

PLAN B

By Áine King

SYNOPSIS: A dark comedy set in a possible near-future. Justice Officer, Max persuades his partner to take trial a new scheme to ease over-crowded prisons.

MAX – any age 30+

EM – any age 25-40

JONATHAN – any age 25+

One table, two chairs suggesting Kitchen/living room of a small unlovely flat.

The near future.

ONE

Morning.

MAX and EM very busy...hurrying...finishing breakfast/coffee...getting dressed...doing makeup...phones, laptops, work bags etc... ..and they are mid-argument -

EM

It's a ridiculous idea!

MAX

But WHY? You can't just keep saying it's ridiculous...say WHY...

EM

I have to SAY...Seriously? I have to actually spell it out to you WHY having a dangerous violent criminal living with us...in our home...wouldn't be a good idea...

MAX

They might not be violent... Might be an embezzler or... er...

EM

...armed robber...arsonist...rapist!

MAX

Fraudster

EM

Strangler...paedophile...

MAX

A politician...there were over two hundred opposition politicians jailed last year...We might get one of them...

EM

Think I'd rather take my chances with a strangler-

MAX

Em, I work for The Justice Department. It doesn't look good if I don't support new policies.

EM

Support it. Don't be a guineapig for it! Don't make ME a guineapig...

MAX

I have to SHOW that I... that we...believe in the new policy.....It's not enough...anymore...to stand in line at a press-conference, nodding and smiling....to get ahead...to stay ahead...now...I have to step up...be part of the program... And...It's a good plan...well, it's A plan...

(faint buzzing noise)

EM

What's buzzing? Have you left your toothbrush on again?

(looking for the noise)

People will say it's too lenient

MAX

People say hanging's too lenient... The Chair's too lenient... 'bring back hot irons and boiling oil...'

Prisons are full to bursting... prison really IS too soft...we have to try something NEW

EM

People will abuse it...

MAX

They won't. Trust me...No, really, they can't...There'll be NO escapes...the tech guys have come up with this amazing-

EM

I meant the actual people – the UNcriminal people...will...abuse it...

MAX

You don't trust your fellow citizens...?

EM

Well, half of them ARE in jail

MAX

Not half...is it?

(checks on phone) 41% is not half...

B'sides, you can't count criminals IN the population...two different things..

EM

Anyone can become a criminal, Max... bad luck... /-wrong place wrong-

MAX

-/ Criminals 'become' criminals...they're Bad People, born that way...born bad, then they're caught.

EM

Hang on...You're saying criminals don't count as part of the population?

MAX

(smoothing his hair) Correct. Criminals forfeit that right. By being born bad...it's probably genetics...or something the mother does wrong...

EM

If they're not IN the population, then none of the *population* are in prison. Zero crime rate. Everyone IN the population are 'Decent People'...

MAX

Ta-dah! You're getting the hang of politics. And statistics.

Anyway, Decent People won't 'abuse' this new scheme...You heard the Justice Secretary's speech "We can trust our fellow citizens to do the right thing...with responsibility and restraint..."

(EM is distracted, looking for the noise)

Besides, we have to do *something*. ...we can't brush another massacre under the carpet

EM

Or under a car park...

(buzzing noise)

Is that- it IS – another bee!

MAX

Not AGAIN!

(they hunt around for it, Max very nervously)

Bloody bees! How're they getting in, Em?

EM

There! See it!

MAX

Don't damage it!

EM

I know...I know...*(catches bee in a cup)* Gently does it...

MAX

You can get nine months now, for splatting one – Hey, maybe we could get a bee-basher prisoner, an expert to do the job for us...

EM

Or you could man-up about catching them...or wash your sugary teacupsand don't even joke about bashing them, someone could hear you!

(releases bee)

Off you go...have a word with your mates – keep out of my kitchen!

MAX

Seriously, tho, Em...Think of the advantages

EM

Of bees?

MAX

A prisoner-servant...

EM

Apart from you brown-nosing your boss?

MAX

Someone to clean the apartment for you –?

EM

-for US, you live here / too-

MAX

...laundry...ironing ...You know you HATE ironing...A baby! You could – WE could have a baby if you had more time – you said / so

EM

When / did I –

MAX

When my mother said your clock / was ticking...

EM

I don't WANT a baby....I don't LIKE babies – and I wouldn't leave a baby – even one I didn't like – at home with a / psycho-criminal house-nanny

MAX

/-A DOG then...? / I KNOW you like dogs....

EM

/- A dog, a baby, you, me AND Sid-The-Psycho all in THIS micro-apartment...we'd have to sleep on the ceiling!

MAX

We'll manage...I'll clean out the utility closet...

EM

The recycling's in there - hang on – 'WE'LL'?

MAX

What?

EM

We'll....You said we'll...we WILL...not we WOULD. We WILL.
You've already signed us up...

MAX

Don't be sill-

EM

O my god, you HAVE haven't you? You've already signed us up to this prisoner-plan...

MAX

Em.....Darling....It'll be fine...gosh...time...Late....
(grabbing his stuff and heading for door) Gotta go...bye...

EM

HAVEN'T you!

<BLACKOUT>

TWO

Same unlovely room. Evening.

JONATHAN, just arrived in prison clothes and metal-foil socks.

MAX and EM study him. Everyone looks at each other for a moment....nervous....

MAX

(checking info on his phone) So....LJ46982D....

JONATHAN

P. Sir.

MAX

What?

JONATHAN

P. Sir. Sorry.

MAX

Already? There's only one bathroom... *(to EM)* 've we got a bucket...?

JONATHAN

No, sir. 8 2 P

EM

(checks MAX's phone) NUMBER LJ4698...P... *(to JONATHAN)* Is that right?

JONATHAN

Yes, Ma'am.

EM

(to MAX) WHEN will you get your eyes tested....

MAX

I'm saving my credits.....Right...Lets see...

(re-sets his phone)...location monitor...motion sensor...alarm...and...this-

(JONATHAN suddenly whimpers in pain)

EM

Max?

MAX

Ooops...er...hang on...This should de-activate-

JONATHAN

(screams and collapses)

EM

Stop! Max, STOP!

MAX

Oops...wrong button...hang on...Goddit..

(JONATHAN slowly stands...panting, shaking...)

EM

Jesus....

MAX

Told you the tech guys had come up with something special. Shock-socks. Water-proof...Tamper-proof....Shock-proof....he he...see what I did there?

(JONATHAN still shaking)

EM

WHEN will you...read the instructions BEFORE you do things...Could have killed him...

MAX

Nah....That was only level two...goes up to ten.

(to JONATHAN) And don't even THINK about trying to mess with them...

(proudly tapping phone) super-surveillance-sensors...Instant upload link to Law Control.....Step out of line – even one toe – and Enforcement is here in seconds....

Goddit?

(JONATHAN nods, he can't speak)

EM

It's barbaric

MAX

Needs to be. Got to shut the 'too lenient' brigade up somehow...

He'll be fine. Strong as pit bulls these criminal types...

Hey, 8-2-**P**, what is your classification, anyway?

JONATHAN

(recovering slowly) P.....I'm...I'm a ...Political Prisoner.....sir.

MAX

(to EM) Told you we'd get a politician. Right....Anyway...All seems to be working now....

I've got a presentation tomorrow...so...beauty sleep...early night...

EM

Where's he going to sleep...?

MAX

Oh, right...um...Utility closet.

(to JONATHAN) You can clear the recycling and mops and stuff out tomorrow. Wedge yourself in best you can tonight...quietly. Em'll find you a blanket and a bucket.

(to EM) Night.

(exits)

EM

(to JONATHAN) What did you do?

JONATHAN

I was a cartoonist....Ma'am.

EM

I meant what crime?

JONATHAN

Drawing cartoons. ...Ma'am.

EM

Oh. Ok...um...Here *(gives him a blanket)*

There's a bucket under the sink...Goo- go ...g'night. *(exits)*

(JONATHAN stands, shaken)

BLACKOUT

THREE

(Some days later...JONATHAN cleaning. EM with her bag, papers etc...hurriedly finishing breakfast)

EM

(as he clears her plate away) Thanks.....82P...I'll be late tonight ...but Max will want supper...perhaps that soup you made last time...? He liked it.

JONATHAN

Yes...Ma'am.

EM

Any more bees?

JONATHAN

Two yesterday evening.

EM

Two! And they're supposed to be almost extinct!

JONATHAN

I let them out the window...

EM

Well done....They're all chipped and tracked now, you know...

JONATHAN

Yes, I know, ma'am...I...I think you might be on a B-Line...it's kind of special flight-paths that they use...

EM

(laughing) I think it's Max's tea....He takes FOUR sugars...there's always sludge in the bottom of the cup....like a ...a...

JONATHAN

-a honey-trap.

EM

That's it.

JONATHAN

I'll try – if you'd like, Ma'am - I'll try blocking up any vents or air bricks...

EM

Good idea. They must be getting in SOMEWHERE....I'm worried we'll squash one without seeing it...and it wouldn't look good if we got arrested for Bee-killing, especially for Max, working for The Justice Department...

(JONATHAN drops a scrap of paper from his sleeve)

EM

What's this? *(picking it up)*

JONATHAN

(scared) N-nothing...just a...

EM

It's a BEE...did you draw this?

JONATHAN

I'm sorry...it's not a cartoon – just a sketch....it was a scrap of –

EM

What did you use?

JONATHAN

It's coffee dregs, madam...I'm sorry...didn't think you'd want them...the scrap of paper was in the recycling bin...I...couldn't help myself...sorry...

EM

It's ...somehow it's...exactly LIKE a bee...

JONATHAN

I'm sorry...*(moves to take the sketch)* It won't happen again. I'll throw it awa-

EM

No! Don't...It's lovely...it really is.....Can I keep it?

(He is amazed she's asking)

I'd like to put it by my desk at work....There's no window in my office...

JONATHAN

If...If you like...of course...

EM

I can't draw...never could....Must be amazing, to make...pictures...come out of your fingertips...like magic...

JONATHAN

It is. Sometimes....Until it gets you into trouble... ...

EM

You KNEW you'd be arrested for drawing your cartoons –

JONATHAN

Yes...

EM

So why DID you...?

JONATHAN

It felt more....dishonest...NOT to... ...

EM

O...Well, Thanks ...for this... (*puts sketch in her bag*)

Look, I can't keep calling you....8-2-P...It's like the robot in...um...that film...um

EM / JONATHAN

Star Trek / Star Wars-

EM

Yes, that one...

JONATHAN

Jonathan. My name.

EM

Well, Jonathan....(*gives him a few pens/pencils from her bag*)...Here. I've always got spare pens and pencils...no need to draw with cold coffee dregs.

JONATHAN

I...O..O,Thank you...

EM

I'll see if I can find some paper at work...meanwhile, use as much recycling paper as you like.

JONATHAN

Thank you, ma'am..

EM

Emily. I'm Emily.

JONATHAN

O, I couldn't call you...

EM

Please...Ma'am makes me sound like an ancient great-aunt...or a brothel-keeper....*(they laugh)*

JONATHAN

Emily, then....Like Emily Pankhurst

EM

Yes...the Suffragette. I remember...we learnt about her at school

JONATHAN

A brave woman...she went to prison, too

EM

(looks blank)

JONATHAN

Lots of them did...the Suffragettes....hunger strike and everything, some of them...

EM

Um...I don't remember THAT bit at school....Anyway...um...*(gives him pens and pencils)*
Maybe...keep those where Max won't see them....I don't want you to get in trouble....or me....Well...Got to go...

JONATHAN

(hiding them, as she goes out) Thank you...Emily.....

(blackout)

FOUR

(hours or days later. JONATHAN cleaning, humming to himself. Sudden pain of electric shock. It stops. He begins to recover. Then another shock – far worse. He cries out, falls....)

(MAX enters, observing....and controlling the shocks)

MAX

(on phone)

Yeah...still effective at a range of at 20 meters....I know, yeah, even better than we expected....That was – *(checks)* level four....Hang on...*(adjusts control)*

JONATHAN

(yells...)

MAX

Five...*(on phone)* Yeah, add it to the Report, ‘Highly effective results at all distances’ ...Ok...see you back in the office...Nah, I’m gonna leave it at 5. Still waiting to hear if I’m getting Expenses paid for my electricity bill....and I don’t want him making a mess on the floor....

(exits)

(JONATHAN gasping...)

BLACKOUT

FIVE

(evening...hours or days later)

EM

(enters...takes coat off...kicks off shoes...removes an earring ...)

Max...?

(feint buzzing sound)

EM

Not again...ok, Mister Buzzy-Bee...where are you...?

(looks around for the bee)

There you are...just stay still for one minute...

(she finds a cup and a scrap of paper and captures the bee)

Gotcha! Don’t panic, we’ll soon have you- what the...

(looking at the paper under the bee)

Oh...

JONATHAN

(has entered) Do you need anyth-

(sees she's looking at the paper)

Oh...I...

EM

Is this ME?

JONATHAN

I'm fairly sure it's a bee...

EM

The DRAWING...

(studying it, careful not to lose the bee)

It is, isn't it?

(to the bee) Calm down, little bee, I'll let you out in a second...

JONATHAN

I'm sorry...I...

(moves closer as if to take it)

EM

You have a Gift...you really do...it's lovely...it's TOO nice...this makes me look beautiful...and I'm not-

JONATHAN

You are...I think you are...I mean...um...keep it, if you like it..

EM

Well...thank you...

Jonathan

...

(she kisses his cheek...

(he puts his hand on hers on the cup.....they might be about to kiss...)

...

MAX

(enters...sees them...) How very romantic! Very -

EM

Max!

MAX

-touching...Move away from him, Em.

JONATHAN

It was my fault...Don't hurt her – sir - please!

EM

Max, don't- NO!

(she is thrown back as JONATHAN is shocked)

JONATHAN

Aaaaa!!!

(he falls)

MAX

(working the control) six...seven...

EM

Max! Stop!! Stop!!

MAX

Eight...

(JONATHAN convulses, then is very still)

MAX

Nine...

EM

STOP!! You're killing him!! MAX!!!!

(she flips the bee from the cup under MAX's foot as he steps forward)

MAX

(stands over JONATHAN. Turns off the current....nudges the body)

...

EM

You...you killed him...You actually killed him, you bastard!

(she activates the alarm on her own watch.)

MAX

What are you doing? That's the Enforcement Call...

EM

Yes. They'll arrest you...

MAX

Don't be stupid. No one's going to care about a criminal....

EM

They WILL care about the bee tho...

MAX

What...

EM

Check your shoe, Max.

(as he checks)

Freshly dead. Squashed. By you. Nine months in prison, at least...

MAX

What the- - ? I'll say HE did it...

EM

With YOUR shoe...on YOUR foot....And I saw YOU

(sound of siren coming closer outside)

MAX

It was an accident-

EM

STILL nine months...and ...I SAW you do it on purpose...

MAX

I was protecting you-

EM

From the bee – or the man...?

You've been luring bees for months...all that sugary tea....

MAX

YOU did it....to frame me...

EM

Say what you like....No one's going to believe you? With a dead bee on your shoe and a dead man on your floor...? And it was ME called Enforcement....

(she slips the sketch in her pocket and moves to leave)

MAX

Em...STOP! Wait...please...Help me...
I'm not a criminal-I can't go to prison! I'm a decent-

EM

People are born criminals, Max, and then they're caught-

MAX

Em-

EM

His name was Jonathan...

...

It's bad blood, not bad luck, remember, Max...

(taking her coat and bag)

We Decent People mustn't be too lenient...You, most of all, know that....You're a Justice Officer, Max...and they'll know you are, in prison....

Goodbye Max....

(she exits)

MAX

Em! Em, wait – stop – EM!!!!

(begins to weep as the siren comes closer...and closer...louder and louder...)

BLACKOUT

Áine King 2025

