

Into the Rain

A prison warden gains a new life perspective from one of her inmates.

20-DE04-W22

FADE IN:

INT. WOMEN'S CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

A quiet, empty hallway. A clap of thunder echoes through the building.

Hasty footsteps thwack the concrete in an adjacent hall. WARDEN BLAIR WESTBROOK (40) rounds the corner. Her pace quickening.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE

The door swings open, the warden enters. Phone and purse in hand, she sheds her purse and makes way to the bathroom that adjoins the office. She gags, and yanks open the door.

INT. HALLWAY

JULIET (25), an inmate, dressed in tan scrubs, is escorted by a GUARD, down the same hallway that held the warden moments before.

INT. BATHROOM

The warden presses a cold rag on her neck. On the edge of the sink, her phone rings. She startles. She taps the speakerphone on.

WARDEN WESTBROOK

Yeah?

She hangs her head over the sink. Hands gripping the side tightly. The warden's husband JEFF, begins talking.

JEFF (O.S.)

Have you made the appointment yet?

She shakes her head.

WARDEN WESTBROOK

(breathily)

No. They're going get back to me.

JEFF (O.S.)

Maybe you should call them again.

WARDEN WESTBROOK

I'm a little busy at the moment, Jeff.

JEFF (O.S.)
Just get it over with. You'll quit
worrying so much.

She breathes in carefully, quelling another wave of nausea.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
Okay, bye.

The line clicks.

INT. HALLWAY

Juliet and the guard stop at the warden's wide open office door. The guard motions for Juliet to go on in.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE

Juliet enters alone.

She surveys the room. The warden is not perched in her "business as usual" spot behind the desk. A purse and some of its contents are splayed across the floor. The door to the bathroom is closed.

Juliet kneels down next to the overturned purse. She brings a small bottle of perfume to her nose. She sniffs. Her face shows approval. She gingerly returns the bottle to the purse.

She retrieves and flips open a pamphlet entitled, "Considering In-Clinic Abortion?" Another pamphlet lies on the floor nearby. She picks it up and reads it. "Raising Your Special Needs Child".

A noise comes from the other side of the bathroom door.

Juliet quickly scoops the pamphlets and remaining items into the purse.

She stands, purse in hand, and heads toward the desk.

The warden emerges from the bathroom.

Juliet looks up. Like a deer in headlights. Her arm outstretched, the purse dangling at the end.

She plunks it down onto the wooden surface.

JULIET
You know I'm not about that life
anymore.

She puts her hands up in surrender.

Warden Westbrook half-smiles. She takes a clipped breath, and motions toward the chair in front of her desk.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
Have a seat, Juliet.

Juliet sits.

The warden stiffly lowers herself into her chair.

Outside, thunder rumbles.

Warden Westbrook rifles through her bag and pulls out a pack of antacids. In doing so, the pamphlets catch her eye. She pushes them further down inside, and places the purse under her desk.

With one hand, the warden pops a couple antacids in her mouth. With the other, she pulls a piece of paper out of a tray on her desk labeled "Release Protocol Checklist".

For a moment, she reads silently.

Juliet sizes up the warden.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
(still chewing)
So, your housing has been approved
for re-entry.

The warden nods to herself, keeping her eyes on the paper. She checks a box on the paper in front of her, ready to move on.

Juliet fidgets with a paper weight on the warden's desk.

JULIET
You know -- I wasn't thinkin' when
I did what I did. I thought I was
helpin'.

She leans back in her chair, paperweight in hand. She shakes her head.

JULIET (CONT'D)
But it didn't help. All it did was
take me away from my little sister.
It stinks.

The warden forces a smile to humor her. She quickly moves to the next box on the form before Juliet can go on.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
 There's an established support
 system, also?

Juliet nods emphatically.

JULIET
 My little sister. Annie. She's all
 the good things. And all the
 support I need.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
 Okay. That's fine. But I mean --

JULIET
 I'll do better. Because of her.
 Eight months is too long. You won't
 be seein' me in here again.

Juliet returns the paper weight to its appropriate spot.

JULIET (CONT'D)
 You're gonna have to come visit ME
 next time.

Juliet chuckles.

The warden swallows hard, and looks back down at her paper.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
 I'll just ask your Counselor what
 she has set up.

The warden's cell phone rings. She picks it up and looks at
 the screen.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
 Excuse me. I need to answer this.

She answers, simultaneously holding up a finger to indicate
 it will be brief. She swivels her chair slightly away from
 Juliet.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
 (at phone)
 Hello.

Juliet leans as far forward in her seat as possible.
 Listening.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
 (at phone)
 Yes, this is Blair.

The warden nods intently. She picks up a pen.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
That'll work. Two o'clock tomorrow.
I'll be there.

On her desk calendar she writes "2:00". Her hand visibly shaking as she writes. The warden swivels her chair back toward Juliet. She glances up. Juliet is uncomfortably involved in her phone call.

The warden knits her brow.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
Okay. Thank you. Bye.

She puts down her phone and turns her attention back to the task at hand.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
Okay. Where were we?

Juliet does not respond. The warden looks up at her from the paper. Juliet is maintaining intense eye contact.

JULIET
Why are you doin' that?

WARDEN WESTBROOK
Why am I doing what?

Juliet's taps the newest addition to the calendar.

JULIET
That.

The warden shifts her weight in the chair.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
THAT doesn't concern you.

The rain hits the window with more force. Both their heads turn to the sound.

The warden returns to the checklist.

JULIET
(still looking toward the
window)
Why are you abortin' your baby?

The warden's breath catches.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
 (through gritted teeth)
 You're out of line, Juliet. And
 that's none of your business,
 anyway.

Juliet nods in agreement.

JULIET
 I know. You're right. I'm sorry.

Juliet stands and wanders to a nearby shelf. She studies a picture of the warden's husband and two teenage children. She appears to have an internal debate.

Back to business, the warden thumbs through another tray of papers.

JULIET (CONT'D)
 But -- I just wanna know.

The warden tenses.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
 Because. I want to.

JULIET
 You do?

The warden hesitates.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
 I do.

JULIET
 WHY?

The warden slams her pen down on the desk.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
 Juliet. Enough.

JULIET
 It's just a simple question.

Warden Westbrook stands abruptly. Her hands out in resignation.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
 Because I'm scared! Is that the
 answer you want?!

Juliet flinches.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
Because I don't know how to do it.
(slowly - more
emphatically)
I don't know how to raise a baby
with Down syndrome.

She crumples into her chair. Defeated. And nauseated.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
I can't. There's just so many
unknowns.

Juliet casually makes her way to the warden's side. She glances down at the delicate cross around the warden's neck.

JULIET
But -- we're not alone in the
unknowns.
He's there with us.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
I just wasn't planning on any more
kids. And, then this on top of it.
There's just so much.

She runs her hand through her hair.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
And it feels like I'm drowning.

Juliet's face lights up.

JULIET
Oh. It's like that story we learned
about in chapel not long ago. There
was that guy. You know -- the guy.
He was scared to walk on the water
with Jesus. So he sank.

Juliet becomes more animated.

JULIET (CONT'D)
I just keep thinkin' how he missed
an opportunity to have a beautiful
moment with him. Just because he
was afraid.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
(softly)
It was Peter.

Juliet slaps her hand on the desk. Warden Westbrook jumps slightly.

JULIET
Peter! Thank you.

Juliet half-sits on the edge of the desk.

JULIET (CONT'D)
I just really -- REALLY -- don't
want you to miss one of those
moments.

The warden avoids eye contact.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
Juliet. I need you to let this go.

Juliet hops up, flings open the door, and darts out of the
office. Urgency in her step.

Confusion flashes on the warden's face.

WARDEN WESTBROOK (CONT'D)
Juliet!?

Warden Westbrook stands. Apparently too quickly. She steadies
herself and sits back down.

INT. HALLWAY

The guard, perplexed, swiftly walks after Juliet.

INT. JULIET'S CELL

Juliet flips through the pages of her Bible and retrieves an
item from inside.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Juliet bursts back into the office. Breathless.

The warden looks up from her desk.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
Juliet. You don't have free rein of
--

Juliet thrusts a photograph in front of her.

JULIET
-- She's why I can't let it go.

Warden Westbrook looks down. In the photo, Juliet embraces a joyful girl with a captivating smile. A girl with Down syndrome. At the bottom, written in ink, "Me & Annie".

JULIET (CONT'D)
That's her. That's my little
sister.

Juliet smiles. Pride in her eyes.

The warden takes the photograph from Juliet.

JULIET (CONT'D)
I've seen what life is like without
her --

Juliet chokes back tears.

JULIET (CONT'D)
-- while I've been in here.

Their eyes meet. Juliet's now pleading.

JULIET (CONT'D)
And life is so much better with
Annie in it.

Juliet touches Warden Westbrook's arm.

JULIET (CONT'D)
God won't let you sink. Just like
he didn't let...

She stops. Racking her brain.

WARDEN WESTBROOK
(barely audible)
Peter.

JULIET
Peter. Gah.

Juliet shakes her head.

JULIET (CONT'D)
Just like he didn't let *Peter* sink.
I believe you can do it. You just
hafta believe you can.

Juliet's eyes move to her sister in the photograph. The warden's follow. Juliet gestures toward the warden's stomach.

JULIET (CONT'D)
She's worth it.

The warden smooths her hand over the young girl's face in the picture. Her eyes fill with tears.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

The warden pulls Juliet's file from the tray on her desk. She opens it and adds her signature at the bottom of the checklist. She writes the date of expected release at the top. Next month.

Her eyes fall on the note she made the day before, under SUPPORT SYSTEM. "Annie". She smiles and closes the folder.

She gets up and places it in the appropriate file cabinet.

She looks at her watch. 1:00. She takes a deep breath and grabs her phone from the desk. She makes a call. With her phone to her ear, she walks to the window and waits for an answer.

Rainwater squiggles down the opposite side of the glass. She traces the lines with her finger.

WARDEN WESTBROOK

(at phone)

Hi, this is Blair Westbrook. I'd like to cancel my appointment for today at 2:00...

Thunder rumbles.

EXT. WOMEN'S CORRECTION FACILITY - MOMENTS LATER

Warden Westbrook steps out a side door of the facility. Raindrops thud onto her umbrella overhead. She lowers her umbrella and places it on the ground at her side. She eases a few steps further into the rain.

Tears and rain run down her cheeks. Warden Westbrook closes her eyes and places her hands gently over her stomach. She tilts her face into the rain.

THE END