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Humanities

## **Prisoner to Your Past**

### **Summary**

Our play takes place in the modern day of Los Angeles, California. The main character's name is Dan Mitchell, a 32 year old convict just released from jail because of his past gang life, he got caught robbing a house. In the story, Dan is an ex-con trying to turn his life around. He isn't able to get a license because of the mistakes he made in the past which causes him to take the bus to work everyday. Because of his transportation issues he gets to work late a lot and his boss has had enough. He tries explaining but himself to his boss but he's too late, he gets fired. Many people judge him because of his past and don't have any faith in him but he wants to prove them wrong. With no job Dan walks out onto the street and runs into one of his old gang members who convinces him to go with a few of there old "homies" to a bar. Dan's wife calls and his wife tries to make Dan not go because she thinks that Dan's old friends are a bad influence, however Dan decides to go to the bar anyway. After a few beers, Dan and his old gang friend Tyrone convinces Dan to steal a nice car with him. Because they are drunk they crash. Dan's wife gets to the scene but only to watch as Dan is led back to prison in handcuffs. The message we are trying to get across from our play is to not judge people because of their past.

### **Prologue**

*Desk will be set center stage lengthwise to the audience, file with inmates information will be set upon it. Two chairs set on each side of the desk will face each other and be angled slightly towards the audience for best view. Parole officer will wear police man uniform, Dan Mitchell will be dressed in an orange inmate jumpsuit, he will be wearing chains around his legs and handcuffs. Spot light will be directed center stage.*

**Parole officer:** Welcome Dan please sit down, so do you know why you are here?

**Dan:** Um, because I'm free sir.

**Parole officer:** No you are not free, not yet. You still have to serve your parole.

**Dan:** But sir I served my time, I feel remorse for what I did.

**Parole officer:** If you are done talking let me read to you your charges and conditions of your parole. Your charges are armed robbery and assault with a deadly weapon, is that correct?

**Dan:** *(quietly)* Yes.

**Parole officer:** You robbed a family's home in the dead of night and held a gun to their heads and were caught under the influence of alcohol.

**Dan:** *(tensely)* Yes. *(clenches fists)*

**Parole officer:** There was a woman and her children there, correct?

**Dan:** *(smashes fist on table, angrily says)* I know what I did. Why are you reminding me?

**Parole officer:** Control yourself, I am telling you because the condition of your parole will be based on it.

**Dan:** I understand sir, what are the conditions?

**Parole officer:** *(picks up file, opens)* It says that you are connected to a gang which we believe was a reason you committed a crime that night. We don't have any information about any accomplices, but I do not advise you to make contact with any of your old gang members.

**Dan:** *(nervously)* I see. *(wipes forehead)*

**Parole officer:** Your parole will last for a period of 12 months, during this time you will be observed closely. We have the right to perform random drug and alcohol tests on you at any time because you were caught under the influence at the time of your arrest.

**Dan:** Yes sir.

**Parole officer:** You also are subject to search at any time, we will check your dwelling for forbidden material.

**Dan:** I understand sir.

**Parole officer:** Good I hope you do, now lets talk about you. *(folds hands)*

**Dan:** What about me, sir?

**Parole officer:** Well it's just that a lot of young men just like you have sat in that chair hoping to restart

their lives and make amends, but they all fell into their own traps that ultimately led them straight back to prison, some come back in few months. They barely make it out of the front door.

**Dan:** I won't be like that sir, I'm really trying. I am going to be a good person.

**Parole officer:** *(sighs)* That's what they all say. I am very hopeful for them that they will make it right and fix their lives, but most of them never do that.

**Dan:** But sir I have a wife and a child. I have to be there for them, I have to fix my life and I will.

**Parole officer:** *(nods)* Well may the best of luck go to you. *(stands up with dan shakes hand)* Oh and one more thing, remember one false step and you will end up right back in prison. *(Dan exits stage right parole officer exits stage left)*

### **Parados**

*Prisoners will walk in a straight line towards the center of the stage. Actors will be dressed in orange jumpsuits with handcuffs on their wrists and manacles wrapped around their ankles. Light will be directed on the line of prisoners.*

**Prisoner #1:** A convict convicted for holding a gun to the heads of innocent people.

**Prisoner #2:** Many long years held back from society locked away in a dark cage filled with rage and violence.

**Prisoner #3:** Released with bitter remorse for his actions, and sorrow for his crimes he walks our streets, scars from his crimes reminding him of his faults.

**Prisoner #4:** Released on parole he goes on a path of freedom many have followed trying to make amends and repair their lives, but to no avail.

**Prisoner #5:** Judged and ridiculed for being a convict he must fight to let us know that he changed for the better.

**Prisoner #1:** Taking a step back to fix the rips and tears in his life.

**Prisoner #2:** Attempting to cut the ropes that held him to his dark past.

**Prisoner #3:** He could suffer the same fate many people like him have suffered, young men like him brimming with confidence ready to return to the world overjoyed to be free at last?

**Prisoner #4:** But to only find that they were not ready to return to the world and are cast away, back into the darkness of prison.

**Prisoner #5:** He'll keep raising his wonderful family and keep doing all the great things that heal him.

**(All Together):** Or he will fall into his own trap that he set built off of his actions from the past.

### Scene 1

*Clementine, Claire, and Claire's mom Kelly they stand center stage light is on the 3 of them. Dan enters from stage right. Chair is set stage right towards the front.*

**Dan:** Hello you must be Kelly, Claire's mom. *(offers hand to be shaken)*

**Kelly:** Oh, um hi. *(says awkwardly, hesitates before shaking Dan's hand)*

**Dan:** Well, how did it go? Did you have fun, Clementine?

**Clementine:** Oh yes, I had a great time. We did all kinds of fun things.

**Dan:** Well what did you guys do?

**Claire:** Well we... *(Claire is cut off by her mom)*

**Kelly:** We went to the park, anyway Claire and I need to go. Uh, bye.

**Dan:** *(acts taken aback by Kelly's actions)* Ok see you guys another time, bye. *(Dan and Clementine wave) (Kelly just nods)*

*Dan and Clementine move over to the chair on stage right Dan sits down on it takes out his cellphone and scrolls through it. Kelly pulls Claire aside to talk to her Clementine eavesdrops on their conversation. Lights are directed at Kelly and Claire.*

**Kelly:** Claire, come here I have to talk to you.

**Claire:** What is it? I want to go talk to Clementine.

**Kelly:** Uh yeah.. well I have a problem with Clementine.

**Claire:** Why? She's my friend, what has she done?

**Kelly:** Nothing, it's what her fathers done. He is a criminal and no daughter of mine will be friends with the daughter of a criminal. *(says angrily)*

**Claire:** What, how could you say that? Dan is so nice and so is Clementine.

**Kelly:** Claire, you don't understand. That man is dangerous no matter how good of a man he seems to be, he is an ex gang member for pete sakes he robbed a house with a gun on him, once a criminal always a criminal. *(grabs Claires arm and forces her off stage angrily)*

*Clementine covers her face in her hands as if crying. Dan stands up puts his phone away and walks to stage right Clementine wipes her tears and follows Dan off stage.*

### **Chorus 1**

*Five Prisoners walk Out on stage single file in orange prisoner jumpsuits with manacles for their*

*arms and legs on. They turn and face the audience and say the chorus.*

**Prisoner #1:** The common man or woman fears ones like us, once a convict always a convict they say.

**Prisoner #2:** An ex-con trying to repair the damage with a kind heart. Only to be judged on his past actions not the actions of the present.

**Prisoner #3:** One womans actions smashes a bonded forged friendship melting the connection between two friends and forcing each one into darkness.

**Prisoner #4:** The pain of having doors opened for you and rudely slammed in your face is part of the con life. Like having a carrot dangling teasingly above your head, in sight but far out of our reach.

**Prisoner #5:** The thought of being held back by the hand, fear, and mistrust of the common man, the man who says never trust a con.

**Prisoner #1:** It is the mistrust and fear that keeps us in the dark even when in the light and free from the chains of prison.

**Prisoner #2:** It is what keeps con's in the dark, even after years of being free.

**Prisoner #3:** Often because of this, fear many ex-cons end up the same no job no licence no hope no way.

**Prisoner #4:** Except to turn back to the criminal life and the common man wonders why so many of us end up back where we started.

**Prisoner #5:** Back to the dark chains and out again.

**(All together):** To the judgment of the common man

## **Scene 2**

*Dan, Vanessa, and Clementine are getting ready for the day, a Table is set lengthwise towards the audience and is set center stage. 3 bowls are on the table as well as a box of cereal. Dan and Vanessa sit on stage right and Clementine sits on stage left. Dan pours cereal into everyones*

*bowls.*

**Dan:** Everyone ready for another day?

**Vanessa:** I think so. I know I am, how about you Clementine?

**Clementine:** *(pauses before speaking)* What? Oh ya I'm ready I guess.

**Dan:** Is something wrong?

**Clementine:** It's just *(pauses)* never mind.

*Vanessa and Dan look at each other confused*

**Vanessa:** What's wrong, you can tell me.

**Clementine:** Mom just drop it, you too dad.

**Dan:** Hey... *(Dan is cut off by Vanessa)*

**Vanessa:** Not now honey, and no I will not drop it Clementine tell me please.

**Clementine:** Well when I was at the park the other day with Claire, and her mom said something about you dad.

**Dan:** Go on *(leans forward)*

**Clementine:** Claire's mom, Kelly, said that I can not play with her or be her friend any more.

**Dan:** Kelly said this to you, did she say why you can't be her friend?

**Clementine:** Well no, I heard them talking when we were waiting for the bus.

**Dan:** But why can't you be Claire's friend?

**Clementine:** Well *(hesitates)* because she says you are a criminal and you were in gangs and robbed innocent people with a gun, is this true?

**Dan:** Well yes, but that was a long time ago. I have changed, I'm a better person now. I have put that

behind me.

**Clementine:** (*Angrily*) You are not the father I know, my father is a person who is good and never committed a violent crime like you did or almost killed somebody.

**Dan:** Clementine stop, just let me explain (*says desperately*)

*Clementine gets up and storms off stage Dan puts his head in his hands Vanessa pats him on the shoulder.*

**Vanessa:** Honey are you ok?

**Dan:** Why, why, why am I still being judged on my actions from the past. First Kelly, and now my own daughter?

**Vanessa:** Just give her time, she will calm down and learn to accept it.

**Dan:** No she will be just like all the other people who leave a five foot circle around me wherever I walk and hiss as I walk past. (*angry smashes fist on table*) No one ever gives me a chance they just judge me based on my past.

**Vanessa:** Dan calm down.

**Dan:** Sorry, it just makes me mad how people are so narrow minded nowadays . They only see a convict on the outside but they don't see the kind hearted caring person that I am on the inside.

**Vanessa:** Well if you are done, then it's time to go. Don't forget to stop by the DMV today.

**Dan:** Oh great, another five hour wait. I will see you later today (*Both hug and exit stage right*)

## Chorus 2

*Five prisoners come on stage and recite chorus*

**Prisoner #1:** Judged by his own daughter one who he thought would for sure see the good person he



had become. Surely he thought she would be so narrow minded and only see the dark past.

**Prisoner #2:** Surely she would see the good in his heart, one that tries and tries to gain trust and compaction in a society that gives ones like us none.

**Prisoner #3:** Always at war in his mind going over the judgements made by common people who don't see the full picture and don't try to either.

**Prisoner #4:** Constantly held back by the eyes of a society that looks but does not see.

**Prisoner #5:** A society where the word "second chance" and "trust" for ones like us is never heard.

**Prisoner #1:** People fire judgements upon us without knowing who we are or the full story behind us they just sit and judge us.

**Prisoner #2:** Society chains our dark past to us so that we are forced to look back but not move forward forever are people like us chained to our dark pasts by judgements.

**Prisoner #3:** Judgement from the common man is like walking with a boat anchor always tied to your legs.

**Prisoner #4:** Always tripping you up slowing you down and holding you back.

**Prisoner #5:** We will never escape from what many of us did all those years ago, society makes sure of that.

**(Altogether):** The judgments of others spear into us like daggers and hold us back.

