

ECHO

Written by

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CHARACTERS

MARIO
KIM
JAKE
PERSON

DRAFT 2

A living room with a view of Central Park.
We would describe it as modest if it weren't
for the view.

Offstage, a party. Talk and laughter creeping
from under the door. It's a happy occasion.

On stage are JAKE, KIM, and MARIO. All
are in their thirties. We're mid-conversation.

JAKE

That's not how I remember it.

KIM

Well that doesn't mean you remember it right.

JAKE

Embarrassing. To start an argument // in front of them.

KIM

A discussion.

JAKE

Call it what you will.

MARIO

Sod this for a game of soldiers.

*JAKE and KIM take time from their
argument to stare at MARIO.*

JAKE

What did you just say?

MARIO

Sod this for a game of soldiers.

JAKE

Ah. Yeah. That's what I thought. And yeah, what the hell does that mean?

KIM

I think he means to say...no idea.

MARIO
Why are you confused?

JAKE
It's just odd.

KIM
He spent a semester in England when he was in college and now all of a sudden he has started on with--

JAKE
You did? A semester?

MARIO
I've mentioned it. Us three. We were in a restaurant somewhere and I said--

JAKE
A restaurant somewhere. Do you know how vague that sounds?

MARIO
Oh bloody hell. I studied in London when I was in graduate school.

KIM
I don't actually remember you ever telling Jake--

MARIO
I'll think of the name of the restaurant.

KIM
Mario, you were an undergraduate not a graduate student.

MARIO
The Moody Cow. Dogs and muddy boots welcomed!

JAKE
They're in the hallway. We can hear them; they can hear us. We can't act this way.

KIM
(showing some compassion)
Now, when he's stressed // he starts up as if he were an Englishman.

JAKE
Are you stressed now? Is that what's happening? Let me help you then. You do yoga, Mario? Go get yourself a mat, breathe, or just fuck someone on it. You're wasting our time.

With a nod of the head, MARIO concedes.

The offstage party bursts in a united laugh.

JAKE

You ever been at a party where everyone laughs at something...some joke. And you don't. Not right away. A second later you do. And the moment you do that...the moment you force yourself to laugh, then the joke makes sense. The joke is, in fact, funny.

KIM
(drily)

LOL.

MARIO
(drily)

OMG.

Beat.

JAKE

LMAO.

MARIO is pacing now -- using the pacing to recall a memory.

MARIO

We put the body in the boot. We agreed on that already.

KIM

You're back with us?

JAKE

The boot?

KIM

Oh here we go again.
The trunk. He means to say--

JAKE

What I remember is that we cut the body up, we used contractor bags, drove over to Molly's farm, dug a grave, and there he lies. // Lays? There he lays or lies? Or lie?

MARIO

You skipped one step. The body was in the contractor bag all cut up. Yes, that's right. But how we got that bag from his apartment to the farm -- we had to put it somewhere, didn't we?

JAKE

In the bag.

MARIO

Transportation. Transporting the body.

JAKE

In the bag.

KIM

What he means to say--

MARIO

To get the body from--the body in a bag from one place to--

JAKE

Oh. Yes. Yes. You're right.

Pause.

JAKE

But you see my memory of it all.

I remember it...well alright I give that one up. I give it to you in the spirit of community.

In the spirit of...of. Living in. A common language, I suppose. Language not in the way we're.

I give up a memory I'm sure of so that I can gain memory.

MARIO

You, Jake, are the bee's knees.

JAKE

Well I take that to mean--

KIM

He's fond of you.

MARIO

Indeed. As I am of you.

JAKE

Thank you. // Thank you.

KIM

Should we go back into the room. Our friends are waiting.

JAKE

Not exactly our friends, though maybe one day.

But only when we settle this can we...want a drink? Kelly has a special stash that she--being an alcoholic and such, well she's prepared for any emergencies. For the ten steps.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

She prepared herself by stashing the liquor and when she is--whenever she finds herself longing--ah!

He finds what he's looking for: vodka. He pours three glasses and as he does...

KIM

I had a friend who did the ten steps except he didn't. The one step that requires you to apologize, you skipped that one, Jake.

JAKE

I didn't see the need to apologize to you.

(he drinks)

All the same, I failed the program.

MARIO

Cheers to that.

They drink. Pour again. Drink.

JAKE

Now with clarity flowing through our body, I believe we can come to an agreement, so that we can go in there and-

MARIO

I think Kim is right. It's wrong of us to be here dealing with our failing memories.

JAKE

Our memories are not failing us. We are choosing to fail our memories.

Beat.

JAKE

Whatever the hell that means.

He drinks.

MARIO

I was in undergraduate school. Kim is right. You are right. I recall it all in splendid detail.

JAKE

Ah. Wonderful! The vodka is starting to do its thing.

MARIO

Now let's not muck around more than we've already--

KIM

Was the bag in the boot?

JAKE

Pardon?

KIM

The contractor bag with the body. Did we put it in the trunk or not?

MARIO

Do you remember?

Beat.

KIM

It was in the trunk.

MARIO

Ha!

JAKE

Alright I concede. My memory now tells me that we did put the body in the trunk *or* the boot if you insist on calling it that.

KIM

Are we good?

JAKE

I need another shot.

MARIO

Of course not.

KIM

Okay. Let's just...enjoy your drink, Jake.

Let's color in the details. The things we don't remember--

JAKE

They will not welcome us into their community if we don't have our story straight. Not story because that implies it's all a lie. We must march back in there with the truth in hand.

He puts the glass down.

JAKE

Let's begin at the beginning. Agree?

Of course. KIM Yes. MARIO

JAKE
The body was that of James Federici.

MARIO KIM
Agree. Absolutely.

JAKE
Okay. Good. We all agree on who we murdered. Now we used multiple weapons including the obvious one: AK-47.

KIM
A curling iron.

MARIO JAKE
What was that about? I remember that. I don't think that did much to James Federici's head, but you did have a curling iron in your hand.

KIM
And it was hot! Hot enough to burn his hair which made for that terrible smell--

MARIO
A hatchet. We did use a hatchet.

JAKE
I need to stop you there. It was a hand axe.

MARIO
Bollocks.

KIM
I hate to disagree with you both but it was an axe. It was an axe. It had the weight of an axe and that makes it an axe.

JAKE
You say that with such certainty.

KIM
I dated a man in college who was a member of WATL.

JAKE MARIO
WATL? You never mentioned.

KIM

WAIL as in World Axe Throwing League.

MARIO

You dated a man who threw axes competitively?

KIM

Trust me when I say this. It was not a hatchet. It was not a hand axe. It was an axe.

JAKE

It was a hatchet.

KIM

That's not what you said just now. You said it was a hand axe.

JAKE

It was a hatchet.

MARIO

It was a hatchet, Kim.

Beat.

JAKE

(reaching for the vodka)

Perhaps a refill will get us back on the right path.

They drink.

JAKE

We agree that it was James Federici. A curling iron -- a hot curling iron. *And a hatchet.*

Beat.

KIM

And a hatchet.

JAKE

My god, Mario, you're wearing flannel.

MARIO

So are you.

JAKE

That's why I mention it.

So is her. MARIO

Did Kelly ever mention the echo? KIM
(walking away from the other two)

Echo? JAKE

This room. It has an echo. Your hear it? KIM

My god, Mario, you're wearing flannel. JAKE

So are you. MARIO

The echo. KIM

Come again? MARIO

Did Kelly ever mention the echo? KIM

Beat.

Say something. JAKE

I don't have to. You just did. And I heard it. KIM

For me to hear it. Properly. I need to shut up. JAKE

Mario? KIM

Cross Patch, lift the latch, Sit by the fire and spin; Take a cup, and drink it up, Then call your neighbours in. MARIO

Beat.

JAKE

I hear it.

MARIO

Me too. A slight one.

KIM

I have this fear. It's the same dream. I'm in a room and when I say something the words come back at me. The room returns them to me as if to say, Are you sure that's what you want to say? And I say them again, but the words have changed ever so slightly. They are returned to me and what I say next changes. It's as if everyone now is saying something similar in various ways. This happens multiple times until I can no longer remember what those first words were, but now what the others are saying have become me. The room has changed me.

Short pause.

JAKE

I don't hear an echo, Kim. I just didn't want you to feel alone.

MARIO

The same. Listen carefully, Kim.

JAKE

Listen to our words.

Beat.

KIM

I don't believe there's an echo.

Beat.

JAKE

What else?

MARIO is momentarily confused but then...

MARIO

A gun.

KIM

Obviously.

JAKE

Yes, a gun.
Last call on weapons.
AK-47. Curling iron. A hot one. Gun. And a hatchet.

On hatchet, JAKE and MARIO look at
KIM.

KIM

A hatchet, of course.

A breath.

JAKE

That's four weapons but there are only three of us. Does that sound believable to you?

MARIO

It's what happened.

JAKE

What happened doesn't always read as true. I say we lie as to reach a collective truth of sorts...yes? yes? No gun then. I think an AK-47 checks that box...yes? yes? Good.

KIM

He was on the toilet.

JAKE

Yes. Mario? Going once. Going twice. Going--

MARIO

(clearly, he remembers it differently)

Yes. The toilet.

JAKE

I shot him first. You, Kim, used the curling iron that he had plugged in. And you Mario...your hatchet shook hands with his right *and* left hand.

MARIO

Not necessary to have one hand jealous of
the other.

JAKE

Miss something? Does this all make
sense?

KIM

I thought I...my memory of it.

Beat.

KIM

Only his right.

MARIO

I'm a fair and balanced bloke.

Beat.

KIM

My memory of it is that you...you, Jake, are correct.

JAKE

Brilliant!

MARIO

Brilliant?

JAKE

Yes, as in Great! Our friends across the pond say brilliant. And because the community we are creating is inclusive, I will now pepper my English with some British slang. How does that sound to you, Mario?

MARIO

Thanks, mate. Buy you a pint next time we're at the Moody Cow.

Picking up the vodka.

JAKE

Fancy a cuppa?

He pours Mario a drink and one for himself leaving Kim out.

MARIO

What I would like now is a fag. Do either of you have a fag? I need a fag to go with the vodka.

JAKE

I quit smoking years ago.

MARIO

But maybe you have one stashed somewhere on your person.

KIM

You don't smoke, Mario, so therefore you have no need of a fag.

MARIO

You're right. I don't smoke.

KIM

There's definitely an echo in the room.

JAKE

I quit smoking years ago.

MARIO

So did I.

KIM

You never smoked.

MARIO

Two packs a day. Dunhills are giving me the blues.

KIM

But you never--.

JAKE

Look, we have now agreed on the weapon...weapons. The victim, I should say first. The weapons including a hot curling iron. We agree on the question of the boot.

KIM

Do we agree the tank was full? Gas. We topped it off before starting. I used my Southwest Platinum to pay.

Beat.

JAKE

We established several things and I think we were headed in the right direction. Forwards. But now you're taking us back to before the murder to something so...a detail that is just--

MARIO

No one shares their dreams with other people and that's because they're boring. Special to you, tedious to hear.

Beat.

KIM

You have a point to make?

JAKE

Anything that happened prior...who cares.

MARIO

Who bloody hell cares.

JAKE

Not relevant.

MARIO

Not relevant.

KIM starts to go.

MARIO

Hey! Stop. If we're to be one. If you're to be one of us...you can't leave the room.

KIM walks over to the bar, pours a shot of
vodka, downs it.

JAKE

(a more gentle Jake emerging)

If we're to enter that other room, we must leave this room united in memory. In language.

Beat.

KIM

(shaking her head no)

I hear an echo and it's taking my words. It's taking them forever. Never to return.

MARIO

Of course words return to you.

KIM

Not the same words, same ideas.

MARIO

We are a community, Kim.

JAKE

Give a little of yourself and gain something greater.

MARIO

A home.

JAKE

You. Your ideas and feelings. You're homeless.

MARIO

We're so close.

Pause.

KIM

It was a fucking axe not a hatchet!

Pause.

JAKE

You made up your mind then.

KIM

I can't.

She walks to the window and jumps to oblivion.

They don't react to KIM's exit but to a wild laugh from the other room.

JAKE

The facts, as we remember them, are as follows.
I filled the tank using my Southwest Platinum to pay.

Waits for MARIO to say something but when he doesn't...

JAKE

We drove to James Federici's house to find him in the bathroom. You used a hatchet, I used an AK-47. We used a table saw to split the body in half. After, we used two electric saws. Finally we gathered the parts stuffed, them in a contractor bag, placed the bag in the boot, drove to Molly's farm, buried it using a small backhoe that you Mario operated with great efficiency.

During the above, there are echoes of what Jake is saying.

MARIO

And Kim?

Who? JAKE

Beat.

I thought there once was-- MARIO

Shhh. JAKE

We're ready then? MARIO

All goes quiet. It stays this way for a while.

We haven't noticed it until now, but theres a swivel chair on stage (back to us). MARIO walks over to it and spins it around to face us. There is a PERSON sitting in the chair. They wear flannel.

MARIO
You can't expect to stay in this room forever and never say a word.

PERSON
I'm shy. Even when I hear the truth...it's hard for me.

Beat.

PERSON
Get over it, a friend said. That's why I'm here.
I have been listening and I agree with you both. I have not said a word but I'm prepared to.

The offstage laughter is once again heard but accompanied by an echo. All on stage smile.

PERSON
I want to join the party.

JAKE
Of course.

JAKE starts walking to the door. Stops.

JAKE

Funny thing memory. If you don't fight it, memory does settle on a single truth.

END