

THANKS FOR THE HANDS

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INT. JAILHOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

COUNCILLOR REEVE (40) a well groomed individual in an expensive suit, strides along a corridor.

A pretty female DEPUTY (25) walks beside him, a rifle slung over her shoulder. Over her left jacket pocket is a law keeper's badge.

They pass a series of cramped, bare prison cells.

Sullen, hostile faces watch them through iron bars.

Councillor Reeve holds a digital pad in one hand. The fingers of the other dance over the screen.

As they approach the end of the corridor a WILD EYED MAN screams at them then smashes his head against the bars.

The councillor shakes his head.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

I believe I've seen enough deputy.

The woman chews her lip, watching him closely.

The councillor comes to a halt.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

Conditions here are barbaric,  
completely unacceptable.

He types the word "barbaric" and "unacceptable" at the end of what looks like an official report.

The Deputy peers down at the electronic document.

DEPUTY

But councillor, you got to realize,  
things is different out in the Martian  
badlands. Life's real tough.

The councillor arches an eyebrow, turning to her.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

Indeed, especially for those subjected  
to your...

He glances back along the rows of cells.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)  
...frontier justice, I believe the  
term is.

He taps the send key. The report floods into the virtual ether.

A tough, weather beaten man in faded leathers and a blaster  
holstered at each hip swaggers towards them. This is SHERIFF CADE  
(50). Like the Deputy he wears a badge of office on his left breast.

SHERIFF CADE  
Reeve!

The councillor looks the other man up and down.

COUNCILLOR REEVE  
Councillor Reeve. How can I help you  
Sheriff Cade?

The lawman runs a hand over several days stubble.

SHERIFF CADE  
You been making a real nuisance of  
yourself the past few days, asking a  
lot of fool questions, snooping where  
you ain't got no cause.

He levels a finger. It stops less than an inch from the councillor's  
chest.

SHERIFF CADE (CONT'D)  
I don't care if you are some big shot  
from the capital.

The finger touches the doctor's chest.

SHERIFF CADE (CONT'D)  
Time you gave me some answers. Why are  
you here?

The councillor pincers the sheriff's digit between thumb and  
forefinger, moving it aside.

COUNCILLOR REEVE  
It's quite simple, to asses you, that  
is you and your law keepers. I've just  
finished my report as a matter of fact.

He hands the pad to the other man. The sheriff mumbles over the lines.

His eyes widen.

SHERIFF CADE  
Son of a bitch!

He slams the pad against the wall, smashing it to pieces.

SHERIFF CADE (CONT'D)  
Sorry councillor. Just clumsy I guess.

He hands the broken device back.

SHERIFF CADE (CONT'D)  
Reckon you're going to have to hand write that report.

The councillor remains unperturbed.

COUNCILLOR REEVE  
I already sent it.

Sheriff Cade leans in eyeball to eyeball.

SHERIFF CADE  
Well then, guess there ain't no reason for you to be here anymore is there? My deputy will show you out.

COUNCILLOR REEVE  
You should know sheriff that I'm here at your governor's request.

SHERIFF CADE  
The governor?

COUNCILLOR REEVE  
You see, he has plans for this little wild west town of yours, for the entire state for that matter.

The sheriff looks at his deputy.

The woman shrugs.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

Full membership of the Council of  
Allied Martian States.

He smiles.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)  
To qualify however you must first carry  
out sweeping social reforms. I'm here  
to begin that process.

SHERIFF CADE  
(Sarcastic) 'Cause we're so backward?

COUNCILLOR REEVE  
Indeed.

The smile drops away.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)  
The first priority is to ensure you  
implement the Council's code of human  
rights.

SHERIFF CADE  
Good folk got rights councillor, bad  
folks get punished.

COUNCILLOR REEVE  
But what about understanding the  
offenders Sheriff Cade, helping them  
reform their unsociable behaviors? The  
Council believes that rehabilitation  
should be a main priority, at least in  
a civilised society.

SHERIFF CADE  
Biggest pile of horsecrap I ever heard.  
The bad asses and crazies that end up  
here get what's coming to them, plain  
and simple.

COUNCILLOR REEVE  
The Council would disagree.

A PORTER wheels an upright stretcher towards them. A  
semi-conscious PRISONER, his head slumped forward, is strapped  
to it.

The Prisoner has bloodied, bandaged stumps where his hands should be.

Councillor Reeve stops them with an outstretched palm.

He looks at the sheriff.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

Tell me, did this poor individual get what was coming to him?

The sheriff nods.

SHERIFF CADE

Yep, believe me the punishment fitted the crime.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

What did he do, steal a loaf of bread, pick someone's pocket? Did you even attempt to treat him for such proclivities? Of course not.

He snorts.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

You're dismissed.

SHERIFF CADE

I got places to be anyway.

He turns to go.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

You misunderstand. I'm dismissing you from your post.

The sheriff sneers.

SHERIFF CADE

Reckon you're overstepping your authority there councillor.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

I think not. The governor's given me full authority to make any changes I deem necessary to qualify for Alliance membership. I plan to establish a new regime here, one that respects human

rights and focuses on rehabilitation  
rather than punishment. You may leave.

The sheriff sneers.

He looks from the councillor to the Prisoner.

SHERIFF CADE

Good luck with your new friend.

He strides away.

The Deputy looks on wide eyed, shaking her head.

The councillor turns to her.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

There's something you wish to say?

DEPUTY

You're wrong councillor. Sheriff  
Cade's a good man and we law keepers  
keep honest folk safe.

She rips her badge loose and throws it at the man's feet. Then  
turns on her heels and leaves.

The councillor turns to the Porter.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

Do you have medical facilities here?

The Porter nods.

PORTER

There's a saw bones next door.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

Would he be able to operate on this man?

The Porter scratches his head.

DEPUTY

Well, ain't sure. Doc likes the sauce  
and round about now he's usually  
sleeping one off somewhere.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

I see.

He folds his arms.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)  
No matter. Before I was a councillor  
I trained as a surgeon. But I haven't  
operated for some years (a beat) no  
matter.

He indicates the Prisoner.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)  
Prep this man for surgery immediately.  
You will assist.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING THEATER - DAY

Councillor Reeve pulls his medical mask away.

He looks down at the Prisoner.

COUNCILLOR REEVE  
How do you feel?

The Prisoner's eyes flicker open.

He looks up groggily.

PRISONER  
Lousy.

COUNCILLOR REEVE  
The effects of the anaesthetic will  
wear off soon.

He looks at the monitor.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)  
All vital signs look normal.

He taps his chin.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)  
No aberrant cognitive functions.  
Testosterone at normal levels.

Councillor Reeve steps forward and starts to undo the straps.



PORTER

No!

The councillor turns to him.

PORTER (CONT'D)

He ain't safe.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

I just told you all signs are normal.  
If there was any physical threat from  
this man it would show up in the  
testosterone levels.

He undoes the straps.

The Porter gasps and takes a couple of steps back.

PORTER

Councillor!

Councillor Reeve scowls at him.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

Oh, get out you foolish man.

The Porter's more than happy to comply, hurrying out the door.

The councillor turns his attention back to his patient.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

Let's sit you up shall we?

The Prisoner groans.

The councillor takes him by the arm and helps him up.

The Prisoner throws his legs over the side of the bed.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

Look down.

The Prisoner frowns.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

Please.

The man does as instructed.

His eyes widen.

A smile creeps across his face as he stares at his new machine hands.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

Try to move them.

The Prisoner stares intently at his metal appendages. The fingers move, one by one.

Then he makes a fist.

PRISONER

Peachy.

He looks at the councillor.

PRISONER (CONT'D)

Real peachy.

The councillor smiles.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

This represents the first step in your rehabilitation.

The Prisoner nods.

PRISONER

You gave me my hands back.

His eyes are growing moist.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

Not quite as dextrous as your own ones were I'm afraid, but very strong and durable.

The Prisoner flexes his machine hands again. A smile creeps across his face.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

Now you can begin to heal. These new hands of yours represent merely physical wounds.

The Prisoner continues to stare at his hands.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

We now have to work on the trauma of your mutilation and the behavior that brought you here in the first place.

He sits beside the Prisoner.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

Tell me, what was your crime if we term it as such? I promise you, I am not here to judge.

The Prisoner shrugs.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

Well, I always thought of myself as a good man, mostly anyway, never drank, told lies or gambled. Lived a clean life really. My folks were old school Christians.

COUNCILLOR REEVE (CONT'D)

I see.

PRISONER

But I got this problem.

He frowns.

PRISONER (CONT'D)

Something I ain't got no control over.

He looks at the councillor.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

Please, go on.

PRISONER

My pa, he had a fancy name for it. A compulsion, he called it.

COUNCILLOR REEVE

And what is the nature of this compulsion?

The Prisoner stretches out a metal hand.

He grabs the councillor by the neck. Cold, steel fingers tighten around the other man's flesh.

Councillor Reeve's eyes bulge. His face swells and reddens.

PRISONER  
I strangle folk.

The councillor struggles, arms flailing wildly.

PRISONER (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

The metal fingers dig deeper.

There's a breaking sound.

The councillor's arms fall limp at his side. His tongue hangs over his teeth.

The Prisoner lets the lifeless body go. The corpse falls to one side.

The Prisoner sighs.

PRISONER (CONT'D)  
Real sorry.

He strips the white coat of the dead man and throws it on.

PRISONER (CONT'D)  
But thanks for the hands.

He stands up and moves towards the exit. He opens the door, peers left and right then slips out.

THE END