

Con-Atonic
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FADE IN ON:

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - DAY

Drab. Dreary. Handmade drawings taped to walls.

Heels CLICK against linoleum. The stilettos belong to WARDEN MUXLEY (30s), a smooth cougar in uniform. Custom sunglasses - and bright red lipstick - on her face.

EGAR MILTON (50s) waddles besides her. Decades of public service stamped across a Milquetoast face.

Muxley points out a particularly childish painting: stick figures and cartoon flowers.

WARDEN MUXLEY

The art displayed here; it's done by our rehabilitated population. Impressive, don't you agree?

EGAR

If you say so, Warden. Though it's a tad... primitive.

WARDEN MUXLEY

The artistic merit of the work isn't what counts. It's the spirit of peace it reflects.

EGAR

Are all your prisoners... compliant?

WARDEN MUXLEY

Please. Call them residents. And yes. These days, most of them are.

Muxley's long legs stride past locked cells.

In one of them: COEN MARKER (30s) and BUG JUICE (40s). Rakish hair falls in Coen's eyes, matches a hipster growth of beard. Bug's small and gangly. His name tag reads "Derrick Gonzales."

Coen winks at Muxley. She ignores him; strolls on by.

BUG JUICE

You crushin' on the Warden, Co?

COEN

I'm not sayin' yeah. But maybe.

BUG JUICE

That lady's outta your league. Even if
you was on the outside. And youse a
lifer. You got no chance.

Coen shrugs - undeterred.

COEN

That makes my chances better. I got all
the time in the world.

One of the drawings flutters from the wall. Coen nabs it
before Muxley sees.

The Warden and Eggar continue down the hallway a few feet.

WARDEN MUXLEY

Our artist program's done wonders.
Especially since the modifications.

They pass another cell. A huge inmate ("EVIL") lurks
inside. His name tag reads "Anderson."

Evil leers at Muxley. Spits on the floor. Spatters her
designer shoe.

Juice opens his mouth to protest. Evil GROWLS. Juice
cowers back in his cell.

EGGAR

(to Muxley)

That inmate isn't peaceful!

WARDEN MUXLEY

That's why we need more state funding.
And your help.

They reach a set of doors. A sign reads "Music
Education."

WARDEN MUXLEY

Here. Let me demonstrate our progress.

She hands Eggar a set of glasses - identical to her own.

WARDEN MUXLEY

Put these on.

INT. PRISON REC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A nerdy PIANIST plays on stage. The room is packed: ONE
HUNDRED PRISONERS. No chains. No restraints.

A strobe light flickers overhead. Every face enraptured.

Muxley and Egar observe. The Warden smiles at the look on Egar's face.

WARDEN MUXLEY

It's Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. If you're wondering.

EGAR

Music keeps them catatonic?

WARDEN MUXLEY

Not the music. And not catatonic. Per se.

She points to the strobe.

WARDEN MUXLEY

That's what keeps them... behaved.

The pianist finishes with a flourish. A hundred inmates CLAP politely. One of them spots Muxley and waves.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - LATER

Muxley steps out with Egar. The little man looks floored.

EGAR

There were a hundred prisoners in there!
And not a single incident!

WARDEN MUXLEY

Please. Call them residents.

EGAR

Your modifications did all that?

WARDEN MUXLEY

It prevents interpersonal violence,
though not their thoughts. And if we get
our funding, we'll do more.

She guides him towards the exit. Egar vigorously shakes the Warden's hand.

EGAR

Ms. Muxley...

WARDEN MUXLEY

...call me Warden.

EGAR

We'll draw up a proposal today! I promise
you'll get your funding.

Muxley grins as the man waddles away.

WARDEN MUXLEY

With a little left over for me.

She turns and heads back towards the music room.

Coen blows a kiss as she passes by. Muxley puts up a
hand: Don't Go There.

INT. COEN AND BUGS' CELL

A strobe blinks in one corner.

Computer books fill Coen's side. **C++**. **Python Programming**.
One leaflet at the bottom stands out: **Mind Control
Through Hypnosis**.

Cohen hunches over the inmate's discarded drawing -
scribbling equations on it with dirt and a finger. Broken
coke bottles roll at his feet.

Juice watches from his bunk. No fancy books on *his* side.
Just a flimsy mattress.

Something *wiggles* under Juice's collar. A PRAYING MANTIS
emerges from his shirt. Clings to Bug Juice's face.

BUG JUICE

Coen?

COEN

Not now. I'm busy, Juice.

BUG JUICE

Whatcha doing?

COEN

Stuff you wouldn't understand. And other
stuff I can't explain.

He glances up. The Mantis explores Juice's arm.

COEN

Get that insect outta here!

BUG JUICE

But...

COEN

You know I have a phobia!

Juice tucks the bug in his pocket. SIGHS. Waits a moment. SIGHS again.

Coen tries to ignore his roomie. It's no use. He runs out of dirt. Looks up.

BUG JUICE

(hopeful)

I can get you a pen. I know a guy.

Coen picks up a book and reads.

COEN

Fine. It's a deal. What's the price?

BUG JUICE

Well, I got this problem, you see.

COEN

What kind of problem could you possibly have? Besides that creepy obsession with bugs?

BUG JUICE

(beat)

I gotta do something bad.

Coen puts down the book. Makes direct eye contact. Waits for Juice's explanation.

BUG JUICE

They're sending me home tomorrow.

COEN

Really, Juice? That's great!

BUG JUICE

(panicked)

No. I can't! I'm not ready!

Juice takes the bug from his pocket, and cradles it in his hand.

COEN

You're saying you'd rather stay here than go home? In this shitbox? You know you can take him with you, right?

BUG JUICE

It ain't that. If I go home, I gotta pay rent. And I gotta live outside.

I don't wanna. I can't! So, I guess I'll have to kill someone. Then they'll make me a lifer. Like you.

Coen watches Juice pet the mantis.

COEN

(sneers)

You can't even kill a fly!

BUG JUICE

I know. I've tried. But something always stops me. Strange...

He points at Coen's **Hypnosis** book. His voice rises.

BUG JUICE

You're the smartest guy in this joint. You hacked into SONY, for Christ sakes! If anyone can help me, you can!

His finger jabs at Coen's broken coke bottles.

BUG JUICE

Or gimme some glass. Make me a shank!

COEN

(sarcastic)

What you gonna use that on? Your teeth?

BUG JUICE

No. Anderson.

COEN

What? You mean, "Evil?"

BUG JUICE

Yeah. Him. Evil's got it out for me. 'Member when he made me swallow my last Mantis? I puked for three whole days! I kill him, I stay inside. And safe. Kill two birds with one stone. Literally.

COEN

That's not what literally means...

The strobes change sequence. A glazed look falls across Juice's face.

BUG JUICE

Ya gotta help me. Please.

His eyes water. Coen melts.

COEN

Okay. But - no killing. I got a better idea.

He pulls a hardcover book from the stack. Charles Dickens, **A Tale of Two Cities**.

BUG JUICE

You know I can't read.

Coen flips the book open. It's hollow. There's something stashed inside.

COEN

Good thing I made an extra pair.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - MORNING

Sun twinkles against gravel. As do more strobes. The yard completely unfenced.

INMATES hang out peacefully in cliques. CLASSICAL MUSIC pours through a speaker. One GANG plays basketball. OTHERS play croquet. No-one even glances beyond the marked borders.

Warden Muxley stares down at the yard from the third floor. A shepherd guarding her flock.

Below: Juice skitters out a door, past a GUARD.

He weaves past light poles with the strobes, **A Tale of Two Cities** under his arm. Juice shades his eyes, and scans the yard.

INT. PRISON AIR DUCTS - CONTINUOUS

Coen trench-crawls through a narrow tunnel of wires and pipes. He wears steam punk type glasses, with a coke bottle lens.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - CONTINUOUS

Juice perches on the bleachers, the book in his lap.

A group of MUSCLE HEADS lift weights nearby. "Evil" Anderson front and center - heavily tattooed. Pumps iron like he's training for the UFC.

The Mantis pokes its head out of Juice's pocket.

Evil grins - locks eyes with Juice. Makes a SMASHING gesture with his fist.

Juice GULPS and hides his pet away. Evil nods at TWO CRONIES. The men head toward the bleachers.

INT. PRISON COMMAND ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Screws CLATTER to the floor. A ceiling cover is removed.

Coen drops into a room filled with monitors. A familiar strobe in one corner. Coen sizes up the equipment. And smiles. It's Linux Central. He's at home.

He drops into a chair, and hacks into the mainframe. A list of inmate names flow down the screen.

He locates Juice's name (Derrick.) And changes the release date to "never."

INT. WARDEN MUXLEY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Muxley preens at her desk. A stack of papers is stamped in big red letters: Approved.

She removes her sunglasses and smiles into the reflective lens. Refreshes her ruby lipstick.

WARDEN MUXLEY

Aruba, here I come.

An ALARM sounds. Muxley jumps to her feet. Papers fly everywhere. She leaves her mirrored shades behind.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Muxley SLAMS open the door. The sign reads: Command Room.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - CONTINUOUS

Evil's gang surrounds Juice. The inmate shrinks before their wrath. Evil reaches into Juice's pocket, and extracts poor little Mantis.

GANG MEMBER

He got another one?

EVIL

He crazy, man. That ain't gonna change.
But we'll teach him a lesson.

(to Juice)
 Guess you like the taste of bug...

Juice jumps up to rescue his insectoid friend. Evil dangles the Mantis out of reach.

The Guard at the door notices. He runs to a wall and flips a switch. The strobe lights change sequence.

Every inmate (er, "resident") slows down instantly. Still able to move - but subdued.

INT. PRISON COMMAND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Muxley storms inside.

Coen's burning up the keyboard, his back turned. Letters fly like Matrix code across the screen. He doesn't notice the door open. He's totally into it.

Muxley tiptoes across the floor. A cat stalking her prey. Her stiletto CLACKS. Coen swings around. The steam punk glasses look like goggles on his face.

WARDEN MUXLEY

What do you think you're doing, Resident?

COEN

I'm saying goodbye. Warden.

She lunges, taser drawn. Coen types fast keystrokes. Hits ENTER. Strobes FLASH in a new sequence.

Muxley's lunge morphs into a passionate kiss. Coen doesn't resist.

After a moment, Coen breaks for air. And pushes her away.

COEN

It would have been fun. But you and me?
 I'm outta your league. We got no chance.

He kisses her once more for good luck, and runs out of the room.

Muxley SIGHS and watches him go. The strobe lights reflect off her wistful eyes.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - MOMENTS LATER

The strobes continue their pattern.

Coen races past the guard, rips the glasses from his face. The guard freezes instantly.

Coen runs full-tilt across the yard. Past Bug Juice. Towards freedom.

COEN
(yells)
Juice. Remember: the book!

Juice blinks. In his eyes, everything seems slow-motion. Evil's frozen, as well. The Mantis hangs, helpless, from his hand.

Juice reaches into the Dickens book. Slllllowwwly, he pulls out steam punk glasses of his own.

He fits them on his face. The world's pace reverts to normal. At least - for him.

Juice snatches the Mantis, and hides it in the book.

Coen races past the "Do Not Pass" sign. He points to the guard's switch on the wall.

COEN
(to Juice)
I activated the mind control subroutine.
When you're ready, flip that switch!

Juice stares.

BUG JUICE
What do I do?

COEN
(grins)
Anything you want!

He turns and runs into the forest. Juice glances up at Evil. Grins.

BUG JUICE
Anderson. Listen to me. Closely.

MOMENTS LATER

Juice flips the switch "off." The strobes fade away. The guard blinks - coming out of his daze.

He glances at Juice, who shrugs.

The guard scans the yard. Everything seems normal.

Someone SIGHS. The guard looks to his left.

Warden Muxley stares out at the field, a misty look in her eye.

WARDEN MUXLEY

Come back, please? I'll make it work!

The guard's eyes bug out of his head. He hears a GIGGLE, and turns back to the yard.

Evil's sitting on an ant pile. The red things swarm all over him. But Evil doesn't seem to mind. He doesn't seem to *have* a mind, anymore.

Juice tucks the Mantis in his pocket. It curls up next to the steam-punk shades.

He pets the bug gently.

BUG JUICE

Things are gonna change 'round here.

FINAL FADE OUT: