

# Sanctum

By Rob Weafer

**EXT. Early morning winter**, dawn breaking in front of a day shelter in a big city about 7:30 am. Homeless men and women are lined up waiting for the doors to open for hot coffee and toast. There's a lot of grumbling and shuffling for the front of the line (about 40+ people jostling and standing about). The opening is about 8 min. late and people are getting impatient in the cold. The steam off their breaths creates a permanent cloud over the gathering. The assembly all carry their lives, sleeping bags, clothes, in plastic bags, big knapsacks and various other bags. There is a big fellow, shelter staff, with a walkie talkie keeping order at the door, getting updates on the delays on his radio.

HOMELESS GUY #1

Damn it ... what's the goddamn  
hold up?! Motherfuckers!

BILL(door guy)

Waiting for staff... people  
to get in place and some guys  
are late. Relax... any minute  
now.

HOMELESS GUY #1

Bullshit! I spent all night  
hanging on for dear life and  
you guys are fucking late?!!

BILL

Easy friend...

HOMELESS GUY #1

What...you gonna ban me  
again?

BILL

We don't ban people for  
complaining.

HOMELESS GUY #1

Ya.. right.

HOMELESS GUY #2

Jesus... I gotta score... ya  
know?

BILL

Any minute now... hang in  
fellas.

A guy steps through the crowd holding a staff ID  
badge ahead of him and makes it to the door. He  
shows Bill the ID.

NEW STAFF GUY

Peer support worker... first  
shift. I used to be an  
addict.

BILL

Congratulations. You're late.  
These people are literally  
freezing to death, got it? Be  
on time from now on.

HOMELESS GUY #1

I used to be peer worker.  
Good luck.

NEW STAFF GUY

Won't happen again. Promise.

BILL

Piss in one hand. And steer  
clear of Helena... she likes  
new meat..she has hiring  
authority. She'll have you  
spun and relapsing in a week.

BILL opens the door quickly with a fob and lets  
the new guy in.

HOMELESS WOMAN #1 (*black  
eye*)

We are human beings out here!  
No respect! My ex got out  
this morning!! LET ME IN!!

The crowd is getting more vocal and unruly.

Chants "No respect!" here and there. Lots of  
"Assholes!" and "Motherfuckers!" from the crowd.

BILL is now worried about the unrest, squawks his  
radio.

BILL

Guys? Getting hairy out  
here. What's the hold up?

RADIO

We're short. A couple of  
burned out interns from the  
college called in sick. We're  
arranging new assignments and  
posts.

BILL

Copy. Can you send up Fred.

RADIO

Hang in. Almost there.5  
minutes.

BILL

Copy.

The crowd makes a small rush at the door... BILL  
pushes back the first few successfully and they  
all back off. One of the crowd, with severe  
mental illness, starts into a shadow boxing  
routine in the middle of everything, great form,  
taking swipes at the air to clear the crush  
around him. He is a former pro boxer with brain  
trauma, well known to everyone and the crowd  
makes a big space for him. His name is Damien.

BILL

Cool it, people! Almost  
there. Damien! Cool it!!

HOMELESS GUY # 3

You ever had frostbite  
friend?!!

BILL IS BACK on the radio.

BILL

Guys? It's getting clinical up here. Damien's withdrawing and acting up. Either I open or you call the cops. Your call, Mary.

MARY responds.

MARY (radio)

Alright... open. We're close enough. People will have to wait a bit for coffee.

BILL

You're telling me that people are freezing cuz someone started the coffee late?

MARY

I prefer an outdoor riot to one inside.

BILL

Wonderful.. Jesus. Thanks.

(then to crowd)

OK folks! Single file!!

BILL pulls out his FOB and opens the main door. Cheers and insults from the group. ("About fuckin' time!" "You're SUPPOSED to care!!" "Here we go again!!" " I need the nurse!! Is the nurse in?!") DAMIEN calms down instantly, picks up in bag and gets in line.

End of SCENE

THE SCENE - INT. FRONT DESK/RECEPTION of SHELTER.  
We have a veteran at the desk, security badge,  
WILLY, 30's, knows a lot of the guys by name, .  
He familiar with the whole scene, looks at home.  
He's handing out towels to a couple of guys who  
have stopped while others pour into the cafeteria  
to grab breakfast/coffee. The first batch looks  
like a sea of humanity pouring past. There's a  
woman with a badge, standing at the entrance to  
the cafeteria, ANDREA, a recent SW graduate .  
Both are wearing collared blue Tshirts with the  
center's name on it.

DAMIEN steps up and puts his hand out to WILLY.  
WILLY seamlessly produces 2 generic smokes from  
his breast pocket and puts them in Damien's hand.  
Damien barely acknowledges, quickly signs a  
clipboard and zips out of shot to get some  
coffee. ANDREA pipes up.

ANDREA

That's against the rules.  
Don't let Mary see you.

WILLY

Ya... Rules. Like these guys  
need rules right now. Keeps  
him calm for an hour or so.

ANDREA

Then what?

WILLY

I give him a couple more.  
He's crank. What's a couple  
of smokes. If I don't, he  
starts taking swings at  
staff.

ANDREA

Didn't he use to fight  
professionally?

WILLY

Exactly... what's a couple of

smokes.

ANDREA

So I should throw out my textbooks and just buy a bag of contraband cigarettes.

WILLY

Pretty much. I'm the only guy he talks to. I've seen him cry. He's got a daughter he can never see.

ANDREA

That's amazing progress.

WILLY

Progress? He takes crank because of the brain damage he got fighting. He's never getting better. Some of these guys are broken, kid.

ANDREA

I refuse to believe that... there's hope for everyone.

WILLY

I used to think that. Contraband smokes are only 5\$ for a hundred and I sleep better.

An obviously disturbed woman steps up to reception and stares at WILLY. She's carrying bundles of loose clothes and underwear, her hair is scattered in odd pigtails and her makeup is nightmarish. She takes 2 steps back and drops her pants, no underwear, looking straight at WILLY. She is in a manic, schizoid episode, WILLY understands this.

WILLY

Hey Molly... nice to see you too. There's something different about you today... Have you lost weight? Is it your hair?

WILLY puts a couple of smokes on the counter,  
MOLLY grabs them, pulls up her pants. She hisses  
at ANDREA and takes off.

ANDREA (blanches, averts  
her eyes)  
Oh my God! What is wrong with  
her? What did I do?

WILLY  
You're a sexual rival,  
competition for goods and  
services.. out there. What's  
wrong with her? Everything.  
Schizophrenia.. compounded by  
a head injury, car accident.  
She thinks she's bartering  
for the smokes, like on the  
street. I just give them to  
her. Broken.

ANDREA  
Jesus Christ!

WILLY  
You won't see her in a  
textbook either, kiddo.

Folks are signing up for laundry on a clipboard.  
There's a new guy, fresh on the street, OMAR,  
brown and pretty clean looking, young. He asks a  
question after signing up.

OMAR  
Do you guys have fabric  
softener?

WILLY  
Uh... no. You're new.

OMAR  
Does it show? Shit. Lost my  
job 2 months ago and got  
tossed from my apartment last  
week. I'm fucking homeless!  
I'M fucking homeless!!



WILLY  
What's your name?

OMAR  
Omar.

WILLY  
You like to drink, Omar?

OMAR  
I'm not an alcoholic. I'm a  
partier. No one believes me.

WILLY  
Well..there's about 80 long  
term transition rooms  
available right now in the  
city if you don't  
drink...sober houses, 3  
squares, nice places. Andrea  
over here can set you up  
today if you can keep a lid  
on the alcohol, not get too  
drunk, for a few months.  
They'll even send you to  
rehab if you ask... free.

OMAR  
You sound like my wife. Look  
bud, I can quit any time I  
want (!)

WILLY  
Course you can. We don't have  
any fabric softener, friend.  
Here's a Tide pack for  
laundry. Coffee's hot, help  
yourself.

OMAR gets a chastened look, grabs the Tide pack  
and walks off.

ANDREA  
He looks so young.

WILLY

It's his first week. That won't last if he can't get indoors.

ANDREA

Maybe he just needs a friend, someone to open up to.. poor guy.

WILLY

You gonna save him? Don't go all Florence Nightingale on me kid and try to fuck him back to health. A couple of trainees try that every year and lose their cerfitications. Stay away from the clients, got it?

ANDREA

I wasn't thinking that at all...even though he is cute and everything. I know the rules.

WILLY

Good.

WILLY picks up the laundry clipboard and reads it.

WILLY

Damien's first up on laundry. Take this.  
(he pulls out another smoke and holds it out to Andrea)

Think you can handle getting him over here?

ANDREA

Look... I'm not totally naive. I know not everything's in the textbooks. Willing to learn.

Lead the way, Obiwan.

ANDREA stares intently at the smoke, caves and grabs it, heads out to get Damien.

WILLY  
There's my girl.

INT. OF THE SHELTER - CAFETERIA.

Line up at the steam tables, guys are a bit calmer now that they are warm and inside. There's staff posted on each side to keep the peace... they look like bouncers. We see MOLLY off to the side, having issues getting coffee at the machine, amidst all her auditory hallucinations. She freaks out and drops the carton of cream all over the floor. Guy next to her flips out.

CLIENT #1  
You crazy bitch!! Now what the fuck am I gonna put in my coffee?!! Somebody clock this bitch !!

A seasoned staff member moves over and takes MOLLY by the arm, grabs her half done coffee and moves her gingerly off toward the tables. One of the big staff guys on the line, FREDDO, pipes up

FREDDO  
Cool it, Normy. Everything's cool... we got milk. Keep moving, buddy ... now!

NORMY  
Fuckin' city gestapo.. I'm just talkin' friend! Look where you are... who you're with. It's the street, friend... it don't mean nothing.

FREDDO  
You wanna get banned again..?  
Keep moving.

NORMY

So I die in the cold for  
talkin' shit... now that's  
fraternity for all, brother.

NORMY cools it instantly and just uses the milk,  
stirs his coffee.

INT. Manager's office, windowed, facing into the  
cafeteria. A large, matronly woman is sitting at  
the desk, going over paperwork for the day. She's  
a brilliant, compassionate professional and about  
38 years old and the smartest person in the  
building. She's keep the whole mad circus going  
and everyone depends on her. Her name is Cassie.  
A staff member pokes his head in.

STAFF #1

Molly's having a bad day...  
off her meds.

CASSIE

OK. The nurse practioner's  
coming in today..we'll get a  
pill count. Oh... just got an  
email...the mayor's popping  
by with some major donors and  
a few photographer's later so  
everyone on their best... OK?

STAFF #1

So I should just tell  
everyone to stop being crazy  
or drunk while he's here?

CASSIE

I was talking about the  
staff... p's and q's. But it  
would be nice if he didn't  
get assaulted or barfed on.  
It's fiscal year end and he's

looking to cut the fat. You  
want your contract renewed?  
My contract's on the line,  
too, trust me.

STAFF #1  
Just tell me what to say and  
who's ass to kiss.

CASSIE  
You can start with mine. Grab  
me a tea. No sugar. Is Molly  
with you?

STAFF #1  
She's right here.

CASSIE  
Send her in.

STAFF #1 waves to someone off shot next to the  
door and MOLLY appears, sheepishly, like she's in  
trouble, some tears.

CASSIE turns in her chair and opens her big arms.

CASSIE  
What's the matter, sweetie?  
Everything'S OK...  
everything's ok.

MOLLY (sobs)  
The voices are so mean  
today... so mean...

She trundles over to CASSIE who takes her up in a  
big warm hug.

CASSIE  
I know baby, I know...  
there's my girl. We're gonna  
make it better, don't you  
worry.... everything's OK.

MOLLY opens up and there's big sobs and shaking.

MOLLY

So mean...

The Nurse Practitioner, ROB, arrives with a medical kit at the door...looks in. CASSIE sort of waves him off and says...

CASSIE

Gonna need a minute, Rob.  
Grab a coffee..thanks.

MOLLY lets out a big sob and CASSIE hugs her just that much more.

CASSIE

I know baby, I know...  
there's my girl.

THE END.