

WHERE WAS I

Life is a Game of Choice

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TYPEWRITTEN ON BLACK:

You were always there
But where was I?

FADE IN:

1 EXT. BATH - ROUND HILL - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK 1

JJ, early twenties, mixed race, in good shape. He spars with CHRISTIAN, same age, also mixed race.

JJ catches Christian in the jaw. He laughs.

Christian recovers and throws a punch.

They continue to spar.

MEG, early twenties, approaches. She's worried.

JJ sees her.

She gives him a nervous smile.

JJ is paralysed.

Christian throws a punch knocking JJ out.

2 EXT. GREAT PULTENEY STREET - DELETED 2

3 EXT. SIDE STREET - MORNING - DELETED 3

4 EXT/INT. RESIDENTIAL GARAGES - MORNING - BACK TO PRESENT 4

RILEY, mid twenties, not gender specific, wearing a hat, walks up A row of unmaintained garages. It's quiet, almost eerie.

Riley approaches one and bangs on it. They wait, carelessly. They bang again and the garage door opens revealing -

JJ, dressed in a hooded jumper and sweats.

Riley grins. They move to greet JJ.

JJ shuts the garage door but Riley stops it.

RILEY

JJ... I was just passing by.
Thought I'd, see an old friend.

JJ closes the door again. Riley stops it, pulls out a bag of weed.

JJ is hesitant.

RILEY (CONT'D)
It's nice stuff.

A LADY with a Cavapoo watches them suspiciously.

JJ notices. Grabbing the weed, he makes way for Riley to go in.

Riley waves at the lady. JJ is pissed.

The lady picks up her dog and walks away.

Riley laughs. JJ pulls them in and shuts the door.

5

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

5

Inside the small space is a mattress on the floor with some bedding. A jar of loose change. A pile of rolling material. Empty fried chicken takeaway boxes and some miniature bottles of ENJ. Two folding chairs and a small table. Along the back wall is a wardrobe that looks brand new and out of place.

JJ sits on one of the chairs.

RILEY
Nice place.

JJ
It's cheap.

RILEY
Can't imagine why.

JJ starts to roll. Riley takes a seat, facing him.

RILEY (CONT) (CONT'D)
You been here long?

JJ continues to roll. Riley notices a notebook on the floor.

RILEY (CONT'D)
What's that bro? A dear diary?

JJ grabs the notebook. Throwing it onto the bed.

JJ reaches into his pocket, pulling out a five pound note. He searches for another. Nothing. Riley watches as JJ collects the jar and places a few coins and some changes on the table.

JJ
You'll get the rest in the next
couple of days, innit.

RILEY
Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's cool.

Riley goes to hand JJ back the money who quickly declines.

JJ
I'm not a charity case.

Riley looks at the surroundings.

JJ kicks his leg back against the chair. It doesn't travel far. He paces. His back facing Riley, he takes a deep breath.

He opens the garage door. Riley gets up and closes it.

RILEY
Look... I've got a job coming up. I
need an extra pair of hands.

JJ rolls his eyes.

RILEY (CONT'D)
Trust me. I wanna make it up to ya.

JJ opens the door. Riley walks out.

RILEY (CONT'D)
It's easy money JJ. Simple in and
out.

JJ considers, he struggles because he's tempted.

JJ
How much?

RILEY
(Smiling)
Enough... I'd love to stay and chat
while you put the kettle on but you
know, things to do.

Riley leaves. JJ walks back in. He looks around at where he is. His eyes land on the coins Riley left on the table.

Picking up the notebook, he sits on the chair. Lights the joint. Opens the notebook. Takes out a photo.

JJ (V.O.)
Shattered glass is all that's left.
I bleed with every touch.

6 EXT. STREET - EVENING

6

SOUND of people enjoying themselves. JJ walks, keeping himself to himself. The sound of laughter and shouting tries to catch his attention but he refrains from making eye contact with anything other than the road ahead.

7 EXT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

7

The church stands in darkness. A HOMELESS MAN, late fifties, rough looking but with a friendly smile, sits on the steps, holding a bottle. Another homeless sleeps nearby with a dog.

JJ approaches the door. Pushing it, only to find it's locked. He notices a sign on the door.

The homeless man, without looking, recites the sign -

OLDER HOMELESS

Due to unforeseen circumstances
this soup kitchen has been closed.
For your nearest, please contact
your local council. We apologise
for any inconvenience caused.

JJ sits by the door, disappointed. The homeless man offers his bottle. JJ takes it.

OLDER HOMELESS (CONT'D)

The dark thoughts, the shame, the
malice, meet them at the door
laughing and invite them in. Be
grateful for whoever comes, because
each has been sent as a guide from
beyond.

The words linger with JJ as he takes another mouthful.

8 EXT. TAKEAWAY - NIGHT

8

JJ approaches a take-away venue. He looks at the menu. He reaches into his pocket pulling out a bit of rubbish, a couple of coins and a 20 pence piece.

Christian walks out with CARMEN, same age, sharing some food, laughing.

JJ pulls up his hood. Turns to avoid them. He walks away.

Christian watches JJ as he almost disappears out of view.

JJ lowers his hood and punches his palm. A hand taps him on the shoulder. JJ braces himself as he turns around.

HOMELESS LADY
Spare any change?

JJ looks at the coins in his hand. He gives them to the homeless lady.

9 INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

9

JJ storms in, shuts the door roughly. He picks up a pre-rolled joint. Lighting it, he takes a long inhale. Instantly relaxing as he exhales.

He looks at the notebook laying on the bed. His eyes linger on it for a while before he picks it up.

He takes another puff and as he exhales he opens the notebook.

He picks up a pen. Writes a few words. Scribbles them out. He tries again.

JJ (V.O.)
I think back to who I was then, now
I'm afraid to put paper to pen.

He scribbles them out again. Frustrated, he throws the notebook. It hits the wardrobe door which opens slightly.

JJ stares at the door. He tries to ignore it.

He crawls to the wardrobe door. Inside is nothing but a box of keepsakes.

JJ looks at the box with fear. He finally picks it up.

10 EXT. ROUND HILL - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK - SCENE ONE

10

Christian pulls JJ to his feet, laughing it off. JJ ignores him and walks to Meg.

They stare at each other. JJ forces a smile and embraces Meg, concerned.

11 INT. GARAGE - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

11

JJ looks at the box in his hands. He quickly puts it back and closes the wardrobe door, resting his head against it.

He lights a joint and inhales a long puff of smoke, staring into the darkness of his place - Meg appears, dressed colourfully. She dances for him inviting JJ to join her. He dances with her and as they are about to kiss...

BANG! BANG! BANG - this wakes JJ from his daydream, startled.

12

INT/EXT. GARAGE - MORNING

12

BANG! BANG! BANG! JJ wakes up. He's hesitant but opens the garage door.

Christian stands there, wearing a smart suit.

JJ is confused. Before he can speak, Christian punches him in the face.

JJ falls back, hitting the small table.

Christian adjusts the cuffs on his suit. Shuts the door.

JJ shifts himself back onto the mattress. Nursing his jaw.

JJ
What the fuck?

Christian looks around, he sees the box inside the wardrobe. He smiles to himself.

He picks up the notebook and flicks through it. JJ gets to his feet.

JJ (CONT'D)
What do you want, pussy?

Christian's smile disappears. He turns to JJ.

CHRISTIAN
Pussy? You want me to knock that tooth out?

JJ snatches the notebook.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
That's what I thought.

They stare at each other. The tension rises.

Both burst into laughter. Christian hugs him. JJ touches his lip.

JJ
That hurt. What the fuck, fam.

CHRISTIAN
It was meant to hurt, pussy.

JJ
What have I done?

CHRISTIAN
It's not what you've done. It's
what you're about to do.

JJ pretends not knowing what he's talking about.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
I know things are shit.

JJ
Man's blessed.

Christian looks around, his eyes land on the box.

CHRISTIAN
I'm sure you are.

JJ
I'm doin' my ting.

CHRISTIAN
This ting will mean game over for
you.

JJ
Games already over.

Christian takes back the notebook from him.

CHRISTIAN
It doesn't have to be.

JJ snatches it back and throws it onto the bed.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
I'm hosting an event...

JJ sits down and starts to roll.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
... I want you there... You're
talented JJ. She always knew it.

JJ
Don't.

JJ's fists clench. Anger in his eyes.

CHRISTIAN

What? Come on then. If it will make you feel better.

The tension rises. JJ goes for him, Christian holds his fist.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Once upon a time you would have picked up a pen.

JJ

Fuck off man.

CHRISTIAN

This pity party is getting boring. You need to pattern up, bruv.

JJ

You're talking shit.

CHRISTIAN

I'm talking shit? Of course. I've just come all this way for nothin'.

Christian opens his suit jacket. Pulls out a piece of folded paper. Hands it to JJ before opening the garage door.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Think what Meg would say.

JJ freezes.

Christian leaves. Leaving the garage door wide open.

JJ mutters to himself as he slams the garage door shut.

JJ

Man's gonna come to my yard...

JJ lays back on his bed. Picks up a joint and lights it.

He inhales a long puff of smoke. Closing his eyes as he exhales.

13

INT. BEDROOM ROOM - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

13

JJ and Meg are arguing.

JJ

We can't do this

MEG

You can't do this.

JJ
It's too soon. We're too young.

Meg turns away. JJ tries to comfort her. She pushes him away.

JJ (CONT'D)
Come on babe, we've got to go.

MEG
You've made your choice.

JJ
Babe, please?

Meg faces him. He looks sympathetic. She pushes him away.

MEG
Fuck off.

JJ
Babe, please, don't--

MEG
(pushes him again)
Just fuck off.

She picks up a bottle, ready to hit him. He backs away. Opens the door and is about to say something when she launches the bottle.

JJ shuts the door behind him. The bottle hits the door and smashes into pieces.

Meg sits on the bed, she looks down and touches her belly.

14 INT. GARAGE - MORNING - BACK TO PRESENT 14

JJ continues pacing around, his temper rising.

JJ
Man's gonna come to MY yard...

15 EXT. ROUND HILL - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK 15

JJ sits on a bench writing in his notebook. Meg approaches. She tries to get his attention with a thin piece of grass.

JJ acts as though it is not bothering him. Meg is persistent.

He closes the notebook, reaches round to grab Meg. They kiss.

- 16 INT. GARAGE - MORNING - BACK TO PRESENT 16
- The chairs are the first to go flying.
- He looks at the wardrobe, heads towards it and turns away in one final attempt to restrain himself.
- 17 INT. BED ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK 17
- The door opens. Shattered glass crunches under JJ's feet as he enters, holding a bunch of roses.
- JJ's poster from one of his gigs covers the TV screen.
- Meg lays on the bed bruised and vulnerable - long dead.
- 18 INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS - BACK TO PRESENT 18
- He turns back and with all his power, his arm and fist follow through into the wardrobe door.
- It opens revealing the keepsake box. JJ picks it up, shaking.
- He throws the box against the wall. The contents goes everywhere. Letters, cards, photos and a baby scan.
- JJ grabs the notebook, he storms out.
- 18A EXT. ROUND HILL - NIGHT
- JJ lights a candle and places it on the bench where 4 more candles are burning. His naked body silhouettes against the night light.
- He moves around, dancing, disorientated, he opens his arms wide, and slowly accelerates as if wanting to fly away and free himself from his immense pain.
- He jumps on the bench and shouts, his voice echoing around.
- 19 EXT. HAYCOMBE CEMETERY - AFTERNOON 19
- JJ stares ahead, his hood up.
- Freshly laid roses lay on a settled grave.
- Standing over the grave, he opens the notebook. He pulls out a photo, admiring it for a moment.
- He crouches down and props the photo against the flowers.

In the photo Meg and JJ are smiling, his arms around her.
There is a glint of emotion in his eyes but he suppresses it.

JJ
I'm sorry.

He stands, pulls out his phone.

20 EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON 20
Riley's phone starts to ring.

21 INT. GARDEN GLEBELAND - AFTERNOON 21
Christian's phone starts to ring.

22 EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON 22
Riley picks up -

RILEY
Alright mate.

23 INT. GARDEN GLEBELAND - AFTERNOON 23
Christian picks up -

CHRISTIAN
Hello.

24 EXT. HAYCOMBE CEMETERY - AFTERNOON 24
JJ
I'm in.

25 EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON 25
RILEY
Yes bruv, you won't regret it.
They end the call with a satisfied smile.

26 INT. KOMEDIA - NIGHT 26
The stage is set with nothing but a microphone.

Audience members take their seats.

Christian stands next to Carmen. He looks at his phone.

He goes to call JJ but stops when he sees CHELSEA, 25, arrives, dressed formally.

Putting his phone away, he greets her.

27 EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT 27

JJ walks out dressed head to toe in black. He puts up his hood and walks away. Leaving the garage door open.

A POEM is HEARD recited over the following scenes.

28 EXT. BATH POSTAL MUSEUM - NIGHT 28

Riley stands waiting.

A tall figure dressed in black approaches with a balaclava on.

Riley smiles pulling down their balaclava.

At the entrance they look to check the coast is clear.

Broken glass on the floor.

A small box out of view, flashes with a red light. Both are unaware.

29 INT. KOMEDIA - NIGHT 29

Audience members smile. All eyes on stage.

Christian looks at his phone. He walks on stage and faces the audience, he says something making them all laugh loud.

30 INT. BATH POSTAL MUSEUM - NIGHT 30

The two of them start searching around in the dark.

Police siren sound is heard coming closer.

Riley is the first to run out. Leaving the other behind.

The other man runs out into -

31 INT. KOMEDIA - NIGHT 31

Carmen and Chelsea are engrossed in what they are watching.
Christian quietly leaves his seat.

32 INT. BATH POSTAL MUSEUM - NIGHT 32

Blue and red lights continue to flash. The other man is pushed on the ground. His hands behind his back. A knee pressed onto him keeping him restrained. An arm reaches out to pull the balaclava up to reveal -

33 INT. KOMEDIA - NIGHT 33

Christian watches from the wing.

He turns to Chelsea and Carmen, their eyes are on -

JJ standing centre stage. He takes a deep breath. He gives the audience his heart as he performs the last verse.

JJ

You were there. You were always
there. But where was I?

A standing ovation. Chelsea gives Christian a thumbs up.

JJ turns to Christian. Christian couldn't be prouder.

JJ takes it all in. He gives a gentle nod of gratitude.

Lifting his head to the sky, he closes his eyes and inhales a deep breath. He exhales and opens his eyes to see -

Meg among the audience, looking at him, smiling.

JJ smiles back.

FADE OUT.