

Fish
By
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Based on a true story

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INT. MORNING WARDENS OFFICE - - - INTRO

A fish floats serenely in an expanse of dim blue water. Music and credits play, and slowly the camera zooms out revealing that the fish is in an aquarium. As the camera zooms out further we see a large plaque on the wall above the aquarium that reads FISHKILL STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

CROSS FADE

INT. MORNING PRISON CORRIDOR - - - TO SEE THE WARDEN

SARAH - a young white woman with disheveled hair and a bruised face, wearing a yellow jump suit and handcuffs - is being escorted down a long corridor by a GUARD - a weathered white woman in her 40's - They are walking side by side. Sarah notices that there are reflective glass windows along the hallway and sees her reflection in the glass. She touches her face in disbelief.

SARAH
(VOICE OVER)
Is that even me?
(Pauses)
I *look* like a *criminal*.

She clutches her stomach and turns her gaze toward the guard.

SARAH
(VOICE OVER)
I wonder what this bitch had to eat this morning. I bet she had a fucking egg sandwich with gravy on it. With a milkshake and a whole bag of hash browns and pies. And cheese sauce to dip the hash browns in. And those little cinnamon glazed things... I would literally break this bitch's arm for a fucking cinnamon bun right now.

The guard sees Sarah staring at her and snarls as she clubs her in the leg.

GUARD
What are you looking at pop tart?!

SARAH
N-nothing.

(CONTINUED)

She stares at the ground as the guard pulls her along by the chain between her handcuffs. The guard spits tobacco into a canteen that she unsnapped from her belt.

They arrive at the warden's office. The guard opens the door and the WARDEN - a large white man in his 60's, greasy from sweat - is sitting behind a large desk. He is fidgeting with something on his desk and staring into space.

WARDEN

Come in,
(Looks at a paper on his desk)
Sarah

Sarah looks fearful as she enters his office. The guard stays in the corridor and slams the large office door shut behind her.

INT. EVENING WORKERS ANNEX - - - MEET THE GIRLS

The gate slams shut after a female inmate enters a dormitory style prison tier. As the camera tracks backward **ONE WEEK EARLIER** is displayed in the lower third. There are small cots on either side of the room. There are plastic lockers between the cots with plastic drinking cups on them. Some of the cups are decorated with circular geometric patterns. The women just returned from work detail and are settling in. All the inmates are wearing forest green canvas clothing that look like pajamas. Sarah sits down on the back cot and we see that she is much cleaner than before, her hair is still disheveled and she is without make up, but she looks healthy. MAY-MAY - a young white girl with dark brown hair and wild looking eyebrows - sits down on Sarah's cot looking excited.

MAY-MAY

You get enough yet??? Can we start it yet?

SARAH

We? I just need another glove full of sugar. Be patient.

MAY-MAY

I'm telling you yo, just use the bread!

SARAH

The yeast in bread is dead. I'm not drinking mold. I don't know who came up with that-

(CONTINUED)

MAY-MAY

Tellin you.

SARAH

Are you climbing up in this fuckin ceiling?

MAY-MAY

I just know it take forever. Get Erica to piss in it yo I bet she yeasty

SARAH

May-may I got this... Go ask Viv to twist one for us.

May-May goes over to VIV - a short black woman in her 40's - who is sitting on her bed next to ICE - a tall white woman in her 20's with a shaved head covered in tattoos - May-May makes a hand gesture by rubbing together her thumb and index finger with her hand down in front of her crotch.

ICE

Haha! She dreamin bout her ex boyfriend again. Hahahahaha

Viv laughs and heads into the bathroom. The bathroom is an open room with no door, two toilets, a shower and no stall walls. The Guards can see into the bathroom from outside of the dorm, but there is a blind spot near the front wall.

INT. EVENING ANNEX BATHROOM - - - SMOKING IN THE GIRLS ROOM

Sarah, May-May, and ERICA - a muscular black woman in her 20's - enter the bathroom where VIV stands waiting. Viv turns to Sarah.

VIV

You ready to work your magic?

SARAH

Did you get me more wire?

VIV

Erica did, she pulled the whole strip out of one of the crates today, I thought we was gonna have oranges all over the kitchen floor. They gonna notice that shit soon

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

So what you're sayin is you're
boofin a lighter for us on your
next VI.

Viv laughs.

SARAH

May-May boost me up.

Sarah puts on a pair of rubber kitchen gloves and climbs on to May-Mays shoulders. She begins to fish the end of a metal wire into the light fixture.

SARAH

OK I got the negative on now move
me over here

Sarah fishes another piece of wire into the other end of the light fixture. The light fixture appears now to have metal tentacles. She climbs down from May-Mays shoulders.

SARAH

You got the wick?

VIV

Right here.

SARAH

OK we have to be quick. Last time I
almost lit the ceiling on fire.

Sarah bangs the two wires together and the 4 women are showered with sparks. She holds out an aerosol can that has a melted nozzle. The can's spray ignites like a blow torch and Sarah quickly turns the torch to the wick - a long piece of toilet paper that has been twisted by hand and held tight with hair wax.

VIV

That Dax make a fine wick.

ERICA

And McGuyver ain't got shit on my
girl Sarah.

They all laugh.

MAY-MAY

Yeah thanks Sarah, from the bottom
of my lungs.

(CONTINUED)

VIV

Yo pass that, my lungs are on the gate. Today was my day off, and I wasn't tryin to blow the breaker and lose our TV.

MAY-MAY

Yo my day off ain't for 3 weeks. I'm tryn to smoke a joint and watch cartoons all day yo I can't wait.

ERICA

Du-duh du-duh how you gonna get a light let alone a joint.

MAY-MAY

Why don't you go pray or somethin.

VOICES

(From out in the dorm)

Mohando!

On hearing that word all the girls are alert. Out in the dorm there is the high pitched jingle of keys, followed by the loud crash of a metal gate.

May-May and Erica bolt out of the bathroom. Viv pulls her pants down and sits down on the toilet. Sarah stands in the blind spot and looks to Viv for a signal. After a silent and stressful minute, the gate is heard again, and the background lull of conversations continues. Viv stands up and pulls her pants up.

VIV

I was sittin on the wick! I thought
I was bout to be the burnin bush!

They laugh.

SARAH

Careful honey you're bunked next to that skinny Japanese girl. You better guard that smoked salmon sushi while you're sleeping!

They laugh some more.

VIV

You stupid, girl

Sarah makes a cheese face.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH
 Lets go see whats good

INT. EVENING WORKERS ANNEX - - - MENTAL HEALTH

SARAH
 Why did they come in?

ICE
 To let dis freak in

Ice points at a petite black woman in the cot that had been unoccupied earlier. She looks too young to be there. She has a child's face.

ICE
 Whats yo name freak?

The girl just ignores her. Ice rips a sheet of paper out of the notebook she had been writing in, crumples it up and tosses the paper ball at the girl, but there is no response.

Sarah goes over and sits on the girls bed.

SARAH
 I'm Sarah, whats your name
 sweetheart?

SHANTAY
 Shantay. SHHHHHHH You already told
 her too much.

SARAH
 Huh?

SHANTAY
 (Rocking back and forth)
 Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

ICE
 I told you she already been talkin
 bout fightin demons and shit. Home
 girl is 7:30 for real...

Sarah looks confused, she walks back to her cot and sits down. She pulls out a notebook and begins to draw. Erica comes over and sits down with her.

ERICA
 Here's that *Simulacra and
 Simulation* book you let me borrow,
 I just finished it. Pretty deep.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

Thanks. What's up with this girl?
(Points at Shantay)

ERICA

Oh she's probly harmless but you never know. Some people are actually crazy for real, you have no idea what they're capable of.

SARAH

(Smiles)
You mean like religious radicals?

ERICA

Oh don't even start... No I did like the way that book explains terrorism though. Like you know I'm not about innocent people dying but I also can't stand the establishment. And dude explains like, the two things feed each other, I get it.

SARAH

Pretty much.

ERICA

I'll tell you what, I wish some terrorist would come and blow a hole in the wall here.

SARAH

What kind of scab terrorist would attack a prison?

ERICA

Yo an equal opportunity suicide bomber.

SARAH

(Laughing)
Yeah I don't think he's gonna get 72 virgins here.

They laugh. Sarah sets down her drawing. The beginning sketch of a mandala. It is the same style of drawing that is on the drinking cups.

ERICA

For real though, you never thought about escapin? Your time ain't short. And I know you and your

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ERICA (cont'd)
clever little tricks, think you
could do it?

SARAH
Oh I know I could escape from this
building. But I can't escape from
this society.

ERICA
True that.

SARAH
I close my eyes a lot, and just
imagine I'm floating. I just float
there, not touching anything until
I can't even feel the weight of my
own body.

ICE
(interrupting)
I thought I heard escape and then
your mouth, it just starts spilling
this new age *bullshit*. Tell me
again how you're a 20 year old guru
(Laughs)

VOICES
(To Ice)
Shut up you pasty bitch!

Ice gets up and storms off screen. Occasional odd noises are heard.

Erica goes back to her own cot. Sarah lies down and grows tired as she watches the inmates around her coping with boredom in different ways. She closes her eyes.

INT. MORNING WORKERS ANNEX - - - ON THE RISE

It is pitch dark in the dorm except for the light from a red exit sign. There is a high pitched jingle of keys, followed by the loud crash of a metal gate.

GUARD
On the rise!

The women all groan as they robotically shuffle to get dressed and ready.

INT. MORNING KITCHEN - - - BEING SNEAKY

A GUARD - stocky, Grey hair, 50's - sits in a glass booth. There are security monitors around him, but as the camera moves inside the booth we see he is covered in sugar, eating powdered pastries, and watching the Family Feud.

Track into a storage room where we see Sarah crouched behind one of the racks. As we get closer we see she is pouring sugar into a latex glove. May-May enters the storage room, and Sarah looks extremely annoyed.

SARAH

May-May get the fuck out of here!

MAY-MAY

Chillax. The chefs all went in the Super's office.

SARAH

That's the last of the sugar. We start brewing tonight.

MAY-MAY

Niiiiice. I need to get druuuuunk.

SARAH

Yeah me too... So whats the deal with new girl, does she want in? Tell her to smuggle some juice back.

MAY-MAY

Yo I wanna smack that bitch.

SARAH

Why you say that?

MAY-MAY

I dunno she mad annoying. Home girl talk to herself. She got issues.

Sarah rolls her eyes.

We see the chefs leaving the Super's office.

SARAH

Shit here comes the chefs, here carry these cans out with me.

Sarah tosses two gallon size cans of vegetables at May-May nearly knocking her over. She picks up several cans herself and they hurry out of the storage room.

INT. EVENING ANNEX BATHROOM - - - MAKING HOOCH

Sarah is hunched over a plastic bag contraption pouring small cartons of grapefruit juice into it. May-May and Viv are holding the sides up.

SARAH

OK just needs sugar now.

She pulls out the tied latex gloves and rips them open pouring the sugar out. When all the gloves are empty, she takes the bag and ties it up tightly.

SARAH

Boost me up.

May-May kneels down and lets Sarah climb on her back. Viv hands her the bag. She is slowly working this bag with a few gallons of liquid into a gap in the ceiling no more than an inch wide.

MAY-MAY

Don't rip it!

SARAH

(Talking to herself)

Pssh. Don't rip it she says...

There, its in.

MAY-MAY

So it should be done Tuesday right?

SARAH

Wednesday.

MAY-MAY

I thought you said it goes faster in here cuz of the heat from the shower!

SARAH

That *is* faster, on another tier it would take until next Friday. Just relax will you. Here I got one twisted up already.

She lights a cigarette on the lit wick hanging in the corner. Erica enters.

ERICA

Let me get one puff quick, I have to clean up before I make Salah

(CONTINUED)

MAY-MAY

This is brewin business in here you
don't want none remember

Erica gives May-May a dirty look, Sarah passes Erica the
cigarette, she takes a puff and then leaves.

SARAH

(To May-May)

You better stop fuckin with her.

VIV

(Laughing)

She gonna jihad on you

MAY-MAY

She just jail religious, I'm not
fallin for it.

VIV

Yeah you probly right.

MAY-MAY

Yo you think those pictures are
really her kids? Those kids look
Jewish yo she looks Egyptian or
suttin. Hows that shit happen?

VIV

You know what it's like havin
babies out there?? Don't talk to me
about havin kids - you a kid!

MAY-MAY

Jeez yo! Alright I get it

SARAH

Obviously you don't.

MAY-MAY

You too?

SARAH

Come on, put that out. Survivor's
on.

INT. EVENING WORKERS ANNEX - - - THE PRAYER

Erica is praying on a small rug between her cot and
May-May's. May-May is sitting on her cot with her back to
Erica. Suddenly Erica stands up.

(CONTINUED)

ERICA

(Very angry)

Could you possibly be more disrespectful?

MAY-MAY

What the hell are you talking about?

ERICA

You just broke wind on me while I was praying!

MAY-MAY

No I didn't.

ERICA

I felt wind, across my face, that smelled like your ass!

MAY-MAY

I didn't fart. And like you could smell anything in this stale ass air anyway.

ERICA

Just apologize to me. I'm not going to be disrespected like that while I'm praying.

MAY-MAY

I didn't fart yo!

VOICES

Just say you're fuckin sorry who cares

ERICA

You're really not going to apologize?

MAY-MAY

Fuck you I didn't fart.

She turns away from Erica, and Erica lashes out throwing one punch at May-May and connecting perfectly with her cheek. May-May crumples to the ground and begins to sob, hiding her face against the floor. When she stands up, there are gasps. There is a bone broken in her face making her eye protrude. Her bulging eye is welling with blood. Another girl in the dorm screams, and there is a commotion as the girls all scramble to their beds. A loud alarm sounds twice. Everyone is in their cot except Erica, pacing. Several guards burst

(CONTINUED)

in and force Erica to the floor. Still more guards pour in and take May-May out. The last guards out close the gate. A few seconds pass in silence. An advertisement plays on the television for a male enhancement drug, and the girls all laugh nervously.

SARAH
No shake down?

ICE
Oh it's coming.

VIV
That shit was crazy.

VOICES
Why did Erica do that?

SARAH
I don't know it just sucks because her time was short. Now she's gonna get a new charge...

VIV
What about your girl just got her whole shit pushed in. Ain't May-May your friend from out in the world?

SARAH
She ain't my friend. If anything I felt sorry for her, but I'm not her friend understand. Her and like 10 of her punk friends jumped me one time after school years ago...

ICE
Hahaha and you had er here by erself and you didn't smack er in the mouf? You meek bitches kill me.

SARAH
When I first came in here the look on her face was priceless I know she recognized me, and she started with the ass kissing immediately. I couldn't bring myself to hit her because she's so ignorant it's almost like its not even her fault. Anyway what can I say. Karma.

Two guards burst in, and interrupt them.

GUARD

Shakedown bitches. Hands on the wall.

INT. MORNING KITCHEN - - - THE KETTLES

Track through center of kitchen until we see Sarah working in an area by herself. A chef enters her area, BIG DADDY - a Hispanic man in his 50's with tattoos on his neck and a gray handlebar moustache, wearing a chef's hat and apron.

BIG DADDY

Lil mama, I need you to clean the kettles again and prep 2 of them empty and 2 of them full with hot water.

SARAH

OK. I'm just finishing the floor over here.

BIG DADDY

I'm not concerned with the floor over there lil mama, prep my kettles.

SARAH

Yes sir.

BIG DADDY

Oh and come here.

Sarah approaches him. He holds up a crate lid.

BIG DADDY

Any idea why the lids to my crates keep falling apart?

SARAH

No sir.

They make eye contact and nothing is said for about 5 seconds.

BIG DADDY

OK lil mama. You let me know if you figure it out though. It's pretty mysterious.

Sarah nods in agreement.

(CONTINUED)

Big Daddy leaves and Sarah begins cleaning out the kettles, large 1000 gallon holes in the floor lined with stainless steel.

Suddenly someone jumps on Sarah's back, choking her and covering her eyes. Whoever it is they are laughing maniacally. Sarah stumbles around under the weight, and with a yell throws the attacker forward and down into the hole with a splash.

SARAH

(Her voice echoing back from
the kettle)

Shantay?! What the fuck girl? Why
did you do that??
Are you alright?!

GUARD

GET DOWN ON THE GROUND!

The guard from the booth stands on Sarah's back as he handcuffs her.

SARAH

She just jumped on me!

GUARD

I don't give a rat's ass. I saw you
throw her down in that kettle. She
could be paralyzed.

INT. AFTERNOON GANG TIER - - - THE ZOO

A guard escorts Sarah down a thin corridor in a much different looking part of the prison. This building is much older, and everything is made of thick cast iron. Sarah is wearing a paper gown, and clutching a cup and a toothbrush. The guard is carrying a transparent plastic bag full of clothes and papers.

GUARD

No room in the SHU I guess you
lucked out.

(Laughs)

Have fun in the ZOO instead.

SARAH

(Pointing to the bag,
concerned)

What's going to happen to all my
artwork?

(CONTINUED)

GUARD

You won't be needing it in there.

A buzzer sounds and the enormous iron gate slides to the side.

GUARD

You go on in 108 and I'll lock you in.

The catwalk is a thin path, maybe 3 feet wide, on the left side are cells, and on the right side are bars separating the catwalk from a common area. There is no one in the common area, but several cell doors are open along the catwalk. Sarah walks in and BENTLEY - an enormous butch black woman wearing only a bra, underwear, and a head wrap - is standing in the catwalk with arms crossed. Sarah looks at the numbers and sees 108 is just beyond her. Sarah moves to walk past her.

BENTLEY

You can't live here!

Bentley punches Sarah squarely in the chest and sends her back into a steel table. Sarah gets up, and runs past the woman into cell 108. Bentley just stands there. Without a word the gate closes to the cell.

Sarah is alone. It is quiet on the tier except the faint sound of a television in the distance. There is nothing in Sarah's cell except a steel cot with a bare plastic mattress, and a stainless steel toilet with a water fountain attached to it. Sarah tries the faucet and has to push hard to get water out. She slumps down on to the cot in her paper gown, and stares at the wall.

Hours have passed, and squeaking wheels are heard. Sarah presses her face against the bars and sees a food cart being pushed up the catwalk. She sits back down on her cot and waits patiently. The cart finally gets to her cell, and the FOOD RUNNER - a slim black woman with dreadlocks - pushes the cart past her cell without a hesitation or glance.

SARAH

HEY! Hey you forgot my tray!

The food runner ignores her.

SARAH

Hey god damn it I'm gonna starve to death in here!

(To herself)

No lunch I guess. Fuck.

She slumps back down onto her cot. She is staring at the wall again when she falls asleep.

INT. EVENING GANG TIER - - - HUNGRY

She awakens to the squeaking of the food truck wheels. She presses her face against the bars and sees that it is just approaching. The food runner is not stopping in front of her cell again and Sarah pleads with her.

SARAH

Can I live? Come onnnn! Let me get a tray!

FOOD RUNNER

(Flipping her off)

Fuck you! Starve to death bitch!

SARAH

That's mad foul! Give me my tray!

It's too late, the runner is already out of sight. Sarah looks miserable. She curls up on her bed and starts crying. After lock-in later that evening, one of the guards is doing a patrol round. Sarah gets his attention.

SARAH

Excuse me, excuse me

GUARD

What?!

The guard points her flashlight at Sarah's face, blinding her.

SARAH

They're not feeding me in here, I haven't gotten anything to eat.

GUARD

You'll have to take it up with the Warden at your hearing.

The guard walks away and continues her round.

VOICES

Snitches get stitches

Laughter

Sarah can't sleep. She lies awake in bed, clutching her stomach. She is noticing finer details about the cell she is

(CONTINUED)

in. The layers and layers of paint that make the metal of the jail itself seem to be warping and dripping. The scratched graffiti, most of it juvenile and predictable, save for one mark. A fish, expertly rendered, scratched into the ceiling with no other marks near it. Sarah notices it and stands on her bed to reach it. She traces her fingers over it. She gets down on the floor and searches until she finds a small flake of rust, no bigger than a pencil eraser. She climbs up and writes next to the fish:

Already have I been a bird,
and a bush,
and a silent fish in the sea.

INT. MORNING GANG TIER - - - STARVING

We hear the squeaking wheels again and see the food runner pushing the cart down the catwalk. As the camera pans we see Sarah pushed all the way into the front corner of her cell with her arms raised. As the food runner steps in front of Sarah's cell, Sarah grabs her by the dreadlocks and savagely smashes her head into the bars.

SARAH

GIVE ME
(SLAM!)
MY FUCKING
(SLAM!)
FOOD!
(SLAM!)

She tries to grab one of the trays from the cart, but can't reach it, and as soon as she lets go of the food runner, the runner quickly pushes the food truck away.

FOOD RUNNER

Now you DEFINITELY ain't gettin
fed!

Sarah collapses on her cot and begins to cry. She looks up and sees her cup next to the sink.

INT. AFTERNOON GANG TIER - - - THE STORM

Once more, we hear the wheels squeaking. As the food runner passes in front of Sarah's cell, Sarah splashes the runner in the face with liquid from her cup.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

You wanna give me a fuckin tray yet?! I got a cup of piss and shit for you every fuckin meal until you start feeding me.

FOOD RUNNER

Oh that was a mistake! You fucked up!

She hurries down the catwalk. Sarah is pacing around her cell for a short time when Bentley approaches with a dozen other women. They crowd the bars, reaching in. Sarah slides to the back of the cell, but there is little room between the cot and toilet.

BENTLEY

You wanna throw shit in my house? Come here you dumb little white bitch, get steppin.

Sarah just ignores them.

VOICES

HAHA! She scared shitless! Look at her!

Laughter

BENTLEY

You wanna throw shit? We can throw shit too. You a mark. A fuckin trick ass ho. Only loc'd up bitches get to live here, you can't fuckin live here.

The girls all start throwing cups of piss and shit, and used tampons at Sarah and spitting at her, one woman is even trying to whip Sarah with a sheet. Sarah slinks down and covers her eyes as her paper gown gets saturated with filth. She hides her nose from the rancid smell. After a minute Sarah looks up to see they are all gone. She looks down at herself and starts to cry again. She gets up and tries to clean herself in the water fountain.

INT. EVENING GANG TIER - - - SOAKING

Sarah is waiting for the runner with a cup. As the squeaking draws near, Bentley jumps out and grabs Sarah's arm through the bars. She manages to smash Sarah's shoulder a few times before Sarah wiggles free and retreats to the rear of the cell.

(CONTINUED)

BENTLEY

You thought I was done wit you? You got the whole tier smellin like hot otters ass. Nasty *bitch*. You gotta go.

The food runner passes by with her cart. Bentley takes the lid off a tray and scoops out some spaghetti sauce with her finger. She holds out her arm and dangles the sauce covered finger inside the cell.

BENTLEY

Whats the matter, you hungry? Come get a taste.

SARAH

FUCK YOU!

Sarah throws her cup at Bentley and misses, sending her cup way out in the common area. Bentley laughs, and then leaves. Sarah lays down on the floor. She looks wretched.

After lock-in, a guard on patrol notices the shape Sarah's cell is in.

GUARD

Well it looks like we got a little piggie in here don't we. DANIELS! Bring me the hose!

She walks away and returns with another guard and the fire hose. They are laughing while hosing out Sarah's cell occasionally hitting Sarah and knocking her over. Sarah winds up lying on the floor soaking wet. The guards leave and the only sound is the dripping water.

VOICES

It puts the lotion on it's skin or it gets the hose again.

Laughter

INT. MORNING GANG TIER - - - THE EVENT

Sarah awakens lying on the floor, still wet, her paper gown shredded. She is pale, and looks dazed. She is hearing distant yelling. She rubs her eyes, and suddenly it becomes apparent that something is going on. Everyone on the tier is screaming. She presses her head against the bars to listen.

(CONTINUED)

VOICES

It's world war 3!

They nuked New York!

The skyscrapers are falling!

Sarah brushes it off and gets a drink. Still the screaming persists, and someone yells.

VOICES

SHUT UP! I WANNA HEAR THIS!

There is a brief silence only broken by the television. Sarah can't hear much, but the words 'attack' and 'pentagon' are clearly audible. Sarah falls back on to her cot, eyes wide. She is dizzy, and listening intently for any clues as to what is going on.

VOICES

Yo maybe they will let us all out

No they would leave us all in here
to rot!

The screaming intensifies, and the breakfast cart never comes. The shouting turns into banging, and then a loud alarm sounds twice. The sound of the gate. Someone screams. A deafening bang. Sarah coughs and then blacks out.

INT. EVENING GANG TIER - - - POST APOCALYPSE

Sarah wakes up and it's already evening. She is visibly weak but makes her way to the water fountain and begins gulping water. She sits down next to the bars and listens.

VOICES

I got people down there too
(Crying)

The jumpers. I can't get that shit
out of my head.

The squeaking wheels of the food cart approach and stop. Sarah is not even paying attention, she is still sitting leaning up against the bars in a daze. A tray makes a plastic plop on the slot in her cell gate. She looks up at it in disbelief for a second without moving. The cart squeaks off. She grabs the tray, tears the lid off and starts eating out of the tray for a few seconds before realizing there is plastic silverware. She eats with the fork but her hands are shaking. She is dropping food and barely chewing it before swallowing.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

Oh my god this is the best thing
I've ever tasted. Slow down Sarah.
Enjoy this.

She finishes and puts her empty tray in the slot. She sits on the bed with a huge smile on her face. Suddenly she grabs her stomach in pain. After a second the pain subsides and she smiles again. She lays back and looks at the fish, and her inscription.

INT. NIGHT GANG TIER - - - MUSIC

Sarah is lying in bed, the television is off, and there is a quiet lull of conversation. Suddenly there is a deep bass sound like a sub woofer. Someone is banging on their cell wall like a drum. A few more drums join in. And then singing. The song is Reminisce - by Mary J. Blige. Sarah smiles.

SARAH

I haven't heard music in months.

She starts to sing.

SARAH

Let's make the time tonight while
the feeling's right...

Reminisce on the love we had

INT. MORNING GANG TIER - - - BANANA SPLIT

Sarah is pacing around her cell.

VOICES

What's for breakfast?

Bird seed!

(Laughter)

I'm so fuckin sick of farina!

VOICES

Yo white girl! That was you singin
last night?

SARAH

Yeah I sing a little

(CONTINUED)

VOICES

You got some pipes girl

SARAH

Thanks... Yo whats the Warden like?

Riotous laughter.

Sarah hears the gate to the catwalk opening, and is startled when the gate to her cell suddenly opens as well. A guard appears and throws a set of yellow coveralls at her.

GUARD

Put on your banana suit and lets go, you got your hearing.

INT. MORNING WARDENS OFFICE - - - THE WARDEN

The guard opens the door and the WARDEN - an enormous man in his 60's, greasy from sweat, wearing a suit that doesn't fit right - is sitting behind a large desk. He is fidgeting with something on his desk.

WARDEN

Come in,
(Looks at a paper on his desk)
Sarah

She looks afraid of him as she enters his office. The guard stays in the corridor and slams the large office door shut.

We see from Sarah's POV as she notices an aquarium against one wall. There is a plaque above it that says FISHKILL STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY. Her gaze turns back to the Warden as he gets up and walks over to her. We see Sarah now and the Warden puts his hand on her shoulder. She looks nervous. He just stands there, staring at her with a blank gaze. 30 silent seconds feel like eternity. Finally he gushes.

WARDEN

My sonnnnnnn!!!
(Sobbing hysterically)

SARAH

Oh no.

She just stares at him with an expression between confusion and terror.

(CONTINUED)

WARDEN

(Between sobs)

My son died... They called and said
he was identified... My son. My
Jason... Is dead.

He grabs Sarah and forces her into an awkward embrace. He is engulfing her in a hug. When we see her face it is like a deer in the headlights. He lets go and stands up straight.

SARAH

When did you find out?

WARDEN

(Wheezing)

Just this morning...

SARAH

Oh I'm so sorry. Cant you... take
the day off?

WARDEN

And do what?

SARAH

Oh... I understand.

Another uncomfortable silence.

WARDEN

So why are you here?

SARAH

I was just

WARDEN

You know what I don't even care.

The Warden walks back over to his desk. He picks up a picture frame but does not show the photo to Sarah, he just stands staring at it.

SARAH

Is that, him?

He doesn't answer, but only stares blankly. After a moment he wipes the tears from his face and turns to Sarah.

WARDEN

Go back to work in the kitchen. No
more problems.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH
Thank Thank you

WARDEN
BARB!

The guard opens the office door.

WARDEN
Take her back to the annex.

INT. AFTERNOON WORKERS ANNEX - - - THE RETURN

The gate opens and Sarah enters in her yellow coveralls carrying a short stack of new green pajamas and sheets. There is a girl she doesn't know wearing long johns and reading a magazine, but everyone else is gone, working in the kitchen. She walks in and sets her laundry down on an empty cot.

SARAH
I'm Sarah

LAQUITA
Laquita

SARAH
You care if I turn the TV on?

LAQUITA
Go ahead but it's the same damn thing on every channel.

SARAH
What happened?

LAQUITA
What you mean?

SARAH
I just heard there was some kind of attack.

LAQUITA
Some kind of attack? Oh you don't know? Some towel-headed fools hijacked a bunch of airplanes and took out skyscrapers, the motherfuckin pentagon, all kinds of shit. Shit is cray.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH
Hijacked planes? We're not at war?

LAQUITA
Oh honey turn the TV on.

Sarah turns the TV on and is glued to the screen as images from the attacks are replayed and analyzed again and again. Hours pass and the gate opens. Among others we see Viv and Ice.

SARAH
I made it back!

VIV
Sarah! and just in time for your hooch!

SARAH
Yeah! I can't believe they let me back. What happened to Shantay?

VIV
They took her out when they took you out. I think they finally figured out she needs to be on C West.

Everybody laughs.

SARAH
No shit. I'm dying for a cigarette. You got anything?

ICE
Oh we got!

VIV
Laquita came yesterday. I don't know why they didn't start her today, but I hope they keep her here, she's got a lighter!

SARAH
Sweet.

ICE
I want a glass of that toilet wine.

SARAH
I got you! lets go pull it down.

INT. EVENING ANNEX BATHROOM - - - THE REJOICE

Sarah stands in a circle with Viv, Ice, and Laquita sipping from their plastic cups. Viv and Ice's cups are adorned with Sarah's decorations. They seem to be enjoying drinking but cringe after each sip.

VIV

Damn girl you could sell this in the ghetto.

ICE

(Laughs)

They do it's called Cisco

LAQUITA

This is way stronger than Cisco. This is nice.

ICE

Its aight. If you don't mind the puke taste.

VIV

(To Sarah)

You were all about getting drunk tonight. You must have known it would be a crazy week.

SARAH

It's September 12th right? It's my 21st birthday. Cheers.

ICE

No shit

VIV

Cheers.

LAQUITA

Happy birthday girl!

ICE

(Laughing)

What a fucked up 21st birthday.

SARAH

What a fucked up week!

The girls laugh and continue drinking

FADE OUT

INT. EVENING WORKERS ANNEX - - - HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sarah is on her cot. She is just finishing her drawing, an intricate mandala. The geometric pattern jumps off the page like a hologram. She is holding it up to the light when Ice comes over and slaps it out of her hand ripping it.

ICE

Where's your terrorist girlfriend?

SARAH

What the fuck is your problem?

ICE

You a fuckin supporter. You always talkin that hodgie shit.

SARAH

Hodgie shit? Are you fuckin serious? I'm only supporting my damn self.

ICE

Yeah that's why you never get no letters or visits.

SARAH

Yo I get you drunk and your gonna be a bitch to me?

ICE

Watch your mouth cunt.

Ice presses against Sarah with her chest and gives her a mean look. Sarah stands up and gets right in her face eye to eye despite being shorter.

SARAH

You really think you're gonna press up on me?! I'm fuckin sick and tired of your shit! You ain't half as hard as you let on bitch! You would fuckin cry if I even told you the shit Ive been through in my life! But you're probably too stupid to understand. You ignorant bitch, sit the fuck down before I gouge your motherfuckin eyes out!

Ice bites her lip and looks like she wants to take a swing, but then she thinks better of it and turns around and walks back to her cot. All the girls in the dorm are staring, and Sarah starts to cry and collapses back on her cot. She gets

hit by a crumpled up ball of paper and there is laughter. She closes her eyes, and lies down.

INT. MORNING WORKERS ANNEX - - - THE REDEMPTION

The guards wake the girls up as usual, but suddenly there is a scream from the bathroom.

VOICES

She's dead! Get the guards!

Who is it?

Sarah!

One of the girls runs up to the gate and yells for the guards. Several guards come in and run to the bathroom. One of the guards comes back out and talks into her radio.

GUARD

Annex B. We have a Code Black.

VIV

Look on her cot! She left a note!

Viv hurries over and picks up the note. Laquita, Ice, and several of the other girls join her. The girls read silently to themselves. Viv holds the note up as Sarah's voice narrates

SARAH

"Dear Erica, You put the thought of escape in my mind, and for that I thank you. I realize that I have always been in chains, prisoner in a world to which I don't belong. A place of abundance and need, where eyes do not pierce and ears do not remember. Trapped in these haunted islands of flesh with irrelevant purpose. But despite the sentence a gate always lies open. One adventure always promised. At long last I will be free.

Sarah"

CROSS FADE TO SLOW MOTION FOOTAGE OF FISH FLOATING

SCORING SWELLS

FADE OUT

INT. MORNING WORKERS ANNEX - - - ON THE RISE

It is pitch dark in the dorm except for the light from a red exit sign. There is a high pitched jingle of keys, followed by the loud crash of a metal gate.

GUARD

On the rise!

The women groan louder than usual as they robotically shuffle to get dressed and ready, but things appear just as before.