

When I Was God

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ACT I: Scene One

Jail Cell

Stage is set as the inside of a jail. There is a single chair outside the cells. FERDINAND DIAZ sits on the cell floor. Alone. Every thing is quiet. Then footsteps are heard approaching as well as the faint clinking of keys. GUARD enters and patrols the jail. He approaches the cell where Ferdinand sits.

GUARD

How you doing today, General?

(Silence from the cell. The Guard steps up to the cell gate.)

Can I get you something?

DIAZ

A cigarette.

GUARD

Sure.

(Guard takes out a cigarette and hands it to Diaz through the cell bars. He leans in and lights it. Diaz smokes taking slow deliberate drags.)

DIAZ

Did they tell you to be nice to me?

GUARD

No sir.

DIAZ

Good.

GUARD

(Sympathetically)

I just think...

DIAZ

Don't feel sorry for me. I don't want your pity or your sympathy. I never wanted that from anyone.

(Diaz looks the guard over)

Especially not from some dumb kid.

(The Guard waits a second, and then slowly exits in the manner that he came. Diaz goes back to his cigarette not moving except to take the cigarette from his lips and back. TWO MORE GUARDS enter with a PRISONER. They throw him in to another cell.)

GUARD 2

In you go.

GUARD 3

Hey General, now you got some company.

(They exit knocking their night sticks against the bars.)

PRISONER

(Yelling after)

You think this is over! You think that we're done! You can't just keep throwing us in jail! Killing us! One day, you'll see! Diaz Lives! The rebellion goes on!

DIAZ

(Still not moving from his seat on the floor)

What do you know of the rebellion?

PRISONER

(Pacing in his cell)

Mind your business, old man.

(Diaz stands for the first time and we see that he is wearing a military uniform. It's old and dirty. He begins to remove his jacket. The Prisoner notices the uniform. He stops in his tracks and steps as close to the bars as he can get so that he can see Diaz.)

(Intensely)

Are you part of the rebellion?

DIAZ

Was.

PRISONER

Was! What are you a traitor?

(Extremely bitter)

... a deserter.

(Turns from Diaz)

It's your kind that are a disgrace to the cause. General Diaz would have had you shot.

DIAZ

Would he?

PRISONER

He would! Its men like you that talk when the police question you. They rat out their friends, their family to save their own skin. They know nothing of loyalty.

DIAZ

(Almost laughing)

Loyalty.

PRISONER

You took an oath. You pledged your soul to General Diaz and now I bet you told everything you knew.

(Diaz walks to the bars and leans looking over at the Prisoner.)

DIAZ

Boy, you nothing of the rebellion. You know nothing of life. To you it's just a game. What did you do to land you in here?

PRISONER

(bitterly)

I killed a man.

DIAZ

What for?

PRISONER

For standing against the rebellion.

(Diaz laughs.)

Why are you laughing? Who the hell are you! What the hell do you know! Why are you in here?!

(The Guard re-enters.)

GUARD

What's all the noise? Keep it down in here fellas .

(The prisoner retreats to the far end of his cell.)

Anything I can get for you General?

(The prisoner sits up.)

DIAZ

No.

(Guard looks the prisoner over before exiting again. Once the guard is gone the Prisoner jumps up.)

PRISONER

General? Just who are you?

DIAZ

An old man, condemned to death.

(The prisoner recognizes Diaz now and his tone towards him changes. He's now passionate.)

PRISONER

The rebellion is still strong.

DIAZ

Strong?

PRISONER

Yes. We are gaining supporters every day.

DIAZ

Through fear.

PRISONER

Like you said, 'Gain three sons by killing one father'.

DIAZ

I did say that, didn't I?

PRISONER

Don't you still believe in the cause, in the greatness of your plan?

DIAZ

Yes.

PRISONER

Then why have you grown so weak?

DIAZ

Because you don't believe in it. You. Standing in your jail cell preaching the greatness of a cause that died years before you were born. You know nothing of rebellion, of purpose.

PRISONER

I have been loyal to you all my life.

DIAZ

And what for?! Because you born in a village controlled by rebellion soldiers. You were taught by rebels in rebel schools.

PRISONER

(hopelessly)

You've given up on us.

DIAZ

What are you loyal to, Boy? Huh? What cause? What purpose? What great injustice has been done to you that you must kill another man?

(The prisoner can not answer.)

Guard!

(The guard enters.)

GUARD

Yes, General?

DIAZ

Can I get another cigarette?

(The guard gives him another cigarette and lights it for him again.)

GUARD

Anything else?

DIAZ

Can you get him out of here?

(The Guard looks over at the prisoner.)

I don't want to spend my last hours listening to him rant and rave.

(The Guard nods and exits. The prisoner is angry. He just steams silently.)

PRISONER

(Suddenly)

I would die for you!

DIAZ

(Shakes his head)

It's not your fight, boy.

(The three Guards enter and take the Prisoner off. Diaz smokes his cigarette. He takes out an old photograph from his jacket pocket and looks it over. The guard comes back. Diaz puts the picture away.)

GUARD

You have a visitor.

DIAZ

I don't want to see anyone.

(SOPHIA enters. Diaz looks at her then nods to the Guard. The Guard opens the gate. Sophia steps into the cell slowly but confidently. The guard closes the gate.)

GUARD

(Exiting)

You've got three minutes.

DIAZ

What are you doing here, Sophia?

SOPHIA

I came to watch the bastard that killed my sister die.

(Diaz turns from her. There is a long bitter stinging silence. Sophia just stares at the back of Ferdinand.)

Have you made your peace with her, Ferdinand?

DIAZ

Have you made yours?

SOPHIA

I just need to see justice done. You took something that you had no business taking.

DIAZ

I loved Rosa.

SOPHIA

So you had her shot....

DIAZ

She was against the cause.

SOPHIA

The cause?! That's what she is now?! She's a victim of the cause.

DIAZ

She knew what it meant to me.

SOPHIA

Obviously it meant more to you than she did.

DIAZ

Sophia.

(He pauses)

Rosa meant a lot to me. She meant more to me than anyone in this world. But, I couldn't turn my back on the movement, not for her, not even for me.

SOPHIA

Is that supposed to make me feel better, Ferdinand?

(Unimpressed)

Save the explanations for Rosa.

DIAZ

I wanted you to know that.

SOPHIA

Know what?

DIAZ

That Rosa didn't die for nothing. She died for a purpose.

SOPHIA

Your purpose, General Diaz.

DIAZ

The greater purpose. Rosa gave her life for it.

SOPHIA

Against her will. You murdered her. Stop trying to rationalize it. You killed her for your own reasons.

DIAZ

What do you want from me, Sophia? I'm already going to die.

SOPHIA

I want to hear you say that you're sorry; that you were wrong for using her.

DIAZ

I'm not sorry, Sophia.

SOPHIA

You killed an innocent women, who did nothing but love you.

DIAZ

And you don't think that I'm suffering.

SOPHIA

This is not suffering, Ferdinand. You have Rosa's blood on your hands.

DIAZ

I'm the one that has to live with it.

SOPHIA

-and now you have to die with it.

(Sophia walks to the gate.)

Guard!

(The guard enters)

I'm done here.

(The guard opens the gate. Sophia steps out of the cell and stops as the guard closes the cell. The guard begins to exit but Sophia doesn't move.)

GUARD

Ma'am?

(He holds out his hand to her. She starts to exit.)

DIAZ

Sophia!

(Sophia stops but takes a moment before turning around. Sophia's face becomes venom and spits at the floor in front of Diaz and exits. Diaz paces in the cell a little while longer. The guard returns.)

GAURD

It shouldn't be much longer.

(Diaz chuckles in spite of himself. The guard offers him another cigarette.)

Would like another?

(Diaz takes another cigarette. The guard lights it.)

DIAZ

Nice lighter.

GUARD

Thanks. My wife gave it to me.

(Diaz nods.)

You married?

(Diaz shakes his head.)

I didn't mean to pry or anything. I've just seen that picture you carry around with you.

(Slowly Diaz takes out the picture and hands it to the Guard.)

She's pretty. Who is she?

DIAZ

(Very slowly)

Doesn't matter... She's dead.

(The guard hands the picture back.)

GUARD

Can I ask you something?

(Diaz nods)

Are you scared?

(Diaz takes a long drag of his cigarette then flicks it across the cell. The guard stands)

Well, I should go see if they're ready for you.

DIAZ

Let me get another.

(The guard hands him the entire pack and the lighter. Then he exits. Diaz lights another cigarette. He sinks back to the floor. Diaz takes out the picture of Rosa and stares at it for a long time. Diaz takes out the lighter and sets the picture on fire.)

Have mercy on me, Rosa.

(Guard 2 enters with the Guard and a PRIEST. Guard 2 notices the burning photo and opens the cell quickly.)

GUARD 2

What the hell is going on!?

(Guard 2 stomps on the flame until it goes out. Then he pulls Diaz to his feet.)

Let's go, General.

PRIEST

It's time.

(The guard stands back while Guard 2 leads Diaz and the priest out of the cell and off the stage. He closes the jail cell with a clang and walks off solemnly behind them.)

THE END