

INT. HEARING ROOM - DAY

Guards push Felix into a chair in the empty courtroom. Behind a bench opposite sit THE PENCIL-PUSHERS: four officious men and women who do not look up. Too busy with paperwork.

PENCIL-PUSHER #1

Candidate number four hundred forty eight. Felix Reyes. Assault, breaking and entering at a federal facility, attempted murder of a deputized meta-human--

FELIX

Yes yes. Let's skip the formalities. I know why I've been brought here today.

PENCIL-PUSHER #1

You do?

FELIX

Statum -- Overlord's putting us away faster than you can build cells to hold us. Ergo -- you've got to parole some of us.

The pencil-pushers glance at each other nervously: nailed it.

FELIX (CONT'D)

On paper I'm a perfect candidate. Model prisoner. Bright. Capable of assimilating and becoming a contributing member of society etcetera etcetera.

Pencil-pushers examine their papers: shit, it's all there. They look up at Felix warily.

FELIX (CONT'D)

Come on. You can spend all day interviewing inmates -- who are you going to let out, some scrawny kid like me? Or someone who shoots lasers out his eyes?

They stare at him until Pencil-Pusher #2 SIGHS, writes something on a sheet. Passes it along. Each of them signs.

PENCIL-PUSHER #1

You'll be released into the custody of a sponsor to ease the transition -- Mister Schafer.

She nods toward the back corner of the room. Standing there is ROLFE SCHAFER, 66, bushy grey beard, monocle, frumpy tan suit, leaning on a cane. *Has he been there this whole time?*

PENCIL-PUSHER #3

Mister Schafer runs a pilot program for people like you. It is only on his recommendation that you'll be fully paroled.

Pencil-Pusher #1 STAMPS the form. The guards pull Felix up from his chair, uncuff him.

FELIX

A pleasure!

Felix looks Schafer over and grins: easy mark.

INT. TOWN CAR - DAY

Felix sits opposite Schafer in back of a roomy town car.

FELIX

Mister Schafer. I appreciate you've been assigned by the court, but I don't need a sponsor. So if you'll just sign my paperwork and drop me--

SCHAFER

You take me for a fool, Felix Reyes. You think I'm like those pencil-pushers in there -- a feeble mind to mould to your purposes.

FELIX

What? No, of course not, I'd never--

SCHAFER

You expect if you say just the right things, you'll be back in tights wreaking havoc any day now.

FELIX

No, I -- not at all--

SCHAFER

But I think you'll find, when it comes to my will, it is much more likely to do the bending than it is to be bent.

Schafer grabs his monocle. TURNS it back and forth. Felix follows it, ENTRANCED. He SHAKES HIS HEAD, looking away.

FELIX

Hey! What are you trying to do--?
(frown turns into smile)
--*hypnotise me?*
(giddy like a kid)
You're *him*. You're *The Hypnotist!*

SCHAFER

(beams proudly)
Indeed I am, Mr. Reyes.
(catches himself, pushes
the pride away)
More accurately: was. Once upon a
time.

FELIX

I had your mugshot on my wall as a
kid. You were a *legend*.
(disgusted)
What happened?

SCHAFER

There will be time to get
acquainted while you are in my
custody. Put out your leg.

FELIX

Put out my--

SCHAFER

(patting the seat)
Your leg, please.

Felix puts his foot up. Schafer draws an ANKLE MONITOR from
his breast pocket. SLAPS it onto Felix's leg.

SCHAFER (CONT'D)

This will monitor your every move,
every flutter of your heart.

He hits a button: the monitor shows an EKG of Felix's pulse.

SCHAFER (CONT'D)

You will live under the strictures
I dictate. Set foot anywhere you're
not supposed to be, you will find
yourself returned to your cell.
Tamper with this monitor --
returned to your cell.

Felix examines the ankle monitor.

SCHAFFER (CONT'D)

You will convince me you genuinely
wish to reform. You will diligently
work the steps.

Schafer holds out a thin, tattered book -- barely more than a pamphlet. The cover reads THE 7-STEP SCHAFFER METHOD. Felix takes the book, raising an eyebrow.

SCHAFFER (CONT'D)

Or--

FELIX

--back to my cell, yes, I got it.

Schafer smiles.

SCHAFFER

At last, you have met a man you
cannot fool.

Felix frowns, thumbing through the book.