To get Justice

Cast of Characters

AMIL A nineteen-year-old black man, who misses his best friends.

CASSIAN A twenty-one-year-old white man, who suddenly lost faith in the justice system, and wants to take matters into his own hands.

Scene

Standing on the beach where their best friend was killed, facing each other, silhouetted by the setting sun.

Time

Present day.

**Scene 1**

AT RISE: Standing on an empty beach, silhouetted by the setting sun.

CASSIAN holds a small handgun and looks furious.

AMIL enters looking down at his phone.

AMIL

Hey, Cass, you told me to meet you here? I know it still—

(He looks up to see CASSIAN holding a gun. His hands fly up.)

AMIL

Cass… homie, why do you have a gun?

CASSIAN

They killed him. That fucking bastard cop killed him.

AMIL

Cassian. Why do you have a gun?

CASSIAN

It’s been six months. Six months to the day and they reinstated

him. He got off scot-free!

AMIL

Put the gun down Cass.

CASSIAN

They reinstated the man who killed him! He killed him in cold blood and *nothing* was done. They need to pay!

AMIL

I know… I know they did. Just— just put the gun down?

CASSIAN

No! No, this is the *only* way we will *ever* get justice. If they won’t put him away for life then *I* am going to take it away.

(AMIL steps towards CASSIAN and CASSIAN points the gun in the air and shoots, a loud ‘bang’ sounds, AMIL flinches back but holds strong.)

AMIL

I know— I know you think that this will fix it. I know you believe that *that*, is the only way to give him rest, but it’s not!

CASSIAN

You don’t fucking know that!

AMIL

I know that shooting up a police department won’t bring him back.

CASSIAN

Neither will sitting back and watching his killer walk free.

AMIL

You think he would’ve wanted you to do this? You think ‘Keem would’ve wanted you in jail?! Just put the gun down, Cass. Put the gun down, and nobody else needs to lose their life. What exactly do you think is going to happen when you walk into there armed?

CASSIAN

I don’t— I don’t know.

AMIL

You think they are just going to lead you to Herrera’s desk? Even if you could get in, you know how trigger happy they were with Hakeem, and he was just walking along the beach. They’ll kill you, Cassian. They’ll slaughter you were you stand, and then I’ll lose both my best friends in one year. Don’t make me go through that. You can’t make me go through that.

CASSIAN

You don’t understand! You’ve never understood, I need to do this, ‘Mil, I *need* to. I need to make it right. You should understand that.

AMIL

Listen… I know— I know you blame yourself for his death. I know you think that it’s all your fault.

(Beat.)

I don’t know if I should tell you… I know you didn’t want me to know, and you went through so much to hide it. Cass… I— I know you were the one who called the cops. I know. I should’ve let you know that I knew, instead of allowing you to wallow in your own self-hatred.

CASSIAN

You— You know? I just wanted to help him. He was getting out of control with the drugs and the partying, and I thought a little run-in with the cops would scare him straight. I never wanted any of this to happen!

AMIL

I know. It’s not your fault. I don’t blame you; I never have. You did what you thought was best, you couldn’t have seen that coming.

CASSIAN

I could’ve. I should’ve— I should’ve known. I thought I knew better, I thought that things like what I see on the T.V don’t happen around here. He wasn’t dangerous!

(CASSIAN begins crying and he is waving the gun around while he talks. AMIL puts his hands up pleadingly.)

AMIL

‘Keem wouldn’t have wanted this. He wouldn’t have wanted you dead too. Because that’s what this is. A suicide wrapped in revenge plan.

(CASSIAN looks away.)

AMIL

I Know you feel like we will never get justice, I know you think that this is the only way to make sure that other black boys like me and Hakeem are safe— from people like him. But you’re wrong.

CASSIAN

You always said the system isn’t going to change. We’re never going to get justice. *Never.*

AMIL

Herrera’s partner resigned yesterday. She publicly stated that it was because she didn’t believe Herrera should’ve been allowed back on the force. She’s going to testify against him. She got into contact with me and said that she wants our help, that she wants to do something good with her life. That she’s realized that she was *wrong.*

Cassian, for once in your life listen to me. The world is still good, and bright, and forgiving.

CASSIAN

How can you say that? How can you say that when a cop murdered our best friend?

AMIL

I know that you went your whole life without realizing that things are fucked. I know that having to come to terms with that all at once is hard. I’ve had my entire life to come to terms with it. You’re reeling, you’ve been spiraling for the last six months and I’m sorry I didn’t realize it.

I know it doesn’t seem like it, it feels like we will always be on the bottom, that we will always get the short end of the stick. I know it feels like people like that bastard cop will always get away scot-free, but the world is changing. People, *my people,* are standing up, and saying “No, no I won’t let you do this, not anymore.” And if you take that gun into that building, you’re going to undo so much work. You know that.

CASSIAN

It— It’s the only way, isn’t it? Violence for violence? How else am I going to make this right?

AMIL

You made the call Cass. We can go to court, we can fix this another way. Cass, if you do this, you will paint the entire Black Lives Matter community as terrorists. If you do this, you will be putting your own emotions in front of millions of black American lives.

(CASSIAN stares down at the gun in his hands for a long moment before looking up at AMIL.)

CASSIAN

I’ll be just like them. I’ll be hurting people because I thought I knew better?

AMIL

Don’t do this. Don’t be the savior. We have to do this the right way, or else we can’t do it at all.

CASSIAN

But why?! Why do we have to be calm and collected and fucking passive when they slaughter 17-year-olds just walking along the goddamn beach!

(AMIL laughs without much humor in his voice.)

AMIL

Welcome to being black in America. Sucks right?

CASSIAN

This is— this is really how they expect you to act?

AMIL

Black people have always had to package their activism in a way that was white friendly. We *have* to show them that we aren’t the violent thugs that they think we are. You cannot do this.

CASSIAN

How do you live like this? How do you know all of that and not lose hope in the world?

AMIL

I wish… I wish we could go back to when we were kids. When you, me, and ‘Keem only cared about playing basketball at the corner of the block. Or back when we were most concerned with hiding our love for Barbie movies. Back to when me and ‘Keem were seen as cute, not dangerous. But we can’t. we can’t go back to a time where we got to be ignorant, where we got to believe that the world is fair. We can’t.

CASSIAN

And why not? You’ve lived with this your entire life. I’ve known about it for six months. Why can’t I be ignorant?

AMIL

Because— because if you’re ignorant then nothing changes. Not watching the news doesn’t mean that children aren’t being killed for playing in their front yard. It just means he never gets justice.

CASSIAN

How do you… still have hope?

AMIL

Because I have to. Because if I didn’t have hope, then what’s the point? If we don’t have hope, then all we have is despair.

(CASSIAN looks down at the gun.)

CASSIAN

So, what am I supposed to do?

AMIL

Move forward. Me and you. We can make a difference in a different way. But most importantly, you need to listen to black people, Cassian, you need to understand that while you have been affected by this, that you are not the target. You never will be.

CASSIAN

…I can’t hold my grief above yours.

AMIL

Cassian, I miss Hakeem more than anything, I feel like I’ve lost a limb, one that I can never get back. But I believe that despite that, the world is still good. We can make it better.

CASSIAN

We can?

AMIL

If you only just hand me the gun, before I lose my best friend again. Please, Cassian. Help me make this right… for ‘Keem.

(AMIL holds out his hand and is shaking. Slowly, ever so slowly, CASSIAN places the gun in his open palm.)

CASSIAN

I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, Amil. What was I about to do?

(Sirens sound in the distance and CASSIAN looks at AMIL, terrified. AMIL grips his hand, and they run off the beach.)

(Black out.)