

**BEYOND THE DOOR**

by

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FADE IN:

INT. UNKNOWN PLACE - N/A

We are sitting a short distance from a WOMAN. She addresses us directly:

ELLEN  
(low, furtive)  
Psst!  
(BEAT)  
Psst!  
(BEAT)  
Yeah, you. Look, would you mind if  
I - Shhh! Keep your voice down!

There's a LONG BEAT.

We hear FOOTSTEPS APPROACH, WALK past us, and then FADE AWAY.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(still low)  
Left or right?  
(BEAT)  
Did you go left or - Ahh, okay,  
okay.  
(BEAT)  
Hey. Listen: I know we're not  
supposed to talk, but could I ask  
you a favor? No, it's nothing -  
just: here.

We hear an OBJECT SLIDING ACROSS A SURFACE, towards us.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Go ahead. Pick it up.  
(BEAT)  
Nice little pocket watch, right?  
But is that clock... ticking? Can  
you hear anything?

We have a BEAT for the conspicuous lack of any ticking.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Yeah, I didn't think so. But it...  
doesn't look broken, right?  
(BEAT)  
Hey, when... when they brought you  
in, did you see any signs? Or some  
kind of name? Just... do you have  
any idea of *where* we - Shhh, **quiet!**

Again: FOOTSTEPS APPROACH, CROSS, and DEPART.

After a BEAT:

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Right, if we're gonna do this, lets  
make it fast. Neither one of us  
needs any more hours on our shifts.

(clears her throat)

How'd I end up here? Probably the  
same way that **you** did.

(BEAT)

I don't even remember how it all  
started. One day I was just going  
about my business, and then -

(BEAT)

Hmm? Oh these?

We hear Ellen FLIP through a STACK OF PAPERS.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Oh, don't worry about those. I've  
got time. I've got lots and **lots** of  
time...

As Ellen starts her story, we transition into HER PAST,  
experiencing parts of the story as she describes them.

FADE INTO:

INT. BLACK CELL - UNKNOWN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - N/A

We are in a dark PRISON CELL. It is cold, dreary, with a bit  
of echo off its concrete walls.

Alone in the cell, currently unconscious is ELLEN MORROW.  
Through the dark we hear her SLOW, STEADY BREATHING.

ELLEN

(V.O.)

Like I said, I don't remember  
getting taken into custody. I don't  
know if they got me while I was  
asleep, or if I was drugged or...

(BEAT)

All I remember is the cell. And  
suddenly waking up there, in the  
dark.

And, as if perfectly on cue, Ellen WAKES UP WITH A START.

She GASPS, and SCRAMBLES. If we could see her face, we'd  
register her disorientation and alarm.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
... and the cold.

As Ellen gropes in the dark, trying to get her bearings -

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
I don't even know what I thought at  
first. You wake up somewhere you've  
never been before, no light  
anywhere, no idea how you got  
there...

Ellen BREATHES HEAVILY, trying to steady herself.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
Maybe I thought it was a joke.  
Maybe I **hoped** it was a joke. But  
then -

Somewhere in the distance we hear a MAN SCREAM.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Hello? Is someone there?  
(BEAT)  
Hello?

There's a LONG, SILENT BEAT. It's the only reply she gets.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
I don't know how long I was sitting  
there in the dark. An hour? A day?  
I was starting to think maybe I'd  
gone blind when...

TENNYSON  
You've got yourself in a bit of  
trouble... haven't you, Ms. M?

Ellen SCRAMBLES, EXCLAIMING sharply.

A moment later - PFFT! We hear the sound of a MATCH BEING STRUCK. A moment later, it lights a CANDLE, and goes out.

Ellen has been joined by the imperious figures of TENNYSON and GOODWIN. They are both dressed in simple, BLACK SUITS. Tennyson carries a folder. Goodwin holds the candle.

How they got into the room - or how they leave it - we will never know.

ELLEN

Ahh! Who - who are -

TENNYSON

It is not the time for questions yet, Ms. M. Let's begin.

GOODWIN

On your feet.

ELLEN

But - where did you -

GOODWIN

I SAID ON YOUR FEET! **NOW!**

TENNYSON

Easy, easy, Goodwin. Give our friend a moment.

GOODWIN

He's not our friend, she's -

TENNYSON

Yes, I know. Still: a moment.

For a BEAT, Ellen just looks at them, thunderstruck. Finally, she gets up.

TENNYSON (CONT'D)

Eyes front, Ms. M. We are ready to begin.

ELLEN

Be - begin? What is happening?

(BEAT)

Look, this isn't funny. I want to know why I'm here.

GOODWIN

Oh, that's rich. Don't act like you don't - !

TENNYSON

(holding him back)

Not yet, not yet.

(back to Ellen)

My name is Tennyson. This is my partner, Mr. Goodwin. We are going to be processing your case today.

ELLEN

My what?!

GOODWIN

Your case, you piece of maggot  
bait. Are you *deaf*?

ELLEN

Case? What case? What the hell is  
going on here?

TENNYSON

Please, Ms. M., save all your  
questions for the end of the  
procedure. I'm going to start the  
recording now.

He produces a RECORDER from his pocket, and CLICKS IT ON. As  
we hear TAPE STARTING TO RUN -

TENNYSON (CONT'D)

(speaking into the  
recorder)

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.  
This Mr. Tennyson presiding,  
assisted by Mr. Goodwin. We are  
here to process the trial of one  
Ms. Ellen M.

ELLEN

Trial?! Look, there's been some  
mistake, I -

GOODWIN

**Of course there's been.** Never heard  
*that* one before...

ELLEN

But, no, I've never -

TENNYSON

Please, miss, if you think that  
there's been a clerical error, you  
will have to fill out a Personal  
Information Corrections form.

(back to the recorder)

Ms. M. was brought into custody  
this morning, and placed in one of  
the Black Cells. You will find all  
other relevant details in the case  
file that has been provided to you.

(back to Ellen)

All right, Ms. M., let's begin.

ELLEN

But - but shouldn't there be a jury? And a judge? And I get a lawyer and -

GOODWIN

Oh, gimme a break! Where do you think you are!?

TENNYSON

I am afraid, Ms. M., that we no longer have time for such luxuries.

GOODWIN

You got any idea how long all that takes!? And how many people we need to process!? You really think we got time for all that mamby-pampby, bleeding heart, b-

TENNYSON

**The point...** is that in these trying times we have had to move forward. Our new methods are more efficient. **We** will be providing any counsel that you might require over

-

At that moment, Tennyson is interrupted. Through the walls, we hear ANOTHER SCREAM. Still distant, but much clearer. It sounds like whoever is screaming is in ABSOLUTE AGONY.

And underneath the scream there's another sound, something mechanical. It *could* be a DRILL. It could be something else.

After a BEAT it stops.

TENNYSON (CONT'D)

- over the course of your trial.

ELLEN

What - what was that?

TENNYSON

It's none of your business - try to put it out of your mind. Now, pay attention.

ELLEN

But what -

GOODWIN

**Do NOT interrupt...**

TENNYSON

Thank you, Mr. Goodwin.

(back to Ellen)

You will notice that there are two doors in this cell: one to your right, and one to your left. You are welcome to go through either one at any moment. Neither one is locked or bolted or any other way obstructed. There will be no attempt to stop you from going through either door. However... you should note that once you go through a door you will not be allowed to go back under any circumstances. Your choice is final, and binding.

ELLEN

But - shouldn't there be -

GOODWIN

I said: **no interrupting.**

BEAT.

TENNYSON

Perhaps you misunderstand us, Ms. M. This is not the punishment. This is not a sentence. This is the trial.

ELLEN

But - what is my crime? Why am I -  
?

GOODWIN

You stupid piece of... **WHAT PART OF  
NO -**

But Tennyson holds him back.

TENNYSON

Thank you, Mr. Goodwin. That will do for now.

(BEAT)

Why are you here, Ms. M.? You're here because of everything. We are here to discuss *everything*.

That matter, seemingly, settled, Tennyson walks over to the door on the right. He KNOCKS on it TWICE - KNOCK, KNOCK - and we hear that is made out of wood.



TENNYSON (CONT'D)

If you go through the door on your right, Ms. M., you will receive the most just treatment that... *anyone* could ask for. What you find that way will be an experience designed to fit anyone and everyone. The great masses, everyone on Earth... boiled down to a single human experience. For better and for worse.

He walks to the opposite side of the room. Knocks on the door to Ellen's left - KNOCK, KNOCK, and we hear that it is made out of metal.

TENNYSON (CONT'D)

If you go through the door on your left, Ms. M., you will receive the most just treatment that... *you* could ask for. A fate that has been prepared especially - *specifically* - for you. All the evidence has been weighed, the data has been taken into account, and a special treatment has been prepared. It will be whatever reward you deserve... for better and for worse.

So then... I trust that the choice is clear?

ELLEN

I'm... not sure what -

GOODWIN

Oh for God's sake... **do we have to explain everything here?!**

TENNYSON

It is the very soul of simplicity, Ms. M. If you consider yourself to be a better than average person, you should go to your left, and choose the door that's been specifically prepared for you. After all... if you've done nothing wrong, you have nothing to fear.

However... if you are... somewhat unsure of your standing...

GOODWIN  
- which wouldn't surprise us -

TENNYSON  
... it might be prudent to err on  
the side of caution. That, Ms. M.,  
is the process of the trial.

Tennyson pulls out a pocket watch. As he checks it, we hear  
it TICK-TICK-TICK...

TENNYSON (CONT'D)  
If you have any questions, Ms. M.,  
now is the time.

For a BEAT Ellen just sits in shocked silence.

ELLEN  
This... you're kidding, aren't you?  
This is some kind of joke or -

GOODWIN  
Do we **sound** like we're joking?

ELLEN  
Or reality TV, or some kind of -

TENNYSON  
Ms. M., I assure you: there is  
nothing funny or frivolous about  
the trial.

ELLEN  
But - no. This makes no sense. What  
am I being charged with? What  
evidence do you have that I've done  
anything wrong?

TENNYSON  
That question presupposes a lot,  
Ms. M. We look after all of our  
citizens. It is a necessary measure  
in these... challenging times.

GOODWIN  
In other words get off your high  
horse, you big baby. It's not about  
you.

But a new thought has just entered Ellen's head. Her eyes  
dart back and forth between the two men.

ELLEN  
Will... will either door kill me?

BEAT.

TENNYSON

I... I believe that's entirely dependent on **you**, Ms. M.

Tennyson glances at his watch. TICK, TICK, TICK.

TENNYSON (CONT'D)

I'm afraid that's all the time that we have today, Ms. M. We will be back when we get the chance, but please don't feel the need to wait for us. You are free to make your choice at any time.

Both Tennyson and Goodwin's voices start to fade...

GOODWIN

Yeah... anytime...

TENNYSON

Make your choice carefully, Ms. M.  
(BEAT, almost an  
afterthought:)  
Although... don't linger **too** long.  
We will need the cell back. Sooner  
or later...

And with that, we hear a soft WOOSH! as the candle goes out.

ELLEN

No, wait! You can't do this to me!  
You can't leave me in here! Wait,  
please! Wait, **please!**

But as Ellen rushes forward, we hear her colliding with a solid wall. The agents are gone.

For a LONG BEAT, the silence is deafening.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

And just like that, they were gone.  
I never found out how they came and went.

(BEAT)

I don't think I moved at all that first night.

(BEAT)

Or... at least what I think was the first night.

Finally, we hear her - slowly - getting to her feet.  
Tentatively she begins to take STEPS around the cell.

We continue to hear her actions as she describes them:

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Finally, I got back on my feet.  
Started trying to figure out what  
was around me.

(BEAT)

I reached a wall. Same as the  
floor: solid, cold granite. I  
followed it around the edges of the  
cell until I found...

A DOORKNOB RATTLES as she knocks against it.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

One door... and then the other. And  
for the next eternal night my life  
was entirely consumed by those two  
doors.

Slowly in the dark, we hear Ellen taking DEEP BREATHS.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Each one was unique in its own way.  
Each one was *terrible* in its own  
way. The door to my right - the one  
that led to the fate that everyone  
deserves - was made out of wood. It  
was splintered and cracked, and it  
seemed to practically be falling  
apart. It creaked at the slightest  
touch -

And we hear it. Just a bit of pressure and... CREEEEAAAANK.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

- and you got the sense that a  
stiff breeze would be enough bust  
it open.

(BEAT)

The door to the left - **my** door -  
was something else. It was made out  
of... some kind of metal. Steel  
maybe. And even closed it felt  
thick and heavy. And I wondered if  
I'd be able to push it open by  
myself.

(MORE)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

There were other things. Each one felt different. The door to my right was always hot - and warm air would often come up through the cracks. Like there was some great oven running behind it, 24/7. The door to my left was just the opposite. The metal was freezing - just standing next to it was enough to get me shivering. Some days I felt bits of frost creeping in from under the door.

But the worst were the sounds. That's what almost made me lose my mind. They'd come and go at different times, but they were there every day.

In the distance we hear SCREAMS.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

There were screams from behind the door to my right. It sounded like people in pain, like they were being tortured or... Or like they were scared for their lives. That noise that interrupted Tennyson, the one I was supposed to "put out of my mind..." That came from the right.

That was bad enough, but... the sound that came from behind the door to my left...

We hear a low RUMBLING...

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I don't even know how to describe it. It sounded like... some kind of machine. Or like some huge *animal*. I was never sure.

The problem was that the first night... when I lay awake listening to what came from behind the door to my left, a thought came into my mind. A terrible thought.

(BEAT)

"It sounds hungry."

The RUMBLING seems to grow LOUDER.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

And well... you know how it is once you get a thought in your head.

Of course, I couldn't see the doors in the darkness. Believe me, I didn't need to. I saw them in my nightmares.

I sat there for days. Or weeks. Or years. How the hell was I supposed to make that choice? How the hell is **anyone** supposed to make that choice?

GOODWIN

I would go with... **QUICKLY**.

We've seamlessly transitioned to another conversation with her two handlers.

GOODWIN (CONT'D)

You've wasted enough of our time already, you disgusting -

TENNYSON

What my associate is trying to say, Ms. M., is that this is what these sessions are for. We are here to assist you with this decision.

ELLEN

But... **how**? What am I supposed to base this on? What my third grade teacher used to say about me?

TENNYSON

"Quite a little troublemaker. Still, she had a good heart, and you couldn't help but love her."

ELLEN

What?

TENNYSON

Your third-grade teacher, Mrs. Edgely. That's what she had to say about you, the day she met with your mother. Closest thing we found to a definitive statement. It's in your file.

ELLEN

My... **what**? How could you possibly know that?

GOODWIN

(scoffs)

Please. You think that we'd be doing this without going through every second of your pathetic, boring, not-even-fit-to-be-a-cure-for-insomnia lifestory?

We hear Goodwin CRACKING OPEN a FILE. He FLIPS through it.

GOODWIN (CONT'D)

"Lazy, unfocused, and disruptive at every turn. A direction-less delinquent in waiting." Mr. Ramos, your fifth grade teacher. Oh how the mighty have fallen in just two years...

TENNYSON

Every relevant detail of your life has been processed, Ms. M. Jackie Feldstein at the start of your romantic relationship: "I have never met a kinder man, someone so willing to give of himself."

GOODWIN

(different page)

Harper Bertram, at the end of your romantic relationship: "I didn't feel like I was dating you, so much as your drinking problem."

TENNYSON

Your brother Michael, on his High School graduation: "I could not have done it without Ellen here to support me."

GOODWIN

(page flip)

On the day of his home's foreclosure: "This would have never happened if you hadn't been so greedy, you self-righteous bitch."

TENNYSON

Your mother, on -

ELLEN

Okay! Okay, I... I think that you have made your point.

(BEAT)

Look... You **know** what's behind these doors. Please, just... tell me. Which one should I go through?

TENNYSON

I am sorry, Ms. M. That is the one question which we cannot answer.

He produces his pocket watch: TICK-TICK-TICK...

TENNYSON (CONT'D)

We have time for one more question today.

Ellen looks at both of them, desperate and overwhelmed.

And then... a thought occurs.

ELLEN

Mr. Tennyson... which door would you recommend -

TENNYSON

I have told you - many times - that is the one thing that we cannot -

ELLEN

... if **you** were undergoing the trial?

Well, then. You could hear a PIN DROP. Goodwin looks at Ellen... and slowly turns to look at Tennyson.

After a LONG BEAT -

GOODWIN

You don't have to answer that, Tennyson. That's horse manure. Don't dignify that with -

TENNYSON

Leave us, Mr. Goodwin.

GOODWIN

But -

TENNYSON

I said **go**.



There's a LONG BEAT - followed by the sound of FOOTSTEPS, which gradually FADE AWAY...

Tennyson approaches Ellen. Dead cold. In a hissed whisper -

TENNYSON (CONT'D)

That was very cute, Ms. M. It doesn't suit you.

(BEAT)

On the... *inconceivable* occasion in which I were to find myself in your *sad* situation, I... I would be wise to choose the door on the right.

(BEAT)

We once told you, Ms. M., that our hospitality would have its limits. You might be wise to heed that recommendation.

He takes the pocket watch from his pocket... and drops it to the cell floor. CLACK!

TENNYSON (CONT'D)

(voice fading)

You hold onto that watch. You'll need it more than I will.

And with that, TENNYSON BLOWS OUT THE CANDLE and FADES AWAY. In the darkness all we hear is the ticking watch... TICK... TICK... TICK...

ELLEN

(V.O.)

I thought I was going mad before. With the silence.

TICK... TICK... TICK...

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Now... Now I was **really** starting to lose it. Nothing to distract me from that stupid watch. Ticking away...

TICK... TICK... TICK...

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Mr. Tennyson should go to the door on the right.

TICK... TICK...

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
(BEAT)  
Was he a better person than me?  
I...

TICK, SWOOSH... TICK, SWOOSH...

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
And that's when I started to hear  
it.

TICK, SWOOSH... TICK, SWOOSH...

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
Moving in time with the seconds of  
the watch... this... *swinging*  
sound. Getting louder...

TICK, SWOOSH... TICK, SWOOSH...

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
... and louder...

TICK, **SWOOSH**... TICK, **SWOOSH**...

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
... and louder... and suddenly I  
could feel blasts of wind. And then  
I realized what was happening.

TICK, **SWOOSH**... TICK, **SWOOSH**...

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
My time was up. I was getting  
evicted. The ceiling was descending  
upon me, swinging lower and lower  
like a great pendulum.

TICK, **SWOOSH**... TICK, **SWOOSH**...

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
And there I was... not sure how far  
above me the great slab of stone  
was. But knowing that it was  
getting closer and closer. And  
hating myself because...  
(MORE)

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
even **then...** I still couldn't bring  
myself to move.

TICK, **SWOOSH...** TICK, **SWOOSH...**

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
I still couldn't make myself choose  
one of the two doors.

TICK, **SWOOSH...** TICK, **SWOOSH...**

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
And all the time it was getting  
lower...

TICK, **SWOOSH...** TICK, **SWOOSH...**

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
And lower...

TICK, **SWOOSH...** TICK, **SWOOSH...**

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
And lower...

TICK, **SWOOSH!**

TICK, **SWOOSH!**

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(V.O.)  
Until -

SMASH. We hear an enormous SLAB OF ROCK IMPACT against the  
cell floor.

BEAT.

BEAT.

BEAT.

EWARD  
(V.O.)  
Barely made it out in time. At the  
last moment something took over me  
and I dove towards the right.  
Didn't even feel myself pushing  
open the wooden door.  
(MORE)

EWARD (CONT'D)

I just remembered spilling through it, and landing on the floor. And when I looked down, I still had Tennyson's stupid pocket watch in my hand.

And, of course, a moment later -

TENNYSON

Excellent choice, Ms. M. Excellent choice. Please, follow me.

We hear the two of them walking, leading them into -

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A drab, nondescript office space. Many desks, each with someone silently working.

ELLEN

(V.O.)

Tennyson led me through a hallway. Eventually we got to an office. Or... at least it looked like an office. He showed me to a desk -

We hear a CHAIR BEING PULLED BACK. Ellen SITS DOWN.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

And asked me to have a seat.

TENNYSON

Your papers should be arriving shortly. Thank you for your cooperation.

ELLEN

Papers? Oh, oh - you mean my release forms?

TENNYSON

No, no, Ms. M. that will... all be handled internally. This is just going to be some paperwork that you'll be helping us with.

ELLEN

Paperwork?

TENNYSON

Just some standard work. Everyone that goes through door number one helps us out with some of it.

ELLEN

For how long?

TENNYSON

Just for an hour.

ELLEN

Oh. Well, I suppose that's not so bad.

TENNYSON

That's the spirit, Ms. M.

We hear a STACK OF PAPERS LANDING on the DESK.

TENNYSON (CONT'D)

That's the spirit. Well, I'll leave you to it.

Ellen FLIPS through two pages.

ELLEN

Hey, wait a minute! What am I supposed to do with these? I'm... not even sure what these are about.

TENNYSON

Not to worry. You don't have to understand them. You don't even have to read them.

(BEAT)

You just have to staple them.

There's a LONG BEAT. And then...

Two pages are STAPLED together. KA-CHICK!

BEAT.

And then two more. KA-CHICK!

BEAT.

KA-CHICK!

BEAT.

KA-CHICK! And that slowly fades under -

ELLEN

And... well, that's pretty much where you came in. I'd been sitting here stapling and wondering about... well, anyway. They sat you down on that desk. Makes sense, I guess, since you also picked the door on the right.

(BEAT)

Heh, you know... it's funny. At first I was so scared of that metal door on the left, but now I kinda wonder what was...

(BEAT)

What's that? How many pages have I... ? Oh, I'm not sure. I've lost track

(BEAT)

I feel like I've gone through hundreds of pages by now. Or maybe... thousands? I don't know. But...

(BEAT)

You remember the pocket watch I showed you? It's the one that Tennyson gave me. I've had it on my desk ever since, right next to my paperwork.

(BEAT, he chuckles)

Take another look at it. It doesn't look broken, right?

(BEAT)

Yeah, but... it's not ticking. Is it?

There's a moment of silence, and, once again, we can appreciate the utter lack of ticking.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(low)

Wait for it...

There's a LONG SILENT BEAT... Before...

Finally...

TICK!

Single. Solitary. Followed by...

A LONG SILENT BEAT.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Yeah. That's the third one, I  
think. Since I started. That was...  
**a lot** of pages ago.

(BEAT)  
I don't think it's the watch that's  
broken. I think it's... well, it's  
something else. And here we are  
with nothing to do. Just...  
stapling.

KA-CHICK!

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
And wondering...

BEAT.

ELLEN  
Just... stapling -

KA-CHICK!

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
- and wondering what was behind the  
other one.

BEAT.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
That's all there is. Just stapling -

KA-CHICK!

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
- and thinking about what would  
have happened... if we'd gone to  
the left.  
(BEAT)  
I get the feeling that this might  
be a very, very, very, **very** long  
hour.

And off of that, we -

FADE OUT.