting on his knees to check the bindings around his feet. The physician turns to the next page of his newspaper.

PRISONER (to Mayhew)

I bet if this was you, there wouldn't be an empty seat in the house.

Mayhew goes rigid. Slowly, he straightens, kneeling to face the prisoner.

PRISONER (cont'd)

A sold-out crowd for all the people who loved Mr...*(he reads the name on his ID)* Mayhew. Tell me, Mr. Mayhew, do you have a family?

Mayhew stays silent, face flushing again.

PRISONER (cont'd)

Come on, who am I gonna tell? Humor me.

MAYHEW

(slowly) A wife.

PRISONER

No kids?

At this, Mayhew stiffens. He glances at the physician, who shrugs as if to say "you're on your own" before returning to his paper.

MAYHEW

One in October. A girl.

PRISONER

A girl. A blessing, then a nightmare. From what I hear, at least.

MAYHEW

You never had kids?

PRISONER

Have you and Mrs. Mayhew thought up a name?

MAYHEW  
We like, uh, Jane.

At this, the prisoner stiffens, his flat hands balling into fists, straining against the bindings.

PRISONER  
Jane?

Mayhew stands up, stepping back from the prisoner, alarm in his eyes. Upon seeing this, the prisoner calms himself, regaining composure.

PRISONER (cont'd)  
I haven't heard that name in years. They always did say that love finds you in your last moments, the pastors. I don't know if any of them ever went out the way I am, though.

The ventilation system kicks on, a slight whirring the only noise. MAYHEW glances at the physician in the corner.

MAYHEW  
Do you have the time, sir?

The physician doesn't look up.

DOCTOR  
Quarter 'till.

MAYHEW  
Quarter 'till...

He thinks. Nervously, he pulls out the coin from his shirt pocket. He lets it fall from hand to hand, rubbing it, fidgeting.

The prisoner sees the coin — something flashes in his eyes. He starts, cautiously:

PRISONER  
The conscience is an odd thing, Mr. Mayhew. Sits up here—

He leans his chest and head forward so that his index finger can tap his temple.

PRISONER (cont'd)

-so light you don't even notice it at first. Then it starts to gain a little weight, around the midsection - we're all guilty of that, aren't we, Doc?

The physician, still glued to his paper, grunts.

PRISONER (cont'd)

Well, anyway. It gains, and it pushes. Down on the heart, then the lungs. Then it just sits, right in the stomach. Heavier than you ever could've imagined. And suddenly, your whole life has passed and you've been anchored by that damn conscience and the guilt it's drugged along. A man's life weighs heavy on the conscience, Mr. Mayhew.

MAYHEW

This isn't my fault. I'm just trying to do my job.

PRISONER

Your job is pushing the button that ends my life, isn't it?

Steam still rises from Mayhew's coffee. Footsteps pass in the hall outside.

PRISONER (cont'd)

I don't want that to weigh on you, Mr. Mayhew. Even if it is just your job. I think we leave it up to fate.

MAYHEW

Your fate is already determined, is it not?

PRISONER

What's the harm in a coin flip? Heads, fate's just pushed my button, but tails I get a minute more of conversation with you.

PHYSICIAN

Quarter 'till...



PRISONER

Mr. Mayhew, let me remind you — the house always wins.  
Probability guarantees I will not walk out of this room.

Mayhew scans the room, glancing at the door, then his feet.

PRISONER (cont'd)

50/50. Could all be over in one minute — a few if I'm lucky.

MAYHEW

Maybe a couple coin flips.

A smile grows across the PRISONER's face.

PRISONER

I'm at your mercy.

Nodding, Mayhew looks at the coin in his hands, playing with it.  
The physician lets out a loud sigh, turning the page in his  
paper.

Mayhew flips the coin, catches it, flips it against his hand. We  
do not see how it landed, but the physician peers up and sees  
the result. He examines Mayhew. Mayhew looks for a second too  
long, nods, and addresses the prisoner.

MAYHEW

Tails.

PRISONER

I want to know how a man like you ends up in a position like  
this.

Mayhew tilts his head, slightly taken aback.

MAYHEW

Funny. Most people would think I'd be asking you that.

PRISONER

Well, "most people" aren't in this room. It's you, me, and  
Doctor Smiles over there.

PHYSICIAN

Watch it.

PRISONER

Besides, Mr. Mayhew, you and I are not the same type of man.

Mayhew crosses his arms.

MAYHEW

How do you figure?

PRISONER

Fate's been kinder to you. My guess is you come from a nice family, church on Sundays. Moral compass stronger than sin. You probably could've worked somewhere nice, with that handsome face. And yet, you're right here with me.

MAYHEW

Had to get a job somewhere. Not the biggest fan of blood, so that ruled out medicine.

The prisoner scoffs/laughs.

PRISONER

So you checked to see if the penitentiary was hiring?

MAYHEW

I guess you could say that.

PRISONER

Let's flip again. I like this game.

Again, Mayhew flips, then palms the coin, out of sight of the audience but visible to the physician again. Mayhew looks up.

MAYHEW

Are you afraid?

PRISONER

I did think the grim reaper would be a little older, scarier.

MAYHEW  
Of losing your life.

PRISONER  
No, no no no. I've been a ghost for years. Death is only scary  
to a man that has something worth living for.

Mayhew grabs an empty chair from the wall where the physician  
sits. He places it facing the prisoner, its sleek metal in stark  
contrast to the thick wood of the electric chair. Mayhew sits in  
it.

MAYHEW  
I hope it happens before you can feel it.

The prisoner leans in as close to Mayhew as he can, still bound.

PRISONER  
I hope I feel every second of it.

The prisoner leans back, eyes to the ceiling.

PRISONER (cont'd)  
I hope, even for a second, that it feels like the sun.

MAYHEW  
Like that story...Icarus...

The prisoner tears his eyes from the ceiling, looking at Mayhew  
with a newfound curiosity.

PRISONER  
Pardon?

MAYHEW  
Icarus. Touched the sun before the fall.

PRISONER  
Don't you think Icarus knew the fall was inevitable?

MAYHEW

I think his wings were made of wax, and he was reckless. He made a choice.

The physician has set the newspaper on his lap.

PHYSICIAN

I'd say it's about time for another coin flip.

The physician taps his wristwatch.

Again, Mayhew flips the coin, palms it. He looks at the prisoner briefly, then back down to the coin. With his eyes still down, he speaks.

MAYHEW

Tails. Your turn.

PRISONER

I think you should get out of here.

Mayhew leans back in his seat, intertwining his fingers behind his head and laughing scornfully.

MAYHEW

I would if I could. They've had me scheduled on this for weeks.

PRISONER

This job, not this execution. This isn't a place for you.

MAYHEW

What, you don't think I can handle this?

PRISONER

I think your wife and daughter deserve more of you than what you're gonna have left over for them.

The ventilator clicks off, suspending the room in even sharper silence.

PRISONER (cont'd)

This is tearing you apart. I'm watching it happen.

Mayhew stands up, turning his back to the prisoner and pacing, hands still behind his head.

PRISONER (cont'd)

You're not supposed to be here, Mr. Mayhew. When you try to fight fate—

At this, Mayhew whips around, pointing a finger at the prisoner. He is flustered, face red, beads of sweat along his hairline.

MAYHEW

Fate is not what brought me here, or what will make me leave. I made a *choice*. I was seventeen years old when I was arrested for a bad choice I made. If I'd been four months older, I could've been tried and charged as an adult, and I may have very well ended up here. I made a conscious choice to change my life, the same way your decisions led you here. Not fate. I can recognize that fact, but you can't. *That* is the difference between us.

The coffee on the floor has long since stopped steaming. The prisoner is tense, back pressed firmly against the back of the chair, startled by this outburst.

PRISONER

You don't think some people get lucky?

MAYHEW

I think we make our own luck.

The physician's eyes bounce between Mayhew and the prisoner. He grips the newspaper tightly.

PRISONER

Let's see what our coin has to say about that.

Again, Mayhew flips, palms. Results indiscernible to us. Mayhew looks up.

MAYHEW

I believe it's my turn to ask a question.

At this, the physician's eyes widen incredulously.

PHYSICIAN

Mr. Mayhew, I think—

Mayhew turns sharply to face the physician.

MAYHEW

I can handle this, Doctor. Thank you.

The physician huffs, and shakes his newspaper out in front of his face. Mayhew turns back towards the prisoner.

MAYHEW (cont'd)

Are you a spiritual man?

PRISONER

That your way of asking if I believe in God, Mr. Mayhew? Of course I do.

Mayhew takes his seat again, crossing his arms and legs. He proceeds skeptically.

MAYHEW

Really.

PRISONER

Who else could be cruel enough to put you here with me, at the very end? Give me kindness, and time. Show me life didn't have to be this way.

He leans in close to MAYHEW. Tears well in his eyes. When Mayhew sees this, he uncrosses his limbs, softening.

PRISONER (cont'd)

God *knew* Icarus. So He gave him the sun, and hope. And then he laughed.

MAYHEW

No, that's not right...

PRISONER

That's how the story goes, is it not?

MAYHEW

God's supposed to be with us, be *for* us, always...

PRISONER

Then where has he been all this time?

MAYHEW

I don't know. I don't know.

PRISONER

You believe in a loving God?

MAYHEW

I believe--I mean, I think--

PRISONER

If you really think life is about choices, you damn sure better be able to make and stand by them, Mayhew. Tell me what you believe!

Mayhew looks at the ground, and then in the prisoner's eyes almost as if he's searching for something. He speaks slowly, letting every word fall off of his tongue intentionally.

MAYHEW

I believe...that a single hour spent with someone that loves you, no matter how far they've seemed to be, is better than a lifetime without. I don't know who that is for you, but it's God for me.

The prisoner draws back in his seat, not breaking eye contact with Mayhew. A look of understanding crosses his face.

PRISONER

An hour, you say. Doc, the time?

PHYSICIAN

Later than it should be.

The prisoner nods, thinking. He smiles softly.

PRISONER

What do you say I flip the coin this time, Mr. Mayhew? Would that be alright?

Mayhew looks at the prisoner, his aged face, constrained feet, skinny wrists and arms with skin void of freckles or color from sunlight. Carefully, he places the coin in the prisoner's hand, folding his own hand over it. They sit for an instant, the imminent future pressing heavy against them.

When Mayhew releases the prisoner's hand, the prisoner takes a long look at the coin, rubbing his thumb over the words IN GOD WE TRUST inscribed on the heads side before letting it fall to the ground. From there, it rolls across the room, near where the physician is sitting.

PRISONER

I'm making a choice. You can do it now.

Mayhew's eyes grow wide. He looks from the coin to the prisoner with confusion.

MAYHEW

But the coin - you didn't flip it.

PRISONER

Let me make this choice. If it's in my hands, like you say it is, let this be in my hands.

MAYHEW

Are you sure? Not one more minute?

PRISONER

Not one more.



Mayhew looks around frantically, searching the prisoner's calm face for any indication he shouldn't begin. When he doesn't find any, he grows solemn.

MAYHEW

Okay, then.

Mayhew stands; fastens the straps across the prisoner's chest with shaky hands. When he tries to attach them, he fumbles twice.

The prisoner lets out a small chuckle.

PRISONER

What, are you nervous or something?

Mayhew stops, choking on a laugh of disbelief. He looks at the prisoner; the prisoner offers a kind smile.

PRISONER

It's going to be okay. You can handle this.

With a nod and watery eyes, Mayhew finishes strapping him completely. He steps back from the chair.

Mayhew wipes his palms on his shirt. He begins, shakily.

MAYHEW

Daniel Samson Walter, you have been sentenced by the great state of Nevada to death by electricity. In a moment, I will administer a series of shocks until your heart is no longer beating. Do you have anything you would like to say before this occurs?

PRISONER

They always did say that love finds you in your last moments.  
Damned pastors were right.

MAYHEW

(shakily) May God be forgiving to you.

MAYHEW walks out of frame. The coin still sits on the floor next to the physician. He slowly reaches down, examines it, looking closely at both sides. It's a normal quarter—one side is heads, one side is tails. He shakes his head in disbelief. From off screen, we here MAYHEW pronounce:

MAYHEW

500 volts being administered...now.

Camera still focused on the DOCTOR, he flips the coin into the air the same time that we hear the electric shock.

INT. — JAIL HALLWAY — NIGHT

Mayhew closes the door to the room, pressing his forehead against it momentarily. He and the physician now stand in the hallway immediately outside.

When Mayhew turns around, he still leans against the door, as if he can't support his own body weight. He is breathing hard.

He wipes his eyes with the collar of his shirt. The physician hands him a handkerchief.

MAYHEW

Thank you, Doctor.

PHYSICIAN

You're not slick, Mr. Mayhew. And you're not God, either.

MAYHEW

Sir?

PHYSICIAN

You expected me to believe a perfectly fair coin would land on tails five times in a row, when I know for damn sure it landed on heads the very first time you tossed it.

Mayhew sobs.

MAYHEW

He just wanted someone to talk to. How do you do that? How do you kill a man in silence?

The physician leans against the wall next to Mayhew.

PHYSICIAN

I've sat in there for a lot of those. I've had to bear witness to a lot of death. You understand me?

Mayhew nods solemnly, silent tears still streaming down his face.

PHYSICIAN (cont'd)

I always thought it's best when the guard just comes in, does it, and leaves. Matter of business, and nothing more. There's always a moment, though, when the shock first hits and the man in the chair tenses, like even though he knew what was coming, he wasn't ready.

Mayhew's face contorts in pain; the physician glances at him and then at the floor.

PHYSICIAN (cont'd)

I'll admit, normally I close my eyes. But tonight, Mr. Mayhew? He didn't tense. He just relaxed right into it. He was ready.

The physician stands up from against the wall, facing Mayhew.

PHYSICIAN (cont'd)

You were never going to save him, keep him alive. But you made his life a little bit better. That's not nothing.

Mayhew straightens himself, wiping his nose and eyes on his shirt sleeve. He reaches out to shake the physician's hand.

MAYHEW

Thank you, Doctor.

The physician grabs his hand, shakes it, then clasps the outside of Mayhew's hand with his left hand emphatically before letting go.

The physician begins to walk away, as Mayhew leans against the wall again. After a few thoughtful paces, the physician turns.

PHYSICIAN

Did it feel good, holding the coin and knowing it didn't matter how it landed? You had the power?

He pauses, reaching into his pocket for something.

PHYSICIAN (cont'd)

I hope it did. I hope it was the closest thing to Hell you'll ever feel—

He tosses the coin in the air, down the hall about three feet to Mayhew. Mayhew catches it, clutching it between both hands.

PHYSICIAN (cont'd)

—and your very first taste of Heaven.

As the physician walks down the long hallway, further away from Mayhew, Mayhew opens his hands and looks at the coin. He examines the tails side in great detail—almost as if he's seeing it for the first time?

He flips it over to the heads side, running his thumb over the words IN GOD WE TRUST.

**THE END.**

