

BROKEN

By David Meyers

Synopsis: Kevin McFadden hasn't spoken to anyone since he killed 17 people at a shopping mall three weeks ago. But when a prison doctor takes an unexpected interest in his case, Kevin decides to meet with him - revealing a troubled past that unites them both.

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CHARACTERS

KEVIN, 25

DR. PALMER, 50s

OFFICER FALCO, 30s, a prison guard

SETTING

A psychiatrist's office in a state-run prison. The present.

The dingy office is bleak and institutional. There's a large desk in the center of the room, with a worn leather chair behind it and a plastic chair in front. A framed diploma hangs on the wall, and a small refrigerator sits nearby.

NOTE: The play is one, continuous scene that unfolds in real time.

A slash (/) indicates where the next line of dialogue begins.

BROKEN

A psychiatrist's office. Bleak, institutional.

At rise, DR. PALMER stands in the office. He's waiting for someone - or something.

Maybe he's pacing; maybe he's nervous. Something's not right.

A KNOCK at the door.

After a second, Palmer opens it - calm, collected.

DR. PALMER

Yes?

OFFICER FALCO (tough, scary) steps inside.

OFFICER FALCO

He's here.

DR. PALMER

Bring him in.

Officer Falco talks to someone offstage.

OFFICER FALCO
(to Kevin, offstage)

Move.

After a moment, KEVIN shuffles into the office, wearing handcuffs. His eyes are bloodshot; he looks drugged, angry, and withdrawn all at once.

There's a bandage wrapped around his head.

OFFICER FALCO

I said, move!

Falco PUSHES KEVIN further into the office - hard, angry.

Palmer goes to say something to Falco, then stops himself.

The three of them stand there. It's uncomfortable, tense.

Palmer turns to Falco:

DR. PALMER

The handcuffs are supposed to be off.

OFFICER FALCO

What?

DR. PALMER

(repeating himself)

The handcuffs are supposed / to be off-

OFFICER FALCO

No one told me that-

DR. PALMER

Take them off, please.

OFFICER FALCO

That's not a good idea. He's- (*unsaid*: dangerous)

Palmer looks at Kevin - skinny, scrawny.

DR. PALMER

We'll be fine.

OFFICER FALCO

I'm not supposed to take / them-

DR. PALMER

The Warden said it was okay.

Falco looks at Palmer.

OFFICER FALCO

The kid just asked to come down here. How could the / Warden-

DR. PALMER

You don't believe me?

...no, I-

OFFICER FALCO

Do you want to call him and ask?

DR. PALMER

Falco looks at Palmer, decides not to fight him.

Falco goes to Kevin and takes the handcuffs off - hard, like he's trying to hurt him.

Kevin rubs his wrists.

Sit down!

OFFICER FALCO

Falco SHOVES Kevin down into a chair.

Kevin looks around the office. He stares at the framed diploma on the wall, the refrigerator, maybe something on a bookshelf....

Palmer watches Kevin. Then he turns to Falco, gestures towards the door.

Thank you, Officer.

DR. PALMER

Falco looks at both of them; this is a bad idea. He raises the handcuffs.

I really don't think-

OFFICER FALCO

We'll be fine.

DR. PALMER

But he's-

OFFICER FALCO

You'll be outside, right?

DR. PALMER

Falco looks at Palmer, angry - but decides not to fight him. He goes to Kevin, grabs his shoulder.

OFFICER FALCO

(under his breath, angry)

I'm warning you, McFadden. You try anything / and-

DR. PALMER

Thank you, Officer.

Falco gives Palmer a glare, then exits.

Palmer closes the door.

A beat.

DR. PALMER

It's good to see you, Kevin.

Kevin doesn't respond. Another beat.

DR. PALMER

After last night, I didn't think you'd come to see me-

(pause)

But ... - I'm glad you changed your mind.

Kevin sits there, vacant. Pause.

DR. PALMER

So...

Another beat. Nothing.

Palmer looks at Kevin - observes, watches.

Then he gestures to the refrigerator.

DR. PALMER

Would you like something?

(pause)

I have soda. I know they don't let you have that...

Kevin stares at the floor.

Palmer goes to the refrigerator, takes a soda can.

Kevin stares at the can - a potential weapon.

Palmer holds the can out to him.

DR. PALMER

Here. ... Kevin?

(Kevin doesn't take it)

Don't you want it?

(pause)

Kevin?

Awkward pause. Tension.

DR. PALMER

What is it? You don't like soda?

Kevin doesn't respond.

Palmer doesn't know what to say. He gestures to the soda can.

DR. PALMER

Would you mind? If I had one?

Kevin doesn't respond.

Palmer snaps the can open, starts drinking.

DR. PALMER

You know, they design this stuff to get you addicted. They have scientists, that's all they do - manipulate the chemicals, the sugar ... But you don't drink it. ... That's smart.

Kevin stares into space.

DR. PALMER

(with a smile)

I could probably use *your* help - get me off this stuff.

No response. Pause.

DR. PALMER

Dr. Saperstein said you wouldn't talk to him either - or Dr. Goldfarb. And you wouldn't talk when I came to your cell last night...

(pause)

That's fine - we don't have to talk.

A beat.

DR. PALMER

But, since you asked the guards to bring you down here, I thought you *did* want to talk...

No response.

DR. PALMER

I know it's been hard. Three weeks - solitary. The isolation, the lack of contact...

(pause)

I know you probably think that people hate you - but I meant what I said last night - I want to help you, Kevin - to listen. And it's just you and me, off the books. They can't use it at your trial or...

Palmer leans in, confides.

DR. PALMER

I'm not even allowed to be doing this. You're not my patient. It's against protocol. But Saperstein, Goldfarb ... I wouldn't talk to them either.

Kevin turns away.

DR. PALMER

You don't trust me. I understand. But I'm not like them, Kevin.

A beat. Kevin doesn't respond. Palmer's getting frustrated.

DR. PALMER

So why *did* you come here? Why'd you ask to come see me if you didn't want to talk? Just to get out of solitary?

Pause. Palmer settles down, leans back.

DR. PALMER

That's fine. We can sit here. ... Whatever you need...

A long beat.

Kevin finally speaks; it's monotone, barely audible.

KEVIN

The carbonation.

DR. PALMER

What?

KEVIN

(gesturing to Palmer's soda)

The carbonation...it burns my lips.

Palmer's genuinely surprised.

DR. PALMER

Really? I've never heard of that.

(pause; a slight switch)

And this was when you were younger, too?

Kevin nods.

DR. PALMER

Did that make it hard ...to fit in with-

Kevin turns on him - pissed, angry.

KEVIN

Don't.

DR. PALMER

You're right.

A beat.

Kevin looks away; now, and often, he has trouble making eye contact.

Palmer waits for Kevin to make the next move. He doesn't.

DR. PALMER

(a confession)

You know. I didn't fit in when I was growing up.

Kevin doesn't respond.

DR. PALMER

It was fine when, uh-

(a tiny pause)

When I was younger. But then I just couldn't make friends... Never knew why...

(pause)

Is that how you felt? Your mom said-

Kevin cuts him off.

KEVIN
You talked to my mom?

DR. PALMER
A little. I called her last night to see if / she-

KEVIN
Why did you / call her-

DR. PALMER
I wanted to talk to her about you. About why-

KEVIN
What did she say?

DR. PALMER
That she still loves you.

KEVIN
Bullshit.

DR. PALMER
She does. She's worried about you.

Kevin shakes his head.

DR. PALMER
(gesturing to the bandage on Kevin's
forehead)
If the gun was a few inches to the left...

Palmer doesn't finish the sentence.

Kevin closes his eyes.

A long beat. Then:

KEVIN
They were assholes.

DR. PALMER
What?

KEVIN
That's why I couldn't make friends. People were assholes.

Who? DR. PALMER

Everyone. KEVIN

I know, but who exactly? Friends? Girls? DR. PALMER

Everyone. KEVIN

Oh. DR. PALMER
(a joke)
I thought you were just exaggerating.

Kevin shoots him an icy glare.

You think this is funny? KEVIN

Of course not. DR. PALMER

(pause)
You know, your mom said that was her favorite thing about you growing up - your smile-

Don't talk about my mom. KEVIN

I / only- DR. PALMER

KEVIN
(quiet - angry)
Don't. Talk. About. My. Mom.

DR. PALMER
Look - I'm on your side, Kevin. Saperstein, Goldfarb, you're right - they want to let you rot.

And you don't? KEVIN

No. DR. PALMER

KEVIN

Why not?

DR. PALMER

We just lock people up. People who need help. People who're in pain. We throw them in jail, and bad things keep happening, and we never know why-

KEVIN

Cause people are assholes. That's why. Aren't you listening?

DR. PALMER

You think it's that easy?

KEVIN

These guys in here, they kill people for a pair of sneakers. *Sneakers*. Cause they're bored. I mean, who does that?

DR. PALMER

Not you. You didn't just wake up and shoot 17 people, right? You had a reason.

(pause)

Do you want to tell me what it was?

Kevin looks at Palmer, makes a decision. Then:

KEVIN

(reluctantly)

When I was 10, I was playing basketball near my house. And these three older kids came and tried to take my ball. I wouldn't give it to them, so one of them punched me in the face - my nose started bleeding. But I still wouldn't give them the ball. So they hit me again.

Kevin stops, almost quivering.

KEVIN

And they dragged me into this hut on the playground, and they took a stick, and pulled down my shorts...

Palmer stops, looks at him.

DR. PALMER

(intention: "are you lying to me?")

They raped you?

Kevin smiles and shakes his head, mocking Palmer.

DR. PALMER

That's not funny.

KEVIN

That's what you want, right? Some stupid reason - so you can go tell everyone why I did it? So they can go home and sleep at night?

DR. PALMER

Kevin-

KEVIN

You want to help me? What a load of crap.

(getting up)

You come to my cell last night, say you're different - you *care* about me. And I thought, maybe... But you're just like them. I'm a fucking science experiment to you-

DR. PALMER

That's not / true-

KEVIN

-a meal ticket. So you can write some goddamn book or / get rich-

DR. PALMER

No. I-

KEVIN

Fuck you.

Kevin stands up.

KEVIN

I want to go back.

DR. PALMER

Wait. Kevin - wait.

Kevin calls out towards the door.

KEVIN

Hey - take me back-

A KNOCK at the door.

DR. PALMER

WAIT.

Kevin stops.

OFFICER FALCO (O.S.)

Dr. Palmer?

DR. PALMER

My-

(he stops; collects his thoughts)

I was like you - when I was a kid. Lonely. No friends-

Another KNOCK.

OFFICER FALCO (O.S.)

Dr. Palmer?!

Kevin looks at the door. Palmer calls out in desperation.

DR. PALMER

I built a bomb. I tried to blow up my school.

Kevin freezes.

Falco BURSTS through the doorway, looks at them.

OFFICER FALCO

What the fuck's going on?

DR. PALMER

Nothing. We're fine.

OFFICER FALCO
(re: Kevin)

What did he do?

DR. PALMER

Nothing. We just-

OFFICER FALCO
(to Kevin)

You're dead, you little shit.