

CLARITY
A One-act Play by Patricia Prewitt

One ^{MIDWESTERN} male corrections officer, one 30-ish female prisoner. Bare stage except for one chair. She sits in chair looking down introspectfully.

GUARD: *[enters swaggering]* Well, hello, honey. Ain't you a pretty one. Welcome to prison. My job is to school you on the way things are done around here. Break ya in, ya know. Do you have any questions so far?
[Girl slowly shakes her head no]

GUARD: Cat got ya tongue?

Girl: No.

GUARD: Good, good. Afraid ta talk?

GIRL: No, but I suspect that anything I say will be used against me.

GUARD: *[chuckles]* That's a good one, Girl. I like you. I have this feeling we gonna get along real good. Real good. Stand up. *[She remains sitting.]* I SAID STAND UP! *[She stands warily.]*

[calmly] You see, Sweetheart, this is how it goes. You call me boss and do exactly what I say when I say it. When I say jump, you politely ask how high. It's that simple. Piece a cake. You can make your time here really hard or we can keep the "hard" right where it belongs.
[grabbing his crotch] Get it?

[Menacingly] Now, don't get skittish on me, Missus Patricia Ann Prewitt number two six six seven, widow, black widow. I read your file. You're no innocent baby. You been round the block a time or two. We're not talking here bout nothin you ain't done before.

GIRL: *[softly]* I don't want any trouble.

GUARD: *[overly sincere]* Me, either. I'm all bout no trouble. This is a no trouble zone. I like to keep things simple. Real simple. So how much time ya doing?

GIRL: You tell me. You read my file.

GUARD: See, like I said, you're a smart one. I like that. *[steps up to her face]* FOR-FUCKIN-EVER. THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE DOING. FOR-FUCKIN-EVER. LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE, YA LIFE-DOING BITCH! YA GOT NOTHIN TO LOSE.. *[softly]* Or so you think, but you'd be wrong. Dead wrong. There are "perks" when you follow the program, don't make waves, cooperate. *[pause, then friendly]* Ya got kids?

GIRL: I'm sure that's in my file, too.

GUARD: Yeh, Smart Girl, yeh. Five. From eight to sweet sixteen. Three pretty girls, too. Just like they momma. And I know you wanna see them. No sweet visits when you're buried in the hole for "failure to cooperate".

But smart girls don't have ta worry bout that. Smart girls know who's in charge, who's got all the cards. Like I said, you do have lots ta lose-if you don't cooperate. *[pause, steps to her]* Am I clear so far?

GIRL: *[stony glare]*

GUARD: *[nose to nose]* AM I CLEAR!!!

GIRL: Crystal.

GUARD: Good, good. I knew you were a smart girl. My job is to show you the ropes, and I gotta thick, stiff rope right here. *[Starts to laugh but when she turns and walks away a few steps, he gets serious again.]* Don't turn your back on me, Smart Girl. That's a direct order. Fresh Meat, you must obey a direct order. It's a rule. Sure would hate to hafta write ya up for "failure to obey a direct order". Got it, Smart Girl? GOT IT?!!!!!!

GIRL: *[turns to him]* Got it, Boss.

GUARD: *[friendly]* Aw, Smart Girl. You knew prison was gonna suck. Guess ya didn't know you would, too. *[mean short chuckle, then moves close]* Ya got such pretty hair. *[touches hair]* Soft. No girly hair shit in the hole. I bet ya like ta read, too. Smart girls like ta read. No library privileges when you're buried deep in the hole. *[in her face speaking rapidly:]* No canteen, no coffee, no visits, no phone calls home. No shit.

Girls tell me the worst part of being in the hole is the once-a-week showers and once-a-week change a clothes. Pretty girls like you like ta clean up every day-especially in this heat. In another month, this place is gonna be a hot box, and the hole is fuckin hotter. *[chuckles this line:]* Hotter than a fresh fucked fox.

All alone in there... Cookin in your own juices-like a turkey at Thanksgiving. *[laughs at his own analogy]* But you're a smart girl. You know what side your bread is buttered on, don't ya?

You want to cooperate. You want to be a model inmate. Your big city lawyer told you to be a good girl, didn't he? Keep your nose clean. Stay outta trouble, if ya ever wanna get back home to your lovin family.

You need to take advantage of all the things that make your time go by

easy. I know you really want easy. "You can do the time or let the time do you." Smart girls learn that fast.

Listen, Babe, I gotta special private place to show you. Only my special girls, my smart girls, get to see it. You're a smart girl, and we gonna get along just fine. We got years together. Years and years. *[pause, smiles]* You may turn out to be my favorite.

GIRL: *[to audience]* There are two ways to end this. I can submissively follow him to his special place and do exactly what he wants. *[takes deep resolute breath]* Or... *[turns to face him]*

GIRL: *[quietly but firmly]* I don't think so, Boss.

GUARD: WHAT?

GIRL: I don't think we're gonna get along at all.

GUARD: DON'T MAKE A BIG MISTAKE HERE!

GIRL: *[one step forward to him defiantly]* Let me make this clear, Boss. Crystal clear. I'm good, real good, at making big mistakes. But I'm bad, real bad, at getting along with slime balls like you. *[pause glaring, then puts wrists together in handcuff position]* Do what you have to do.

GUARD: *[through clenched teeth and fists balled]* You'll be sorry. I promise. Real fuckin sorry, ya life-doin-bitch. *[inhales, steps back, regroup]* But this is your goddamn lucky day.

GIRL: *[sarcastically]* Yeh, I'm the luckiest girl in the world.

GUARD: I'm not gonna take you down today. But I will take you down. You can count on that. You can guaran-damn-tee that! IS THAT CLEAR?

GIRL: Yeh, Boss. *[He exits fuming while she sits down warily watching.] [To herself she announces:]* Crystal clear. *[THE END]*