



The Judas Window

A Play
by
P.S. Lynch

Act One

Scene Two

(From total darkness, a cold, sluggish grey slowly lights the scene. In the semi darkness, the audience should be able to make out only the faintest traces of the contents of the cell; SL is a small deal table and two wood chairs set either side of it; SR a simple, metal prison bed. As the play begins, we can make out a pair of feet on the bed, wearing leather boots that tap together as a crackly recording of Al Jolson singing Sittin' on top of the World plays.

After a minute, the music fades as KELLEY emerges from the rear of the auditorium. As he speaks, he moves through the audience, onto the stage and into the cell. As the music stops, he stands SR in the half-light next to the table smoking a cigarette. Throughout, the figure on the bed is perfectly still and, apart from the leather booted feet, remains unseen by the audience.)

KELLEY: *(Addressing the audience)* How do you measure a life? In paperclips my wife says; office secretary since out of college. Or toenails perhaps. My brother was a podiatrist for thirty seven years, so it follows that he'd...measure a life in...

(He casts a glance towards the bed, remembering. The figure on the bed - still shrouded in darkness - rises and exits through the doorway, closing the door behind him.)

What about twelve red leather suitcases? Each one of them bore his monogram embossed in gold. They were a sight to behold. He was hardly taking a holiday, so what did these suitcases contain, you may very well ask. *(Pause)*. His life. His old life, before Cell #5 at Nuremberg. The life he wanted reflected back as a reminder.

(Pause. As KELLEY continues speaking, the lights illuminate the scene as in daytime, but never to anything more than a sluggish grey. WHEELER pushes the cell door open and strides in holding a suitcase. He moves in and out of the

cell, bringing suitcases and setting them down, centre stage. According to the production, as few as four suitcases might be used, so as to make the suggestion of what follows.)

There were gold Luftwaffe badges encrusted with diamonds; a traveling clock by Movado. He had five sterling silver pill boxes. One case - imagine it - was full of rings; diamond rings, ruby rings, emerald, every kind of ring you could imagine. Semi-precious buttons - another was stuffed with semi-precious buttons. They found his Iron Cross - 1st Class - in one of them, plus three - no four - wrist watches as well as lapis lazuli cuff links. There was a gold cigarette case inlaid with amethyst and monogrammed by Prince Paul of Yugoslavia. Nice piece. *(Pause)* Then there were the pills. A tidal wave of them cascaded everywhere the day they brought him to Cell #5 at Nuremberg. Six of the boys lugged two cases each, set them down in the cell. *(WHEELER brings in a final case which, as soon as he sets it down, falls open, a lengthy roll of white fabric unfurling over the floor, suggesting hundreds of white pills)*. One of them lost its clasp and thousands of little white capsules poured out onto the floor, rattling like hailstones as they fell. Spilling out, bouncing about. They all stood there in a sea of pills, agog.

WHEELER: *(Staring down)* What the fuck?

(Both characters are oblivious of one another as they continue to recount the facts, addressing the audience throughout.)

KELLEY: They told me that since paracodeine wasn't produced outside Germany, Goering had amassed the world's entire supply. Two cases, 20,000 pills. *(Wryly)* In my profession we would confidently call this an addiction.

WHEELER: He was a junkie for well over twenty years. Took a bullet during the Munich putsch of '23. Accounts differ. Some say he was shot in the thigh, others the groin. Stomach maybe. Anyway, a local furniture shop owner - Jewish by the way - likely saved his life. Ironically. This guy dragged him into the shop where his wife treated the wound as best she could. Goering and Mrs G slipped the border into Austria and he checked himself into Innsbruck Hospital. By the time

the first snowflakes fell that December he was hopelessly addicted to morphine.

(As KELLEY picks up the story, WHEELER strolls to the doorway and leans against the frame.)

KELLEY: The report I saw claimed that his addiction was accompanied by the massive weight gain which came to define him in the eyes of caricaturists. No trace of the handsome, athletic flying ace of the First World War. He was injecting himself with morphine on a daily basis, and by 1925 he'd developed the worst kind of symptoms. He was lethargic, erratic in his behaviour and prone to violent outbursts. While under hospital observation, he attacked a nurse so violently that he was committed to the Institute of Nervous Diseases in Sweden.

WHEELER: Confined to a padded cell and straitjacketed. Crazy fuck.

KELLEY: Hitler's physician, a Dr Morella observed that Goering was a slave to his habit. He'd be slumped in a chair, get up and leave the room, then return a few minutes later revived. Morell was convinced that Goering was dosing himself up whenever his opium count dropped.

WHEELER: By the time he arrived at Nuremberg, he was a hefty, simpering slob. Hands shaking and sweating like a bishop in a whore-house. Popping over a hundred and sixty of those pills. Daily.

KELLEY: 22,000 pills. The world's entire supply.

(WHEELER strolls over to the deal table in the cell and picks up Kelley's cigarettes, lights one and then returns to the threshold of the cell, leaning on the doorway with his back now to the audience.)

KELLEY: Later, came the theft. Colonel Andrus, the old bastard who ran Nuremberg noticed that some of the inventoried items in Goering's suitcases had gone missing. He couldn't be sure at first, it wasn't the kind of stuff that would be an obvious target for a thief but after a while there was no doubt. The

stolen items were....intriguing.

So much so that it made the mystery of who was taking them all the more tantalizing for their strangeness: a collection of ivory toothpicks. Used. A mother of pearl soap dish. A hair net. And the last item...the last item was a pair of tailored silk pyjamas in Bordeaux red for a man of 5'10" weighing 280lbs. They never did find the thief.

WHEELER: (*Turning his head slightly*) Col. Andrus was so naïve.

KELLEY: He believed that being how the boys were a long way from home, not much money in the bank and mouths to feed...They see a pair of gold cufflinks and think 'Well why not?' The fact was that Andrus would rather *that*, than...I mean he'd rather have a soldier who made a dumb decision than...

WHEELER: (*Turning round*) A fan.

KELLEY: Which is what I believed. Someone who actually respected the Reichsmarschall. (*During the following, WHEELER slowly turns and leaves through the cell door.*) Liked him, even. An acolyte. Who knows why. Perhaps for personal gain – sort of 'You scratch my back an' I'll polish your mother of pearl soap dish' type-thing – or perhaps, more likely, because he was...intoxicated. The proximity to power. (*KELLEY is now alone. The lights slowly fade during the following.*) I can empathise. I knew Goering for, what, thirteen months? I spoke at length to him in here. Sometimes, at night I would watch him through the eye hole in the door, through that Judas window. Often, he would be sitting perfectly still at the table.

What I would have given to know what he was thinking. Plotting. He was shrewd, quite brilliant actually. No question, he was an insatiable megalomaniac with appetites beyond the soaring dreams of avarice. At times he could be utterly charming, beguiling even; he could also be a complete asshole. But never dull. The truth is that every hour I spent in his company was electrifying.

SLOW FADE