

# *Small Box with a Revolver*

*By Dustin Hageland*

## Characters:

Sam: Pretentious. The logically intelligent one.

Gene: Also pretentious. The emotionally intelligent one.

## Setting:

A mostly empty room, with two beds, a door with a padlock (or other lock of some sort) and a small box of unknown origin. The door can be pantomimed.

## A Note on Casting:

These characters are intentionally written without specifying their race or gender.

*There are two small beds adjacent to each other in a mostly empty room. There is one exit, but a padlock keeps the door securely closed. In one of the beds, lies SAM, unconscious. At the foot of the other, sits GENE, passing time quietly. The room is otherwise empty, except for a small box in the middle of the room.*

*SAM startles awake.*

SAM

I just had the most remarkably terrible delightful dream.

GENE

Did you now?

SAM

I did.

GENE

Did you now?

SAM

I did indeed.

GENE

Well... are you going to tell me of it?

SAM

Give me a moment, I must regain my bearings. I did just wake, you know.

GENE

You did.

SAM

From the most magnificently petrifying phenomenal dream.

GENE

You did.

SAM

So please, a moment.

Certainly, certainly. Take your time, but don't.

GENE

I beg your pardon?

SAM

Dreams fade quickly after sleep.

GENE

Not if you are thinking of them.

SAM

Are you thinking of it?

GENE

Which?

SAM

Your dream.

GENE

Drat.

SAM

See?

GENE

Please, some silence.

SAM

Silence is not going to bring your dream back.

GENE

Neither is your prattling.

SAM

A fair assessment.

GENE

Now please.

SAM

By all means.

GENE

*Beat.*

GENE

Is it helping?

SAM

No!

GENE

Well, should I try the prattling again?

SAM

Wait... I have it. I have it, the most awfully troublesome stupendous dream.

GENE

Well, tell it.

SAM

I will.

GENE

Tell it.

SAM

I am telling it!

*Beat.*

SAM

I was flying. No, hovering, above the clouds. But I could see. See through them, as if my eyesight were stronger than the vapor, piercing, powerful. And I could see all of the creatures below. Birds, of course, deer, dogs, cats, but also humans. I watched all of them, as I just kept going higher and higher. And that felt good, but also terrifying. Like... like I was high enough to be thrilled, but I also knew what happened when I fell. I felt powerful, but fragile in my power. I thought, perhaps, if I flew higher than I, and everything and everyone, would be safer, so I went straight up. Straight towards the stars, the moon, other planets, but every inch I got away the more intense the feeling of powerful insecurity took over. Eventually I got so high up, that I felt a tug back to Earth, and I started to fall. Now usually, falling in a dream means you wake up, but I did not. Perhaps I was entranced by the dream, I didn't want to leave. So I fell. And I just kept falling, and falling and falling, I was terribly high up. I knew that as soon as I hit the earth that it would be an absolute disaster for myself and everyone around me. Eventually impact came. I felt safe again, but my power was gone, and, believe it or not, looking around, everything was still intact. Everyone was still fine. It was as if they didn't rely on me in the first place. In fact, I wondered if I had had it backwards. And then, in that moment of clarity, I woke up.

*Beat.*

Who the hell are you?  
SAM

Oh, pardon me, of course. I am Gene.  
GENE

Sam.  
SAM

Pleasure.  
GENE

I have some questions.  
SAM

Naturally.  
GENE

May I ask them?  
SAM

Naturally.  
GENE

Where are we?  
SAM

GENE  
I don't know. I woke up in that bed, shortly before you did. There were just as few answers to our location then. There seems to be a door. I know that there is a door. The door is over there, but it has a padlock on it. I examined the padlock, and it's quite locked. Certainly quite locked. It seems we are in a room, with a locked door, unable to leave, but I do not know where we are. I don't know where we are or how we are expected to leave.

Ah.  
SAM

I'm deeply sorry.  
GENE

You have nothing to apologize for, friend.  
SAM

You call me friend? GENE

Well, sure, can we not be friends? SAM

Can we? GENE

Why couldn't we? SAM

I suppose you're right. GENE

Then that's it. SAM

That's it? GENE

We're friends. SAM

We're friends! GENE

I have another question for you, friend. SAM

I hope to be able to answer this time, friend. GENE

We won't know until I ask. SAM

I suppose not. GENE

Alright, here I go. SAM

Shoot. GENE

What is that? SAM

*SAM points to the small box on the floor.*

Ah! An excellent question GENE

Yes? SAM

A very excellent one. One that I was excited for you to ask. GENE

Yes? SAM

Indeed, indeed. I am quite excited, giddy even. It's not often I feel giddy. GENE

Yes? SAM

That is a small box. GENE

*Beat.*

Oh, you're finished. SAM

Quite. GENE

It's a small box. SAM

Yes. It was present when I became conscious. I went to open it, but then I noticed you, and decided that it would be rather rude to open it without you. GENE

Well that is rather polite of you. SAM



GENE

Yes. Polite.

SAM

We weren't even friends yet, and you thought of me.

GENE

It was the right thing to do.

SAM

I suppose it was, but I'm not sure that I would have done the same.

GENE

Really?

SAM

No, I'm afraid that my curiosity would have gotten the better of me, I don't believe I could have waited for you, if I were the one who woke first. I'm sorry, friend.

GENE

It's quite alright, we all have our flaws.

SAM

Yes, I suppose we do.

GENE

You are just inquisitive, is all.

SAM

Such a kind way of putting it.

GENE

So, would you like to do the honors?

SAM

After you waited so long? I couldn't allow that.

GENE

But I waited for you, dear friend, so that you may open the box.

SAM

And that behavior deserves a reward, does it not?

GENE

It does not.

It does not? SAM

It does not. GENE

It does not. SAM

It is basic human decency, politeness merely. Decency and politeness need no reward. GENE

But I would not have done the same. SAM

That doesn't mean I deserve a reward GENE

Are you saying I should be punished? SAM

No no no, my dear Sam, I would never suggest that. GENE

Alright. SAM

You are my dearest friend. GENE

Alright. SAM

My only friend, in current circumstances. GENE

Alright. SAM

I would never suggest such a heinous thing. GENE

Alright. It seems to me that we've perhaps gotten a bit off track. SAM

Yes, I suppose, may I reguide us? GENE

Please. SAM

Sam. GENE

Gene. SAM

GENE  
There is a box on the floor. I am quite curious to know what is inside it, as, as you have stated, are you, now please, would you do the honors of removing the lid and showing what is within.

Gladly. SAM

*SAM approaches the box, with caution at first, trying to hide some giddiness at being the one to open the box, then more rapidly, removing the lid, and giving a quizzical look to its contents.*

Well, don't keep me waiting any longer. GENE

It's- SAM

Yes? GENE

It's a revolver. SAM

*Beat.*

A revolver. GENE

A revolver. A gun. SAM

Simply a revolver?  
GENE

I don't know if there's anything simple about a revolver.  
SAM

But is that all that is there?  
GENE

Hold on.... Yes.... yes I am quite certain that there is just the revolver.  
SAM

*SAM pulls the revolver from the box.*

A small box with a revolver in it.  
GENE

Yes, it seems that way.  
SAM

*There is a tension in the room that wasn't there before.*

How strange.  
GENE

It is quite strange, isn't it?  
SAM

Certainly.  
GENE

Indeed.  
SAM

Certainly.  
GENE

Indeed.  
SAM

*Beat.*

I believe I am going to put the revolver back now.  
SAM

Yes, please do.

GENE

*SAM starts to carefully return the revolver to the box.*

Wait.

GENE

Pardon?

SAM

It is worth investigating.

GENE

It is?

SAM

It is. Yes.

GENE

What about it?

SAM

Well, tell me about it.

GENE

You can look at it for yourself.

SAM

That's alright. That's alright. I'll trust your judgment.

GENE

Alright, what would you like to know about the revolver?

SAM

Is there any kind of engraving?

GENE

There doesn't seem to be.

SAM

Well that is certainly a dissapointment.

GENE

SAM

Indeed.

GENE

It may have been a great insight if there had been an engraving. A note of some kind.

SAM

It indeed could have.

GENE

What kind of revolver is it?

*Beat.*

SAM

I can't say that I know.

GENE

I'll be honest, I'm not sure what kind of answer I expected.

SAM

I know very little about revolvers.

GENE

I can't expect you to, I know very little as well.

SAM

I know they shoot.

GENE

I was also aware of this occurrence.

SAM

I am fairly certain that is the purpose.

GENE

Perhaps in general.

SAM

I don't follow.

GENE

Who is to say that this one shoots?

SAM  
You know, I hadn't thought of that.

GENE  
Perhaps it is a replica.

SAM  
That is quite possible.

GENE  
What does a replica revolver look like?

SAM  
I'd imagine-

GENE  
Yes?

SAM  
I can only really imagine, for I do not know.

GENE  
Your imaginings are worth quite a lot to me at this moment.

SAM  
I imagine it would look a lot like a real revolver.

*Beat.*

GENE  
I'd imagine you're right.

*Beat.*

GENE  
Well then, I suppose that is that.

SAM  
Yes... however, I do believe that this is worth further examination.

GENE  
I would really rather we didn't.

SAM

Yes... yes, I would also like to dispense of this item, but I'm afraid this is the only clue to our location.

GENE

I suppose you're right. Well... tell me of the mechanics of it.

SAM

The mechanics?

GENE

If it is a replica I imagine they would be different.

SAM

Different how?

GENE

Haven't the slightest.

SAM

Alright, I'll take a look.

*SAM examines the revolver further.*

GENE

What do you see?

SAM

It's a revolver. It... has many pieces. They're shiny. They seem functional. Not that I know how they function, but they are... clean. Pristine perhaps. The trigger is- mobile. It seems.

GENE

Don't press it!

SAM

I'm not going to press it. I'm not going to press it. But it seems to move. I can... wiggle it a little. The handle... grip? Stock? It's enamel... it seems. White. Clean. Smooth. A pattern, a uh, criss cross across it. The uh... the part on the top. The, uh, sights. The things you look down. The sights. They're... uh... pointy. And, uh, straight. The barrel.

*SAM stares down the barrel of the revolver tentatively.*



SAM

Is clear, straight down, definitely, uh, definitely a channel for a bullet to travel quickly. Nothing inhibiting that process. Again, to the best of my knowledge, seems to be functional. Effective even. The, uh, revolver part of the revolver. The part that... revolves... and holds the bullets. It spins. There's a switch. Ah! Ah. Ah... It seems to ... eject itself. Slide out. To be loaded. There are six chambers. One, empty. Two, empty. Three, four, empty. Five, empty. Six...

*Beat.*

SAM

There is one bullet loaded.

*Beat. SAM takes the revolver, and gingerly places it down in the box. SAM waits another moment and then grabs the lid and puts it back on the box.*

SAM

There.

*Beat.*

GENE

This is all rather tense, isn't it?

SAM

Yes, quite, I was thinking the same.

GENE

I suppose it doesn't have to be.

SAM

Does it not?

GENE

We were quite comfortable before we opened the box.

SAM

Yes, quite.

GENE

We were becoming friends.

SAM

Yes. We were perhaps a bit confused, but content in friendship.

GENE

Why does the existence of the box and its contents have to change that?

SAM

Because.

GENE

Because?

SAM

Because.

GENE

I'm afraid I'll need a bit more than that.

SAM

Because, we are still lacking some answers. The box was meant to have them, so I hoped, and the only "answer" was a further question.

GENE

I suppose you're right.

SAM

As much as I enjoy your company, Gene, at some point, I will want to leave this room.

GENE

I suppose you're right.

SAM

I'm sorry if I'm getting a bit terse, I am just... anxious.

GENE

I understand, friend. I am also a bit anxious.

SAM

You don't seem anxious.

GENE

I'm repressing it a bit.

SAM

Are you now? Why is that?

GENE

Well, would my anxiety help with your anxiety?

No, indeed not. SAM

It would make it worse, would it not? GENE

Likely. SAM

So I am suppressing it. GENE

How very selfless of you. SAM

This situation is unfortunate enough with anxiety. GENE

Indeed. SAM

*Beat.*

Part of me wishes that we never opened the box. SAM

I can see that. GENE

Opening it has made everything worse. SAM

Yes, it's much like Pandora's box. GENE

Yes. SAM

*Beat.*

What's Pandora's box? SAM

It's an old Greek myth. GENE

Aren't all myths old?

SAM

Many are.

GENE

And what happens in this one?

SAM

Do you really want to know?

GENE

A story may assuage my discomfort.

SAM

Very well, what do you know of Greek myths?

GENE

Very little.

SAM

Very well, I suppose I will fill you in on some of the finer points.

GENE

Thank you.

SAM

GENE

You're very welcome. In Greek mythology, there are many immortal, mighty, important beings. Some of these are the gods. They live up high, above everyone else, on a mountain above the clouds. They are in charge. Zeus, is the head honcho. He's in charge of those in charge. He was in charge before there were humans on the earth to be in charge of. Before he, and the other gods ruled, there was another group of immortal beings, the titans. The titans birthed the gods, but the gods rebelled and overthrew them, sentencing many to nasty torture for they could not truly die. Several of the titans, however, pledged their lives to the gods, one of these titans was named Prometheus. Zeus tasked him with creating subjects to be ruled. Prometheus, in turn, created humans, and Zeus was satisfied. However, Prometheus saw that the humans he had created were suffering down below the rule of the gods, so he asked Zeus if he could bring them fire to keep them safe. Zeus refused, saying that fire was just for the gods. Prometheus stole the fire anyway, bringing it down to the humans. Zeus was furious, so he planned his revenge. He created a woman, a beautiful woman. He made her to be intelligent, kind, generous, and above all, curious. She was named Pandora, and before Pandora was sent off to walk the earth she was given, by Zeus, a box, a beautiful, handcrafted box. She was told never to open the box. But, one day, because she was full of the god's curiosity, she did open the box, and out of it escaped a bevvvy of

horrible things. Disease, fear, hate, pain, poverty, and many others were sent out into the world before Pandora could slam the box shut again. And that is the story of Pandora's box.

*Beat.*

SAM

What happened to Prometheus?

GENE

He was punished.

SAM

How?

GENE

Zeus chained him to a rock and a bird came to eat his innards every day.

SAM

Every day?

GENE

He was an immortal titan, so he could not die.

SAM

The people must have hated Zeus.

GENE

He was worshiped. He was their god. They couldn't hate him.

SAM

Huh...

*Beat.*

GENE

There was one thing trapped in the box, after Pandora slammed the lid.

SAM

What was it?

GENE

Hope.

*Beat.*

SAM

Does that mean that she kept the hope or that hope was trapped before escaping into the world?

GENE

I'm not sure.

SAM

And why was hope among all of those bad things? Is hope an evil like disease or poverty?

GENE

I'm not sure.

SAM

Oh, I don't like that at all. I don't like that at all. What does that mean?

GENE

Does a story have to mean something?

SAM

Yes otherwise, what is the point of a story?

GENE

I don't know, truly.

SAM

I appreciate you telling me the story, but I'm afraid it has done nothing to lessen my anxiety, friend.

GENE

I apologize.

SAM

In fact, it has likely made it worse.

GENE

I apologize.

SAM

I am unsure what to do with myself now.

GENE

I apologize.

*Beat.*

SAM

We were meant to open that box though.

GENE

Pardon?

SAM

No one told us not to open that box. Zeus was clear in his direction and Pandora did not listen. Neither did Prometheus.

GENE

Correct.

SAM

But no one instructed us to keep the lid tight. We were practically encouraged to open it.

GENE

I'd have to agree.

SAM

Were there clear instructions, perhaps none of this would have happened.

GENE

Perhaps not.

*Beat.*

SAM

Gene?

GENE

Yes, Sam?

SAM

Do you think we're meant to fire it?

GENE

That is typically what a revolver is for.

SAM

Yes, I suppose, but what would we be meant to fire at?

GENE

I do not know.

SAM

Me neither, but I'm determined to discover.

GENE

Perhaps it's a different kind of test.

SAM

In what way?

GENE

Perhaps it's meant to see how long we can go without firing it.

SAM

Interesting.

GENE

Or perhaps, we're meant to turn it into something else, take it apart and do arts and crafts.

SAM

Interesting.

GENE

Perhaps we are supposed to destroy it, hide it, banish it, make it disappear.

SAM

Interesting.

GENE

There are many options outside of the most obvious.

SAM

Indeed, you may be right.

GENE

And there isn't really a way to know without instruction. That means that there isn't a right thing for us to do.

SAM

We can deduce.

GENE

Not effectively.

SAM



Perhaps.

*Beat.*

Maybe we just need to look at it closer.

SAM

*SAM reaches for the box. GENE stops SAM.*

Sam, perhaps we should take a moment.

GENE

We don't have a minute.

SAM

We have plenty of time. There is nothing rushing us.

GENE

I just need to know.

SAM

We will figure it out, but I believe that it would be best if you were calm before you handle the revolver again.

GENE

I just need to know.

SAM

I know, I know. And you will. Once we have taken a moment.

GENE

*Beat.*

Alright... alright.

SAM

There you go.

GENE

I'm ok. I'm ok.

SAM

Just breathe.

GENE

SAM

I'm sorry, Gene, I got a little stressed.

GENE

That's alright. This is a stressful situation.

SAM

You're right. Perhaps we should take a moment.

GENE

Yes.

SAM

The revolver isn't going anywhere.

GENE

Yes.

SAM

We can take a moment.

GENE

Yes.

SAM

You have been so kind to me Gene, just so kind.

GENE

It's nothing.

SAM

This is very trying for both of us, but you have been sane all this time.

GENE

I suppose it's just my nature.

SAM

I am appreciative of your nature.

GENE

Are you calm now?

SAM

Calmer.

GENE

That is good. That is good.

What now? SAM

I suppose we pass some time. Do calming activities. GENE

Like what? SAM

I'm not sure. GENE

What do you typically do in your free time that relaxes you? SAM

I tend to read a lot. GENE

I could have guessed that about you. SAM

Yes, I am quite the bookworm. GENE

Quite. SAM

Reading isn't much of an option at the moment, however. GENE

No, but something has occurred to me. SAM

Please share. GENE

We are friends, yes? SAM

I like to believe so, perhaps even good friends. GENE

Perhaps. We have been through what has felt like quite a lot together. SAM

GENE

Yes.

SAM

I shared my dream, you told me of Pandora's Box, but it occurs to me, that though we have this kinship, we know very little of each other. I don't even know what you do.

GENE

What I do? In general?

SAM

As a profession. Less in general.

GENE

I'm a teacher.

SAM

Are you?

GENE

An English teacher.

SAM

I like that on you. I can see you as an English teacher.

GENE

Yes, it suits me.

SAM

Do you enjoy it?

GENE

At times. It of course depends on the moment.

SAM

But in general?

GENE

Yes, I would say that I enjoy it in general.

SAM

I'm happy for you.

GENE

Thank you.

*Beat.*

And you?

GENE

Hm?

SAM

What do you do?

GENE

As a profession?

SAM

As a profession.

GENE

I'm an accountant.

SAM

Ah.

GENE

What does that mean?

SAM

I just said "Ah."

GENE

And what did you mean by that?

SAM

It was just a sound.

GENE

All words are just sounds, and those have meaning.

SAM

Yes.

GENE

So what did your "ah" mean?

SAM

Nothing. Accountant just suits you, that's all.

GENE

Because it's boring?

SAM

No.

GENE

It's not boring.

SAM

No, it's dreadfully boring, it's just not the boring part that suits you.

GENE

And which part does?

SAM

The mathematical part. The logical part.

GENE

Well that I would agree with.

SAM

You do better when things are black and white.

GENE

And that's not a requirement that you have.

SAM

I teach literature, shades of gray are what I know.

GENE

Fascinating.

SAM

Truly.

GENE

*Beat.*

Gene, thank you, I feel much calmer now.

SAM

I am glad. GENE

How do you feel? SAM

Tired, but less anxious to be certain. GENE

I am glad. SAM

*Beat.*

Do you think it's time? SAM

I suppose, if you feel that you're ready. And calm. GENE

I am calm. I am ready. SAM

Ok. After you, then. GENE

*SAM slowly approaches the box again and removes the lid. SAM slowly and carefully removes the revolver. SAM looks to the revolver, and then the box again. Then pauses.*

Huh. SAM

What is it? GENE

I seem to have missed something in the box. SAM

Have you really? GENE

Yes. SAM

*SAM reaches down and pulls a note out of the box.*

A note. SAM

A note! GENE

Yes, a note. SAM

A small box with a revolver and a note in it. GENE

Yes, it seems that way. SAM

*SAM's hands are full.*

Here, could you hold this? SAM

*SAM hands the revolver gingerly to GENE, who carefully and unwillingly receives it.*

Well, what of the note? GENE

It's signed on the front. SAM

Don't keep me waiting. GENE

From The Superiors. SAM

From The Superiors? GENE



From The Superiors.

SAM

*Beat.*

Well that is immensely reassuring.

GENE

Right? That's what I thought.

SAM

That will surely have answers.

GENE

Surely we are here for a good reason.

SAM

Certainly!

GENE

Indeed!

SAM

Certainly!

GENE

Indeed! They will take care of us. Let us know why they locked us in a room with a small box with a revolver and a note in it. I feel immensely relieved.

SAM

I've had enough with the suspense. Read it. Read it.

GENE

Alright. I shall.

SAM

*SAM opens the note and freezes.*

Shoot the other.

SAM

*Beat.*

GENE

Is that all?

SAM

That is all.

GENE

“Shoot the other.”

SAM

That is all.

GENE

Huh.

*Beat.*

GENE

Not my favorite note.

SAM

No, I was thinking the same.

SAM

This is rather unfortunate.

GENE

It is.

SAM

And from The Superiors.

GENE

Yes.

SAM

We have to comply.

GENE

You think?

SAM

Yes. Don't you?

GENE

I do, but I was afraid you wouldn't.

SAM  
No, of course, we must listen to The Superiors.

GENE  
Quite right.

SAM  
No matter how difficult.

GENE  
Quite right.

SAM  
So we must comply.

GENE  
Quite right.

*Beat.*

SAM  
Do you have anything to say?

GENE  
No. Do you have anything to say?

SAM  
No, I don't think I do.

GENE  
Very well.

*Beat.*

SAM and GENE  
Goodbye, dear friend.

*GENE points the revolver at SAM. SAM holds out a hand to receive the revolver. They freeze.*

SAM  
It occurs to me now that we may not be in agreement on what must be done here.

I think you may be right. GENE

Indeed, the note was rather cryptic. SAM

Inspecific, really. GENE

“The other.” SAM

That could be either of us. GENE

Well, I read the note. SAM

I have the revolver. GENE

I had the revolver. Because I opened the box. SAM

After I let you, because I woke up first. GENE

Yes, I suppose that’s true. SAM

*Beat. GENE is still pointing the revolver at SAM.*

This is a predicament, isn’t it? SAM

I daresay it is. GENE

There is no way to tell which of us the note is referring to. SAM

Either of us could be “the other.” GENE

SAM  
We agree on that point?

GENE  
Yes, I believe we do.

SAM  
Then could I ask you a favor, dear friend?

GENE  
Go ahead.

SAM  
Could you stop pointing the revolver at me?

*Beat. GENE lowers the revolver.*

GENE  
My apologies, my good friend. I forgot what I was doing there for a moment.

SAM  
It's alright, it's been a tense day.

GENE  
It certainly, certainly has.

SAM  
Indeed.

GENE  
I am surprised you are so calm.

SAM  
Why is that?

GENE  
Well, we are unsure again. Previously that put you practically to the brink.

SAM  
That's true, but we aren't any more uncertain. We have another piece of the puzzle. We know what we must do.

GENE  
That's true.

SAM  
And we know that it's right. The Superiors asked for it.

GENE  
Right you are.

SAM  
Now we just have to figure out the rest.

GENE  
It is rather sad.

SAM  
Of course, of course it is sad. One of us must be shot.

GENE  
One of us must be shot.

SAM  
But it's for the greater good.

GENE  
Do you think?

SAM  
Of course, why else would they ask us to do it?

GENE  
I can't argue with that.

*Beat.*

GENE  
But how? Do you think?

SAM  
Pardon me, dear friend.

GENE  
How is it for the greater good for one of us to die?

SAM  
It quite depends.

On what? GENE

On which one of us “the other” is. SAM

I guess you’re right. Do you think one of us is being punished? GENE

What for? SAM

I don’t know. It would have to be something pretty terrible to warrant being shot. GENE

Especially in such conditions as this. You would think they would have better methods than this. SAM

I also imagine that we would know if we committed any crime bad enough to justify this punishment. GENE

It would have to be rather obvious. SAM

And why would we need the other? GENE

That is strange. SAM

Unless... GENE

What? SAM

Unless we are both being punished. GENE

Is that possible? SAM

GENE

Sure. Killing someone could be considered just as harsh a punishment as being killed.

SAM

I don't know about that.

GENE

You don't?

SAM

Dying is as bad a punishment as it gets.

GENE

Living with the pain of knowing that you have killed someone is far worse. Much worse than the blank nothingness of death.

SAM

Nothingness is the worst pain. Pain is better than nothingness.

GENE

We have fairly different world views.

SAM

It seems we do.

GENE

And it occurs to me that the best way to maximize punishment would be to have ME kill YOU.

*Beat.*

SAM

Yes, I daresay that would be the case.

GENE

But that is not the only option.

SAM

No.

GENE

Like we said previously, we would certainly be aware if we committed an offense terrible enough to allow this to happen.

SAM

I happen to agree.

GENE



But this is certainly for the best, as the superiors know best.

SAM

I agree.

*Beat.*

GENE

You know, another story comes to mind.

SAM

Like Pandora's Box?

GENE

Yes, it is in many ways similar.

SAM

I'm not sure what good another story would serve at the moment.

GENE

I think it could be helpful.

SAM

A helpful story?

GENE

Yes!

SAM

Then by all means.

GENE

Very well, this is a story from the bible.

SAM

Does it have a name?

GENE

I suppose it's the story of Abraham and Isaac. Do you know it?

SAM

I don't believe I do.

GENE

Very well. There was a man named Abraham. A devout man. A follower of god.

SAM

Gods again.

GENE

Only the one this time. Well, Abraham had a son, named Isaac. And God, one day, commanded Abraham to kill his son. This troubled Abraham, as he very much loved his son and didn't want him dead, but he didn't want to disobey God. So, he asked his son, Isaac, to bring a sheep, and a knife and they began the trek to the altar. It was a painful trip for Abraham, as he knew the destination would be the last for his son, but his son carried on merrily, suspecting nothing of the kind. When they arrived at the altar, with the sheep and the knife, Abraham tied up the sheep, asked his son to sit on the altar. He raised the knife and thrust it down toward his son.

*Beat.*

SAM

How is that helpful?

GENE

The story is not over.

SAM

My apologies.

GENE

It's quite alright.

SAM

My apologies.

GENE

Abraham thrust the knife down, but before the blade reached his son, God spoke to Abraham, and told him not to kill his son. Abraham was relieved, and he and Isaac sacrificed the sheep and went home.

*Beat.*

GENE

That is the end.

SAM

I have questions.

GENE

I expected you would.

SAM

Did Abraham not dislike his god after he was asked to murder his son?

GENE

Of course not.

SAM

Why?

GENE

Because he still had trust.

SAM

And he didn't see that as a betrayal of his trust.

GENE

I don't think he felt that God could betray his trust.

SAM

And Isaac.

GENE

I imagine he felt the same.

SAM

Fascinating. You would think that they would have been shaken.

GENE

If they were, then they recovered.

SAM

And what of the sheep? Why did they sacrifice it?

GENE

That was the custom.

SAM

The custom?

GENE

Yes, sacrifices were often made to all kinds of gods. Zeus as well.

SAM

Zeus also received sacrifices?

Yes. GENE

And this is a different god from Zeus? SAM

Yes. GENE

Why is that? SAM

Different people worship different gods. GENE

Right. SAM

Any other questions? GENE

You know I do. SAM

Shoot. GENE

Why did God ask Abraham to kill his son if he didn't mean for him to follow through? SAM

I suppose it was a kind of test, so that god could know that Abraham would listen to him no matter what. GENE

But is God not omnipotent? Does he not know all? SAM

He is. GENE

Then wouldn't he know that Abraham would listen to him, even through such an... extreme request. SAM

I suppose he would. GENE

Seems like a foolish test. SAM

Perhaps it was. GENE

You said that this story may be of help to us. How? SAM

Ah. You see, what if one of us is Abraham, and the other Isaac. GENE

I don't follow. SAM

What if this is a test? And as soon as one of us points the revolver at the other, The Superiors will tell us to stop what we are doing, no one needs to be shot. GENE

Brilliant, Gene! SAM

I thought so. GENE

But weren't you pointing the revolver at me, moments ago. SAM

Perhaps they weren't paying attention. GENE

Or perhaps I'm the one meant to hold the revolver. SAM

That is entirely possible. GENE

Should we test our theory? SAM

GENE

I suppose we must.

*SAM grabs the revolver.*

Are you ready, friend?

SAM

Yes, but remember, do not fire.

GENE

I won't. I won't.

SAM

Don't.

GENE

I won't, I won't.

SAM

*SAM takes a deep breath, and then raises the revolver to point at GENE. GENE is calm.*

Three... Two..... One.....

*SAM (taking a lot of time)*

*A very, very, very long beat.*

Zeeeeero.....

SAM

*A long beat.*

Did something happen?

SAM

I don't believe so.

GENE

Disappointing.

SAM

I'd have to agree.

GENE

SAM

What do you think went wrong?

GENE

It's hard to tell.

SAM

Do you think it wasn't convincing enough?

GENE

Did you have your finger on the trigger?

SAM

I had my finger on the trigger.

GENE

And you were pointing it right at me?

SAM

I was pointing it right at you.

GENE

Did you have malice in your heart?

SAM

Can they see malice?

GENE

Perhaps?

SAM

Well, I don't know that I can have malice for you, dear friend.

GENE

You may have to. The Superiors may require it.

SAM

Why would they require that?

GENE

Is that for us to ask?

SAM

No, you're right, it isn't. I'm sorry.

GENE

It's quite alright.

SAM

I apologize, I wasn't thinking.

GENE

It's quite alright.

SAM

I'm under quite a bit of strain, forgive me.

GENE

It's quite alright.

SAM

Well... I don't believe that worked.

GENE

I'd have to agree.

SAM

Well, there is only one thing to do.

*SAM hands the revolver to GENE.*

GENE

My turn?

SAM

Of course, it could be you that they are testing.

GENE

Very possible.

*GENE takes the revolver, takes a few paces away from SAM, and points the revolver.*

*Beat.*

SAM

Are you not going to count?

GENE

No, I don't think I will. I think we'll just wait.



That is as good a plan as any.

SAM

GENE

I figured we'd change it up. Since counting didn't work.

I follow your logic.

SAM

Yes, so we will just wait.

GENE

Fair enough.

SAM

*Beat.*

How long do we wait?

SAM

Until they stop us.

GENE

You're right. You're right.

SAM

*Beat.*

And if they don't.

SAM

We will wait until we are sure.

GENE

Can we ever be sure?

SAM

We will wait until we are mostly sure.

GENE

Right... right.

SAM

*Beat.*

SAM

You know, I've never had a gun pointed at me before today.

GENE

Really?

SAM

Really.

GENE

Me neither.

SAM

Really?

GENE

Really.

SAM

But you know what I wouldn't have expected?

GENE

What wouldn't you have expected?

SAM

I wouldn't have expected it to be this boring.

GENE

What did you expect?

SAM

I don't know. Perhaps, I've seen too many action movies. Western movies. Horror movies. War movies. Where it is exciting, exhilarating, tension inducing when the gun is pointed at someone. It's always to save someone, or the whole world, or to take down the big bad villain. To save the day

GENE

Ah, it's different here.

SAM

How so?

GENE

This isn't a day saving kind of thing. It's simply our duty.

SAM

Our duty?

GENE

Yes, it's what's expected of us. Our civic duty. We aren't some kind of spy, it's more like... paying taxes.

SAM

Yes, it's not nearly as glamorous.

GENE

Yes.

SAM

Or as scary. I thought I would be more scared staring down the barrel of a revolver.

GENE

Well yes, I suppose that is also because The Superiors asked us.

SAM

Perhaps you're right.

GENE

It takes out the mysticism.

SAM

Yes.

GENE

It takes out questions of right or wrong.

SAM

Yes.

GENE

You know, it's almost reassuring to be pointing the revolver at you, Sam.

SAM

I felt the same way, Gene.

GENE

I don't know that it feels right.

SAM

No.

GENE

But it certainly doesn't feel that I am doing wrong.

SAM

No.

GENE

And there's some joy, I believe, in knowing that I'm doing as the superiors ask.

SAM

I agree. It's a bit odd.

GENE

It's a bit odd.

*Beat.*

GENE

They don't seem to be stopping me.

SAM

No, they don't seem to be.

GENE

Perhaps if I get closer. May I?

SAM

By all means.

*GENE gets a bit closer with the revolver. Then closer. Then closer, until GENE is shoving the revolver and squishing SAM's face.*

GENE

That doesn't seem to be doing it either.

SAM

Not in the slightest.

*GENE returns the revolver to the box.*

GENE

My apologies, friend.

SAM

Not at all, it was worth a try.

GENE

Truly forgive me, that accomplished nothing.

SAM

Not at all, it was worth a try.

GENE

I feel very foolish for giving you discomfort in that way.

SAM

Not at all, it was worth a try.

GENE

Well, good friend, it seems it may not be a test.

SAM

It seems that way.

GENE

Neither of us Abraham. Neither of us Isaac.

SAM

It seems one of us must truly shoot the other.

GENE

Lethally?

SAM

What do you mean?

GENE

Well, the note said "shoot the other," not "kill the other."

SAM

Did it not say "kill the other?"

GENE

No, I don't believe it did say "kill the other." I do believe it said "shoot the other."

SAM

Are those statements, "kill the other" and "shoot the other," not semantically the same?

GENE

No, “kill the other” and “shoot the other” are not the same.

SAM

How are “kill the other” and “shoot the other” not the same?

GENE

We could “shoot the other” non-fatally. Like in the foot. Or in the arm. But there isn’t another way to interpret “kill the other” than ending their life.

SAM

It would seem that you are right. “Shoot the other” and “kill the other” are not the same. Though they are not exactly opposites.

GENE

No, there is a good bit of overlap between “shoot the other” and “kill the other.”

SAM

It is even quite possible that they meant “kill the other” if they had said “shoot the other.”

GENE

Yes, shooting the other would be an efficient way of killing the other.

SAM

But, I do believe that the note said “kill the other” and not “shoot the other.”

GENE

Well, Sam, I have good news.

SAM

What is that?

GENE

That may be the most solvable mystery of the day. We still have the note.

SAM

We do, don’t we.

GENE

We do, would you like to do the honors?

SAM

I would, indeed.

*SAM pulls the note from the box.*

SAM  
“Shoot the other.” You were correct.

GENE  
May I see?

SAM  
But of course.

*SAM hands the note to GENE.*

GENE  
“Shoot the other.” It does not say “kill the other.”

SAM  
No, but it may very well mean “kill the other.”

GENE  
I’d have to agree.

SAM  
Gene?

GENE  
Yes, Sam.

SAM  
It is very important to me that we do this right.

GENE  
As it is to me.

SAM  
And I don’t believe that, if we were to shoot the other and they were to die then we did poorly.

GENE  
No, I don’t think so either.

SAM  
And I believe that there is a chance, if we were to shoot the other and they were to survive... well that would mean that we did poorly.

GENE  
Yes, I believe you to be right.

*Beat.*

SAM

Gene, do you know the expression “better safe than sorry.”

GENE

I’m familiar with “better safe than sorry.”

SAM

Do you think this may be one of those times where it would be best to be “better safe than sorry.”

GENE

I do. I think there are many circumstances where it’s best to be “better safe than sorry.”

SAM

Then we are in agreement.

GENE

Yes.

SAM

Once we determine who “the other” is-

GENE

Yes.

SAM

We must shoot them-

GENE

Yes.

SAM

Fatally.

GENE

Yes.

*Beat.*

SAM

Well, then, there is just one more step.

GENE

Which is that?



We must find out which of us is the other.

SAM

You'd be right about that.

GENE

How do we discover that?

SAM

Well-

GENE

Yes?

SAM

It's occurred to me that there is another possibility.

GENE

Which is?

SAM

You may not like it.

GENE

Nonsense, what is it?

SAM

Perhaps... it doesn't matter who the other is?

GENE

I don't follow.

SAM

Perhaps it's meant to be left to chance.

GENE

Oh.

*Beat.*

SAM

I told you you wouldn't like it.

GENE

SAM

You were right. I do not like it.

GENE

I tend to be right about those kinds of things.

SAM

Why would The Superiors want one of us to die at random?

GENE

I do not know.

SAM

Then why would we believe that to be the case.

GENE

It's not up for us to know or to question the decisions of The Superiors.

SAM

I suppose you are right.

GENE

I sense that didn't put you at ease.

SAM

I am not one for chance. I just simply don't believe this to be true.

GENE

It very well may not be.

SAM

But they didn't specify who "the other" is.

GENE

They did not.

SAM

But we know we must shoot and most likely kill the other.

GENE

Sam.

SAM

And we must, because The Superiors have demanded it. With a note.

GENE

Sam.

SAM

And we do not know who must be shot, with the revolver from the small box. There is no indication.

GENE

Sam.

SAM

And now you are suggesting that we may need to decide randomly? Randomly of all things! How would we even decide randomly who would be shot, potentially fatally.

GENE

Sam!

SAM

Yes, dear friend.

GENE

You are destroying the note.

*SAM looks down to see the note. SAM has been crumpling the note in anxiety.*

SAM

Oh my, I apologize.

GENE

That's alright.

SAM

This may be important.

GENE

It very well may be.

SAM

I will return it to the box at once.

GENE

That is a sound plan.

*SAM steps to the box and puts the note in the box. Something catches SAM's eye.*

Gene. SAM

Yes, Sam. GENE

There is something else in the box. SAM

What? GENE

There is something else in the small box with a revolver and a note in it. SAM

And what else? GENE

*SAM reaches into the box, and pulls out a somewhat large coin.*

A coin. SAM

A small box with a revolver, a note, and a coin in it? GENE

A small box with a revolver, a note, and a coin in it, indeed. SAM

We really must be more thorough with this box. GENE

I have to agree. SAM

It's almost as if it's bottomless. Something new every time we look. GENE

It's fascinating. SAM

GENE

I need you to check, Sam, I don't know if I can handle any more surprises.

SAM

Check what?

GENE

The box. Check the box to see if there is anything else we are missing.

SAM

Very well.

*SAM looks again in the box, reaches in a hand and feels for anything missing.*

SAM

It seems we have it all.

GENE

Good.

SAM

A small box with a revolver, a note, and a coin in it.

GENE

A small box with a revolver, a note, and a coin in it.

SAM

Strange, no?

GENE

Certainly.

SAM

Indeed.

GENE

Certainly.

SAM

Indeed.

*Beat.*

Sam? GENE

Gene. SAM

This is a sign that we are meant to determine who “the other” is randomly, no? GENE

Yes, I believe we are meant to determine who “the other” is randomly? SAM

Shall we? GENE

Yes, yes. Shall I flip it? SAM

You found it, you may as well flip. Are you any good at flipping coins? GENE

I’m good enough at flipping coins. SAM

Good. That is good to hear. GENE

Shall I do the back of the hand thing? SAM

What? GENE

The back of the hand thing. SAM

Elaborate. GENE

The thing where you catch it and slap it on the back of your hand before revealing it. SAM

GENE

Rather than what?

SAM

Rather than just letting it hit the ground.

GENE

Does that make it any more random?

SAM

I don't believe so.

GENE

Then what is the point?

SAM

I think it just feels cooler.

GENE

Ah. Then by all means.

SAM

Thank you. Thank you.

*Beat.*

GENE

Shall we?

SAM

Yes, yes. Call it in the air.

GENE

Yes.

SAM

Call it in the air.

GENE

I will.

*SAM positions as if getting ready to flip,  
prepares to throw the coin, and then-*

SAM

Gene?

Sam. GENE

SAM  
Are you familiar with “heads I win, tails you lose?”

GENE  
I am familiar with “heads I win, tails you lose.”

SAM  
It would be awfully convenient to me if you weren't.

GENE  
I suppose that would be true.

SAM  
Though it wouldn't feel right. To win like that.

GENE  
I suppose that would be true.

SAM  
Right. Call it in the air.

GENE  
Yes.

*SAM positions again, is about to throw the coin and then-*

SAM  
Since I am doing the back of the hand trick.

GENE  
You are.

SAM  
And since we both agreed to it.

GENE  
We did.

SAM  
Say I was to fail the trick.



GENE

Fail it?

SAM

Drop the coin instead of slapping it on the back of my hand. What then?

GENE

I suppose we would have to call a mulligan.

SAM

A what?

GENE

A redo. For fairness sake.

SAM

For fairness sake.

GENE

Yes.

SAM

Ok, so call it in the air, but if I drop the coin, it is void.

GENE

So do not look at the coin.

SAM

What?

GENE

Do not look at the coin as you flip it.

SAM

Why is that?

GENE

Well, if I am to call it in the air, and if to drop the coin is to make the result void, then if you were to see that the result may be undesirable to you, you may intentionally drop the coin.

SAM

You think that I would cheat you like that?

GENE

You did just suggest “heads I win, tails you lose.”

SAM

And then said that I would not feel good about the result if I had used that gimmick.

GENE

That’s true.

SAM

So I would not cheat, therefore I can look at the coin.

GENE

What if you instinctively cheat unintentionally?

SAM

How could I instinctively cheat unintentionally?

GENE

Well, if you are to lose the flip, then you likely die, yes?

SAM

Yes.

GENE

Well the human brain is hardwired to avoid death at all costs. It’s what has allowed our species to survive this long. Even when we aren’t paying attention our brains are trying to keep us alive.

SAM

That makes sense.

GENE

So what if, in noticing that an undesirable result may occur in the coin flip, your brain spasms your arm or takes away your coordination to make you fumble the flip. It wouldn’t be your fault, per se, but it wouldn’t be fair to me. And I believe that this is a matter that calls for utmost fairness.

SAM

Yes, Gene, I very much want to assure utmost fairness for both of us.

GENE

Right.

SAM

We are striving for a true fifty fifty here.

GENE

Right.

SAM

And I think you may have a point, so I will flip the coin without looking at it.

GENE

Thank you.

SAM

No thanks needed, friend.

*Beat.*

GENE

Shall we?

SAM

Yes, yes. Call it in the air, I will not look.

*SAM positions again to toss the coin, this time eyes closed, looking away. SAM is about to throw the coin and then-*

SAM

It occurs to me.

GENE

What occurs to you?

SAM

That it might be rather difficult to flip this coin, catch it and slap it on the back of my hand without looking.

GENE

Ah.

SAM

Does that not occur to you as well?

GENE

It occurs to me now, yes.

SAM

And I must tell you, Gene, I am rather attached to this idea of flipping the coin, catching it, and slapping it on the back of my hand at this point.

GENE

Yes, I very much want that for you too.

SAM

But I share your concerns about the fairness added by me not looking at the coin as it flips.

GENE

I know you do, you've been very kind in that way.

SAM

So, how do we do this properly?

*Beat. They both think.*

GENE

What if you squint?

SAM

Squint?

GENE

Yes, squint at the coin as it flips.

SAM

What does squinting accomplish?

GENE

You are able to see the general outline of the coin without the detail of knowing which side is going to land up. You only need to guide your hand to the coin to catch it, and let your dexterity do the rest, the rest being guiding the coin to the back of the other hand, and you only need the outline of the coin in your vision to accomplish that. Squinting takes away your ability to cheat without taking away your ability to catch the coin.

SAM

Very well thought out, dear friend.

GENE

Thank you.

SAM

No thanks needed, friend.

GENE

Shall we?

SAM

Yes, call it in the air, while I'm squinting, I'll catch it and slap it on the back of my hand.

GENE

Good. Are we good?

SAM

We are good.

GENE

Are we set?

SAM

We are set.

GENE

Perfect. I will call it in the air, you will catch it and slap it on the back of your hand.

SAM

All while squinted.

GENE

All while squinted.

SAM

Of course.

GENE

Of course.

SAM

Ready.

GENE

Ready.

*SAM gets into position to flip the coin, squinting. SAM is about to throw the coin when-*

SAM

Best of luck to you, dear friend-

GENE

Please flip the coin.

SAM

Right, sorry.

*SAM gets into position to flip the coin, once again, squinting. SAM prepares to throw and tosses the coin in the air.*

SAM

Call it.

GENE

Heads.

*SAM catches the coin, slapping it on the back of their hand.*

*OR, if the actor fails to catch the coin, the actors can ad-lib about repeating the process, as discussed, and repeat until there is a satisfactory flip. If this is to happen, GENE should change the choice each time.*

SAM

Ok, are we calling that a fair flip?

GENE

I believe it was as fair a flip as any.

SAM

And I was squinting, I have no idea of the result.

GENE

As you should.

SAM

As I should. Now, are you ready?

GENE

Take a look

*SAM removes a hand from the coin. SAM stares at it blankly.*

Is it heads or tails? GENE

I... SAM

Heads or tails. GENE

I don't know. SAM

How can you not tell? GENE

It isn't obvious. This side of the coin is... nondescript. SAM

Well, what does the other look like? GENE

*SAM starts to flip the coin.*

Wait! GENE

*Beat.*

What? SAM

Be sure to remember which side of the coin was the result. GENE

Yes, of course. SAM

I'd rather not have to redo the result. For fairness sake. GENE

For fairness sake. Of course. I will keep the coin flat, and look at the bottom. SAM

Yes, do that. GENE

*SAM lifts the coin, looking at the bottom side.  
Beat.*

Well? GENE

It's identical. SAM

Is it? GENE

Completely identical. SAM

Well let me see? GENE

*SAM tosses the coin to GENE.*

You weren't lying. GENE

Did you think I was lying? SAM

I thought it was a possibility. Today has been full of possibilities. GENE

That's fair. SAM

The coin. It's smooth on either side. GENE

No markings at all. SAM

Can it even be considered a coin? GENE

Perhaps a defective coin. SAM



Certainly a defective coin. GENE

A small box with a revolver, a note and a defective coin. SAM

Today is full of possibilities. GENE

Chock-full. Most peculiar. SAM

Certainly peculiar. GENE

*Beat.*

Well, Sam- GENE

Yes, Gene. SAM

I'm at a bit of a loss as to what to do now that we know that the coin is defective. GENE

Well, there are other ways to randomly determine things. SAM

Like what? GENE

Perhaps it was staring us in the face the entire time. SAM

Like what? GENE

The answer could be quite simple. SAM

Like what? GENE

Gene?  
SAM

Yes, Sam.  
GENE

Have you ever played russian roulette?  
SAM

I can't say that I have.  
GENE

Me neither, but I am familiar with the concept. Are you familiar with the concept?  
SAM

I can't say that I am.  
GENE

I'll familiarize you with the concept. In short, people sit or stand in a circle, with a revolver-  
SAM

We have a revolver.  
GENE

With a revolver with a single bullet loaded.  
SAM

We have a revolver with a single bullet loaded.  
GENE

And the participants, several people-  
SAM

We are several people.  
GENE

Several people take turns passing the revolver between themselves, spinning the chamber, to ensure randomization-  
SAM

You know I'm for randomization.  
GENE

And take turns firing at their own temples.  
SAM

*Beat.*

GENE

Let me get this straight.

SAM

Please.

GENE

So, on any given turn, when someone grabs the revolver and spins the chamber to ensure randomness, there is a one in six chance they shoot themselves.

SAM

Yes. Typically in the head.

GENE

And what happens if you do?

SAM

You lose.

GENE

You lose.

SAM

And you likely die.

GENE

You would likely die.

SAM

This is perhaps what the superiors had in mind. We have several of the elements.

GENE

We truly have all of the elements.

SAM

Right. All of the elements. It would ensure randomness, which we noted as vital, and it would ensure one of us gets shot, which we noted as vital.

GENE

Sam, I think you may have found the answer here.

SAM

Right. I think I may have.

Very well done.

GENE

Why, thank you. That is so kind.

SAM

It's really nothing.

GENE

No, Gene, it was very kind for you to flatter me like that. So kind, that I feel I should do something in return.

SAM

That is really unnecessary.

GENE

I'll tell you what.

SAM

*SAM marches over to the box and pulls out the revolver.*

Because you were so kind, and I wish to return the favor, I will go first for Russian Roulette.

SAM

That is quite kind.

GENE

It's really nothing. Now... good luck, my friend.

SAM

Good luck, friend.

GENE

*SAM takes a deep breath, spins the chamber of the revolver and starts to raise the revolver.*

Wait!

GENE

What? What is it?

SAM

GENE

It occurs to me that we aren't doing this properly.

SAM

What about this isn't proper? I thought this was quite proper.

GENE

Think back to the note.

SAM

What about the note?

GENE

It did not say "shoot yourself" or even "kill yourself" it said "shoot the other," though notably not "kill the other."

SAM

As we determined.

GENE

Correct, as we determined. So it would not be right to play traditional Russian Roulette.

SAM

Because we are not meant to shoot ourselves.

GENE

Right, we are not meant to shoot ourselves. Otherwise, wouldn't The Superiors have specified?

SAM

They surely would have.

GENE

Right, so, as it were, we must play... Reverse Russian Roulette.

SAM

What is Reverse Russian Roulette?

GENE

It is where you shoot the other instead of yourself.

SAM

It seems the same conceptually, really.

GENE

Right, but if we are to do this, I would say that we may as well do it right.

SAM

We haven't come this far to get it wrong.

GENE

I'd have to concur.

SAM

Very well.

*SAM raises the revolver and fires at GENE.  
It clicks and does not fire.*

GENE

Oh my! You could have given me a moment.

SAM

I'm sorry.

GENE

That could have been my very last moment, I'd hope it would be more ceremonious.

SAM

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

GENE

No, it's quite alright, I just got a little flustered.

SAM

It seems as appropriate a time as any to get a little flustered.

GENE

I suppose so. I suppose so.

SAM

But it wasn't.

GENE

How do you mean?

SAM

It wasn't your last moment.

No, I suppose it wasn't.

GENE

Now then.

SAM

*SAM hands the revolver to GENE.*

Your turn.

SAM

Thank you.

GENE

Of course.

SAM

*GENE raises the revolver at SAM.*

Hold on, hold on.

SAM

What?

GENE

You must spin the chamber.

SAM

Oh, right, right.

GENE

*GENE spins the chamber, points the revolver at SAM and pulls the trigger. It clicks but does not fire.*

Very well. Your turn.

GENE

It's sort of exciting isn't it.

SAM

I suppose I get why people play it.

GENE

*SAM takes the revolver, spins the chamber and pulls the trigger. It clicks but does not fire.*

SAM

You're up, good friend.

GENE

I didn't really think this would last this long.

SAM

Why not?

GENE

Well, there are only six options, aren't there? So it has to be a one in six chance to fire. We've gone through three already. We are running out of options. Ready?

SAM

Ready.

*GENE spins the chamber, raises the revolver and pulls the trigger. It clicks but does not fire. GENE hands the gun to SAM*

GENE

That's four of six out of the way.

SAM

Ah, see, you have your number a little wrong there, friend.

GENE

Have I?

SAM

You have. See this?

*SAM spins the chamber.*

SAM

Because you spin the chamber each time, it does not work like you think. Ready?

GENE

Ready.



*SAM points the revolver and pulls the trigger. It clicks but does not fire. SAM hands the gun to GENE.*

*The pair continue to pass the gun back and forth, firing it at one another as they continue to talk.*

SAM

You see, you are correct in noting the one in six chance. Every time we pull the trigger there is a one in six chance of the gun firing. However, that doesn't mean that the game will end after six pulls of the trigger. Because we spin the chamber, so the position of the single bullet changes. So, theoretically, we could be here forever, passing this gun back and forth, and the shot never fires.

GENE

Is that likely?

SAM

No, that is very unlikely. Truth be told, the fact that the revolver has not fired already is unlikely.

GENE

It seems that a lot about today is unlikely.

SAM

It's just one of those kinds of days.

GENE

I don't follow.

SAM

You know how there are bad days?

GENE

Of course.

SAM

Well, there can also be other kinds of days. Have you ever had a day where you are just a little sad? Not a bad day, per se, not a disastrous day, just a melancholy kind of day. Have you ever had that?

GENE

I suppose I have.

SAM

So, perhaps, today is just an unlikely kind of day. For both of us.

Yes, an unlikely kind of day.

GENE

It's a thing.

SAM

It seems it would have to be.

GENE

There's always tomorrow, isn't there.

SAM

For one of us, anyway.

GENE

Yes, perhaps... under these circumstances.

SAM

Still not a bad day.

GENE

You don't think?

SAM

No, I've had worse days. I'd call today more unlikely than bad.

GENE

I agree.

SAM

It's almost a blessing. To be called upon by the superiors like this.

GENE

I have to agree. A bit of an honor, really.

SAM

It's reassuring to know that they thought of us, you know?

GENE

It is. Despite the potentially lethal circumstances, I feel noticed.

SAM

To be able to help, even if we're unsure how, is certainly an honor.

GENE

Indeed. SAM

I have a question. GENE

I may have an answer. SAM

Would you consider- GENE

So this is a personal perception question. SAM

Yes. Would you consider the fact that this gun has yet to fire, good luck or bad luck? GENE

An interesting question. SAM

Thank you. GENE

On one hand, neither of us have been shot. SAM

That could be considered positive. GENE

Yes, it could. However, we have yet to satisfy what was asked of us by The Superiors. Which is certainly important. SAM

It has to be. GENE

So, perhaps it's a net neutral? SAM

That would be fair. GENE

SAM

What do you think?

GENE

Well, I leaned toward net negative.

SAM

Really? Why is that?

GENE

Well, for both of the reasons you described.

SAM

Naturally.

GENE

And the loss of time. We have spent a good bit of time in this room.

SAM

You are right, however, I believe you are also missing something.

GENE

Am I?

SAM

You are.

GENE

Go on.

SAM

Well, you see, the longer we are in this room, the longer one of us gets to live and the more our rather doomed friendship gets to flourish.

GENE

You are right about that. So perhaps it is a net neutral after all.

SAM

Perhaps even a net positive.

GENE

Perhaps, it's all subjective.

SAM

Not my strong suit.

GENE

No, not your strong suit.

SAM

No one ever tells you how much exercise is involved in Russian Roulette.

GENE

Really?

SAM

No, but handing a revolver back and forth is a bit of a workout.

GENE

I'd be inclined to agree.

SAM

Perhaps we should take a break soon.

GENE

Do you think?

SAM

Yes, perhaps we should take a break and reevaluate.

GENE

I find it extremely unlikely that this revolver has yet to fire.

SAM

It indeed is improbable.

GENE

One more each?

SAM

Before the break?

GENE

Before the break.

SAM

Deal.

*They each pull the trigger one more time while pointing the revolver. The revolver clicks but does not fire. They take a break.*

SAM

I feel like I've barely had a moment to breathe since waking up.

GENE

It's been intense.

SAM

Intense seems like an understatement.

*SAM looks at the box.*

SAM

And all because of this box.

*Something about the box catches SAM's attention. SAM dives for the box.*

SAM

Gene.

GENE

Yes, Sam.

SAM

Gene, don't be mad.

GENE

Yes, Sam?

SAM

The box.

GENE

Yes, Sam?

SAM

The small box with a revolver.

GENE

Yes, Sam?

SAM

The small box with a revolver, a note and a defective coin.

GENE

What is it Sam?

It has a false bottom.

SAM

*Beat.*

A false bottom.

GENE

The bottom of the box comes out.

SAM

A small box with a revolver, a note, a defective coin and a false bottom.

GENE

That is correct.

SAM

*Beat.*

Sam?

GENE

Yes?

SAM

Is there something underneath the false bottom?

GENE

Let me check.

SAM

Please do.

GENE

It would be a fairly pointless false bottom if it wasn't hiding something.

SAM

I'd agree.

GENE

*Beat.*

SAM

Yes.

GENE

Yes?

SAM

Yes, there is something underneath the false bottom.

*SAM removes a second revolver from the box.*

GENE

Is that-

SAM

I believe it is.

GENE

Is it-

SAM

It's identical.

GENE

In every way?

SAM

In every way I can tell.

*Beat.*

GENE

Huh.

SAM

Huh indeed.

*Beat.*

GENE

A small box with a revolver, a note, a defective coin and a false bottom hiding a second revolver.

SAM

A small box with a revolver, a note, a defective coin and a false bottom hiding a second revolver.

*Beat.*

SAM



That would explain why the note didn't specify "the other."

GENE

It would seem that we are each "the other."

SAM

We are each "the other."

*Beat.*

SAM

Well, I guess there isn't anything else to do.

GENE

I don't believe so.

SAM

Are you ready?

GENE

I am ready.

*GENE and SAM each grab a revolver. They stand across from one another, facing, pointing their revolvers.*

SAM

Gene?

GENE

Yes, Sam.

SAM

Do you think we could get one more story?

GENE

That seems appropriate.

*Beat.*

GENE

A moment please, I must find the right one.

SAM

Of course.

*Beat.*

GENE

In Celtic mythology... there was a man. Breogan. King Breogan was the son of Brath who was the son of Bile, the god of death. Breogan, one day, was brought a mirror, a mirror that showed him the world, farther than even their tallest tower could show him. He saw the shores of Ireland, and became obsessed with it. He wanted it for himself. Breogan loaded a boat full of men, and left to conquer the land. He was certain, certain that this was the only thing to do, however his men weren't too sure. They felt they had enough, that their home was enough for them. That they didn't need more land, and they didn't need to, fight, kill, suffer, cause suffering for others. So, on the way over, they mutinied and killed Breogan.

*Beat.*

SAM

What happened to the crew?

GENE

It's said a storm turned the ship no sooner than they had shifted sails toward home.

SAM

And Ireland?

GENE

Breogan's son sent another ship to avenge his father's death and conquered it.

SAM

So none of it mattered?

*Beat.*

SAM

Well, here's hoping it matters, dearest friend.

GENE

Here's hoping, dearest, dearest friend.

*They both take a deep breath.*

SAM

Three.

GENE

Two.

SAM and GENE

One.

*The lights dim.*

*Two gunshots are heard in unison. Then a thump of something hitting the ground.*

*A moment passes.*

*The lights come up again suddenly.*

*They both missed. Neither of them have been able to open their eyes yet.*

Gene?

SAM

Sam?

GENE

*They both open their eyes and discover that they are each fine.*

I'll be honest, I didn't consider us missing.

SAM

Neither did I.

GENE

*SAM looks to the door.*

Oh, would you look at that.

SAM

*GENE turns to the door as well. The lock has been shot off. The door swings open.*

Huh.

GENE

*Beat.*  
*SAM walks over the door and pushes it open a little more. SAM peeks out the door, takes*

*a moment, then grabs the knob, closes the door and relocks it.*

Now what? SAM

I don't know. GENE

We've exhausted our two bullets. SAM

And the contents of the box. GENE

I don't know how to satisfy The Superiors now. SAM

*Beat.*

Can I be honest? SAM

I'd be insulted if you weren't. GENE

I am exhausted. SAM

Are you? GENE

It seems we're going to be here a while, and I could really use some sleep. Would you mind? SAM

By all means. GENE

Goodnight, Gene. SAM

Goodnight, Sam. GENE

*SAM gets into bed again. GENE sits down at the foot of the other.*

*Just a moment passes, then two small distinct objects fall from above, startling GENE.*

*GENE stands suddenly, and walks to the objects and picks them up.*

*Two bullets.*

*GENE takes a moment to process, then turns to SAM in the bed.*

GENE

Sam... Sam!

*SAM does not wake.*

*GENE takes a moment, then realizes what has to be done.*

*GENE grabs the second revolver, loading it then returning it to the box, then replacing the false bottom. GENE then grabs the coin and the note and puts them in the box. This is followed by GENE grabbing the first revolver, loading it, placing it in the box, and putting the lid on the box.*

*GENE returns to sitting at the foot of the bed.*

*The lights slowly dim.*

*END OF PLAY*