



Sweatbox is a 12-minute short film about 3 women who have been transported in a prison van from court to prison. Nina, Rachel and Steph share their stories as they sit outside HMP Bronzefield waiting to be let out, to be processed and to start their sentences.

Stream the full film for free on [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Content Warnings

Strong language, substance abuse and withdrawal, self-harm, pregnancy, claustrophobia, family separation.

Age Guidance: 15+

Helplines and Support

Agenda

Agenda is a charity for women and girls at risk of abuse, poverty, poor mental health, addiction, homelessness and contact with the criminal justice system. They offer support and help women and girls get the protection they need.

weareagenda.org

0203 883 7792

Birth Companions

Birth Companions offers practical and emotional support to women before, during and after their baby's birth in prisons across England and in the community in London.

birthcompanions.org.uk

020 7117 2824

Narcotics Anonymous

Narcotics Anonymous is a society of men and women for whom drugs has become a major problem.

ukna.org

0300 999 1212

Samaritans

Samaritans provides emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide.

samaritans.org

08457 90 90 90

Turning Point

Turning Point supports individuals with a learning disability and complex needs. It offers a wide range of health and wellbeing services and works across mental health, learning disability, substance misuse, primary care, the criminal justice system and employment.

turning-point.co.uk

Unlock

Unlock provides a voice and support for people who are facing stigma and obstacles because of their criminal record.

unlock.org.uk

Women in Prison

Women in Prison supports women affected by the criminal justice system and campaigns to end the harm caused to women, their families and our communities by imprisonment.

womeninprison.org.uk

020 7359 6674

Synopsis

Sweatbox is set in a prison van.

The action takes place in the three cells of the prison van each containing a woman: Nina, Rachel and Steph. The camera abruptly cuts between them, and you can sometimes hear them speaking to each other through the cell walls.

The film starts with the sound of the van stopping. It cuts to Nina who is sat in the prison van; she looks bored and is playing with her nails. You can hear Steph in the other cell asking if they've arrived and when they can get out.

Nina explains that they are sat outside HMP Bronzefield and that she expects them to be there for a while.

Rachel is visibly distressed, she is hyperventilating and Steph is banging on the doors to be let out. Steph shouts that she "needs a piss."

Nina tells a story about her religious aunt who used to live next to the prison.

Steph shouts that they aren't animals and need to be let out. She tells a story about her friend whose dad used to be a butcher near HMP Holloway and how they used to throw guts at the prison vans coming in.

You can hear Nina talking about how people turn to religion or "crack" when they're in prison and how neither of them have been much use to her. She starts to sing a song called "I'm Enough".

Rachel is still distressed, she is rocking back and forth and breathing heavily. She is calling out that she needs help and asks if anyone can hear her because she thinks she's having a panic attack.

Steph is starting to get more agitated and is shouting that she needs to be let out. She visibly needs to go to the toilet. Steph talks about how you need to learn how to cope and not draw attention to yourself in prison.

Rachel starts talking about her son, who is 3. Steph tells her not to talk about her kids. Rachel explains that her sentence was a surprise, and her son is expecting her to pick him up from nursery. She shouts that she can't breathe.

Nina bangs on the door and tells her to stand up and turn around in circles to help with the panic. She says that she was sick in the end and starts laughing loudly. She talks about her first time she was in a prison van, when she was in withdrawal from drugs.

Steph is getting more agitated about needing a piss. Steph spots the guards having lunch outside the van and shouts to them.

Rachel asks the others what prison is like. Steph jokes that it's like Butlins.

The women discuss the length of their sentences: 6 months, 18 months, and 4 years.

Nina is starting to pick her self-harm scars from her forearms, and she is getting hotter, visibly feeling the effects of her withdrawal. You can hear Steph talking about how your sentence is based on how the judge feels that day.

They talk about what Rachel should tell her son. Steph says her dad used to tell her he was working on a cruise. Nina explains that her kids are older now so they can handle it and encourages them to be honest.

They talk about how the guards are flirting and Nina observes that her ex used to laugh like that right before he had one of his episodes.

Rachel shouts that she's going to faint. Nina responds that she shouldn't worry as there's no room to fall and hurt herself. She laughs and starts singing again. Rachel cries that she wants her baby.

Steph reveals that she's pregnant and is going to be having the baby in prison. She tells Nina to "shut the fuck up with your fucking singing." Nina responds that she should "shut the fuck up yourself" and tries to intimidate her.

Steph talks about how she's afraid of giving birth and Nina narrates her withdrawal from drugs.

There is a crescendo of all of them repeating what they've said throughout the film. The music rises. Nina counts to keep herself calm. The scene flashes as though they are blinking. Steph says she "can't hold it in" and urinates in the cell.

The sound of the doors unlocking is heard and natural light floods in. The prison guard apologises for their wait and unlocks each of them in turn. When she gets to Steph she looks into the cell and sarcastically says "oh lovely."

Steph looks at the other women.

The scene goes to black.