

What is Your Question

(Working Title)

Because sometimes a question is more than just a question

A Short Film

Written by

Cristóbal-José Prieto Iñárritu

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Cristóbal-José Prieto Iñárritu
Via Roma 50
Cavaion Veronese, VR 37010
Italy
prieto.inarritu.cj@gmail.com

INT. SPARSELY FURNISHED ROOM WITH TWO DOORS WITH A PHONE BY EACH DOOR

Prisoner 190-6-2

As the wall timer gets down to 00:00:30 Prisoner 190-2-6 walks slowly to his chosen door stands by door and proceeds pick up the phone occasionally glancing at the other door. Slowly and hesitantly he picks up the phone.

VOICE 2

What is your question?

WIDE ANGLE SHOT OF PRISONER 190-6-2 AND THE COUNTDOWN TIMER WHICH IS HAS SHOWING 00:00:05

PRISONER 190-6-2

(panic stricken a shaking)

"Did I guess the right door?" Please tell me that this is the right door. I don't want to die. Is this the door that leads to freedom?

(calm voice on the other side of the phone)

VOICE 2

Sure it is! Congratulations!

Clicking sounds can be heard as both doors unlock. Prisoner 190-6-2 briefly turns toward sound of the other door unlocking and is confused as to why it unlocked also. As he turns back toward the door in front of him he notices the countdown timer has reached 00:00:02. He panics, remembering what the voice told him. He quickly opens the door sighs and runs out.

CAMERA PANS TO TIMER AT STOPPING AT 00:00:01

FADE TO BLACK

In the blackness a man screaming in agony can be heard.

FADE IN

INT: SAME SPARSELY FURNISHED ROOM

MCU OF CHARLEY LYING ON FLOOR OR ROOM. PAN UP HIS BODY
STOPPING TO FOCUS ON PRISONER NUMBER

Charley slowly opens his eyes to what he imagines to be the sound of a man crying out in agony. Groggily, He looks around the room trying to figure out where he is and how he got there. As his eyes move back and forth around the room a digital timer suddenly appears on the wall with a time code of 00:05:00. While he is trying to figure out the meaning of his situation he is startled by a disembodied voice.

(Looking around to try to
determined the origin of the
voice.)

VOICE 1

Prisoner 191-6-2. During your criminal trail on 23 June 2018 for a capital offense you opted for Choice Sentencing. You were informed that your sentencing could begin on any given day without advanced notice. Today is your sentencing day and you will make the choice of whether you will be shown leniency...

Interrupting

CHARLEY

Who are you and where am I? I shouldn't even be here. I was framed, I am totally innocent...

VOICE 1

(interrupting coldly and matter-of-factly)

Do you see that timer on the wall? That is the amount of time I have to explain to you as much as I can about what you are required to do complete your sentencing. When it gets to zero all communication with you will be discontinued... permanently. Now, I have no problem taking a few minutes

to answer any questions you might have? Is that something you want me to take this time to do for you?

CHARLEY
(shaking head)

No,no,no Please go ahead.

VOICE 1
Choice Sentencing is sentencing based on a choice that you make, more specifically by a Question that you ask and a choice that you make based on that question. The choice you make based on your question will determine whether you live or die. You will have exactly 60 minutes to determine what question you will ask. To ask the question you will proceed to a door of your choice. One door will lead to your immediate freedom along with your record being expunged and the other to to your execution. At the door you will pick up the phone and ask your question. On the other side of the phone will be the person who will answer your question and then unlock the door. Once you walk through the door you will either be set free or executed--end of sentencing. Unfortunately, you don't know who is behind each door, the person that will liberate you or the person that will execute you. However, there is one thing I can tell you about them. One of them NEVER tells the truth and the other one NEVER tells a lie. And as you don't know which one will tell you the truth and which one will tell you a lie you you should think carefully about your question...and your choice.

CHARLEY
What if I decide not to ask a question. I could just sit here and..

VOICE 1
Yes, that is also an option. In fact, 6 others have made that choice.

CHARLEY

and!?!?!?

VOICE 1

Once my 3 minutes are over a new timer will begin to countdown from 1:00:00. Once it reaches 00:03:00 the numbers will turn red letting you know that you will have to ask your question, make a choice, and act on it within 180 seconds. Once the timer reads 00:00:00 all the lights in the room will turn off and you will be immediately executed. As I mentioned SIX have chose that option..either willingly or unwillingly. Inaction is also a choice.

as the mysterious voice is finishing his last sentence the camera pans to the timer on the wall and notices that there are 5 seconds left on the clock.

CHARLEY

Well, I have one last question.....

VOICE 1

Yes?

as Prisoner 191-6-2 starts to ask the question the clock runs out and there is a click.

CHARLEY

(confused and slightly angry)
What do I....hello...HELLO...are you there?

HELLO???????

(No response)

Prisoner 191-6-2 walks over the little desk and chair sits down and starts to look around the room again. His glance comes to a halt at the countdown clock. He fixates there as if in disbelief of his current situation.

After sitting for about 10 minutes he gets up and walks over to the doors.

Hello??? HELLO????? Is there anyone out there?

He attempts to open both doors but turns away in frustration. He returns to the desk and sits down to go over all the

instructions that he received from the voice.

Did he say 'One question per each door
or just one question'?

Prisoner 191-6-2 walks over to one of the doors and picks up
the phone to ask his question

VOICE 2

What is your question?

Suddenly Prisoner-191-6-2 slams the phone back down onto the
receiver realizing that he cannot take a chance on asking a
question

CHARLEY

Pacing around anxiously looking back at the counter and
talking to himself

Calm down and try to think about this
rationally. He said that there is one
question... one question that I can
ask either one of these guys to get
out of here.

Sits down in chair head in hands trying to think of the
question

Can I?...no, Do you know? NO!

Shaking his head in frustration

If I go out this door...? If I go out
this door will ...will I? Come on,
THINK, THINK... If I go out this door
will I.. no, will it...will it what X?
If I go out this door WHERE will it
lead to?
(realizing that his question could
be answered with a lie and he
wouldn't know)

X gets frustrated and jumps out of the chairs and starts
pacing around with increased frustration as he looks at the
counter to realize that he has spent over 15 minutes deep in
thought.

(counter is down to 00:30:49)

TIME LAPSE TRANSITION TO CHARLEY BACK IN CHAIR

CU SHOT OF COUNTER

(counter is down to 00:07;23)

CUT TO WIDE SHOT OF THE ROOM AND CHARLEY BACK IN THE CHAIR

(Charley is less panicky than before because he feels that he has stumbled on a way to ask the question he needs to ask)

If I ask the other guy if you are truthful what would he say?

He gets up and walks around as he ponders the possible answers to that question. Muttering to himself in the voice of the person on the other side of the door.

"he would say that I am truthful"
(shaking his head)

Yeah, but he could be lying, how would I know for sure, DAMN, I need a to ask a second question. It's impossible to get out of here with only one question.

As Charley goes over in his head on how to rephrase the question he happens to casually look over at the counter and then freezes in panic.

(voice cracking from panic as he looks at the counter and sees that it has now turned red and is down to 00:02;57)

Oh crap, how did that happen? It was just at seven minutes a minute ago.
(The fear is now palpable in his voice but Charley is trying to remain calm knowing that if he panics he cannot think clearly)
COME ON Charley! You can do this!
THINK HARDER!

Breathe! Take a breath and think.
What would...what would the other guy say is the door

Pacing rapidly around the room

No, no, no! wait, Yeah, yeah YEAH!
What would the other guy say is the

door leading to my freedom?
 (speaking in the voice of the
 person on the phone)
 "he would say that HIS door leads to
 freedom"
 (pauses to think about how to
 respond to that answer)
 but if he is lying and I go out...

Charley looks back at the counter and sees that it is down to
 00:01:03

(Suddenly remember something that
 he was told by the mysterious
 voice)
 Wait! the voice said a question and an
 action..action, what kind of action

MCU SHOT OF CHARLEY WITH COUNTER BEHIND HIM

(counter is down to 00:00:35)

Charley runs over to the phone picks it up

VOICE 3
 What is your question?

CHARLEY
 (looking at clock noticing that is
 is down to 20 seconds he
 nerviously stumbles through the
 question)
 What would the other guy say is the
 door leading to safety?
 (a pause)
 (looking back at the clock Charley
 feels the pause is interminable)

VOICE 3
 He would say this one!
 (the sound of both doors unlocking
 is heard)

At hearing the sound of both doors unlocking Charley turns
 around with a puzzled look on his face as he goes to open the
 door.Suddenly he stops!

ECU SHOT OF CHARLEY'S FACE LOOKING OVER AT THE OTHER DOOR

CUTAWAY SHOT TO THE CLOCK WITH 6 SECONDS LEFT

CU SHOT OF CHARLEY HAND LETTING GO OF DOORKNOB

 WIDE SHOT OF CHARLEY RUNNING TO THE OTHER DOOR AND EXITING

THROUGH THE DOOR.

CUTAWAY SHOT TO CLOCK AT 00:00:00

(the sound of the door closing can
be heard and all the lights go
out in the room)

FADE TO BLACK

INT: SAME SPARSELY FURNISHED ROOM

Prisoner 192-6-3 slowly opens her eyes and looks around the room trying to figure out where she is and how she got there. As her eyes move back and forth around the room a digital timer suddenly appears on the wall with a time code of 00:05:00. While she is trying to figure out the meaning of it the voice of Prisoner 191-6-2 is heard.

CHARLEY

Prisoner 191-6-3. During your criminal trail on 05 September 2019 for a capital offense you opted for Choice Sentencing. You were informed that your sentencing could begin on any given day without advanced notice. Today is your sentencing day and you will make the choice of whether you will be shown leniency...

(the voice slowly fades out as the camera pans to show Prisoner 192-6-3 grabbing her shirt to reveal her prisoner number)

EXT CU

Slow zoom in on prisoner uniform number 192-6-3

FADE TO BLACK