

SCENE 2

H2O2 +KI

*A testing plant in China.*

*Idleton, Emerald and a man in uniform stare out of a glass panel at the workers beyond it.*

*Row upon row of identically dressed workers are sat at small cubicles.*

*The work to an unknown rhythm, something made of chimes and scratches, the melody the soft murmur of hands working at a delicate task, the bass a hollow voice crooning from the loudspeaker.*

SPEAKER S.B, where excellence lives.

.....

S.B, we care about you.

.....

S.B, committed to quality.

.....

S.B

.....

S.B

S.B

S.B

UNIFORM Call in number 417.

SPEAKER 417, To head office. 417, to head office.

Idleton looks haggard.

EMERALD What's the problem today?

UNIFORM They're complaining about working conditions. Again.  
Something about sensitive skin.

IDLETON Sensitive skin? Three men came to see me yesterday with caustic burns on their hands.  
One woman may lose a finger!  
What the hell kind of chemicals are we using?!

UNIFORM The same one's we always have, it's simple exaggeration.  
The wish only for your pity. At first.

IDLETON I do pity them.

UNIFORM Why? They have work, a roof above their head, food, what more could a man want?

IDLETON Safe working conditions? Besides, what you're describing is survival.  
Living is a little more complicated.

*A man enters, dressed in grey, he has the air of a lifetime prisoner, subdued, but with a roughened set of edges that dissuades casual empathy.*

MAN 417.

SPEAKER Number 417, we have received reports that the workers in this section are not happy.

417 No Mr Liu, they worry for their health.

LIU They would have no health if it were not for this company!

IDLETON Jesus, calm the fuck down man.  
...Here, sit down, what's your name?

417 417, sir.

IDLETON I mean your real name.

417 .... Zhang.

IDLETON Zhang, tell me why the workers aren't happy.

*During Zhangs next speech, a small commotion will occur on the factory floor, starting with one man jumping up from his seat, backing slowly away, then bolting for the exit as smoke curls upwards from his desk.*

*The men in the glass booth above do not notice.*

417 We clean the screens sir, and apply a base layer of protective silicate to keep the surface free from scratches.  
...But sometimes... We don't always get the same chemicals, or the same tools...  
The fumes are bad enough, I have headaches every night, and I have heard stories of workers losing their sense of smell.... Even their sight.  
Then, last week, we sat down to work and the chemicals had all changed.  
This in itself would not be strange. But their were no labels or warning signs on the Packaging either.  
2253 was the first, he spilled some on his arm, by the time we got him to the care wing, his arm was covered in boils, blisters like you have never seen.

LIU He was careless.

417 2253 is over fifty years old, I have never met a more careful man.  
These chemicals are dangerous.

LIU So wear gloves.

417 The gloves don't work!

IDLETON Enough! Obviously these chemicals are unsafe.  
I will look into the matter, 417...

*The smoke on the work floor has thickened and blackened.*

*Without a sound, a streak of white light blooms at it's epicentre.*

*An explosion rocks the room*

*Idleton grabs 417 and throws him to the floor as the glass panes explode inwards, showering the room in glass. Emerald and Liu have gone to ground unscathed.*

SCENE 3:

The prodigal son.

*Pea and Wright are sat at a picnic table, carelessly scorning the bourgeoisie as they annihilate the remains of a roasted lamb through mastication and carelessness.*

*Empty beer bottles lie on the table, the sound of muted merriment floats in from off-stage.*

PEA            So! You're a father! Congratulations!

WRIGHT       Thanks Moses, I just can't believe I missed... you know.

PEA            The main event?

WRIGHT       Exactly. I feel like we got off on a bad foot or something.  
Kid won't even look at me.

PEA            I don't blame him.

WRIGHT       Seriously, and Tina's pissed too. Get a great job, miss your sons birthday.  
One step forward, two steps back,

*He jabs the lamb half heartedly.*

PEA            Buck up, you have your entire life to get to know the little sprog, so you missed his birthday, not like he'll remember it anyway!  
You're providing for his, no doubt, blindingly bright future.  
S.B likes the generational thing.  
Trying to put a new spin on nepotism or something.

WRIGHT       You don't get it.  
The only reason I went for this job was to provide for my family, now my wife won't speak to me and my son will always think less of me.  
Fucked it up from day one.

PEA            You're the reason he's here.  
That's got to be worth something.  
Personally, I'd hold it against you, dropping me in to the shit storm that is the world today but...  
Well. You've got a strong bond, he sure as hell didn't choose it, dunno about you, but it's a worth a lot more than the one's you do choose I'd say.  
He's got a long time to grow up, I'm sure he'll forgive you eventually.

WRIGHT       *(sighing heavily)* it's not really him I'm worried about.  
Tina's staying with her folks *(imitating a woman)* "for a few days".  
Turned into a week, I only see the kid when I go over, and with work...

PEA            You, my friend, need to relax.

*He hands him a beer.*

WRIGHT       I've been sleeping in my office.

PEA            I know.

WRIGHT       This isn't what I wanted.

PEA            You don't enjoy your job?

WRIGHT        I fucking love my job.  
It's going home to a woman than gives me nothing but scorn I can't handle.  
Or going home to a completely fucking empty house.  
It's not what I wanted.

PEA            Some people take entire lives to find a job that gives them satisfaction.  
You're wife will mellow and...

WRIGHT        We're not married.

PEA            (exhaling lamb) what? I thought...

WRIGHT        Nope, I proposed twice, but she said no.

*A silence.*

PEA            That's... shit, sorry Fred.

WRIGHT        She always said it wasn't the right time and now we've got this...  
Little person... Little Daniel.  
Yet I fell further away from her than ever, I literally am further from her than at  
any other point I can remember.

PEA            These things pass. (drinks beer)  
Besides, sometimes it just isn't meant to be.

WRIGHT        ...That's what I'm afraid of.  
(drinks beer)  
Seems the son really does inherit the sins of the father...  
... I never knew my old man. He left when I was 2.  
I don't even remember his face.  
(drinks beer) I tried to find him. When I grew up.  
When I got taller... (drinks beer) He was working in an electronics shop.  
Little guy. Exact same face as mine.  
I had so many things I wanted to say to him, so many questions.  
(drinks beer) Instead I asked him what he thought of Sky broadband.  
Spend your whole life wanting someone. Someone's love.  
Then it's right there in front of you and you hide behind inanity.  
(drinks beer) I used to think he'd fucked me up, you know?  
All the other kids had dads, I used to see the every day outside the school  
gates and I'd think to myself, where's mine?  
(drinks beer, it's finished. He looks into the bottle pensively)  
Then one day it all just... isn't there any more.  
All the anger, the fear, the frustration.  
You realise it probably wasn't there at all, if it can disappear so easily.  
Maybe we don't need people as much as we think, maybe they don't need us  
as much as we'd like to think they do.

PEA            Pretty sure that kid's gonna need his dad.

WRIGHT        Daniel.

PEA            Hmmm?

WRIGHT We called him Daniel.

PEA Nice name.

WRIGHT It was my dad's.

PEA Still a nice name!

WRIGHT Ever get the feeling history does nothing but repeat?  
I don't want to be absent from my sons life.

PEA So don't, it's your decision.

WRIGHT Is it?

PEA Now you're just being pessimistic.  
Of course it's your decision!

*A Frisbee whizzes on to scene, it delivers a kiss to the back of Wright's head.  
Denied momentum, love unrequited, it tumbles to the ground.  
Pea explodes into fits of laughter, beer sprays from his mouth as a young woman ambles into view.*

WOMAN Sorry boss!

PEA See? Now that's karma in action my friend!  
Think shitty thoughts, receive missiles to knock them out!  
Simple law of balance!

The woman sits down.

WOMAN I wouldn't have taken you for the karma type Moses?

PEA I've always had a kinship with elephants.

He passes her a beer, Wright rubs the back of his head, utterly dejected.  
She notices, passes him the beer and gestures Pea for another.  
He looks around, then stands and moves off to find more.

WOMAN What's the matter champ?

WRIGHT It's nothing... I don't think we've met.

WOMAN Lisa. Hunt.

WRIGHT Frederick Wright.

LISA (chuckles) Oh we all know you, the man behind the curtain!  
You're the reason we've got slides instead of stairs.  
How'd you manage that?  
I applied for a coffee machine last year, still have to buy my own.

WRIGHT I told them they'd be more productive and boost morale, worker happiness.

LISA So would coffee... Wait, how do you even measure that.

WRIGHT You can't.

LISA            Well, things have really changed around here since you showed up.  
I suppose the picnic was your idea too?

WRIGHT        Employees like to feel they're appreciated, a birthday party's a small thing.

LISA            You sir, are a genius.  
I would kill for your job.

WRIGHT        What do you do here?

LISA            Honestly?  
I edit power point slides.  
(she drinks)

WRIGHT        Of what?

LISA            Different things, it's just the slides though, I don't even get the full presentations.  
*(sung to the tune of 'just a gigolo')*  
I'm just a little cog.

Pea returns with beers and party hats.

PEA            This will get you in the mood!

*He moves to Wright and attaches a party hat to his head, he does the same to Lisa.*

PEA    Beautiful outside, beautiful inside, or something.

*Lisa and Wright exchange a look.  
Pea blows a party horn.*

PEA            To Daniel!