

THE SUNSET CELL

A One Act Play

by

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Cast of Characters

The Thief

The Priest

The Doctor

The Jester

The Hangman

The Poet

Setting

A large holding cell underground with one barred window

Time

An unspecified past

Lights up on a large prison cell with a single barred window looking on the setting sun. There are six prisoners in the cell. The thief plays with a set of dice. The doctor examines a pocket watch. The poet writes with a piece of charcoal on paper. The jester fiddles with a guitar. The priest reads passages from a Bible. The hangman is chained to one of the walls. Nobody speaks until)

Priest

I smell sulphur. *(pause. More quiet. Then, to the Jester)* Would you stop that? I think we'd all be grateful for some peace for a moment?

Jester

But of course, sir. *(to themselves)* We'll listen to dice rolls and shaky murmurs instead.

Poet

I don't mind her playing. I thought it was calming.

Priest

Did you? Well, if you insist, let the plinking and twanging continue. *(to the doctor)* Does this calm your spirits, sir?

Doctor

It makes no difference at all to me.

Poet

Come now. It's not as though we have much else to bide the time.

Thief

If nothing else it breaks the monotony.

Priest

Hm. Very well, then. Do as you please.

Jester

Oh, most humble thanks for your kindness, sire. *(begins fiddling again)*

Priest

It can't be long till I'm released anyhow. Soon they will realize their mistake and come for me. I'm certain of that. *(the doctor chuckles)*

Doctor

Of course. I can hear them scurrying now, desperate to bring you home.

Priest

You wouldn't understand. I'd hardly expect the lot of you to. But mark my words, I will not be held here long. I will be free from this cell soon enough.

Thief

Whatever this cell is.

Hangman

The Sunset Cell.

Jester

Ah, so the man does speak!

Poet

Sunset Cell? What does that mean? *(the hangman is silent)*

Thief

(to the doctor) Care for a game?

Doctor

What would I bet on dice in this place? Rocks?

Thief

Your pocket watch?

Doctor

(half chuckling, half coughing) Not interested, my friend

Thief

Suit yourself. *(to the jester)* What about you?

Jester

Really? What do I have to win?

Thief

I suppose just the dice themselves. My dice against your guitar.
Interested?

Jester

... Hell, why not. Always happy to relieve a friend of their
possessions.

*They each roll a die. The jester
loses. The priest laughs*

Priest

Bravo! Let that be a lesson on sin for you!

Jester

(handing the thief the guitar) Fine. Best of luck with the blasted instrument. A beggar like you, I'm quite certain-

The thief plays the guitar, much better than the jester's picking. The group quietly listens for a moment

Doctor

Not your typical beggar then.

Poet

You play well, friend.

Priest

Indeed. For a cur.

Thief

Well. It's something to break up the monotony anyways.

The thief plays a song. Maybe the poet and the jester hum/ sing/ drum along. The group begins to let their guard down, until-

Hangman

The Sunset Cell. This is the one. You can't mistake it, that's for sure.

The group turns their focus to the hangman. The music dies.

Thief

Can't mistake it for what? What is this place?

Hangman

A holding cell. For night hangings. They'll have emptied this cell before any of us see another sunrise.

Priest

No. No, there's been a mistake. Do you hear me?

Hangman

5 feet 9 inches.

Priest

I beg your pardon? (*silence from the Hangman*) Damned idiot, I'm speaking to you! (*silence*) Well, alright. I see you will be among the damned very shortly.

Jester

As will we all, no doubt.

Priest

Speak for yourself. The Lord knows my soul. He will have mercy on me. The same may not be said for the rest of you.

Jester

Oo, I've heard this one before! So a priest, a doctor, and a highwayman-

Priest

I'm sorry, is there a problem with your tongue?

Jester

No, sir

Priest

Good! Then pray, man, have the good sense to hold it.

Poet

I never imagined what the sunset would look like through bars. A beautiful, bittersweet sight, is it not?

Thief

Any sunset's a good thing to see. Means another day's gone by and you haven't starved.

Doctor

But you will be dead by morning. *(they cough)*

Thief

Heh. I suppose that's true. I hope Cynthia and the boys have eaten today.

Doctor

Surely it would be best to think of yourself? They are not the ones to be executed soon.

Thief

Not officially, no. But without my support... heh. Surely, they will starve.

Poet

Awfully strange cause for laughter, my friend.

Thief

It is. And yet... I'm not afraid. I've been terrified of capture all these many years. But now here I am, captured, and I feel... peaceful.

Jester

Peace! And in hours, may you rest in it. *(removes flask from their undergarments)* A toast to your peace! *(drinks)*