The Space Inside

A bare stage except for two armchairs and a door. At key moments, the stage is drenched in red light that grows darker. Each scene starts with lights up and ends with a black out. OWEN *sleeps on a chair. He is dressed appropriately for a counsellor. He is wearing glasses and an analogue watch.*

An alarm clock sounds. OWEN *wakes up startled by the clock – the ringing ceases. There is a knock at the door.*

OWEN: Oh hello, yes please come in!

JAMIE *enters. They sit on the other chair.*

OWEN: Jamie hello! How are you?

Pause.

OWEN: Have you been feeling alright recently? Any troubles at school?

A long pause.

OWEN: If you don't want to talk right now then that's fine, we take these sessions at your pace not mine, but I do want you to get the most out of our time together if possible. So, with that in mind, anything you do say here is confidential and will not be shared with anyone, unless what you say implies danger to yourself, or others.

JAMIE *nods.* OWEN *is patient.*

JAMIE: school has been okay…

OWEN: That's excellent, I'm glad to hear it! Has there been anything you're enjoying more at the moment?

JAMIE: um… no not really. I just um… well I…

Beat.

OWEN: Jamie it's okay. Take your time, remember that there is no rush and that you are in a safe space, okay?

JAMIE: I um… I have a… partner.

OWEN: Oh really? I'm very happy for you, what're they like?

JAMIE: Um… pretty and uh… cuddly and caring.

OWEN: It sounds like they mean a lot to you. Do you see each other outside of school?

JAMIE: Mhm. We see each other on Saturdays as well.

OWEN: Excellent. I'm happy for you!

Pause.

OWEN: Do you want to talk more about your partner? How did you meet them?

Both are silent.

OWEN: Jamie? Jamie, can you hear me?

JAMIE: Yes. I can.

OWEN: Do you want to stop the session? If you feel too anxio-

JAMIE: NO!

OWEN: Okay, okay that's fine we won't stop. If you open up to me Jamie, we can chat, and I can help.

JAMIE types on their phone. "They hurt me".

Pause.

OWEN: they hur-

JAMIE: they **hear** me when in the bathroom.

Beat.

OWEN: I see…

Both are silent.

OWEN: alright well good session Jamie! I'm glad you're doing well. I've booked you in for next Wednesday at our usual time alright.

OWEN *hands them a note.* JAMIE *understands; they nod.*

OWEN: Stay safe okay? You know who to call if anything comes up.

The two armchairs and door. OWEN *sleeps on a chair. He is dressed the same as before, but his clothing is creased and his hair greasier. His glasses are sellotaped at the arms.*

An extremely loud alarm clock. OWEN *takes a while to wake up. There is a knock at the door.*

OWEN: Hello?

KITT: I'm Kitt, I'm here for therapy - I have an appointment with you today.

OWEN: Oh, okay I see. Please come in.

KITT enters.

OWEN: When did you book Kitt, I can't seem to find you?

KITT: Oh, I definitely booked.

OWEN: I'm sorry Kitt but I can't see you anywhere in my diary for both today and tomorrow. When did you book an appointment?

KITT: Right now.

Beat.

OWEN: I'm sorry but I can't see anyone unless they have booked an-

KITT: But I did book, are you stupid or something?

OWEN: Booked an appointment in advance.

KITT: Well, that's not my problem.

OWEN: Regrettably, it is. I have a full day's worth of patients to see today – I can't see you unless you book in advance or it is unfair to those who have already secured an appointment.

KITT begins to 'cry'.

OWEN: I can see you for ten minutes, okay?

They both sit.

OWEN: Anything you do say here is confidential and will not be shared with anyone, unless-

KITT: You just gonna sit there wasting my time? Or can we just start already?

Both are silent.

OWEN: Unless what you say implies danger to yourself, or others. Now, what's getting to you? It must be rather urgent if you needed an appointment this desperately.

KITT: Well, basically I have a partner and they're cool and whatever, but like, they're always really mopey and sad and just ugh. It's draining ya know? Like, I'll be telling them about what a great day I'm having, and they just bring it down. Like, fuck just listen-

OWEN: I understand your issue, but I'm not a couple's counsellor. I'm not well suited for giving advice in this area I'm afraid. I can point you in the direction of some people better suited-

KITT: So, you're a liar then? You said you're a counsellor!

OWEN: I'm not a liar. I specialise in mental health counselling; it says so on my door.

KITT: You should be good at all types of therapy.

OWEN: Would you expect a dentist to know how to perform lung surgery? This is the same thing.

KITT: Alright then, if you're gonna be such a bitch: my partner being a mopey twat is affecting my mental health.

Pause.

OWEN: What effects are your partner's mental health having on your own?

KITT: Well, I get really annoyed and angry at them and then they apologise. So, on top of everything they're a wimp cos they never argue back.

Pause.

OWEN: Have you considered as to why your partner's mental health is so detrimental right now?

KITT: Uh maybe cos their life is just boring?

OWEN: So, I take it, you are exempt from causing boredom or upset for your partner, right?

Silence.

OWEN: Your partner is struggling. And the way you talk about them makes me think that you think of them as a burden or an annoyance.

KITT: It's not my fault Jamie is such a miserable cunt! You'd be like me too, if every time you hugged them, they winced and cried! It's like they're terrified of me or something!

Silence.

KITT *rises and hits* OWEN *repeatedly. His nose breaks.*

KITT: Every fucking time I want to go somewhere they seem sad and upset! Am I just that shit that every time I see them, they look like they just created a poem on their wrists?

OWEN: *(calmly.)* If this is how you treat them, then no wonder they're terrified.

The door and chairs. OWEN *on the brown chair; dressed the same as before. His hair is longer – his shirt now has old blood and food stains on it. His glasses are now cracked. He has a bandage over his nose.*

A foghorn blares for a while. OWEN *wakes up half asleep. The door knocks.*

OWEN: Hello?

Knocking.

OWEN: Come in. The door is open.

It creaks open.

OWEN: Ah, I see. Come on Franklin, we're short on time today.

FRANKLIN *enters. He sits on the floor.*

FRANKLIN: Heh heh, sorry O. Ya know I like playing tricks.

OWEN: Yes, I'm well aware – been pulling them on me since year nine. Unfortunately, the higher-ups saw fit to overbook me.

FRANKLIN: Pricks.

OWEN: Yep, can't argue with that at all. So Frank, any developments on how you've been coping? You seem rather happy this morning.

FRANKLIN: Gotta be honest O, I'm doing better. Me and the lads have been working out in the yard a lot. Doing like, ya know, reps and all that fitness shit.

OWEN: And how are the 'lads'?

FRANKLIN: Yeh, they're alrigh' to be fair. Lot of them in for like, drugs and that.

OWEN: Yeah, I speak to a few of them.

FRANKLIN: Hm.

OWEN: How are you feeling about inmate life 9 months in?

FRANKLIN: Well with another 4 and a bit years to go… not bad. Could be worse.

OWEN *waits.*

FRANKLIN: Been thinking about why I did it recently. Still not sure if I can say I feel bad about it to be honest. Black-market firearms dealing aint the most like, you know, worst thing you could do. Was only selling them to some dealers as well. Not as if they got outta control either – the dicks I was selling to were about as smart as me.

Pause.

FRANKLIN: Should I feel guilty O?

OWEN: Well, Frank it's not my position to say-

FRANKLIN: But say it anyway.

Pause.

OWEN: On paper, yeah, I would say you don't need to feel guilty. The weapons you were selling all got tracked and dismantled not long after your trial, so they didn't do any real harm, like you said.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that's what I thought.

OWEN: But you are a parent, Frank.

Beat.

FRANKLIN: Yeah…

OWEN: I won't go on at you about it-

FRANKLIN: Nah you should. I miss him so much.

OWEN: Them, Frank. Them.

FRANKLIN: Them? What you on about Owen?

OWEN: I can't tell you Frank. You know I can't discuss other patients. Ask Jamie about it when they next visit.

FRANKLIN: You see him every week?

OWEN: Yeah. They book their appointments themself.

FRANKLIN: Good. You're the best shrink around O, you know that. You know how difficult it is for him to talk to people-

OWEN: Them, Frank.

FRANKLIN: Yeah them, shit sorry.

Pause.

OWEN: Yeah, they find it difficult to talk to but when they do talk, they can talk.

FRANKLIN: Seems to be like that for everyone but me.

OWEN: Don't start doing that. They still love you, Frank. They're your kid.

FRANKLIN: They're the only thing I care about.

OWEN: I know that, and so does Jamie. So really try when they next come visit, yeah? You've been on good behaviour for a good 3 months now Frank. Don't screw it up – they need you; seriously.

FRANKLIN: What have they been telling you?

Silence.

FRANKLIN: Owen, what have they been telling you?

Silence.

OWEN: They have a partner.

KITT *begins knocking harshly on the door. They do not stop until the next black out.*

FRANKLIN: Oh that's- that's great!

OWEN: Well… yes. I suppose.

Pause.

FRANKLIN: And? Are they okay together?

OWEN: No.

FRANKLIN: Fucking no? No what? Owen what the fuck do you mean?! OWEN?!

OWEN *looks to the door; it topples.* KITT *topples too and continues bashing on the door.*

OWEN: I can't say.

FRANKLIN: Owen… please god tell me… tell me what is happening to Jamie… OWEN! TELL ME! What the fuck is that cunt doing to my baby!? OWEN PLEASE!

FRANKLIN *gets up and falls to his knees clutching at* OWEN's *clothing.*

OWEN: I can't brother. I'm sorry…

The door is USC. JAMIE *and* FRANKLIN *sit in the chairs.* OWEN *stands in the door. His shirt is now ripping in a few places - it is dotted with blood stains, alongside other stains. He has black eyes. The bandage is dirty.*

FRANKLIN: So, how you keeping mate?

Pause.

FRANKLIN: School uh- school going well?

JAMIE: hm…

FRANKLIN *looks to* OWEN *pleading.*

OWEN: It's okay Jamie. They aren't around.

JAMIE: School is… okay.

OWEN: You need to be honest Jamie.

JAMIE: School… isn't great.

OWEN: You know what you have to say Jamie.

JAMIE: I know… but it's…

OWEN: I know it is. Don't worry. Just imagine you're having a chat with me. He's your dad remember.

JAMIE: I know… but what if-

OWEN: No more what ifs. He's your dad – he'll love you and understand you no matter what.

Beat.

FRANKLIN: You alright Jame?

JAMIE: Yeah, I'm… I'm okay Dad. Sorry.

FRANKLIN: Nah don't say sorry mate, it's fine.

Pause.

FRANKLIN: I spoke with uh, with Owen last week. He said that uh. Well, no, sorry he didn't say, he sorta hinted at it but um… he said you're a 'they' instead of a he now? That right?

JAMIE *nods.*

FRANKLIN: What does it mean? You know me, not too involved with all that stuff.

JAMIE: It uh, means that… it means I…

FRANKLIN: It's alright Jamie, I'm here.

JAMIE: It means… that I'm not a boy… but not a girl either. I'm sorta in between, I guess.

FRANKLIN: Oh, right. That explains the skirt; it looks nice. Where did you get it from?

JAMIE: You're not mad?

FRANKLIN: Nah of course not! Why would I be mad Jame?

JAMIE: Cos some people don't like that I'm not a boy or girl.

FRANKLIN: Well, those people can go fuck themselves. You're still my beautiful kid and nothing is ever gonna change that, even if you end up in here for something stupid like me. I'm still going to love you, Jamie.

The stage is flooded with blue light.

JAMIE: Dad...

FRANKLIN: I've never stopped loving you Jame. The moment your mum had you and the first time I saw your handsome face you were the most beautiful thing in the world. And its not cos you were my boy, its cos you just were, ya know? I couldn't give a rat's arse if you told me you felt like a boy or girl or fucking whatever cos you're my only kid and you're all I've got… Your mum would be proud, Jamie.

JAMIE: Really?

FRANKLIN: Of course, she would. I don't know loads about that gay stuff but I know enough to know how hard it is.

Pause.

JAMIE: Did Owen tell you about my partner?

OWEN: Be careful Jamie.

FRANKLIN: He did. He didn't say much about them though. Just that you and them don't get on.

JAMIE *nods.*

FRANKLIN: If they aint good for you Jame, leave 'em. You are beautiful inside and out and you don't- don't deserve shit like that bringing you down. Alright?

A long pause.

JAMIE: Yeah. Thanks Dad.

The armchairs. The door in its original position. OWEN *sleeps on a chair. His clothing is mangled and almost destroyed. His hair is soaking. His bandage peeling away and pussy. He looks half dead.*

KITT *knocks on the door.*

OWEN: Yeah? What is it now?

KITT: It's Kitt.

OWEN: Yeah, I know.

KITT: Should I come in?

OWEN: If you must.

KITT: Some fucking counsellor you are.

OWEN: Just come in Kitt.

KITT: Fine, fuck me. Keep your pants on.

OWEN: What did you wanna talk about today?

KITT: Jamie's been- wait aren't you going to say anything about like privacy or whatever?

OWEN: Why? You've heard it at least ten times now.

KITT: Guess you're right. Anyway, Jamie seems happier now.

OWEN: Oh? That's good. Can you think as to why that might be?

KITT: I don't know and to be honest I don't care. It makes a nice change to seeing them so damn depressed twenty-four seven.

Beat.

OWEN: Do you know why they've had a change in mood?

KITT: Nah. Haven't bothered asking. I don't really care so long as they perk up and smile.

Silence.

OWEN: You are just terrible.

KITT: Excuse you?

OWEN: You heard me. You couldn't give one single fucking shit if Jamie lived or died; everytime I see them here-

KITT: Jamie sees you?

OWEN: You didn't know? That's impressive seeing as you eavesdrop on them and act as their own personal fucking prison escort.

KITT is speechless.

OWEN: Whenever Jamie sees me, they seem like they're on the verge of breaking down-

KITT: I see that every fucking day you moron.

OWEN: And yet, you cannot see why they are so close to their limit. Nor even take the time to talk about it to them. How selfish can you be?

KITT: The fuck you saying?

OWEN: They told me you hurt them. Then not two days later, I meet you.

Pause.

OWEN: I've never seen you both in the same room, but I can only imagine what you're like. The way you talk about them in here is proof enough.

KITT: It's not my fault they're so depressed!

OWEN: Yes you are! You are horrible for them! You are literally all Jamie feels the need to speak about all they ever speak about! And, bear in mind, they have a father imprisoned for arms dealing and they almost NEVER speak about that – it's all you! You frighten them half to death and you do not give a shit.

Silence.

OWEN: Get out Kitt.

Silence.

KITT: (*meekly.*) They hadn't told me that about their Dad so how could I have-

OWEN: Did you ask them? Did you ever once consider asking how they were feeling instead of just spitting facts about yourself at them?

KITT: (*looking around the stage*.) I um- wait hold on-

OWEN: Thought not.

No armchairs. No door. OWEN *is eagle spread on the floor. OWEN is not wearing any clothes except boxers. His hair is soaking. His bandage is seeping. He looks dead.* JAMIE *and* KITT *stand.*

KITT: So, anything you wanna say for yourself?

JAMIE *mumbles.*

KITT: Fucking speak up Jamie.

JAMIE: No, not really.

KITT: Why not?

JAMIE: Cos you don't own me, Kitt.

Silence.

KITT: I can't believe you've been seeing this quack without me knowing-

JAMIE: You've been seeing him too.

KITT: Yeah, but that's cos it was about you. I'm not fucking deranged like you Jamie.

JAMIE: Okay.

KITT: That's all you have to say? "Okay"? Get angry you fucking coward!

JAMIE: I can't be bothered, Kitt. There's no point.

KITT is frustrated.

KITT: You have a dad in jail for arms dealing and you didn't tell me? And then you went behind my back-

JAMIE: You don't own me.

KITT: What?

JAMIE: You don't own me. I don't have to tell you everything.

KITT: Well how am I supposed to trust you?

JAMIE & OWEN: Trust isn't built on surveillance, listening in on phone calls and degrading!

Pause.

KITT: So, what? I'm the bad guy here?

JAMIE: Yes, Kitt.

OWEN: Glad you finally worked it out.

KITT *stands, kicks* OWEN. *Goes to leave before realising there are no doors.*

KITT: (*to Owen*.) You gonna keep me here forever then?

Pause.

JAMIE: I still love you Kitt. I'm not sure why. But… we're done.

KITT: … fuck off. I don't deserve this.

Silence. FRANKLIN *places a door on stage and gestures for* JAMIE*.* JAMIE *exits with* FRANKLIN*. The door stays.*

KITT: This is your fault.

OWEN: If you say so.

KITT: Don't you ever get tired of being useless and pathetic?

OWEN: I could ask you the same.

Silence.

KITT *kicks* OWEN *before leaving with the door. Spotlight on* OWEN*.*

Black out.