THE SHOW GOES ON

Written by

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INT. DARKENED ROOM–LATE NIGHT

Two men sit across from each other a table, a small light hangs above them. KEN, late 40’s, he has unkept hair and a scraggily beard. ERIC, late 20’s, sports perfect hair with clean shaven, well defined face.

ERIC
Please, just let me go. I don’t know what else you want from me.

KEN
I want you to understand. You need to understand.

ERIC
I do! I believe you! Just let me do this one last-
   (Coughs loudly)
This one last show!

KEN
You’ve been feeling sick for a while haven’t you?

ERIC
I’ve been on tour, a long one. It’s nothing.

KEN
But yet every day you feel worse and worse. What does Andy think about that?

ERIC
Why would he matter?

KEN
It all matters.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE GREEN ROOM–3 HOURS EARLIER

A roaring crowd is heard in the background as Eric, and his BANDMATES walk into the room. Eric immediately walks over to the couch in the room and flops down.

BANDMATE #1 (O.S.)
That was awesome!
BANDMATE #2 (O.S.)
The energy out there was amazing!

Eric raises his tired hand to the stage assistant.

ERIC
Can I get a cup of tea please.

BANDMATE #3 (O.S.)
Tea? Forget that bring me the liquor!

The other bandmates yell in approval. Eric leans his head back and closes his eyes. Their manager, ANDY, comes storming into the room. Andy has bright orange hair, a shiny blue suit, his shirt collar popped up.

ANDY
What a show! That’s what i’m talking about!

The assistant behind him rolls a tray of liquor bottles over to the other bandmates. She then hands Eric his cup of tea.

ANDY (CONT'D)
(To Eric)
And you! Heck of a job! They loved you!

Eric nods softly, sipping his tea.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Oh what am I saying? Of course they loved you! Everyone loves you! The whole world loves you!

The bandmates yell out again. Eric faintly smiles.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Speaking of that, I have great news! We added two more shows for this weekend!

One of the bandmates grabs a bottle of champagne and sprays the room.

ANDY (CONT'D)
That’s right celebrate! I’ll leave you guys to it, remember wheels up at 6am!

He turns to leave.
ERIC
Andy!

ANDY
What’s up superstar?

ERIC
Two more shows? I told you I couldn’t do any more. Somethings wrong with my voice, with my whole body. I don’t feel-

ANDY
(Interrupting)
Nonsense, nonsense. Listen it’s just a little strain, drink your tea, try and relax, you’ll be better in no time.

ERIC
No really, somethings wrong, it’s been like this for weeks. Maybe even months, I-

ANDY
(Interrupting)
Ssh! Rest, save your voice, save your energy. You’ll be fine, we’ve been through this before.

ERIC
Andy please, just-

ANDY
(Interrupting)
Enough! You know your contract, you know your responsibility. This is how it goes! This is show business!

FLASHBACK END:

INT. DARKENED ROOM—LATE NIGHT

Eric frustratingly fidgets in his chair.

KEN
Doesn’t seem to me that he cares at all about you.

ERIC
He does. He’s just tough. But that’s how we succeed, he pushes us.
KEN
(Laughing)
Yeah, he’s good at getting people
to believe that.

ERIC
Just let me go. I swear I won’t
tell anyone. Seriously I won’t. I
just need to get back for the show.

KEN
And then what?

ERIC
And then... I don’t know.

KEN
Then you do another show? Go to a
new city, do another show, two
shows. And then another city, and
another one. And on and on it will
go.

ERIC
That’s what I do.

KEN
No one should be subjected to that.

ERIC
Listen don’t punish me just cause
you’re jealous of my life.

KEN
Is that what you think this is?
Jealousy?

ERIC
Well what else? Why else would you
trap me here? You want this life,
my life. A life you never could
have.

KEN
I already did.

ERIC
You already did what?

KEN
I already had your life.

ERIC
Sure, okay.
KEN
Let me ask you something. Do you remember the night you got that tattoo?

Ken points to a seemingly innocuous tattoo of a bird on Ken’s wrist.

ERIC
Yeah of course. It was in London. The night after our show.

KEN
Uh huh right. And did it hurt?

ERIC
What?

KEN
Did it hurt getting the tattoo?

ERIC
No. I don’t know, I was drunk.

KEN
So you don’t remember?

ERIC
The memory’s foggy okay. What does it matter?

Ken rolls up his shirt sleeve, exposing the same tattoo on his wrist.

ERIC (CONT'D)
So what? You got the same tattoo as me. I imagine most stalkers do that.

KEN
Look closely.

Ken walks over and holds his wrist closer to Eric’s face.

KEN (CONT'D)
Look at the number.

Eric squints his eyes at the bottom of the tattoo.

ERIC
Okay so?
KEN
The number is 20 numbers off from yours.

ERIC
You should ask for a refund.

KEN
And the bird, why did you choose that kind of bird?

ERIC
Look I was drunk! I don’t remember why.

KEN
It’s a Phoenix. A Phoenix rising from the ashes. The symbol of rebirth.

ERIC
Okay?

Ken rolls up his sleeve and walks over to the side of the room and flicks on the light switch. Eric is shown tied up to the back of the chair in a concrete and dusty basement.

KEN
One more thing I want to ask you. Those pills Andy gives you each morning, what are they for?

Eric’s eyes widen.

ERIC
How did you—How do you know about that?

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE GREEN ROOM—BEFORE THE SHOW

Andy walks into the room, bustling with energy.

ANDY
(Clapping)
Alright alright alright! How we doing!

BANDMATE #1
Ready to go!
BANDMATE #2
Ready to kill it!

ANDY
That's what I like to hear! The crowd is going crazy already.

BANDMATE #3
Wait till we’re through with them.

ANDY
That’s right! That’s right! I love it!

Eric has been noticeably quiet, sunken back into the couch.

ANDY (CONT'D)
(To Eric)
You ready to blow them away tonight?

Eric half-heartedly raises his arm in the air.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Something wrong?

ERIC
My head, it feels like the rooms spinning.

ANDY
Sip your water.

ERIC
My body, it aches with every move.

ANDY
Sip your water. Your dehydrated, you must of went too hard last night.

ERIC
I’ve felt like this the past month. The past few mon-

ANDY
(Interrupting)
You’ve gone too hard the past month! You all have! I told you this before.

BANDMATE #3 (O.S.)
That’s what a Tour is for!
BANDMATE #1 (O.S)
Best job in the world!

ANDY
Everyone else is feeling good.
Drink your water, you’ll be fine.

ERIC
It won’t go away, no matter what I do.

ANDY
Alright fine!

Andy reaches into his pocket and pulls out a few small green pills.

INT. DARKENED ROOM–LATE NIGHT
Eric is hanging his head low. He can barely muster strength to look at Ken.

KEN
What are they for Eric?

ERIC
They’re for my health. For energy.

KEN
And do you feel healthy? Do you have energy?

Eric struggles to think, his face is strained and pained. He drops his head down in anguish.

ERIC
(Tired voice)
Just please let me leave. Please..

Ken walks over to the back of Eric’s chair and starts undoing the knots. Eric’s tired arms spring open, he tries with a gust of energy to stand up and run, but his weary body can only stand a few steps.

KEN
You’re late for your pills..

Eric nearly falls, Ken catches him.

KEN (CONT’D)
When you leave here, you must never go back to them, to him. Leave them, leave them for good.
ERIC
Why are you doing this?

KEN
I’m not doing anything but showing you the truth. You’ll feel like this for a little while but eventually it will go away.

ERIC
Why do I have to leave them? That’s my life.

KEN
It was my life once too. Those numbers between us, it’s not just a tattoo, it’s our barcode. We’re just a product.

ERIC
I don’t understand.

KEN
You will after this.

Ken helps Eric over to the door behind him. He opens the door to a black abyss. An odd odor causes Eric to cover his face.

ERIC
What is that?

Ken steps inside and flicks on the light.

KEN
It’s us.

Eric looks in horror at the sight. Before him is a room of bodies. Not just any bodies, bodies like his. Their faces like his, their eyes like his, their tattoos like his. He nearly falls again, Ken again catches him.

ERIC
What is this?

KEN
It’s our past, present, and future. We’re nothing but products. Products with a shelf life. Toys for them to use, for them to sing and dance along with, and then discard when they get too old. There was many before you, many before me.
ERIC
But I have a family. Friends, memories, experiences, shows.

KEN
I had those same memories. I had that same family. But that’s all it is, a show. Think hard, that family, feels more like a dream than reality doesn’t it?

ERIC
Everything? Everything was a lie?

KEN
Everything is just a show. All an act. The world around you was the stage.

ERIC
What do I do? Where do I go?

KEN
Leave. Leave it all. Take the next train as far as you can go.

ERIC
Why are you doing this?

KEN
Once I got out. I stayed away for too long. I let too many go because I was afraid to help.

ERIC
But, everything I did. Everything I have, it will all be gone.

Ken points to the room.

KEN
We all lost it too. But it was never ours to have, ours to keep.

ERIC
How can I- What will I do?

KEN
Live. Live on your own. This whole world will go own without you whether you’re here for it or not. I’m giving you the only chance to escape.
ERIC
Ok let me-

KEN
The time is now Eric. Once they come back and find us here, we’ll be thrown in with the rest of them. And then they’ll activate their next star.

ERIC
This—This is crazy. It’s absolutely insane!

KEN
No. It’s just how it is. It’s just show business.

FADE TO BLACK.