

EVERGLADES

by
Brough Hansen

Characters

Fallon – Male, mid to late 30s

Jasper– Male, late 20s to early 30s

Fallon and Jasper enter and speak to the audience.

FALLON

Back in the nineties, me and my brother Jasper here,
live with our Pa in a cabin in the Florida
Everglades.

JASPER

Pa's lived in the Everglades his whole life. He likes
to say,

FALLON AS PA

*The Everglades been around for a long time. You
can try and forget 'em, but they always remember
you.*

FALLON

Ma leaves when I'm real young, right after Jasper's
born. Ever since she left, Pa sits in an old La-Z-Boy
and drinks all day.

JASPER AS PA

*Yer born lucky or unlucky. This life don't mean
nothin'.*

FALLON

At night Pa passes out in his chair and we lie on the
floor and try to sleep. It's usually too hot, so we just
listen to each other breathin' in the dark.

JASPER

Outside, the palmetto bugs sound like a broken boat
engine. The gators don't make noise, but you can
feel 'em beyond the walls like a heartbeat, slidin'
around in the scorchin' black. I get real scared.

FALLON

I feel Jasper reach across the floor and take my
hand.

JASPER

Fallon? What was Ma like?

FALLON

I don't remember anything about her, so I make things up.

(to Jasper)

She's a scientist. Smart like you. She lives on an island in the Caribbean. She studies about dolphins and other sea creatures.

JASPER

What else?

FALLON

She sings. She sings like a bird. Church songs mostly. Like, 'Amazing Grace'.

JASPER

What's that?

FALLON

You don't know *Amazing Grace*? *Amazing Grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.* Like that.

JASPER

The Caribbean. That sure sounds refreshin'.

(beat)

One day, I come home from school and Fallon's sittin' in Pa's chair. He's sippin' a beer and his knuckles are covered in blood. He starin' at what looks like a pile of rags. It's Pa, crumpled in the corner, barely movin'... Fallon? What happened?

FALLON

Get your stuff.

(beat)

Yeehaw!

JASPER

Woohoo! We jack Pa's pickup and set out to West Palm Beach!

FALLON

We sell the truck for cash and put a deposit on an apartment. I meet up with a high school buddy and start sellin' weed to get by.

JASPER

I apply to Morningside Academy, a prep school on Palm Beach proper, the island across the bridge. I score in the ninety fifth percentile on the entrance exam and get a full scholarship.

FALLON

I make money hand over fist. I buy a Honda and trick it out. I'm talkin' nitro boost, big ol' fat subwoofer, eighteen-inch rims with a gunmetal finish— ooo, boy! Friday nights I cruise downtown bumpin' Biggie and rev my engine next to Mercedes for laughs.

JASPER

Morningside is paradise. Palm trees sprout from lush lawns and there are these gorgeous white buildings. The other students are like nothing I've ever seen. They just glow. They smile all the time and their teeth sparkle like china on the home shopping network. My senior year I get a call from Fallon. He's in jail.

They sit.

FALLON

Little bastard set me up. If I ever see that punk again—

JASPER

Calm down. What'd they find?

FALLON

A couple of ounces. A hunting knife. My lawyer says I'm lookin' at five to ten, but I might be able to plead down. Shit.

JASPER

I have news. I got into Williams.

FALLON

No way! Haha! Your first choice! That's...
Congratulations, Jasper. Hey, what's wrong?

JASPER

I've been thinking. After I go to college, I might just
stay up there.

FALLON

Well, that's okay. I'll visit ya. I ain't ever been
north. I'll just buy a coat, right?

JASPER

That's not what I'm. I'm saying I'm not coming
back.

(pause)

We're just headed in different directions. I think it
would be best if we didn't... associate. Anymore.

FALLON

'Associate'?

JASPER

It means—

FALLON

I know what the fuck it means.

(beat)

So that's it? No more brothers.

JASPER

I'm sorry.

Jasper starts to leave.

FALLON

You know, this reminds me of that thing Pa used to
say. *You can try and forget the Everglades, but they
always remember you.*

Jasper walks out the door and I never see him again.

(beat)

I take the plea deal and do two years.

Inside, I meet a neo nazi named Mike that used to be a roadie for Motley Crew. He tells me to forget weed. The real money is in *ice*.

JASPER

At Williams, I major in economics and graduate with high honors. I land a job as an analyst at Merrill Lynch. I work hundred hour weeks. I rise quickly.

FALLON

If the military industrial complex is a snake, meth is its venom. I forge a few bank documents and buy a house in the suburbs. I gut the basement and start cooking.

JASPER

I dance to the war drum of the United States Financial System. I worship the bull as my only idol, baptise myself in hundred dollar bills. I work til midnight, drink til four, wake up at dawn and do it all again. Thank God for adderall.

FALLON

West Palm takes to meth like a cancer patient to chemo— the cure that kills it. I install an industrial grade safe and stuff it full of bills damp with the sweat of fiending palms.

JASPER

Before I know it, I'm an executive. I transfer departments. I oversee the manufacture and sale of mortgage backed securities.

FALLON

I notice a black escalade with tinted glass following me everywhere I go. Mike gets out of jail and I hire him as my personal bodyguard.

JASPER

We're kind of like butchers. We take slabs of rotten home loans, carve them into discrete slices, staple them to slices of other loans, label it filet mignon and sell the whole, putrid bundle.

FALLON

I install bars over the windows and security cameras on every side of the house. I sit in my living room smoking and chewing my nails. I keep my red-eyes locked on that throbbing monitor. Who the fuck is after me?

JASPER

I buy a house on a small island in the Caribbean. I build an infinity pool. Its turquoise chlorine appears to bleed into the pure, blue Atlantic.

FALLON

I give the order to Mike. Turns out killin' is easy. All it takes is a nod. It's on the news the next night. 'Unidentified body found floating-' I turn off the TV. I swallow. I need air. I head to the roof.

JASPER

I sit on the patio at dusk, sipping a cold rum. The clouds trick the ocean into adopting their color. The sun sets and like a daydream, the horizon vanishes and sky and water bloom into a single, disembodied violet.

FALLON

Spanish roofs stretch as far as the eye can see. The heat from the rush hour sun pummels the clay shingles and warms my face. I'm a king and this is my empire.

JASPER

The rum drains through my body and the soles of my feet melt into the cool concrete. An ocean breeze carries the purple to my bare chest. I hear macaws mouthing off like stock brokers in the distance. I laugh. For the first time in my life...

FALLON

I feel...

JASPER

Refreshed.

FALLON

At peace. I light a cigarette and take a pull like it's my last breath.

JASPER

I'm blissful oblivion, a lanky nothing stretching its limbs between voids.

They take each other in.

JASPER

After all those stories you told me about Mom living in the Caribbean I half expected her to emerge from the pool. Put her hand on my shoulder as she hands me a drink.

FALLON

What goes wrong?

JASPER

The bubble bursts. The world burns down. And I get a bonus. At first they fear prosecution so they transfer me to Tokyo. I work harder than ever. I graduate from adderall. I fill my body with cocaine like it's sand and I'm an hour glass. Time accelerates. I wake up one morning and I see my reflection in the glass of my patio door. I'm an old man. I slide the door open and step outside in my boxers.

I'm high up. It's windy. Chilly. My skin tightens, my penis contracts. My bones freeze. And then I see the sun, a simple sunrise, and I'm suddenly... Overcome. By the generosity of this earth. That it would share its light with a wretch like me.

Jasper sits to the side.

FALLON

I'm sent to a federal prison in Colorado. It's a solitary confinement facility. I start to read. I get good at it. I discover the Greek tragedians and I think, at last, here are men that know about life. Weeks go by. Then months. Then...

One winter I get a letter from Pa's second wife.
 She's writing to tell me he's gone. She says that he
 loved me and that in the end he found Jesus. She
 says she's sorry about my brother and that she
 hopes she can visit. She says nothing in this world
 is more important than family and that she'll keep
 me in her prayers.

'I'll keep you in my prayers.' A great poet once
 wrote, 'only God is free.' Of course, God isn't free,
 because God isn't real. In fact, he never existed in
 the first place. Unlike me.

I look out my frosted window and I can just make
 out the western plains, a boundless field of dead
 grass frozen over like a mass grave of human hope.
 I think about words I heard a long time ago.

JASPER AS PA

*Yer born lucky or unlucky. This life don't mean
 nothin'.*

FALLON

And I remember the Everglades. And I close my
 eyes. And I hear breathing in the dark.

To have never existed. What a thought. I should be
 so lucky.

End of play.