

INCARCERATION

short play by Kim Komljanec

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

CHERRY	a woman in her early twenties
KEVIN	father of her child
SEAN	a man in a suit, thirty something
MAN ONE and MAN TWO	prisoners; depending on the production possibilities, they can be reduced to voices off
PLACE:	a small city in Devon, England
TIME:	now

SCENE ONE

Morning. Cherry is standing in front of a tall red brick wall on top of which runs a thick line of barbed wire. Next to her a baby pram. She yells.

CHERRY: Kevin! Kevin? Kevin, you there? Oi! Can you 'ear me? Kevin? Don't leave me standin' 'ere shoutin'! Kevin?

A man's voice is heard shouting from behind the wall.

KEVIN: I'm 'ere, luv. I was gonna go out, but I changed me mind.

She laughs.

CHERRY: How are ya?

KEVIN: Fine. I guess. You?

CHERRY: I'm all right. I think.

Silence.

Merry Christmas.

KEVIN: Is it?

CHERRY: Oh, come on, Kevin, don't be thick!

KEVIN: Wha do you mean?

CHERRY: I told you last week I'd be here on Christmas day, didn't I?

KEVIN: Yeh.

Silence. She lights a cigarette.

D'you get anything nice?

CHERRY: Wha? Like presents?

KEVIN: Yeh.

CHERRY: Nah. Who's gonna get presents for me?

KEVIN: D'you buy anything?

CHERRY: Who for?

KEVIN: Dunno. The lil'un?

CHERRY: Oh, she don't know wha' presents are. She'll get um next year.

KEVIN: Ah.

CHERRY: Did you want a present? Like from me?

KEVIN: Me? No, no. I'm fine.

CHERRY: Right.

Silence.

KEVIN: You broke?

CHERRY: No, I'm loaded. What the fuck do you mean!? Course I'm broke. You think I dug up a treasure in the park since last week or somein?

KEVIN: Sorry.

Silence.

CHERRY: You really fucked me over, Kev, you know that? I mean, why'd you have to go rob Mrs. Delmar's shop, huh? Like there isn't plenty shops 'round 'ere for you to rob? Why d'you have to pick the one I worked in, huh? So now I don't have no job either. Jesus, Kevin, you're really thick, you know that?

KEVIN: 't wasn't robbing!

CHERRY: What was it then?

KEVIN *mumbles in reply.*

CHERRY: Wha?

KEVIN: Borrowin'

CHERRY: Can't hear you!

KEVIN: BORROWIN'!

CHERRY: Oh. Borrowin'. Yeh, right.

KEVIN: Listen! Wha you gonna do tonight?

CHERRY: Nuffin. Stay 'ere I guess.

KEVIN: Wha do you mean?

CHERRY: Where am I gonna go?

KEVIN: You should go out, you know, dancin', havin' fun with the gals. Sandra
an' Mindy?

CHERRY: Na-ah. Mindy won't speak to me.

KEVIN: Why not? Isn't you two friends?

CHERRY: Na-ah. Not anymore. Not since wha you did.

KEVIN: Wha!?! Because of 'er mum?

CHERRY: You hit 'er on the 'ead, Kevin.

KEVIN: I did not. The thing fell when I was runnin' away. I told you.

CHERRY: Kevin!

KEVIN: Okay, I pushed 'er, but I didn't mean to!

CHERRY: Well, whatever, Mindy fuckin' Delmar won't talk to me no more.

KEVIN: Sorry.

CHERRY: That's all right. She's a bitch anyway.

Silence.

KEVIN: So wha you gonna do tonight?

CHERRY: Why you so worried?

KEVIN: I want me girl to be 'avin' fun for Christmas.

CHERRY: 'ow can I 'ave fun without you?

KEVIN: Yeh, I know. It's hard.

She laughs. They both laugh.

KEVIN: But, really, luv, go out, go dancing or somein'.

CHERRY: Wha? With the little one 'round me neck?

KEVIN: Oh, right. I forgot.

CHERRY: Jesus, Kevin, it's your child, too!

KEVIN: I know. I luv 'er. And you, Cherry. That's why I want you two to have fun tonight. Not stay out 'ere like. Okay?

CHERRY: Yeah.

Silence.

Are you ... Is there ... You guys havin' a Christmas party in there tonight?

KEVIN: Here? Nah.

CHERRY: Wha? Like nuffin?

KEVIN: Don't think so. There's no decoration hangin' on the walls or anythin'. Or d'you reckon this bob wire counts as decoration?

He laughs. She smiles.

CHERRY: Wat's it like in there, Kev?

KEVIN: Wha d'you mean?

CHERRY: Is it like ... Do they make you do stuff ... Like?

KEVIN: Yeh, we 'ave to work. Dig ditches eight hours a day. Heavy, you know
wat I mean?

CHERRY: Yeh. Youm said.

KEVIN: Yeh.

CHERRY: I meant. Do they make you *do stuff* ... like we saw on the telly? I mean,
like other blokes from your cell or whatever.

KEVIN: Oh. Oh, that. *(He laughs.)* Naah. Wha made you think 'bout tha, huh?

CHERRY: Dunno. I'm just askin'.

KEVIN: You don't have to worry 'bout that, now, luv. Your Kev's thinkin'
'bout you. Every night, he is. And as soon as they let me outta here,
we're gonna get things back on track, you and me, yeh?

They both laugh.

So don't you worry, all right?

CHERRY: All right.

Silence. She puts out her cigarette. The baby in the pram cries.

KEVIN: Wha's that? Is that me lil' gal?

CHERRY: Yeh.

KEVIN: She 'ungry, you reckon?

CHERRY: Dunno. I guess.

KEVIN: Wha d'you mean, you dunno?

CHERRY: I said I dunno. Is not like she can tell me wha the fuck she wants.

KEVIN: But ... Don't you, like, know?

CHERRY: Wha? Like read 'er mind or somein'?

KEVIN: No. Just like, know, you know, like.

Silence. The baby starts crying again.

When did you last feed 'er?

CHERRY: Oh, fuck off!

KEVIN: Cherry, Cherry, luv, don't go away.

CHERRY: I wasn't going anywhere. Where d'you want me to go?

KEVIN: No, I just reckoned. In't she 'ungry?

CHERRY: Yeah. So? She'll wait.

KEVIN: But ... She's crying.

CHERRY: So wha? It's not the end of the world like! When I was little and I wanted somein me mum always left me crying. Didn't hurt me much, did it?

The baby keeps crying.

KEVIN: Will you just go and feed 'er for Christ's sake!

CHERRY: Whatever.

She leaves.

KEVIN: Cherry?

CHERRY (*shouts*): I'm off.

KEVIN: Talk to you tomorrow, luv! Merry Christmas! I luv you, Cherry!

SCENE TWO

A pub. Lunch time. Pop Christmas music is playing. CHERRY, behind the bar. Sean, wearing a suit approaches.

SEAN: You work 'ere, me lovely?

CHERRY shrugs.

CHERRY: Wat's it look like?

SEAN: I never saw you here before.

CHERRY: 'ow can I 'elp?

SEAN: Give us a pint.

Silence.

Oi, 'ow come I never saw you before?

CHERRY: You forgot maybe.

Sean stares at CHERRY's breasts.

SEAN: Nah. I never forget a pretty face.

CHERRY (*points at her face*): Only me face is up 'ere, my lover.

SEAN (*still staring at her breasts*): That's wat I'm sayin: I'd never forget a pair like these.

CHERRY laughs. SEAN looks at her.

So, when do you finish?

CHERRY shrugs.

You don't know? What kind of a job is this?

CHERRY: Only temp. I'm just 'ere now, for Christmas. Just a few days. Until New Year's eve, when the regular girl comes back from 'olidays.

SEAN: Wow. Nice 'oliday for you that is.

CHERRY shrugs.

CHERRY: Yeh.

SEAN: So, wha do you do when you don't work 'ere?

Pause.

You still in school?

CHERRY bursts out laughing.

CHERRY: Wha? In school? Me?

SEAN: Why not?

CHERRY shakes her head.

CHERRY: Does it look like I'm smart enough for school?

SEAN: Well ... So wha **do** you do? You gotta boyfriend?

CHERRY shrugs.

CHERRY: Wha do **you** do?

SEAN: No? You gotta be kidding me! You tellin' me you're single? (*points to her breasts again*) Now that's a waste of a lovely pair, innit?

CHERRY laughs.

CHERRY: You're daft.

She gives him the pint he ordered. He pays and offers his hand.

SEAN: No, I'm Sean.

CHERRY: Cherry.

She takes his hand. Sean kisses hers.

SEAN: Cherry, huh? Sweet or sour?

CHERRY laughs.

I'd love to taste it.

CHERRY: Look, I gotta go, all right?

SEAN: Where you goin'? I thought you worked 'ere.

CHERRY: I do. I gotta go sort somein out in the kitchen.

She walks away from the bar, towards the back room. SEAN crouches under the bar and follows her.

SEAN: Can I come with you?

CHERRY: No.

He does anyway. CHERRY turns around, stopping before she comes to the door. She looks him in the eye. The music stops playing.

SEAN: Maybe I can 'elp?

SCENE THREE

Later that day. A hospital room. A chair and a white curtain, covering the patient's bed. A beeping of a medical machine and heavy breathing (as if through a tube) are heard throughout the scene. CHERRY walks in. She's carrying her baby and a wrapped present in her arms. She sits on the chair next to the curtain.

CHERRY (*whispers*): Hi, Mrs. Delmar.

Just heavy breathing and the beeping of the medical machinery are heard.

Is me. Cherry.

No response.

I thought I'd come 'round to say hi.

No response.

I can't stay long, though. I gotta get back to work 'cause ... Oh. (*Pause.*)

Yeh, I got a job, but is only temporary. I reckoned I'd come work for you again, once you're outta here. I mean, if you'll take me back, that is. Anyway.

She stops. There's no response.

You know, Mindy won't speak to me. Did you know that? I mean, I know is like really bad wha Kevin did and all, but – (*Pause.*) I reckoned if I came back to work for you at the shop, I could pay off wha 'e took and wha got broken and all and then maybe we could –

She stops. Still no response. She speaks louder.

Oh, don't go tellin' me 'bout the big expectations you 'ad for me! I don't need to 'ear all 'bout 'ow I was so much smarter than Mindy in school and if only I didn't drop out 'ow I could've gone on to be a lawyer or a teacher or somein. I really don't wanna 'ear all that again, all right?! That's not why I came 'ere for, like, OK? A lecture or somein!

She stops.

Anyway.

Pause.

I just thought I'd come 'round to see if you're doin' all right.

Pause.

I reckoned you might like to see the lil'un. Bein' Christmas and all.

No response.

I thought you might wanna 'old 'er for a while. She's been a really good gal today. Sleepin' all the way 'ere and all. *(to the baby:)* In't that true, lil'un, huh? You wanna give nanny Delmar a lil' hug? Yeh, 'ere we go. *(to Mrs. Delmar:)* I'll just put 'er next to you on the bed if that's all –

Cherry draws the curtain aside. The hospital bed is empty. There are no medical machines next to it. Cherry takes a step back. A moment. The beeping and the heavy breathing become faster and louder.

Oh. Oh, all right.

The baby starts crying. Cherry draws the curtain back again. She sits on the chair.

(To the baby:) Shush, hush now. Don't cry. Shush.

Pause. The baby stops crying. The beeping and the heavy breathing is calmer again.

Anyway. I just thought I'd come 'round to see if you're doin' all right.

I reckon you don't wanna 'ave me over for Christmas dinner this year, right?

Pause.

I brought you a present. Had it wrapped and all.

Pause.

D'you want me to open it for you?

She starts unwrapping the present. She tears the paper very slowly. She starts singing to herself softly:

I don't want a lot for Christmas

There's just one thing I need

I don't care about the presents

Underneath the Christmas tree ...

Lights fade out.

SCENE FOUR

CHERRY's singing fades into pop Christmas music. Evening. The pub. CHERRY is behind the bar, facing SEAN on the other side of the bar. She passes him a pint of beer.

CHERRY: Anythin' else I can 'elp you with, my lover?

SEAN: A kiss?

She leans over the bar closer to him.

CHERRY: Look, you don't wanna be with me, yeh?

He kisses her. She lets him.

SEAN: You sure?

CHERRY (*with her eyes closec*): Yep.

SEAN: Maybe you wanna be with me?

CHERRY: No. Look. No, yeh?

SEAN: D'you wanna go somewhere quiet?

CHERRY: No.

SEAN: Come on.

CHERRY: No. I gotta go anyway.

SEAN: Where to?

CHERRY: I gotta check somein in the kitchen.

He kisses her again. She lets him. Then she turns around and walks away from the bar. SEAN crouches and follows her.

Oi. You can't do that.

SEAN: What?

CHERRY: Come to my side.

SEAN: I just did.

CHERRY: Look, I really gotta go, yeh? I'll be right back, anyway.

She goes to the back-room. SEAN follows her. She lets him. There are cardboard boxes with beer and wine bottles everywhere in the room.

SEAN: This in't the kitchen.

CHERRY: No.

SEAN: No.

He steps closer. He kisses her again.

CHERRY: Oi.

SEAN: Wha?

CHERRY: I got a baby.

SEAN: Wha?

CHERRY: I got a kid.

SEAN: Really?

CHERRY: Yeh.

SEAN: So?

CHERRY: Wha d'you mean so?

From behind a pile of boxes, CHERRY brings out her baby. The music is still heard from the other room. Long silence. They both stare at the baby.

SEAN: Wow. He's cute.

CHERRY: She.

SEAN: Oh. Hello, baby! Can I 'old 'er?

CHERRY: Sure.

CHERRY passes him the baby. She cries.

Oi. You 'ungry? Is she 'ungry?

CHERRY: Yeh. Like all the time!

CHERRY takes the baby back.

SEAN: Do you breastfeed 'er?

CHERRY: Yeh.

SEAN: Go, on, I don't mind.

He turns away as she sits on one of the boxes and starts breastfeeding the baby. She watches the baby and doesn't notice SEAN turning around to face her again and says:

Wow. That's real beautiful.

CHERRY smiles. A moment.

This really makes me wanna fuck you.

CHERRY: Wha?

SEAN: I said, I envy **the kid**. I wanna fuck you.

CHERRY gets up, still holding the baby.

CHERRY: Get out. Get, out, you fucking pervert! *(she screams)* Get out, you
freak!

SEAN stands motionless, listening to her. The baby starts crying. CHERRY starts screaming.

You fucking bastard! Get out! GET OUT OF 'ERE! YOU FUCKING
PERVERT! GET OUT! LEAVE! LEAVE US ALONE! LEAVE ME
ALONE!

She stops screaming. Her eyes are fixed on him. He watches her then slowly turns around and walks out. CHERRY watches him leave. She's left alone with the baby who is still crying. She stands and breathes deeply. She looks at the child.

Sorry. Sorry lil'un. Sorry. This in't supposed to 'appen. In't supposed to be like this. I'll take care of you. Don't worry. I'll take care of you, but I need to take care of meself first, all right? You see? I need to take care of meself, yeh? I 'ave to, all right? I 'ave to. Yeh? But that don't mean I don't I luv you, yeh? Mummy luv you. Mummy'll always luv you, yeh?
Mummy'll always luv ya.

Gradually the baby stops crying, but CHERRY starts. She takes a flattened cardboard box and picks up a marker pen lying on the floor. She writes something in big letters. Lights out.

SCENE FIVE

Late evening. The same wall as in scene one. Nobody's there. After a while, CHERRY comes in. She walks to where she always stands. She looks for her cigarettes and lights one. After a while, she finally yells:

CHERRY: Kevin! Oi, Kevin!

KEVIN: Cherry? That you, luv?

CHERRY: Yeh. You okay?

KEVIN: Yeh. You?

Silence.

Where you'd been? D'you go somewhere nice?

CHERRY: I's busy.

KEVIN: With another bloke?

CHERRY: Nah.

KEVIN: Promise?

CHERRY: Yeh. Listen. I been lookin' for work.

KEVIN: Yeh?

CHERRY: Nuffin. No one'll take me.

KEVIN: Oh.

Silence.

Don't worry, luv, I'll take care of ya.

CHERRY: Yeh.

KEVIN: I'll get two jobs, all right?

CHERRY: Right.

KEVIN: We got this thing in 'ere now, *reintegration programme* is wat they call it. They send this woman in and wat she does is, she tells us 'ow to get jobs and all when we get out, right? See, some blokes been in 'ere since the 90s, you know wat I mean? This woman, Alice 'er name is, she says we gonna learn to *cooperate* and be *members of the society* is wha she says. Anyway, tonight we get to play football instead of diggin' ditches. Is really useful, this programme.

CHERRY looks at the ground. She can't keep still.

CHERRY: Right.

KEVIN: So, when I get out, luv, I'll find us a nice 'ouse and you can stay 'ome, cookin' and takin' care of the kids and all, all right?

CHERRY: Yeh.

Silence.

KEVIN: Is gonna be real nice, okay?

CHERRY: Yeh.

KEVIN: Listen, luv. I gotta go now, we got football now.

Other men's voices are heard in the background.

CHERRY: Yeh.

KEVIN: All right.

CHERRY: I went to see Mindy's mum. I wanted to ask 'er if she'll take me back after wha you did. Only, Mrs. Delmar's still in the hospital. Still in a coma. They say she's never wakin' up, like. I really hope she don't kick the bucket or Mindy'll never speak to me again you know wat I mean?

KEVIN: Wat? I can't hear you, luv.

CHERRY: Yeh.

The lights change, revealing the other side of the wall: KEVIN and the other prisoners are putting on their football shoes, changing their shirts etc.

I's thinkin'. I guess I should give the lil'un away. Like not for good. Not really for adoption. Just for a few years. Wha d'you reckon? Find someone to take care of 'er or somein'. Wha d'you think? Just so I get meself together.

KEVIN: Cherry, luv, I'll speak to you tomorrow, all right? I gotta go now,
game's startin', you know wat I mean? I luv you!

The men in the room are playful, they shove each-other around, there's a growing excitement in the room. Their voices get louder, shouting "Kevin, you ready, boi?" etc. but we can still hear CHERRY shouting over the wall.

CHERRY: Cause it's not like you're gettin' out tomorrow, right? I mean, you know, I'm on me own, like. So, I guess I 'ave to earn enough to pay the bills. But with the kid and all, you know, it's impossible. I mean is like, I can't even take care of meself, you know wat I mean? I need to take care of meself first, you know? Kev? Oi?

CHERRY's voice is drowned in the sounds of men shouting and shoving each-other around the room.

MAN 1: So Keviboi, you ready for this?

He passes the ball to Kevin. They play a little. Lights on the prison side of the wall fade, so do the ones on CHERRY'S side. A baby's crying is heard. A light comes on at the other end of the stage to reveal a cardboard box, where the crying is coming from. On the box it says in big letters: PLEASE, MAKE ME FEEL AT HOME.

THE END