

## Custody

The audience enter a large empty space. Along one wall are stacks of chairs, flats, office supplies, 2 desks, a TV, a small refrigerator, a gurney, and costumes on a rack.

The performers enter the space with the audience. It is apparent that the set is not built, that it lies stacked, with the chairs, against the wall. Together, performers and audience assemble the set. Theatre is a social occasion; soon, the set is up and the performers are getting into costume. A sense of accomplishment ripples through the audience as they settle into their seats.

The set consists of a wall 10 meters long bisected by another wall 5 meters long. Both walls are 3 meters high. This makes two, two-walled 'rooms' 5 meters square: one room is bare and the other room looks like an office – not until costumed performers are on the set is 'the setting' made clear. The office has two desks, a clock on the wall, several phones, a fridge, and a TV monitor showing an image of what's in the other room. The two rooms are not directly connected. Running parallel the 10 meter wall is another wall, making a hallway. The performers must leave one room by a doorway and go down the hall to get to the other room. Both ends of the hallway are walled off; the entrance to the hallway is near the office and at a right angle to the end wall. Chairs are scattered around the set and there are unimpeded views into either room. But there is only a partial view of what happens in the hallway. This is important.

Two performers walk onto the set:

**C**, dressed in rags, slumps down onto the floor of the cell.

**D**, dressed as a police officer, sits at a desk in the other room, doing paper work. On the monitor in the office we see **C** in the cell.

Now the set makes 'sense'; it is a police station.

With much swearing and rough handling, **A**, a policeman – his nose bleeding – drags **B** – handcuffed, drunk – into the hall wherein **A** proceeds to beat **B** for some time. The audience have only a partial view. But they hear the punches and kicks and cries of pain.

After this beating, **A** drags **B**, who is still cuffed, down the hall and into the cell. **A** drops **B**, limp and bleeding, facedown in the middle of the cell.

A goes into the office, gets a soda from the fridge and sits on the edge of his desk.

D: *Fuck...*

A: *Fuck, yea.*

A removes his belt with his gun and radio and puts it on his desk. After a while, A notices the blood on his face and gloved hands and goes to wash it off. He leaves the set and walks through the audience to the green room. After a while he emerges clean and somewhat refreshed. A enters the office, sits down and begins to do some paperwork.

B, broken and bleeding makes a faint moaning sound. C crawls over and puts his hand on B's shoulder.

D and A do paperwork. After a while, D uses a remote to switch channels on the monitor. A and D watch the TV as D surfs through the channels, settling on nothing; finally returning to the CCTV feed from the cell.

D: *Fucker's still cuffed.*

A: *Fuck...*

A gets up, leaves the office, walks down the hall, enters the cell and kneels next to B. C crawls back a few meters. B is lying on his stomach, his hands still cuffed behind him. A removes the cuffs, B's hands flop to the floor beside him. A gets up slowly, still looking down at B. A looks and thinks. A kneels down again, takes B by the wrist and feels for a pulse. A rolls B over onto his back, leans in, puts his ear to B's mouth, listening for a breath. A jumps up, runs out of the cell, down the hall and into the office.

A grabs his radio. D looks up at the monitor.

A: *Heart, this is Blue. Do you read me? Over.*

Paramedic: *Blue this is Heart. We read you. Over.*

A: *Heart, we need an ambulance at HQ right away. Over.*

Paramedic: *Blue, this is Heart; be there soon. Over.*

A runs back out of the office, down the hall and into the cell where he begins to do CPR on B.

Performers dressed as **Paramedics** have been in the audience since the set was built. They wait.

The gurney sits where it has since the beginning of the performance. Time goes by. **A** is still performing CPR on **B**; more time passes.

The **Paramedics** get out of their seats, get the gurney, wheel it over to the set, into the hall then into the cell. **A** backs away from the prone **B**. The **Paramedics** check **B's** vital signs while continuing CPR. They lift **B**. onto the gurney and wheel him out of the cell, down the hall and off the set, through the audience and into the green room.

The house lights come up and the performers change out of their costumes, into work clothes, and begin dismantling the set as the audience leave.

The cast is comprised of men and women of various ethnicities. They switch roles every performance: From show to show, it is always a different person/performer being beaten.