

A LITTLE BIT OF SUNSHINE

Written by

Paul Knauer

Based on the songs:

Sunshine by One Republic, lyrics by Brent Kutzle, Casey Smith,
Noel Zancanella, Ryan Tedder, Tyler Spry, Zach Skelton, (P) 2021
Mosley Music/Interscope Records

and

Sunshine On My Shoulders by John Denver, lyrics by John Denver,
Dick Kniss, Mike Taylor, (P) 1973 RCA Records

The following script is for entertainment purposes only, as a
writing exercise.

FADE IN:

INT. COAL MINE - NIGHT

Dark. Dirty. Noisy.

A row of PRISONERS, chained together, hold pickaxes at their hips. The oldest in the group, RAY, 60s, chiseled from years of swinging that axe, leads them in a bit of song...

RAY
Work all night.
(lifts his axe)
Sleep all day.

They all swing hard, striking the ground as one.

RAY
*Never see the sun, 'cause I never
get away.*

The work continues with the team in complete unison--except for: ETHAN, 30s, skinny, fresh, the last on the chain--who just can't seem to get it right.

Ethan looks nervously at the Prisoner next to him, who just greets him with a shake of the head.

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Ethan, covered in sweat and soot, falls into his cell, pushed there by a GUARD.

Ethan looks around: Concrete everywhere. No window. A hole in the ground for the toilet. Concrete slab for a bed. A real third world kind of prison.

The only bits of interest in the entire cell: a small, barred window in the door, leading to the hall and a crack high on the wall.

Ethan can't help but cry.

He's interrupted by a voice from another cell.

RAY (O.S.)
Chin up. First day's the hardest.

ETHAN
Yeah?

RAY (O.S.)
 'Sides, you got the best cell in
 the joint.

ETHAN
 It was either this or a room at the
 Waldorf.

RAY (O.S.)
 Comes with responsibilities though.
 But, that's for later. Get some
 sleep. You'll feel better.

Ethan lies on the slab, stares at the crack on the wall.

LATER - DAY

Ethan sleeps. The prison around him buzzes with voices.

PRISONER #1 (O.S.)	PRISONER #2 (O.S.)
Is he going to do it?	Don't let him sleep through it.

Ray calls out, more whisper than yell...

RAY (O.S.)
 New guy! Hey! New guy!

Ethan stirs awake.

RAY (O.S.)
 Stand on the X.

Ethan walks to the door, looks out the tiny window, sees Ray,
 in his cell, across the hall.

RAY
 I told you. You got the good cell.
 But, you gotta share.

PRISONER #1 (O.S.)
 Stand on the X. Please.

RAY
 We had the last guy mark it. So
 you'd know.

Ethan looks around. Sure enough, there's a small "X"
 scratched into the floor.

RAY (O.S.)
 Back to the wall.

Ethan presses his back to the wall.

Just as he does, a dot of sunshine hits his forehead--a singular beam, through the cracked wall.

He puts his hand up--can't help but smile.

PRISONER #2 (O.S.)
Come on, man.

RAY (O.S.)
You gotta describe it, new guy. For the rest of us.

ETHAN
It's warm.

The Prisoners erupt in dissatisfaction. Voices call out: "That's all you've got?", "Aw, come on!", etc.

RAY (O.S.)
More. We wanna feel it.

Ethan soaks in the sunshine. Thinks. The room melts into...

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Ethan stands in a meadow. The sun blazes over grasses and flowers. Birds chirp. Bees buzz. Ethan...sings.

ETHAN
Sunshine...on my shoulders, makes me happy.

He swings around. A real Julie Andrews moment.

ETHAN
Sunshine...in my eyes can make me cry.

PRISONER #2 (O.S.)
Hell, no!

SMASH CUT:

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Ethan stops cold as the Prisoners assault him with verbal jabs: "Seriously, are you crying?" "The last guy never cried." etc.

RAY (O.S.)
We're counting on you, new guy.
There's not much time left.

Ethan slumps. The bit of sunshine, no longer on his forehead, now dots the wall next to him. He takes a deep breath--steps into the dot.

Suddenly, he throws his arms open--a dramatic move--like a dancer seizing their big moment. Light BLASTS the room, the sun now a giant spotlight--Ethan at the center.

PRISONER #1 (O.S.)
That's what I'm talking about!

Ethan smiles big as he bursts into song...

ETHAN
*Runnin' through this strange life,
chasing all them green lights!*

He dances forward, leaps onto his bed.

ETHAN
*Throwin' out the shade for a little
bit of sunshine!*

He leaps off the other side of the bed, where the wall used to be, and onto a...

EXT. TREE-LINED BOULEVARD - DAY

Shoppers. Traffic. A summer day, bustling with activity.

The music surges, as does Ethan's energy. Now dressed to the nines, he slides across the hood of a convertible.

He continues singing, busting sick dance moves as the other Prisoners, still in prison garb, slowly join him.

As the number builds, they slowly shed their prison garb, revealing beach wear underneath. They're all dancing now, happy as can be.

ETHAN
*I'm dancin' more just a little bit,
breathing more just a little bit.
Fail a little less just a little
bit.*

ALL
My life is woo-hoo!

The Prison Guards join--first, trying to break it up. Slowly, though, they're sucked into the sheer joy of the moment.

The dance number grows. It's huge now. No more prison garb, no more guard uniforms. The colors and choreography would put any Bollywood bit to shame. It's a frenzy of movement and joy as the song continues.

In the background, though--a sound builds. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

Eventually, it can't be ignored. The music stops cold.

SMASH CUT:

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Ethan stands, back against the wall. No music. No dancing. No beam of sunshine. The other Prisoners are NOT happy: "What the hell?" "Come on, man." "It's usually longer." etc.

Ethan jumps onto his bed, peers out the crack.

ETHAN

There's a truck. Blocking the sun.

The Prisoners collectively groan.

RAY (O.S.)

Shit. Laundry came early. That was good, though, new guy. You done well. Can't wait for tomorrow.

The Prisoners shout their "thanks" and "good jobs." Ethan soaks in the praise.

INT. PRISON HALL - CONTINUOUS

A Guard walks down the hall.

GUARD

Settle down, boys.

They do. Once satisfied with the state of the prison block, the Guard turns for the door. He sings, ever so lightly...

GUARD

*Runnin' through this strange life,
chasing all them green lights...*

UNDER CREDITS:

The Guard dances his way through the prison: A dazzling, one-man dance machine.