

LOCKDOWN

Caught smuggling drugs into the prison where he works, Sam is in line for some hefty jail time. But when a unique turn of events leaves him one-on-one with the warden who will determine his fate, Sam has to decide just how far he's willing to go to keep his freedom.

FADE IN:

EXT. MALCOLM CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - MORNING

A rural, yet modern prison with gleaming rows of razor wire atop a tall chain link fence. Guards sit in watchtowers around the yard, lazily scanning for signs of activity.

WARDEN (PRE-LAP)

I don't think you understand how serious this is. The penalty for smuggling schedule I narcotics is a minimum five year sentence.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A spartan room with a large wooden desk. There's only one chair for anyone but the warden and its smack-dab in the middle of the room, like you're there to see the principal.

SAM (early 20s, overweight), sits in the hot seat, fidgeting and sweating through an ill-fitting guard's uniform.

The WARDEN (50s, silverfox), sits behind his desk and carefully watches Sam's every move. He's ridiculously fit for his age and wears a well-tailored suit.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Now I'm only going to ask this once, and God help you if you think you're going to save your ass by lying to me. Were you threatened or coerced by any of the inmates?

Sam brightens at the prospect of a lifeline, then wilts under the pressure of the Warden's stare.

SAM

No sir...

WARDEN

And you did it all by yourself?

SAM

That's right.

WARDEN

Bullshit. No offense, son, but that wasn't exactly a trivial amount of smack. I'm supposed to believe you had more effort and initiative for building a drug operation than you ever showed at your actual job?

SAM

I guess?

WARDEN

Well then, while we're 'guessing' why don't I take a stab? I think you have multiple accomplices. And I think you've wrongly assumed you should be more afraid of them than you are of me. But what I can't suss out is how you could possibly think this will work out for you.

SAM

Cause maybe you'll let me go?

WARDEN

I'm sorry, what?

SAM

You know how far our pay goes -- or doesn't! And it's not like anyone's getting hurt. Don't you understand how it all works?

(he realizes the
implication)

Not that you'd ever do anything like this. Just that people say you used to, you know, 'get it.'

The Warden pinches the bridge of his nose.

WARDEN

Go wait out in the hall. There's something I want you to see.

The Warden watches as Sam leaves, then sighs heavily and pulls a sobriety chip from out of his breast pocket. He leans back in his chair and rubs it like a worry-stone.

INT. HALL - SAME TIME

An empty, sterile looking hall. MAX (30s, shifty), loiters by the door, and when Sam exits, he swoops in.

MAX

Hey, how'd it go?

SAM

Not good. He won't let it go.

(he freezes)

But I swear I didn't say anything!

MAX

Relax! Nobody said you did. And now that we've done our due diligence, we can move onto plan B.

SAM

Wait, like right now?

MAX

When else? I'm guessing he's gonna take you downstairs for the 'scared straight' routine. That'll leave you two alone, with me and Billy in the Operations Center.

SAM

But then that means... No Max, please! I can't!

MAX

Listen, all you need to do is make sure he goes down. Our 'friends' can take care of the rest.

SAM

But how? And when?!

MAX

Don't worry... you'll know.

INT. HOUSING UNIT FOUR - LATER

The high security wing. Three floors of metal doors and stairs, with no other visible accommodations. All the cells are shut tight and there's a tremendous amount of contraband piled up in the middle of the walkways.

The Warden and Sam make their way along the third floor, stopping periodically to look at the detritus as they go.

SAM

So you turned over the whole unit?

WARDEN

Had to, because of you.

(he picks up a small
strip of paper)

You know what this is?

SAM

A Suboxone strip. Guys cut em' up and sell em' to the junkies.

WARDEN

Yes and no. This is a failure. An example of how we let down the most vulnerable in our care. Whenever --

WAAAAAH! WAAAAAH! WAAAAAH!

Sirens start blaring and emergency lights flash a concerning shade of red. One-by-one, cell doors begin to click open.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Oh shit...

The Warden whips out a walkie-talkie, then runs over to the railing to see the full extent of the emergency.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Operations Center, do you copy?

Hello!? Do you copy?

(he slams the railing)

I swear to God if someone's sitting on their radio again...

Sam stares numbly at the warden and unfastens a taser from his side. All around, confused inmates pile into the hall.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing? Are you gonna taze every one of them?

(he forcibly pushes Sam's arm aside and hauls him over to the stairs)

The caseworker's office is closest. It's not perfect, but -- SHIT!

As they start down the stairs, the Warden's sobriety chip slips from his pocket and bounces down to the second floor. He shoves Sam ahead and wordlessly takes off after it.

Sam waits for a moment, then reluctantly keeps going. When he hits the main floor, he races over to a small metal door.

It's locked.

Sam looks around frantically. Almost the entire unit has left their cells now and while some are excitedly going through the contraband, others are already causing a ruckus.

He goes one way, then another, then stops. His hands are shaking badly and his eyes are open wide.

The Warden, now missing his jacket, reaches the bottom of the stairs. He runs up to the door, fumbles with a ring of keys, then unlocks it as they both slip inside.

INT. CASEWORKER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A small cinder block room with a worn-down wooden desk and some plastic chairs. The Warden hunches over, catching his breath while Sam leans against the wall and shakes.

SAM

What the fuck was that?

WARDEN

A pretty damn good escape, I'd say.

SAM

No, fuck you! You left me back there with no key. And for what!?

The Warden holds up a 30-day sobriety chip.

SAM (CONT'D)

Unbelievable. Un-fucking-believable. You went soft for these junkies because you're one of them!

As he rants, Sam grows increasingly animated and pulls out the taser. The Warden eyes him warily.

WARDEN

Easy, son. Let's put that away.

Sam looks down at the taser, then at the Warden and considers. After a moment, he slams it onto the table.

SAM

God, it is just so fucking rich that you're moralizing to me when you're the one out there getting high!

WARDEN

(softly)

The chip is for alcohol. And I haven't touched the stuff in years.

SAM

(sarcastic)

Oh really? Guess you haven't been to many meetings lately.

WARDEN

I could, but they wouldn't give me anything bigger than this.

(he looks down at it)

It was a personal best.

INT. CASEWORKER'S OFFICE - LATER

The Warden sits, tilting back in a chair with his sleeves rolled partway up. Sam, meanwhile, paces back and forth, periodically looking at the taser on the table.

WARDEN

Why don't you get comfortable? We could be here for awhile.

(he waits for a reply)

How bout some small talk, then? How long have you been a drug-dealer?

Sam stops, annoyed.

SAM

I'm not a drug dealer.

(he ignores the eye-roll)

I brought in some packages, but it's not like I sold them to...

WARDEN

People?

SAM

You know what I mean.

WARDEN

I do, but I'm not sure you do.

(he gestures to the door)

You ever notice how the inmates insist on checking paperwork for every new guy that comes in?

SAM

Yeah, to see what they're in for.

WARDEN

And if it's one of the 'bad' crimes they'll try to hurt them.

SAM

It's prison justice. Even animals have a moral code, sometimes.

WARDEN

But that's not why they do it. They do it because they need someone, anyone, to have it worse off than them. Turns out people can take a lot of shit as long as they've got someone else to shit on.

SAM

Oh, and is that the lesson? You think I'm lashing out because I don't give a shit what happens to these pieces of trash?

WARDEN

Not consciously, no. I think you wanted a PS5 or new rims for your truck. But I also think deep down you need them to be trash.

SAM

Well I think you need a drink.

WARDEN

So you don't look at all your highschool friends going to college or joining the military and feel like you're being left behind? You don't look online and see your peers out at bars while you're here on mandatory overtime like a loser?

Sam picks up the taser.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

And you're telling me that you never once thought that these inmates are forced to be here, but that you come back willingly each day, which might be even worse?

SAM

I think you should shut up.

WARDEN

It makes you feel better, right? As long as they're just animals?

SAM

(coldly)

I'm not going to say it again.

WARDEN

You already said it yourself, Sam. I 'get it' cause I've been there.

SAM

(yelling)

Then what changed!? You're just gonna pull up the fucking ladder and send me to prison because you got drunk and feel bad?

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
(he steps forward)
Why do they matter so goddamn much?

WARDEN
Because any one of them could have
been my son.

Sam stops, momentarily surprised.

SAM
The fuck are you talking about? How
does your--
(he looks to the chip)
That's not yours, is it? It was "a
personal best," but not yours...

The Warden smiles sadly.

WARDEN
Jeremy didn't have anyone who loved
him enough to just listen and not
judge. Now it's too late for me to
be the father he needed. But it's
not too late to use what he taught
me to make this a better place.

SAM
(hoarsely)
And what's that?

WARDEN
That everyone matters. That there's
no such thing as tough love. That
even when it hurts to see someone
making the wrong choice...
(he looks at the taser)
You can't make them do the right
thing, only give them a chance.

Sam falls back until he's up pressed up against the wall. He
stands there, trembling, holding the taser in both hands.

SAM
I don't know what to do... I don't
want to do this, but what choice do
I have? I'm so fucking scared...

WARDEN
You can choose to ask for help. I
can't promise it'll all be okay,
but I can promise I'll try my best.

FADE OUT.