

TEN TO SIX

by

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Cast:

Susan Davenport Female, 30s-40s.

Jim Davenport Male, 30s-40s. Susan's ex-husband.

Time:

The Present

Place:

An observation room adjacent an execution chamber.

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(Lights up on an observation room adjacent an execution chamber. There are two chairs facing the audience. Susan is seated in one of them. Jim enters from right.)

Finally.

SUSAN

Is this—?

JIM

That's your seat.

SUSAN

Thanks.

JIM
(Sits)

Is it—?

(Beat)

Ten minutes. The execution is at 6:00. Which you would know if you had been here on time.

SUSAN

Sorry. Yeah, I guess there was a discussion earlier?

JIM

A briefing. It started two hours ago. Not that I care if you came or not.

SUSAN

I almost didn't.

JIM

Really.

SUSAN

I couldn't figure out why I should come.

JIM

Closure.

SUSAN

That's why you came.

JIM

SUSAN

Damn right. But let me guess: you don't need closure.

JIM

Not really.

SUSAN

How can you sit there and be so...serene.

JIM

Let's not start, please.

SUSAN

Don't you care about what he did?

JIM

I don't obsess over it.

SUSAN

What's that supposed to mean?

JIM

I'm only here because *Laoshi*¹ told me to come.

SUSAN

Oh, God.

JIM

Laoshi told me that I should be here for you.

SUSAN

Did he.

JIM

You don't have to feel like this.

SUSAN

Like what?

JIM

Angry.

SUSAN

He was our son.

¹ Pronounced "LAO shuh"

JIM
Christopher wouldn't want to see you like this.

SUSAN
Don't you dare.

JIM
But—

SUSAN
Do not put words in his mouth.

JIM
I'm sorry, but—

SUSAN
You used to feel. You used to care.

JIM
I still care! I'm here, aren't I?

SUSAN
Not for this.

JIM
No. For you.

SUSAN
Spare me.

JIM
Laoshi says—

SUSAN
“*Laoshi says*”, “*Laoshi says*”. His name is Michael. Michael Wang. He was born in Milpitas, for Christ's sake. Stop acting like he's some ancient Chinese guru.

JIM
He helped me.

SUSAN
Helped you stop caring about what happened.

JIM
He helped me move on. You have to move on, eventually.

SUSAN

Tomorrow. Tomorrow, I'll move on. Today, I'm going to savor.

JIM

Savor?

SUSAN

Yup.

JIM

I don't like what you've become.

SUSAN

Feeling's mutual.

(Beat)

That light. Up there That's the one-minute warning. Just so you know.

JIM

Thanks.

SUSAN

After a minute, the curtain opens. He'll be strapped onto the gurney. He'll get to make a final statement. Then the execution starts with an injection of sodium thiopental.

JIM

Wait. We can see him?

SUSAN

Of course we can! That's the point. I'm going to look the bastard right in the eye as the drugs start flowing.

JIM

But I thought...

SUSAN

Sixty seconds later, the second injection starts. That's pancuronium bromide, a muscle relaxant. According to Todd, it's the same stuff Indians put on poison arrows in South America.

JIM

Susan!

SUSAN

What?

JIM
I'm not interested.

(Beat)
Who's Todd?

SUSAN
Someone I'm seeing. Todd Saxon.

JIM
Saxon? Isn't he that victims' right activist?

SUSAN
We both went to a lot of pro-death-penalty vigils. One thing led to another, and...

JIM
He met with us once. A long time ago. Didn't he?

SUSAN
You remember.

JIM
He seemed very...devoted. To victims' rights.

SUSAN
He still is.

JIM
Why isn't he here?

SUSAN
He's outside. At the vigil. Only the victim's family is allowed in here.

JIM
Well.

(Beat)
So, uh...how's Mr. Sparkles?

SUSAN
Oh.

JIM
What?

SUSAN
I had to have him put down.

JIM
What?!?

SUSAN
Late last year.

JIM
Why?!

SUSAN
He got out and got mauled by a raccoon.

JIM
Couldn't you have done something?

SUSAN
He was sixteen. The vet said there wasn't anything we could do.

JIM
Oh, God.

SUSAN
I'm sorry.

JIM
But he was Chris's kitten.

SUSAN
He was old. He had a good life. Lived longer than Christopher did.

JIM
How could you forget to tell me?!

SUSAN
I'm sorry, but with the appeals and everything...it just slipped my mind.

JIM
Damn.

SUSAN
Well, how about that. I finally found something you care about.

JIM
Excuse me? Yes. I care about our son's cat more than I care about...his murderer. What's wrong with that?

SUSAN

They're called priorities.

JIM

I care because Christopher cared. What more do you want?

SUSAN

I want you act like a normal human being.

JIM

Who are you to tell me what normal is?

SUSAN

I was his mother.

JIM

And I was his father.

SUSAN

I needed you!

JIM

You needed me to be angry.

SUSAN

I needed *you*.

JIM

No, you needed someone who was angry. Hence Todd.

SUSAN

Don't psychoanalyze me.

JIM

No, that's fine. You needed that. I couldn't provide it.

SUSAN

Todd cares! He comes to every execution in the state!

JIM

Of course he does! He's stuck.

SUSAN

Stuck?

JIM

He didn't get what he wanted when his daughter's killer was executed. So he comes to every execution. Victims' rights? Please. He's just living through other victims. It's pathetic. He'll probably leave you in a month.

(Beat. Jim notices Susan's reaction)

Susan?

SUSAN

We should stop talking. People are looking at us.

JIM

Susan, I'm sorry. I didn't mean for it to come out like that.

SUSAN

Jim. Please. People are staring.

JIM

Susan, really, I'm sorry.

(Beat)

Susan...

(Beat)

SUSAN

We love each other.

JIM

I'm sorry. I'm sure you do.

SUSAN

Todd's just passionate.

(Beat)

I am going to move on.

JIM

Excuse me.

SUSAN

Tomorrow.

JIM

Sure.

SUSAN

Tomorrow. Closure today, and then, tomorrow, I move on.

That's what you said. Earlier.

JIM

Earlier.

SUSAN

I'm sure you will

JIM

Don't say it like that.

SUSAN

You were always stronger than me. I just...I couldn't wait. For today.

JIM

It's all right.

SUSAN

You'll be fine. You're always fine.

JIM

There we go.

SUSAN
(Notices light)

What's that light?

JIM

Sixty-second countdown.

SUSAN

It's really going to happen.

JIM

Yes.

SUSAN

God, I...

JIM

What is it?

SUSAN

I have to go.

JIM

Jim?
SUSAN

I don't want to look at that man. I can't look at him.
JIM

You should
SUSAN

I can't.
JIM

Then don't.
SUSAN

I just want Christopher back. I want my son back.
JIM

So do I.
SUSAN

I shouldn't have come.
JIM

I'm glad you did.
SUSAN

Really?
JIM

Really.
SUSAN
(Susan holds out her hand)

Thanks.
JIM
(Takes her hand)

Be strong.
SUSAN
(A loud buzzer, followed by the sound of curtains opening)

(Lights down)

THE END