

LOCKED IN

By

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Proverbs 28:13

INMATE (O.S.)
It's ironic. I never thought I
would be in prison. Sometimes I
wish I could just start over from
the beginning...

INT. PRISON - PHONE ROOM - DAY

Josh, early 30's, soft eyes, bald head, tattoos up to his neck and hands, sits behind two inch thick wire mesh window wearing orange jumpsuit. He solemnly speaks into phone:

JOSH
It seems unfair sometimes, like I
was doomed from the get go. I guess
those were just the cards I was
dealt though, ya know?

On the other side is ALEX, mid 30's, suit and tie pressed, hair meticulously combed, Bible by his side. An "above and beyond" guy who speaks in measured tones:

ALEX
I don't understand you, Joshua. The
older you get the more you fall
into this victim mentality. I don't
know where you get it from?

Josh looks deep into his eyes, then smirks.

JOSH
Remember when Mom found those
playing cards in your shoebox?

A smug smile from Alex as he sits back.

ALEX
Yes. She spanked you pretty hard
even though they were mine.
(chuckles)
I still remember her yelling,
"Those devil cards have no place in
my house!"

They both share a laugh, but Josh is anxious to make his point.

JOSH
Do you remember what you said when
she asked you if those cards were
yours?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

What?

JOSH

Nothing.

The air is sucked out of the room as Josh sternly continues:

JOSH

After that day, I realized there are different roles in life, and mine isn't Mr. goodie-two-shoes.

ALEX

That's a bunch of bologna Joshua.

Alex reaches for the Bible by his side.

ALEX

The Bible says you're either going to be a victim or a victor.

Josh rubs his temple and looks away.

JOSH

Don't start with that Alex.

He gestures to hang up.

ALEX

Alright, alright. I'm just saying. God has a plan for your life, but you have chosen not to follow it.

Josh, frowning, moves phone away from his ear again.

ALEX

Alright, I'm done.

Alex checks his expensive watch.

ALEX

I have to get going. Melissa and I are going on our cruise tonight.

Alex stands up and takes out a white card from his Bible.

ALEX

Ericka wanted me to give this to you. It's a card from Sophie. I'll leave it up front.

Josh's eye's soften as he sees his daughter's scribblings on card.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
Happy birthday brother. Don't
forget to give mom a call.

He nods sheepishly. Alex is about to hang up when:

JOSH
Alex!

ALEX
Yes.

JOSH
(hesitant)
I got a parole hearing next week
and--

ALEX
I'll pray for you. We'll believe
for God's--

JOSH
Never mind, forget about it.

They stare at each other. Alex finally puts his religion
aside and humbly talks to him like a brother.

ALEX
Just don't get caught with drugs
again and jeopardize your parole.
We're running out of excuses to
tell Sophie why her daddy's not
around.

CLUNK! Alex hangs up. Straightens his coat and tie then
marches out.

INT. PRISON - CAFETERIA - DAY

Josh shuffles through the dinner line sandwiched by two
overgrown TATTOOED CONVICTS. SLOP! A pile of steaming glop
splatters into his tray.

INT. PRISON - CAFETERIA - MOMENTS LATER

Josh slides into a bench and devours his food. ANOTHER
INMATE sits next to him, bows his head and begins to pray
for his meal. Joshua puts his fork down, picks up his tray
and decides to move to a different table.

INT. CRUISE SHIP - RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A WAITER'S hand lifts to reveal a steaming succulent lobster on elegant dining table. Alex's wife MELISSA, a sweet, attractive woman with eyes that hint at future crow's feet, kindly applauds presentation. Her diamond earrings sparkle in the candlelight.

MELISSA

Do you think we'll finish all that?

She pokes the lobster, scrunches her nose and smiles.

ALEX

We better cause it was not cheap.

She shoots him a look--don't start.

INT. CRUISE SHIP - RESTAURANT - LOBBY - LATER:

They stroll, arm in arm, out fancy restaurant toward casino area. Both are well dressed and well mannered.

MELISSA

All that food made me sleepy.

ALEX

You should be darling. You practically devoured that lobster.

She pushes him playfully.

MELISSA

Stop it. I barely touched it.

He laughs and places his arm around her. His eyes then wander to the 25-cent video poker slot machines.

ALEX

Want to play a for a few minutes?

MELISSA

(sternly objects)

Alexander.

ALEX

I was just joking. You know I stopped.

She dismisses it, but his eyes keep wandering to the machines.

INT. PRISON - JOSH'S CELL - NIGHT

Josh sits on cold bed surrounded by unsympathetic concrete and steel. He gently opens his daughter's card. It reads with sloppy crayon, "tO mY DaDy...haPPy BiirThDaY."

JOSH
(under his breath)
Thank you, baby.

A tear glides down his cheek as he holds card up to his chest and lays back.

INT. PRISON - CELL BLOCK - LATER

ON JAKE AND SNAKE'S SIDE BY SIDE CELLS: Josh awakens when SNAKE, a heavysset, harrowing inmate whispers from next cell.

SNAKE
Big J. Your shipment came in.

Snake pushes a TOP RAMEN, tied to a string made out of thinly stretched plastic bags tied together, from his cell to Josh's. Josh quickly gets up and unties it.

JOSH
(by wall)
Got it.

The makeshift fish line retracts. Josh opens plastic package and carefully follows crease down the middle of noodles. They open like a small briefcase and reveal a small plastic bag with a white powder concealed. He pensively looks up at calender marked "Parole hearing."

INT. CRUISE SHIP - ALEX'S CABIN - NIGHT

Melissa's earrings CLINK as she lays them onto a vanity tray. She examines her face in the mirror as she scrubs away her make-up. Alex wistfully stares out small window.

MELISSA
Why aren't you getting ready for bed?

ALEX
I just have a lot of things on my mind.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

Like what?

ALEX

(absorbed)

Nothing worth sharing?

She ambles gently to him, holds his cheeks in her palms.

MELISSA

Baby, if it's bothering you, then
it's worth sharing.

He looks at her, contemplates, then looks away.

ALEX

It's just guy stuff.

He disconnects as he methodically takes his coat and tie
off.

ALEX

Let's get ready for bed honey.

Melissa stays there, at a loss.

INT. CRUISE SHIP - ALEX'S CABIN - LATER

Melissa is dead asleep. Alex is wide awake staring at
ceiling. He looks over at ALARM CLOCK: 1:15 a.m. He waves a
hand in front of her. She's unresponsive. He then proceeds
to slowly exit bed, she abruptly turns around, he
stops...she's still asleep. He slowly continues out.

INT. PRISON - CHAPEL HALLWAY - DAY

Josh slumps back against the wall by door that leads to
prison chapel. He eavesdrops on the Sunday morning sermon.

PRISON MINISTER (O.S.)

Anytime you are resisting God and
what He wants, you are going to be
miserable until you decide to give
in. The Bible teaches, that if we
choose to sin, then we choose to
suffer. But if we choose to confess
our sin, then He is faithful and
just to forgive us.

SMACK! A YOUNG GUARD stabs a baton into his back.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG GUARD

You're either gonna go inside or go back to your cell. No waiting around in the hall. What's it gonna be?

He motions that he'll go back to his cell and walks off.

EXT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

Sunday morning service has just dismissed and Alex stands at the door shaking hands, smiling, kissing babies, like a well groomed politician. The people love him.

INT. PRISON JOSH'S CELL - DAY

Josh is restless. He paces, sits and stares out prison bars. He rubs his head in frustration as he looks over at Top Ramen packages then over at toilet. He closes his eyes, then utters under his breath:

JOSH

I don't want to suffer anymore.

INT. ALEX'S HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Alex sits at his desk with an arsenal of commentaries, Greek and Hebrew dictionaries, lexicons, etc. He is hard at work on his next sermon. Melissa unassumingly strolls in.

MELISSA

Hey babe, I am going to take the kids to your Mom's house. We'll try to be back before dinner, but if not, I left the leftovers on the top shelf.

ALEX

Alright my love.

Before she exits, she asks:

MELISSA

Oh. Do you know what happened to those red earrings you got me for our anniversary?

Alex shakes his head no.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

That's strange cause I remember I
had them the night of the cruise...

He shakes his head again and continues studying. She gazes at him unsure.

MELISSA

Alright love.

Alex stares at his desk, eyes focused on nothing. He waits to hear Melissa's CAR BACK OUT. Alex's hands shake as his nervous fingers flip the computer switch. BLEEP. His eyes glisten from the glare of an an online gambling site.

INT. PRISON - CELL BLOCK - NIGHT

Josh nervously stands outside his cell with other INMATES. A SMALL ARMY OF ANGRY GUARDS scrutinize every cell, tossing beds over, flipping through books, letters, looking for anything illegal.

Josh's eyes drift to his food shelf. Young guard, eyeing him, picks up his Top Ramen packages. Josh's heart races. The young guard begins opening one, nothing. He then grabs another, this is the one. Joshua watches intently. As the guard opens it...NOTHING.

He shoots Josh a wrathful look--almost. Josh smiles.

From the neighboring cell, other guard yells:

ANGRY GUARD #1(O.S.)

We got a hot spot.

All the guards immediately tread over to neighboring cell where ANGRY GUARD#1 proudly holds up a cell phone and a large bag of white powder. Snake's head drops. The guards haul him away but not before he locks eyes with Josh.

INT. PRISON - JOSH'S CELL - LATER

Josh organizes his cell. He hangs calender back up. He stares at following day marked "Parole hearing."

RATTLING of guard's keys echo off of the empty hallways.

GUARD #3

Lights out ladies.

(CONTINUED)

Row by row the lights expire. CLANKS from the guard's boots as they THUMP off. In a dim light, Josh solemnly continues to stare at calender. Finally, he contritely lays down. He stares at picture of Sophie, then reluctantly gets on his knees.

JOSH

(sighs)

I know it's been a while. But I hope it's not too late...please give me a second chance, Lord. I'm not promising I'll be perfect, but I'll do my best to be a good man, to be a good father to my Sophie. To...live out your plan for my life...just give me another chance Lord.

He looks up, then buries his head in his hands.

INT. ALEX'S HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Alex, head buried in his hands, slowly looks up at computer screen. It's his bank account, and he's in the red. Melissa suddenly walks in. He quickly navigates screen away. But like any good woman, she doesn't need much to sense something is wrong.

MELISSA

You okay?

ALEX

(regains his composure)

Huh? Yes. I'm alright. Why?

Melissa's not convinced. She goes in for a closer look and sees him balancing checkbook.

MELISSA

Is that the church's checkbook? Why do you have that here?

ALEX

(impatient)

No. Get out of here. I'm just thinking, going over some things, gosh. Why are you so nosy?

Taken back, she stares at him.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

I don't know what is going on with you, but I don't like it Alex. I better not find out that it's you playing your stupid little games again.

She snatches a stapler off the desk. Her heels pound the carpet as she strides from the room. He sighs, then looks over at his Bible.

ALEX

What am I doing?

INT. PRISON - PAROLE HEARING ROOM - DAY

Seven STONE-FACED STRANGERS sit side by side at a long table. Josh walks in and stands by a chair facing them.

STOCKY STONE-FACED MAN

Have a seat.

Josh does his best to sit up straight on the cold metal chair.

PALE STONE-FACED WOMAN

We see by your file you've served three years of a five-year sentence.

FEEBLE STONE-FACED ELDER

Do you feel you're ready for parole?

Josh exhales. Takes a good look at each one of their languid faces, then sincerely responds:

JOSH

I am not proud of what I did, but I did do it. And because of that, the last for years have been the toughest of my life. Every year my little girl is getting bigger, my family travels and enjoys life. While I'm...I'm here, getting older, staring at four walls, eating slop and talking to inmates who could care less about me...or the fact that my little girl is growing up without a father. That by the time I get out of here, I'll probably have to start scaring boys away from her.

(CONTINUED)

(chuckles)

The room is silent. Josh clears his throat.

JOSH

All because of my stupidity. I realize that. If that's what you call ready, then yes. If not. Well...

He takes a moment.

JOSH

I guess I'll just have to trust God to get me through the rest of my time here...and pray that my children will be in his hands.

Josh's eyes well up. There's nothing else to say.

JOSH

Thank you.

Josh gets up to leave. The seven suits and ties stare dispassionately. He takes a moment to wipe his tears.

INT. ALEX'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alex's daughter, SARA(6), sits on his lap as he meticulously corrects her homework.

ALEX

Good. Good. Good. You got them all right, wait. Sara.

SARA

Yes.

ALEX

Have you been cheating again? Don't lie to me.

A blank stare. She says nothing. He glares into her innocent eyes and sees his own reflection. His heart sinks.

DOORBELL RINGS!

He pushes curtains aside. Two STONE-FACED POLICE OFFICERS await at the door. Knowing exactly why they are there, Alex takes a deep breath then kneels down to Sara. He holds her soft cheeks in his palms.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
Sweetheart.

Sara nods kindly. He lovingly brushes her hair behind her ear and with all sincerity tells her:

ALEX
Don't start telling lies, baby,
cause once you start, it's really
hard to stop.

DOORBELL!

ALEX
Coming.

Shamefaced, she looks at him, and him her. He miserably gets up to open the door.

ALEX
Yes?

STONE-FACED OFFICER
Are you Pastor Alexander Garcia of
Holy Brethren Church?

Alex dolefully nods his head.

FADE OUT:

INT. PRISON - PHONE ROOM - DAY

TITLE CARD: 6 Months later.

FADE IN:

An INMATE'S voice is stressed with shame.

INMATE(O.S.)
It's ironic. I never thought I
would be in prison.

We TILT UP to reveal the INMATE is Alex, who now sits behind two inch thick wire mesh window, wearing orange prison jumpsuit. He solemnly speaks into phone:

ALEX
Sometimes I wish I could just start
over from the beginning, before I
started keeping all of this stuff
locked in.

This time on the other end is Josh, cleaned up and with a Bible by his side. He listens intently. Around his neck is a colorful piece of jewelry from his daughter
"FoRgIVeN."

FADE OUT: