

# HARSH CONDITIONS

written by

Dr. James Atherton

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BLINK... BLINK... EYES OPEN TO...

INT. CAVE - CLOSE TO THE MOUTH - DAY

A WOMEN, twenty-something, attractive, looking right in our direction. Ten yards away.

WOMAN

Hi... at last.

A MAN, late twenties, maybe thirty, rugged but handsome, groggily awakes, sitting up against the wall of the cave.

A moment as he comes to.. looks straight at the women... clearly disorientated.

MAN

Hi.

The woman, who wears heavy colourful eye shadow... kinda resembles Harley Quinn, rests up against the opposite wall. This cave appears no bigger than a small classroom.

WOMAN

Been staring at you for four hours now.

MAN

Lucky you.

The man's eyes then catch the several bags of bread and a dozen or so bottles of water that lie just ahead of him. The woman has the exact same fix.

MAN (CONT'D)

Christ. Bon appetit.

He then checks his surroundings, starting with the cave's mouth --

Around three metres wide and two high, it sheds enough light, but of course, it is daytime. Beyond the mouth, the exterior seems tropical. There's a large plant outside with huge leaves which distort those beams of daylight.

The man finishes scooping it out and glances around the darkened walls --

It's not rock - more like plastic impersonating rock.

He looks at the back of the cave - Halloween-style cobweb covers the lower wall, almost glowing against the light.

WOMAN  
Whaddya think?

MAN  
Very seasonal.

The man bangs his fist against the wall behind him, the sound pounds.

MAN (CONT'D)  
Thought so. What are these crackers like... Right.

The man gets to his feet, looks towards the mouth, steps forward as the woman shoots a wry smile...

He staggers, as if restrained - did not notice his ankle is shackled to a chain - though he's staring at it now.

MAN (CONT'D)  
You gotta be kidding me.

WOMAN  
They did say a week in harsh conditions.

He sees the woman's trousered ankles also have a chain.

MAN  
Didn't think we'd be chained.

The man sighs, places his hands on his hips, takes it all in... surrenders himself back down against the cave wall.

WOMAN  
First thing, piss and shits -- I'm gonna try not to do the second one, but in the corners towards the back as far as the chain will let us. Preferably when the others ones asleep.

MAN  
Geez, forgot about that...sure.

A moment.

MAN (CONT'D)  
...What's your name?

WOMAN

Y'know, I was thinking, since we're here for a week, might be fun if we withhold. Something to guess at least.

MAN

Ok. How about -- whaddya do? Or do ya wanna save that too?

WOMAN

I say save... I'll disclose that I've got a kid, that's why I'm here.

The man shows a glimpse of discouragement.

MAN

Good for you.

WOMAN

Got a kid. But it's just me and the kid.

That discouragement simmers.

MAN

Ok.

A moment.

WOMAN

How's the anaesthetic wearing off?

The man sighs.

MAN

Not quite... would've never let them do that if wasn't for the hundred smackers up front.

WOMAN

Do you trust these guys?

MAN

...No, but if they're crazy enough to deposit one hundred thousand dollars into my account, I reckon they're crazy enough to give us the full whack...if we don't quit this bullshit.

WOMAN

If we make it through. They said,  
"If we make it through".

MAN

Same thing. Neither of us gonna  
quit for that kinda of money, I'd  
do a month.

The woman's expression doesn't concur - she looks the more  
apprehensive out of the two.

The man reaches for a bottle of water, uncaps and gulps down  
half the contents... much needed.

He then rummages into his trouser pocket and pulls out his  
vapour pen.

MAN (CONT'D)

Ok, no phones but thank fuck they  
let me have this.

He takes a mighty inhale... blows out quite the cloud, it  
mystically billows against the stream of light. The woman is  
fixating on the cloud as he takes another hit.

WOMAN

Go easy, you'll need that.

He heeds, places the vape pen on the ground.

Then looks at the woman... seemingly captivated.

MAN

Shame about these shackles, there's  
definitely some great ways we  
could've spent this time.

She gives him a look, "Don't go there".

MAN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

WOMAN

How about you try my name?

The man grabs the water bottle, gulps down the rest. Then  
hurls it, with a hint of anger, straight through the mouth of  
the cave into the unknown. He turns back to the woman.

MAN

Ok... Harley?

She returns a sarcastic smile.

MAN (CONT'D)

Margot?

WOMAN

These are all compliments but no.

MAN

...Natasha? Nadine? Sharon? Sally?

WOMAN

F.

MAN

F... Francis? Frankie? ...Fanny?

She giggles whilst the man contemplates his next answer... as we slowly pull out from the cave...

Then upwards, past the plant... through crystal clear glass... upwards...

The set-up becomes clear...

It's a rectangular TERRARIUM.

We see the whole shebang from a birds-eye view --

The cave. The plant. Soil. A pot of water.

And in one of the corners, surrounded by web...

A TARANTULA.

About half the size of the cave. Hairy, grisly and real.

It's inspecting the water bottle with its palps.

It's facing the cave...

FADE OUT.