

Spirit Forward

by

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Cast of Characters

BENJAMIN:

20's

DASANA:

20's

Place

New York

Time

Any

Setting: Brooklyn styled brownstone apartment.

At Rise: Benjamin and Dasana talk on the bed, in their bedroom. A large wooden desk takes up most of the room, filled with papers, notebooks and coffee stains.

Benjamin: It's not working today, yesterday...probably tomorrow.

Dasana: What?

Benjamin: The shit I write. I hate it. It's all surface level bullshit. Just crap I spit out to make a few dollars, it's nothing with depth or meaning, nothing that truly moves the soul. I'm a joke.

Dasana: What? You probably have that thing that most writers deal with, what is it?...writer's block!

Benjamin: Oh come on with that, there's no such thing as writer's block. There's only such thing as mediocre writing and that's all I do lately, terrible writing.

Dasana: I don't think so.

Benjamin: Of course you don't. Why would you?

Dasana: Why would I what?

Benjamin: Why would you complain?

Dasana: Meaning what?

Benjamin: Money. I'm barely enough money, so why not keep going, even if it's shit that I'm writing.

Dasana: I would never view you that way, Benny.

Benjamin: I feel like I'm a sell out. Writing these stupid short stories just to make a dollar or two and no one really gives a damn about what I do.

Dasana: Who cares what people think? It's what you love doing, isn't it?

Benjamin: No! It's not. Not like this! This is crap at its finest. Damn it, I hate myself for surviving this way...and they get published to make matters worse, so there's a record of my work now for the ages to show what a fantastically horrible writer I was.

Benjamin (cont'd): I guess this is what desperation looks like when you sell your integrity.

Dasana: You have your integrity.

Benjamin: So, why can't I sleep nights?

Dasana: You're stupid.

Benjamin: You're absolutely right.

Dasana: No, you're stupid for thinking that your writing is bad.

Benjamin: Dasana, it's mediocre. Average. It doesn't move. It's just one note nonsense. No guts. I want to make a living doing the real writing work I feel I'm capable of creating, not this first grade crap.

I'm trapped in my own private hell. I'm writing something so empty, so brainy it makes me sick..it's forced, there's no organic gravity to it...it's like I'm just going through the motions, blah, blah, blah and 'ding' it's done. Bravo! Everything is backwards to how I normally work. There's no life in them, I'm just forced to produce, produce, produce...it's become so mechanical because it's not how I like to work...I feel like a fake and yet if I don't write, I can't keep anything afloat, everything will go to hell.

Dasana: Ben..Benny...Benjamin...

Benjamin: ...What?

Dasana: Breathe.

Benjamin: I am breathing.

Dasana: ...Why didn't you talk to me about this sooner?

Benjamin: I'm talking to you about it now.

Dasana: How long have you felt this way?

Benjamin: Too long.

Dasana: How long is too long?

Benjamin: Past year, at least.

Dasana: I thought you've been happy. Haven't we been happy together?

Benjamin: I am happy, but I'm miserable at the same time.

Dasana: Not sure I quite follow that.

Benjamin: I'm happy waking up next to you in the morning, going off into the kitchen and making coffee for us, starting our day together calmly, love going out and grabbing a bite to eat without stressing over how much money I have to my name...wanting to give you a decent life for loving me the way that you do, Dee...you matter more to me than I matter to myself but inside myself, when I'm alone writing, that's when the darker aspect of things hit me, that's when I feel pressured to produce these short stories in order to keep our little world spinning, you see...my work, the quality of my work, how I truly feel about my words...stinks...and I'm suffering because of it...I can't write at the level I wish I could write at because I'm constantly bogged down with cranking out average junk like a hack...I'm not going deep enough, I'm not allowing my characters to really BE cause I don't have the time...at best the people I invent feel like ghosts longing to live but instead they are trapped like me and can't ever escape...

Dasana: That's the most depressing shit you've ever said to me...

Benjamin: Don't start crying, please, don't start that crying shit, before I throw myself off the roof.

Dasana: You said the building isn't high enough to kill you, anyway.

Benjamin: I'll go head first with a running start!

Dasana: Stop speaking this way!

Benjamin: It's true!

Dasana: Go and do it already!

Benjamin: I will!

Dasana: Do it right now!

Benjamin: I'm not suicidal enough!

Pause.

Dasana: ...You're a genius and you don't even know it. Or maybe you do know it but you are not one hundred percent sure because you don't have financial success. Well, I got news for ya. You ARE a success. You ARE special. You ARE a genius. I see it everyday. I see you create these wonderful worlds that just happen. I see these little miracles everyday. I see the magic in you.

You walk around with this attitude of not caring as much and I love that about you but you don't need to always be this tough street guy who wears his leather jackets and has a chip on his shoulder. You also have that sensitive side that you try to hide but it's always there in your eyes. I know you've been through so much but that's what makes you such an inspiration. It's amazing that you are where you are with everything that happened in your life. If you gave it up, you'd be miserable and you know it!

You can't stop now. You need to keep on going forward. You've come this far. You need to keep the fire burning.

Benjamin: I'm no genius, Dasana. And I don't know what leather jackets have to do with all this but I'm not gonna be young forever. Time is running out, I've gotta make something good, instead of just getting by! I can't keep depending on these short stories to pay the bills for us. I need to do more! ...I'm just getting through it to make ends meet and it's degrading. (beat) Maybe I should-- (sighs)---nothing.

Dasana: Work harder.

Benjamin: What?

Dasana: Prove it. Prove what you can do, Benjamin. I think you can work through anything...I understand what you're saying, but I think you're suffering from a slight case of self-imposed excuses. I know it's hard, working in the way you are working for small monetary gain, I get it, you've never had any kind of formal education, you've had to do it alone and that's alright, it gives you an edge, something important to say! You put down your writing all the time but if people hated your writing, why would they ever read your work? You might not see it yet but you are a great writer, it's there somewhere in you and because I know it, you need to look at all this as a challenge. One great big challenge. In time, you will one day write that full length novel you've been dreaming about, but for now keep chipping away at these short stories and find the stamina to continue carving out your larger work...it will happen and if it doesn't, at least you gave it your best effort.

Benjamin: ...I'm trying.

Dasana: Try harder.

Benjamin: Any harder there's a heart-attack waiting for me.

Dasana: Oh, stop it.

Benjamin: Yeah, well...

Pause.

Wanna put up some coffee and let me, uh, let me try and see what comes of it?

Dasana: I'll make us fresh coffee. Clear your mind and have another go at it.

Benjamin: Yeah...another go.

END OF PLAY