

THANKS FOR THE HANDS

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CORRIDOR - LIT

DR WRIGHT (Late 40's), a stern, humourless figure draped in green medical robes, halts outside a jail cell door, arms held imperiously behind his back.

Beside him is NURSE YACE (30), a fawning, jittery woman. She carries what looks like a beer cooler with her.

NURSE YACE

Are you sure we can do this, Dr Wright? I mean the sheriff told you this man was dangerous.

A sneer ripples across the man's lip.

DR WRIGHT

The 'Sheriff'...

He says the word like it tastes bad.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)

...is little better than the rest of the rabble here. As Earth's medical inspector I am not subject to his authority.

He arches an eyebrow.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)

These tin pot Martian colonies need to appreciate that we're trying to civilise them.

NURSE YACE

Yes doctor.

DR WRIGHT

The evidence against this man is purely hearsay. The fellow was involved in an altercation and they call it attempted murder.

NURSE YACE

Yes doctor.

DR WRIGHT

And punishments often far outweigh the crime in places such as this. One fellow at Olympus Mons had his legs broken for jaywalking.

He shakes his head.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
Atrocious.

NURSE SHAW
Yes doctor, atro -

The man turns an intense gaze on his companion.

NURSE SHAW (CONT'D)
(Squeaking the words)
-tious.

DR WRIGHT
But amputation!

He gives a snort of indignation.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
Positively barbaric.

The nurse nods vigorously.

The doctor regards the door. There's a roman numeral, "X" on the front.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
Let's take a look at the fellow,
shall we? See what we can do for
him.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - LIT

Dr Wright pulls his medical mask away.

He looks down at PRISONER X, a non-descript man somewhere in his mid 30's. He's strapped to an iron frame, military style bed.

Bloodied bandages wrap around his wrists and hands.
Discoloured fingers with blackened nails poke through.

DR WRIGHT
How do you feel?

The Prisoner's eyes flicker open.

He looks up groggily.

PRISONER X
Lousy.

DR WRIGHT
The effects of the anaesthetic will
wear off soon.

He steps forward and starts to undo the straps.

NURSE YACE
Doctor, is that wise?

DR WRIGHT
Goodness me, nurse. You're as prejudiced as the sheriff. This man is more a victim than anything else.

The woman's mouth opens.

NURSE YACE
Yes d....

She cannot finish the sentence.

DR WRIGHT
Wait outside.

The nurse scampers out the door.

Wright undoes the straps

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
Now, let's sit you up shall we?

The Prisoner groans, lifting himself up with the doctor's help.

He throws his legs over the side of the bed.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
What they did to you was inhuman. Taking away a man's hands. It's unbelievable.

Prisoner X frowns.

PRISONER
Yeah.

DR WRIGHT
My job is to prevent such acts of brutality and where possible, rectify them. Look down if you please.

The man does as instructed.

We're suddenly looking, close up, at the new hands. Silvers of wires and metal strips run along what we can see of the them, mostly it's just the fingers.

Prisoner X stares at his new appendages.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
 I did the best I could. The hands
 are from a cadaver but I augmented
 the flesh with a fine exo-skeletal
 frame and internal circuits.

The fingers move, one by one.

Then he makes a fist.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
 This represents the first step in
 your rehabilitation. You
 understand?

Prisoner X nods.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
 Not quite as dextrous as your own
 ones were, but far stronger and
 very durable.

The Prisoner continues to stare downwards.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
 We now have to work on the trauma
 of your mutilation. I'll arrange
 for counselling.

The Prisoner isn't really listening.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
 Why don't you tell me about
 yourself?

He lays a hand on the man's shoulder, shaking Prisoner X from
 a sort of reverie.

PRISONER X
 Me?

DR WRIGHT
 Yes. Were you raised here?

PRISONER X
 My father was a pastor at Valles
 Marineris.

DR WRIGHT
 And your mother?

PRISONER X
 I never knew her. She died of
 Martian flu when I was three.

The doctor nods sympathetically.

DR WRIGHT
I'm sorry to hear that.

Prisoner X seems to lapse into his own ruminations.

DR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
(Prompting)
And your childhood?

The Prisoner gives a bitter laugh.

PRISONER
Strict, I'd guess you'd call it.
Every day was a sermon on sin. My
father never got tired of lecturing
me on man's fallen, corrupt nature.

DR WRIGHT
I see.

PRISONER
But, it's alright. He helped me
find my purpose.

The doctor regards him closely.

DR WRIGHT
I don't understand.

PRISONER
See, he made me read the bible, and
only the bible, every day. One day
a page just fell open for me. It
was from the Book of Job.

His eyes lose focus, his gaze turning inwards.

PRISONER (CONT'D)
(Quoting from memory)
*"I prefer strangling and death. I
despise my life. It is a mercy it
should end.*

He frowns.

PRISONER (CONT'D)
At first I thought it meant for me,
because I was really miserable. But
then it came to me. I knew what I
was meant to do.

DR WRIGHT
(A little worried)
And what is that?

Prisoner X stretches out a hand.

Grabs the other man by the neck. Fingers tighten.

PRISONER X
To bring that mercy.

DR WRIGHT's eyes bulge. His face reddens.

He struggles, arms flailing wildly.

The metal fingers dig deeper.

PRISONER X (CONT'D)
The problem was I was never strong
enough. That's how I ended up in
here. But now...

There's a breaking sound.

Prisoner X lets the corpse fall to the ground.

PRISONER X
Well, you've given me what I
needed. Thanks doctor.

He stands up and moves towards the exit.

PRISONER X (CONT'D)
Thanks for the hands.

He opens the door.

Nurse Yace is waiting outside. She looks nervously up at
Prisoner X.

He smiles.

FADE OUT