

CMN 231 - A3- Comic Script

Title: *A Criminal Mind: Do You Hear What I Hear?*

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Page 1 – Nine Panel Spread (setting the stage, no dialogue)

Colour Palette Note: Muted, almost monotone colours dominate—grays, washed-out colours, and sometimes colour (Police Sirens). The rain shown in white strokes and shadows make the world feel neutralised, emphasising isolation and tension.

Panel 1: A dark, rainy night in a quiet city block. The focus is on a puddle on a cracked sidewalk, reflecting the faint glow of a distant streetlight. Raindrops ripple across the surface. The colours are muted—grays and faded greys with white lines—giving the panel a cold, detached atmosphere. No sound effects; just the visual weight of weather and darkness.

Panel 2: Zooming out from the puddle. The side of the Asylum is shown as a small leaf is falling.

Panel 3: A police cruiser splashes through another puddle, coming directly toward the reader in a head-on perspective. Water sprays outward. The monotone colours make the scene feel stark and tense. There are red and blue colour accents to accentuate the police sirens.

Panel 4 (second row): The police car passes an asylum sign and a puddle, lit by a flickering, dim light. It's clear where the car is headed. The “cop car” suggests urgency, carrying a dangerous or unstable individual. Muted grays dominate, reinforcing the cold, foreboding mood.

Panel 5: A man in handcuffs is escorted from the vehicle by a police officer (who is not shown in the panel) into the Asylum. His posture is tense and restrained. The back view of the man as his face is not yet revealed.

Panel 6: The head entrance police guard watches with disgust and an angry expression. The tension between authority and the restrained man is palpable. The muted palette keeps focus on body language and facial expressions rather than colour. The Cell door is shown.

Panel 7 (Third Row): Close-up of the officer opening up the door to let the prisoner in. The guard is saying hello to the officer taking the prisoner in. The prisoner's face is still not revealed. Emphasising authority and control. Shadows and rain-streaked light accentuate the monotone mood.

Panel 8:The reader is introduced to the cell: dark, bare, and cold. One small table stands against the wall. Tally marks from a previous inmate are etched into the concrete. Monotone colours—grey walls, pale light—reinforce isolation and despair.

Panel 9:The man enters the cell, tense, hunched over. The door shows all the cells behind him. The muted colours make the space feel oppressive and lifeless. He looks

Page 2 - One Splash Panel Spread (Prisoner Face Reveal)

Panel 10: The prisoner's face is revealed. The small cell feels suffocating — walls too close, silence too loud. He looks angry and is piercing into the soul of the reader. The reader is pulled into his spiraling thoughts — fragments of confusion and fear. He looks like a man haunted by memories that will not line up with reality. He does not speak, he only thinks.

PRISONER (internal thought):

How... How could I end up here? What did I do?Where are Diana and Mark?

PRISONER (internal thought):

They wouldn't leave me. Not them. Not my only friends.

Page 3 - Four Panel Spread (Flashback Intertwined with Reality)

Note: For Flashback panels the art style is going to be completely different then the present

Panel 11: The bleak gray tones dissolve into the soft glow of memory — or imagination. The setting transforms into a cozy living room from years ago. A young boy (the prisoner as a child) standing on the carpet by the doorway tries to get the attention of his mother and father, his face lit with excitement. His parents, mom at the desk and dad standing behind her, glance at the empty living space where the boy gestures a point towards the doorway, their mouths open with shock. The air is warm, but there's tension beneath it.

YOUNG BOY (brightly, pointing to empty space beside him) :

Look, Mom! This is Diana — and that's Mark!

YOUNG BOY:

They said they like my drawings!

Panel 12: Zoomed into the parents face, the extremely concerned mother's eyes darted to the father's; neither knew what to say. In the background the boy just keeps smiling, unaware of their unease.

Panel 13: As the childhood memory dissolves, the scene shifts to an outside perspective of a barred prison cell. The prisoner sits on a stark, empty bed, staring blankly at grey walls etched with tally marks. The viewpoint is from behind.

Panel 14: In his cold, dark cell, Dan slips into a comforting fantasy. He imagines himself as a teenager in a bright, colourful world of mountains and birds, sailing with Diana and Mark toward the end of a rainbow. This imagined scene appears on the right side of the panel in a memory bubble. It matches the drawing style of past-tense memories but, because it's entirely fictional, it's the only part of the comic shown in full colour.

PRISONER (muttering to himself):

They've always been with me... since the beginning

PRISONER (muttering to himself):

We used to sail across the sea, to the end of the rainbow together

Page 4 - Six Panel Spread (Insanity)

Panel 15: CAPTION (*top of panel*): *Two months later...* A dim corridor stretches outside the prisoner's cell. The prisoner's hands come into view as the guard pauses, certain he's heard something. Cautiously, he begins to approach.

GUARD

Huh?

Panel 16: The guard looks into the dark jail cell through the bars, with a stoic face with curiosity and anger.

Panel 17 : The prisoner's face emerges from the shadows: sunken eyes, a man possessed, hollowed and broken by isolation, staring with a terrifying mix of desperation and rage.

Visual Note: This panel should communicate the prisoner's psychological collapse — desperation, feral tension, a man no longer grounded in reality.

Panel 18: CAPTION (*top of panel*): THE NEXT DAY — A NEW VISITOR IN THE CELL.

Writer's note: The caption is in all caps to emphasize that this moment does not literally occur in real time. The capitalization distinguishes it clearly for the reader. Writer's Note: Rockwood Asylum is typically very strict—almost never does another prisoner enter someone else's cell (spoiler alert: that remains true). For context, this is similar to other asylums in Canada and the USA. However, for the purposes of this story, there is another prisoner who enters the cell.

The guard returns to the cell, still angry and visibly shaken from the night before. He unlocks the steel door cautiously, then shoves a skinny inmate inside. The prisoner already in the cell—slumped over with his back turned—does not react to the newcomer's arrival.

Here's your new home!

GUARD

Panel 19 The prisoner (who finally reveals his name) turns around, staring at the newcomer with a hollow expression. The skinny inmate just stares at Dan— unmoving — for an uncomfortably long three seconds, not saying a word.

My Name's Dan! What's yours?

PRISONER (DAN):

Panel 20: Then the skinny prisoner's face contorts; he bursts into sudden, chaotic laughter. Close up of skinny inmate continues laughing hysterically, head thrown back. Letters in red ink to display pure evil.

SKINNY PRISONER:

HA-HA-HA-HA!

Page 5 - Six Panel Spread (Insanity)

Panel 21: CAPTION (*top of panel*): *One month later.* From behind, we see Dan — noticeably thinner now, looking much more like the skinny prisoner. He's frantic and terrified, gripping the cell door with both fists. Dan desperately begs the guard to let him out. The skinny prisoner isn't fully visible, but his laughter echoes from inside the cell.

PRISONER (DAN):

Jesus, this guy... Please! Let me out of here — it's too much! I can't— I can't stay here!

SKINNY PRISONER :

HEHAHA!

Panel 22: The guard stationed near Dan's cell grows irritated by the commotion.

Panel 23: The guard approaches the cell door and notices Dan hunched forward in his cell.

Panel 24: The guard approaches the cell door and grabs the bars. He then stares directly at Dan. His eyes are red and beaming with anger and evilness.

GUARD

You know I can't let you out... You have to serve your time, get better. You are *insane.. insane!!*

Panel 25: Dan grabs the guard in panic and stress. In the background, the skinny prisoner—though not shown in this panel—begins to laugh. Dan's voice, louder than it has ever been, shifts from simmering anger to a raw, agonized scream, pleading for a guard to let him out. The guard stands still, yelling, neither pushing him away nor embracing him.

PRISONER (DAN):

I want that door open.
I want to hear the click!

SKINNY PRISONER :

HE-HA-HA—!

GUARD

Get off of me!

Panel 26: A close-up of Dan's face, looking very different than before. Fear and impatience are written across it. He is now pleading with the guard to take action.

PRISONER (DAN):

I want out. I am trapped — I am scared

Please do something for once...

Page 6- Seven Panel Spread (The Conclusion...)

Panel 27: CAPTION (top of panel): *A full month passes—nothing changes. Dan's sanity cracks as the skinny prisoner laughs nonstop.* Off-panel, a guard in the corridor shouts a loud remark. The panel zooms in on Prisoner Dan, laughing uncontrollably.

NIGHT SHIFT GUARD

Hey! Keep it down in there!!

SKINNY PRISONER :

HE HA—!

Panel 28: The night shift guard, drained from standing in the doorway and enduring the laughter, finally steps into Dan's cell. Dan is shown in the corner of the panel.

NIGHT SHIFT GUARD :

What the hell is so funny?
For two months all I've heard from this cell is
laughter.

PRISONER (DAN):

It's not me...
It's the skinny inmate.
He doesn't talk — he just... laughs.
Please make it stop...

Panel 29: The nightshift guard steps forward, voice grim. (Front angle.) Writer's note: This panel mentions an electric chair, which does not exist in the Canadian justice system. Though the story is set in Ontario, this detail is fictional for narrative purposes.

NIGHTSHIFT GUARD :

Dan... you've been here alone. All these years alone in the dark—cold concrete, no mercy.

And tonight? Tonight you're being escorted to your final seat: the electric chair.

Panel 30: Dan looks up sharply — then a disturbing smile spreads across his face. The thin prisoner's face appears on his soul, showing they have always been the same. The prisoner has always been inside him. Schizophrenic and fractured by multiple personalities, Dan desperately needs help. Then—

DAN (LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY):

HA—HA—HA—HA...!

Panel 31: Exterior — Night. (Calling back to the first panel of the comic). A desolate city block under heavy rain. A puddle on cracked pavement reflects a dim, flickering streetlight. Ripples distort the reflection — the world feels distant, cold, disconnected. Muted grays, silver streaks of rain, thin white highlights. This time the laughter is shown.

DAN (LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY):

HA—HA—HA...!

Panel 32: Full black panel (no dialogue) - meant for reader interpretation

Panel 33: The End (Red lettering to match the title)

Afterword

When I set out to create *A Criminal Mind: Do You Hear What I Hear?*, my goal was to explore the complex realities of mental health within prison systems. At first, Dan—the prisoner the reader meets—seems ordinary, speaking and acting in ways that appear “normal.” Yet, as the story unfolds, it becomes clear that Dan experiences schizophrenia and maintains active imaginary friends, Diana and Mark. This shift invites readers to question their assumptions about what “normal” behaviour looks like, particularly within the highly structured and isolating environment of incarceration.

The setting of the comic, Rockwood Asylum in Kingston, Ontario—established in 1859 and closed in 2000—serves as a historical lens, but the issues it highlights remain painfully current (Care, 2021). Mental health care in both Canadian and U.S. prison systems is often inadequate. Facilities that still operate, such as specialized psychiatric units, frequently focus on managing symptoms rather than addressing the root social, structural, and psychological causes of distress (Care, 2021). The treatment of prisoners with mental health challenges, and of individuals with mental illness in general, can be deeply dehumanizing.

A common question readers have after finishing the comic—or even just hearing about it—is why Dan ended up in the asylum in the first place. Ultimately, that detail is not central to the story. Throughout the comic, it becomes clear that Dan wasn’t necessarily in the *wrong* place, but rather in a situation shaped by circumstances beyond a single, simple explanation.

I chose to leave that aspect open to interpretation. Dan’s admission could stem from a variety of reasons, and given his unstable mental state, it is possible that all of those reasons coexist at once. His backstory is not meant to be pinned down to one definitive cause; instead, it reflects the complex, often messy nature of mental health and how people can find themselves in places without a clean, linear narrative behind it. By keeping this ambiguous, readers are invited to bring their own perspectives, assumptions, and experiences to the story—making Dan’s situation feel more universal and open-ended.

One of the most striking scenes in the comic depicts Dan standing guard, confronting an authority figure who remains impassive and unfeeling. The visual cues—subtle hints of colour, from the police badges—emphasize a division between “us” and “them,” the institutional authority versus the individual subject to its control. These images reflect larger systemic issues:

how mental illness is often medicalized in the criminal legal system, how criminality is pathologized as an individual deficiency, and how social determinants of health are minimized or ignored (Care, 2021).

The comic also touches on broader patterns in how the criminal legal system treats vulnerability. Mental health needs are frequently conflated with notions of “risk”. By highlighting Dan’s experiences, the story asks readers to consider how punishment, mental health care, and social context intersect—and how often they fail the people most in need.

Ultimately, *A Criminal Mind: Do You Hear What I Hear?* is not just a story about one individual. It is a reflection on systemic failure, the human cost of neglecting mental health, and the urgent need to rethink how we approach care, responsibility, and rehabilitation in correctional settings. I hope readers come away with both a deeper understanding for those living with mental illness in prisons and a critical awareness of the societal structures that shape these experiences.

References

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