

THE PANDIA PROJECT

Written by

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COMMERCIAL - INT. BROOKMEYER SYNERGY LABORATORY - DAY

MAXINE NOBEL (mid-40s), a short woman with wide-set eyes in a white lab coat, stands behind BUBBLING BEAKERS.

She steps in front to address the camera.

MAXINE

It all starts at Brookmeyer, your partners at Pandia. We're working to build a better you.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

GRANDMOTHER sits on the couch with a puzzled look, crowded by stacks of old newspapers and boxes.

MAXINE (V.O.)

We've all witnessed or known about scenes of loved ones struggling with Frederick's Alzheimer's.

Grandmother clicks a remote, and a SMALL DRONE encircles her.

She shoos it away and clicks another button.

A HOLOGRAM OF A LION appears, and she cries in genuine panic.

INT. BROOKMEYER SYNERGY LABORATORY - DAY

Maxine has her arm around the GRANDDAUGHTER.

MAXINE

At Pandia, we want to bring your loved ones clarity of thought and quality family time.

Granddaughter smiles, and Maxine pats her on the head.

EXT. FIELD OF WILDFLOWERS - DAY

Granddaughter races Grandmother in a field of wildflowers. They hug after the old woman wins.

The Brookmeyer Synergy/Pandia logo expands: a tree grows out of a heart, and a lemon-yellow sun rises from behind.

END COMMERCIAL

CROSS DISSOLVE:

EXT. PANDIA ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Dead birds lay near Pandia's military-grade wall.

Signs say, "Beware Electrified Wall," "Pandia: Where Mental Fitness is a Way of Life," and "in association with Brookmeyer Synergy: Working to Build a Better You."

PUSH INTO:

EXT./INT. PANDIA - HOSPITAL - NEIL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A normal-looking hospital amid adobe buildings.

Through a space in the metal cage encasing a window...

UNCLE NEIL (mid-50s), a short man with spritely eyes that have lost much of their light, holds a CELL PHONE up.

A METAL PANEL dangles below the window.

INT. DAVENPORTS' HOUSE - ABNER'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

In a hotel-like room, ABNER DAVENPORT (early 20s) prepares for bed and sees Uncle Neil's name on his CELL PHONE.

He sighs, declines the call, and climbs into bed.

MOMENTS LATER

Abner bolts upright in bed and screams.

GEORGE DAVENPORT (late 40s) bursts in and flips on the light.

GEORGE
That's two nights in a row.

ABNER
Sorry for waking you up!

George sighs and takes a few steps forward.

GEORGE
It's not that--I just worry about you.

George himself looks like hell.

He sees how Abner keeps looking at...

An ABSTRACT WATERCOLOR PAINTING of a woman hung by the door.

The vivid colors and wavy lines make it difficult to make out who it is, but the author's signature is clear: "Carrie."

George sits on the edge of Abner's bed.

He gazes at the painting and almost says something but stops and changes tact.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Still seeing that girl?

ABNER
Isabel keeps me in line.

George nods.

GEORGE
I'm glad you haven't quit that school.

ABNER
But...

GEORGE
You still haven't picked a major, and as happy as I am to see you on the occasional weekend trip, I wonder if you're focused on your studies.

ABNER
I've got time to decide.

GEORGE
At your age, I'd already enlisted and proposed to your mother.

ABNER
I like to consider all my options so I don't make the wrong choice. Like, what if I get stuck behind a desk working for a boss who yells at me for eating his lasagna in the staff refrigerator?

George gives a comical, questioning look.

ABNER (CONT'D)
Or work with someone who steals all my ideas? Or steals my girlfriend? Or eats our boss's lasagna and blames me?

George shakes his head--this is too much!

GEORGE

Life's risky--for all of us! You can't hide from the responsibility of making decisions--even though there are landmines we can step on.

George brushes hair from Abner's eyes.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You don't even like lasagna. It's your uncle you're worried about.

ABNER

All right!

George nods.

GEORGE

We both need to see him.

EXT. PANDIA ENTRANCE - DAY

SUPER - NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, PANDIA

The Brookmeyer Synergy/Pandia logo is prominent.

Seen through a blue energy field, at a table, SECURITY GUARD #1 stares at his monitor.

A visitor passes through the energy curtain.

SCANNER VOICE

Detect traces of fecal coliform and enteric pathogens on epidermis of palmar surface, suggesting sub-optimal hygiene practice.

Distracted and moody, Abner waits in line with his father.

ABNER

Translation: he hasn't washed his hands in a while.

GEORGE

Don't act like I dragged you here.

ABNER

That makes me feel better.

They shake their heads at one another.

Through the field of blue, Abner watches Security Guard #1 spray VISITOR #1 with a fine mist from a hose.

ABNER (CONT'D)

This place is serious about security.

GEORGE

And germs. You should be glad for your uncle. My buddy Randy pulled a lot of strings to get Neil in here.

VISITOR #2 passes through.

SCANNER VOICE

Subject in the early stage of a flu virus. Stand still.

An ultraviolet wave flashes, and Visitor #2 walks on through.

Abner and George are next in line.

SECURITY GUARD #1

Step through, visitor.

Abner steps through, and the scanner's voice is silent.

George follows him.

SCANNER VOICE

Subject has 10% chance of getting Frederick's Alzheimer's. See a specialist at the hospital.

Abner studies his father's expression.

GEORGE

10%'s not bad.

ABNER

While we're here, you should get it checked out.

GEORGE

I'm fine. 90%'s a good number.

Abner shakes his head as they walk farther into the facility.

Abner looks around and sees the place is laid out like a small village, with adobe houses the primary architecture.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

This place used to be a Native American museum.

The ARTIFICIAL SOUNDS of BIRDS surround them.
Above, an energy field lights up when dust blows onto it.
Mini satellite dishes line the wall surrounding the facility.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Neil seems to be getting better.

ABNER
Is he still asking why you keep
turning down job promotions?

GEORGE
Stargazer's mad at me for not
pursuing his dream. They keep
wanting me to be a space pilot for
a bunch of Moon tourists.

ABNER
Why you won't do it?

GEORGE
I've got people on Earth who need
me more.

Abner rolls his eyes.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Excuse me?

ABNER
You're hanging on to your
commercial airline pilot's license
by a thread.

George's face has turned red in anger.

GEORGE
I only take Mood-180 to keep the
edge off--in my free time.

A GUIDE (30s), a woman in a beige pantsuit, beckons Abner and
George to follow her.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I don't have a problem with it.

ABNER
Not according to Randy. You and I
know it's because of Mom.

GEORGE
She's been gone for four years.

ABNER

It seems like she just stepped out
for a trip to the beauty parlor.

George sighs and puts his hands on Abner's shoulders.

GEORGE

That's why you stopped visiting
your uncle before he was
transferred here.

ABNER

He'd always launch into a story
about how Carrie said this or
Carrie did that--like she's still
with us. He used to help me deal
with that, but now...

George nods.

GEORGE

I remember how he got you that
telescope.

FLASHBACK - EXT. COLORADO HILLSIDE - NIGHT

SUPER: FOUR YEARS AGO...

Abner stands beside Uncle Neil (early 50s), gesturing for him
to look through the TELESCOPE.

Abner squints, and the distant, fuzzy points of light become
more sharply defined, and he gasps at the rings of Saturn.

He steps away from the telescope and smiles at his uncle.

NEIL

It's beautiful, isn't it?

Abner frowns.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Are you thinking about Carrie
again?

ABNER

You're suggesting I shouldn't?

NEIL

No, of course not. The tricky thing
about memories is they come to us
unbidden--especially the sad ones.

ABNER

But I don't want to forget her.

Neil stoops to Abner's level, and the night sky shines behind him as if to give him a halo.

NEIL

You know where you can find your mother? Just look up there, and you'll see her in the heavens-- always.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PANDIA GROUNDS - DAY

Abner blinks, coming out of his reverie.

George gives Abner an impatient nod toward the GUIDE.

GUIDE

Welcome to Pandia where mental fitness is a way of life.

ABNER

You're not a robot, are you?

GEORGE

Abner!

GUIDE

I am not programmed to respond to such inquiries.

Abner looks to George.

GUIDE (CONT'D)

Just a joke. Let me show you around. We'll look at the four phases of patient development, which we've patterned after a butterfly's maturation.

The guide takes them to a section of adobe buildings marked by the symbol, BUTTERFLY EGGS ON A LEAF.

INT. PANDIA EGG STAGE TREATMENT CENTER - DAY

The guide walks them over to the central building of this section that has the sign, "Egg Stage Treatment Center."

GUIDE

The egg stage is for our newest arrivals who must relearn language.

FOUR PATIENTS sit at desks and respond to the TEACHER as she points to letters on the virtual chalkboard that blossom into animals and objects that represent the letter.

PATIENT #1 spouts nonsense: "A is for that's dumb I didn't sign up for this shit. Aboob, abutthole, acandynipple."

The others become agitated as TWO SECURITY GUARDS grab Patient #1 and stick him in a chair in the corner.

A NURSE forces a PILL down his throat, and electrodes are placed on his skull. His foot kicks out non-stop.

GUIDE (CONT'D)

Sorry you had to see that.

ABNER

Are they hurting him? What're the electrodes for?

GUIDE

The electrodes stimulate the Synderesis so it works faster and is more effective.

Patient #1's foot stops kicking.

He rejoins the group as Abner and George follow the guide.

EXT./INT. LARVA STAGE TREATMENT CENTER - DAY

The guide leads them to the next building. On the sign, a CATERPILLAR CRAWLS ON A LEAF.

They file into the building.

GUIDE

The larva stage is for those who are ready to be reminded of who they are.

SIX PATIENTS sit in recliners against the back wall.

On each table to their right is a MEMORY PLAYER: lamp-like with several arms that extend in different directions.

Patients' skull caps are attached to their Memory Player.

ABNER

Do those Memory Players have all their memories?

GUIDE

The most significant ones. There's not much to observe here because, like the larva stage, patients are still as they feed off, in this case, their memories.

The six patients appear blissful.

GUIDE (CONT'D)

Your uncle is in the Pupa Stage, which is the farthest anyone has progressed at this point.

GEORGE

What's the final stage?

GUIDE

The patient is a butterfly, flapping their wings as they head into the bright blue sky--ready to rejoin their communities.

ABNER

Uncle Neil has progressed really fast.

(off her nod)

When will we get to see him?

GUIDE

I believe he's with the next cluster.

EXT./INT. PUPA STAGE TREATMENT CENTER - DAY

A CHRYSALIS IS SUSPENDED FROM A TREE BRANCH on the door sign.

Inside, FIVE PATIENTS sit off to the side.

NEIL (57) is one of them. He spots Abner and waves.

ABNER

Is that...?

GEORGE

He looks 10 years younger.

GUIDE

We're so proud of him. Now, they're doing show-and-tell where their talent is shown as having manifested multifold due to the treatment.

TEACHER #2 stands before a VIRTUAL CHALKBOARD, on the opposite side of which is ELIJAH, a youngish-looking man with baby smooth skin but wild-staring eyes.

ELIJAH

I've just designed a multilingual robot with a frontal lobe that controls judgment just like humans and with a programmable personality.

The virtual chalkboard is covered in MATHEMATICAL EQUATIONS and ROBOTIC DESIGNS.

TEACHER

Could you explain some of these designs, Elijah?

Elijah peers into Teacher #2's eyes and grabs his shoulders.

ELIJAH

I'd have to somehow take you inside my system--my brain.

TEACHER

Elijah, you're hurting me.

Elijah holds Teacher #2 even tighter and draws him closer.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Elijah, please!

The guide rushes Abner and George out of the room.

EXT. PUPA STAGE TREATMENT CENTER - DAY

The guide edges Abner and George toward the entrance.

ABNER

What was that?

GUIDE

Unfortunately, setbacks happen.

GEORGE

You mean this sort of thing has happened before?

GUIDE

I wanted to spare you and give the medical professionals room to address the situation.

ABNER

You were hiding something from us.

Security Guard #1's at the blue curtain energy field.

GUIDE

Can you see that our visitors are safely removed from our campus?

SECURITY GUARD #1

For your protection and that of our patients, I need you to exit.

INT. PUPA STAGE TREATMENT CENTER - DAY

The Nurse directs the Five Patients, including Neil, outside.

SECURITY GUARD #2 enters from the back and approaches the scene where Elijah still holds Teacher #2 who trembles.

Elijah pulls Teacher #2 closer and bites off his nose. BLOOD SQUIRTS like a GEYSER as Teacher #2 screams.

INT. PANDIA - REGGIE'S OFFICE - DAY

It's a sterile office with a silver and synthetic leather design. There's a uniform quality meant to intimidate.

At his desk, REGGIE FLINT (early 50s), a large African American, analyzes Maxine sitting before him.

REGGIE'S POV: A digital display of the surroundings, complete with biometric readings of Maxine.

She shifts about and looks anywhere but in his robotic eyes.

MAXINE

You're worried about my resolve after what just happened to that teacher.

REGGIE

The teacher is being reeducated-- kind of ironic. He'll only have a fleeting memory, like a recurring nightmare. That was a close call, though, with the visitors.

MAXINE

The boy looked shaken up. His uncle's in here, and we'll have to be on the lookout when he returns.

REGGIE

Indeed. I don't have to tell you someone is watching me and questioning my resolve.

His robotic eyes whirl as the pupils spin about like they have a mind of their own.

EXT./INT. BELLWETHER - DAVENPORTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

A working man's brick house: a throwback in this modern age.

KITCHEN - NIGHT

George and Abner eat their sandwiches at the table and stare at each other.

Abner fakes a sneeze.

ABNER

I need an allergy pill.

BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Abner pulls every bottle from the medicine cabinet.

He stops and turns to see George in the doorway.

GEORGE

Son, I told you I've got Mood-180 under control.

They stare at each other for a tense moment.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I'm doing it for you and Neil.

ABNER

So, how're you going to get Uncle Neil out of there?

GEORGE

Whoah, who said I was doing that?

ABNER

Don't tell me after what we saw you're--

GEORGE

What I saw was a patient having a setback.

Abner moves to the doorway, but George blocks him.

ABNER

I'm going to my room.

George steps aside, and Abner slips past him.

GEORGE

Are you going to finish your food?

ABNER (O.S.)

Not hungry.

A look of vulnerability flits across George's face.

ABNER'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lying on his bed, Abner calls Randy.

ABNER

It's me--Abner.

RANDY (V.O.)

Is everything okay?

ABNER

We visited Uncle Neil at Pandia.

RANDY (V.O.)

It sounds like he's not doing so well.

ABNER

Uncle Neil--he's, actually, doing really well.

RANDY (V.O.)

That's great news.

ABNER

But a patient attacked a teacher while we were there. They rushed us out before we could see much or ask questions.

A sigh issues from Randy's end.

RANDY (V.O.)

I'd hoped the whispers about that place were wrong.

ABNER

What whispers?

RANDY (V.O.)

Let's just say they came from reliable sources who now have me questioning getting your uncle in there.

Abner lies against the headboard and stares in despondence.

RANDY (V.O.)

Listen, I don't mean to set off alarm bells or start any fires...

George appears in Abner's doorway with a grim look.

ABNER

You mean set off or start up my dad.

RANDY (V.O.)

He's standing there now, isn't he?

ABNER

You know him too well.

Abner ends the call and turns to sit on the edge of his bed.

George motions Abner to scoot and sits beside him.

GEORGE

What you need to keep in mind is your uncle has a serious condition that's not easy to treat. Those people are--

ABNER

They kicked us out before we could see anything. Your friend, Randy, has even had second thoughts about getting Uncle Neil in there.

GEORGE

Randy's a great guy--my friend--and I owe him my life. He covered my butt in the Iran War, but you should know he suffers from PTSD.

ABNER

For getting a kid blown up there. I do listen to you sometimes.

GEORGE

I'm telling you, the people at Pandia are doing what's best for him.

ABNER

We should go back there.

GEORGE

You've got school now. Maybe around Thanksgiving, we can schedule something. They've got a picnic.

ABNER

You're always talking about these missions you had with Randy...

GEORGE

You're not getting any ideas, are you?

ABNER

I wish I could get in without them knowing I'm there.

GEORGE

Break in? They have all that security for a reason.

ABNER

To keep the truth out.

GEORGE

Keep your nose in the books, son.

George pats Abner on the back and shuffles out.

Abner comes close to the painting done by his mother and peers at it from different angles.

ABNER

What're you trying to tell me, Mom?

He turns off the lights and stands there for a moment.

Still in his clothes, he ducks under the covers of his bed and falls asleep.

NIGHTMARE INT. BROOKMEYER SYNERGY LABORATORY - NIGHT

The BROOKMEYER/PANDIA LOGO: a tree grows out of a heart, and behind the branches is a lemon-yellow sun.

The tree morphs into a DISEASED BRAIN with TINY PEOPLE climbing its branches.

Maxine steps in front of the logo.

MAXINE

We're working for a better
tomorrow. We'll make a better you.

She peers straight ahead, as if at Abner.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

If you want a better tomorrow,
you'll turn around and never come
back.

END NIGHTMARE

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON - DAY TO NIGHT

TIME-LAPSE:

-- Rainier Vista Park's open green stretch with a row of trees on either side.

-- Drumheller Fountain.

-- Red Brick Buildings.

-- Suzzallo Library.

INT. SUZZALLO LIBRARY - MAIN DESK - NIGHT

With stealthy steps, Abner approaches the counter where PAULINE (60s) sorts BOOKS into PILES.

He tries to get her attention as he taps his hand against his side, his body angled as if ready to leave.

She shifts her body when she sees him: her owl-shaped face bears down on him.

PAULINE
What're you looking for, young man?

ABNER
Ex... Excuse me?

She gives him a wry, mysterious smile.

PAULINE
Most students in this library are
looking for something.

ABNER
Um, I was wondering... That is, I'm
trying to find articles about
the...
(whispers)
Pandia Project.

She reacts in alarm at this.

Abner looks like he's been caught red-handed.

PAULINE
I'll see what I can find.

Her guarded look leaves him uncertain about all of this.

READING ROOM

It's a huge room with a vaulted ceiling and oak bookcases
topped by carvings of plants native to Washington.

Abner's at a table by himself, drowning in BOOKS and
PHOTOCOPIES from microfiche of newspaper articles.

Pauline watches him from afar with an air of suspicion.

In ONE PHOTOCOPY, Maxine (30s) stands before the Brookmeyer
Synergy building with a look of pride.

The headline: "Ambitious Laboratory Fires Up Bunsen Burners."

Pauline approaches Abner, looking all around in caution.

His panic has reached the boiling point.

PAULINE
My sister was in there.

He sighs, nods, and points to the picture of Maxine.

ABNER

I've seen her somewhere else.

PAULINE

The commercial for Pandia?

ABNER

Since it began airing, I've been having nightmares with her in it. But I've also seen her someplace I can't put my finger on.

She pats his shoulder and lays a STACK OF PHOTOCOPIES in front of him.

He eyes a COPY OF PANDIA'S LAYOUT.

She touches his arm.

PAULINE

Just find my sister. We'd become estranged over the typical stupid stuff--politics.

ABNER

I know what that's like.

PAULINE

They claimed Patricia died and that her wish was to be cremated. But she was a deeply spiritual person who believed her body was a sacred vessel from birth to death.

He glances at the super-sensitive information before him, revealing the history of the place that's not in brochures.

ABNER

This is a big help.

She smiles and leaves him alone.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON CAFETERIA - DAY

Thanksgiving decorations cover the walls. A turkey by the salad bar says, "Gobble up the time with friends and family!"

At a table, Abner stares at the turkey omelet on his plate. He gazes at the empty chair across from him.

He sighs and puts his phone to his ear.

NEIL (V.O.)

Ab, it's me. I have to tell someone. You saw it in your last visit. Pandia isn't a safe and sane retirement community, and it's not a program for treating Frederick's Alzheimer's. The drug... What it does is...

A gasp follows the scraping and thumping of something, a body perhaps, on metal steps.

He texts his father: "ABNER: Dad, you can't ignore Uncle Neil's voicemail--not after our visit."

Abner's PHONE BUZZES. He reads a text from his father.

"GEORGE: It's sad, but that's what this disease does. Don't do anything foolish. Wait until we go to the picnic."

ISABEL (18) sits down with her turkey omelet.

Their eyes meet, but there are no smiles or gestures of welcome. She stuffs her face, forkful after forkful, as he leaves his plate untouched.

After an interminable pause, Abner clears his throat.

ABNER

You came.

She eyes a forkful of the omelet with mischievous intentions.

ABNER (CONT'D)

I just wanted to explain why--

ISABEL

You didn't sound like yourself when you unceremoniously dumped my ass? Over the phone? Go on.

ABNER

It's not that I'm leaving you. I'm leaving this place.

ISABEL

You're quitting school?

ABNER

Taking a break.

ISABEL

You're such a flake. You were listening to something before I sat down.

Some students sit close enough to be their audience.

ABNER

It's a message from my uncle. He's been in Pandia.

ISABEL

From the commercial? Working to build a better you?

ABNER

They're not as advertised.

She reaches out and touches his hand.

ISABEL

Your uncle has Frederick's Alzheimer's?

He nods, and she frowns and smacks his hand.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

You never told me. You're a jackass, you know that? Couples talk to each other.

ABNER

See? We'd just end up like your parents. I guess I keep things locked up like my father.

ISABEL

The way he never talks about your mother?

ABNER

I guess what I'm saying is I can't move forward until I clear up family stuff.

ISABEL

So, I'll go with you.

ABNER

It's not that simple. You can't just stroll in, or they'll sell you with a brochure speech.

ISABEL

You're thinking of, what, sneaking in?

She gasps.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

But you've never done anything risky in your life. You must really love your uncle and think he's in trouble.

ABNER

Right, and I don't want to drag you into this. It's, like I said, family stuff, and...

Isabel bangs her fork on the table.

ISABEL

I'm not family?

ABNER

It's not about that. We're going in different directions. I don't know what the hell I want, but you--with all your brilliant computer skills--have a bright future.

ISABEL

Careful--don't fuck with a hacker. You need me.

She has his attention.

He nods as he comes to a decision.

ABNER

We've got a long drive ahead of us.

He tries to take her hand, but she pulls it away.

He takes out his phone to show her a text: "RANDY: Don't go to Pandia--whatever you do. Rumors of patients turning into... something else... Just wait 4 me. Flying from D.C."

ABNER (CONT'D)

I should tell you about when my dad and I visited Pandia three months ago...

EXT./INT. PANDIA ENTRANCE - ABNER'S CAR - DAY

From his car, Abner surveys the formidable electrified fence.

Isabel sits beside him in black jeans and a black shirt.

ABNER

How're we getting in there?

She removes her BACKPACK and places it on her lap. Unzipping it, she takes out a LAPTOP.

Her fingers fly all over the keyboard.

She shows him her computer screen: a blueprint of Pandia with labels that identify buildings and access points, with one front and center on the screen.

ABNER (CONT'D)

The service building?

ISABEL

That's their weak point.

ABNER

Even so, I doubt they leave the door open--except for deliveries...

She tweaks his nose, and his ouch is exaggerated.

ISABEL

You don't knock on the door--not as yourself. You pretend to be a vendor--Firewall Ghosting.

ABNER

How? If they're such a black ops organization, that does commercials by the way, you can't just go directly into their system.

She punches him in the arm.

ABNER (CONT'D)

Ouch! Friends don't do that.

She gives him a questioning look.

ISABEL

Pay attention! By imitating a vendor's electronic signature, I was routed through the subroutines employed by Pandia.

(MORE)

ISABEL (CONT'D)

With an inverted key code, I took another trip as if I were the security mainframe. Going in both directions, I gained authorization to all paths in their system.

He leans in for a kiss, but she pulls away.

ABNER

Even if you get the door open, there'll be people and cameras.

ISABEL

We'll go during their lunch hour which is in about...
(glances at watch)
Ten minutes.

ABNER

How do you...? Oh, you found their schedule.

She smiles like she's proud of a toddler who gets it.

ISABEL

I'll order a reboot of their entire system, opening doors and shutting down cameras for exactly 10 seconds.

Abner's a nervous wreck.

ABNER

10 seconds? That doesn't give us much time.

ISABEL

It's enough for us to run to the uniforms room and grab our disguises.

ABNER

Who was I kidding? I'm not my father.

She looks him in the eye.

ISABEL

You've got this.

Her words wash over him...

FLASHBACK - EXT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

STUDENTS and PARENTS file into the auditorium.

Abner stands outside in his graduation cap and gown.

CARRIE (early 40s) straightens his cap and beams at him.

CARRIE

I'm so proud of my little
valedictorian.

ABNER

What if I flub it up?

CARRIE

You won't, honey. You've read your
speech so many times, I think I
could recite it.

He grins.

ABNER

Wanna go in my place?

She grows serious.

CARRIE

I think you're so smart your brain
defeats you sometimes.

He glances down, but she raises his chin.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

You've got this!

END FLASHBACK

Isabel shakes Abner's shoulder.

ABNER

I'm okay. As long as I don't think.

She smirks.

ISABEL

That's never been a problem.

INT. PANDIA - MAXINE'S OFFICE - DAY

There's a coffee table. A few feet from that is a messy desk
with BINDERS and COMPUTER PRINTOUTS.

To the left of the desk is a black lamp and a SAD-LOOKING PLANT--its purplish flowers have turned brown.

ANOTHER DEAD PLANT sits on a table behind the desk.

There's a PICTURE of two little girls on the wall behind the desk: chocolate smeared on their faces as they stand before a giant frog from some cartoon.

At her desk, Maxine's on the phone.

Frayer waits in a seat before her, regulating her breathing.

She keeps one hand behind her back. The other holds a PHOTO.

MAXINE

It'll be one, not only for the scientific periodicals, but for the history books.

Maxine slams her phone down and gives a steely-eyed stare.

FRAYER

I know you don't like being bothered...

MAXINE

Just get to it, Nurse Frayer. We're having our big reveal at the Thanksgiving picnic. Is Elijah ready to go?

Frayer holds up her hand with a missing pinky.

Maxine looks on in horror.

INT. PUPA STAGE TREATMENT CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Elijah's restrained on a table.

Maxine steps near him.

Frayer stands a safe distance behind her.

MAXINE

I thought you were the one who could unlock the puzzle.

Elijah slobbers in his eagerness to plead his case.

ELIJAH

We're surrounded by simpletons who don't understand the importance of our work!

MAXINE

We mustn't chomp others' body parts.

Maxine nods to Frayer who administers the TRANQUILIZER HYPODERMIC NEEDLE through the top of his skull.

Elijah snaps his teeth in a frenzy to Frayer's discomfort until he succumbs to stillness.

A grim Maxine turns to Frayer.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

Take him to the toxic wing.

Frayer nods and goes to the head of the table Elijah's on.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

And, Nurse Frayer? Mix a little Neuronmethacin with the pudding they serve at lunch.

FRAYER

But that could slow their progress.

MAXINE

We can't afford to have another incident--not when we're opening our doors to the public.

Frayer wheels Elijah out.

There is a beep, and she looks with dread at a notification on her watch.

EXT. PANDIA ENTRANCE - DAY

Abner and Isabel drive to the service entrance near some dumpsters. He parks twenty feet from Pandia's outer wall.

INSIDE ABNER'S CAR

ABNER

Are you sure about this? If we get caught--

ISABEL

We've got good reasons for doing this. And I did some research on this place in the Dark Labyrinth.

ABNER

So, you're saying my uncle's not delusional, and I'm not paranoid?

ISABEL

I'm saying this place has secrets the world needs to know about. Stop worrying. Are you ready?

He nods, and the two of them get out.

They edge closer to the service entrance.

Hugging the wall to the side of the entrance, she removes her laptop from her backpack.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

10 seconds.

He gulps but then gathers his nerves.

Her fingers race over the keyboard, and after clicking a series of keys, VIRTUAL SCREENS appear to the left and right.

Pandia's security loop becomes highlighted, and each main checkpoint is traced to reveal the circuit.

She urges him to edge closer to the door, gives him a look, and then presses a single key.

After a CLICK, she opens the door, and they rush inside.

INT. MAXINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Maxine stands before a WALL OF COMPUTER TERMINALS.

She stares, sober-eyed, as REGGIE'S HOLOGRAM appears.

REGGIE

Having technical difficulties again? That's embarrassing in a high-security facility.

Reggie's robotic eyes wheel about clockwise and then counterclockwise, the RED PUPILS glowing like fire.

MAXINE

It was scheduled. With such a robust and elaborate system as ours, a periodic reboot is necessary to keep the machine well-oiled.

The robotic joints in Reggie's face whir as he frowns.

REGGIE

From now on, keep me apprised of all scheduled maintenance. And anything else, for that matter, such as adding another inmate to your infamous hospital wing.

MAXINE

As you know, studying the ones who don't take well to treatment can be beneficial.

Reggie's robotic facial joints whir, quite visible and audible even over a hologram. He squints his metallic eyes.

REGGIE

Do you know what's not beneficial? If word gets out about these malformed subjects. Max, I know you think you're being compassionate, but what about the greater good?

Maxine gazes at the picture of her sister on her desk.

MAXINE

Still looking into doing a mass clinical trial?

REGGIE

If you're worried, the dosage has been adjusted, but we can't improve upon it enough without a clinical study.

MAXINE

On unwitting participants? Which might result in unsatisfactory outliers?

There's a WHIRRING sound as Reggie smiles, which is somehow worse than his grimace.

REGGIE

We're both soldiers fighting for this great country.

(MORE)

REGGIE (CONT'D)

The leadership core must remain intact and long-lasting to secure a superior America. I'll let you keep your little experimental subjects; just make sure they never see daylight.

Reggie's hologram blinks off and leaves Maxine to stare at STACKS OF PAPERS on her desk.

INT. SERVICE BUILDING - DAY

The lighting is dim, with only the emergency light strips on the ceiling and floor glowing.

Isabel and Abner stand where shipments are received.

There is a forklift in one corner.

In another are three office cubicles.

Beyond the open area are shelves stocked with various goods.

She points to a door to the right, and they run toward it.

INT. UNIFORMS DEPOT - DAY

Completely dark inside, Isabel hands Abner a FLASHLIGHT.

He turns it on, and they see various uniforms.

ISABEL

It's lunch, and they get an hour, so we might want to see if we can talk to your uncle in the cafeteria.

ABNER

Are those uniforms for the cafeteria?

On one rack are collared shirts with yellow and red stripes and brown khaki pants.

ISABEL

Grab one you think might fit you.

ABNER

You should get one. If my uncle sees me, he'll blow our cover.

She nods and finds a uniform about her size and undresses.

This gets Abner's interest and earns him a baleful glare.

ISABEL
Find your own uniform.

He browses and comes upon a rack of hospital scrubs.

ABNER
I think these might come in handy.
Call me Doctor Davenport.

He ducks behind the rack to change.

She peeks from in between uniforms on the rack.

ABNER (CONT'D)
Girls have different rules.

ISABEL
Now you're catching on.

He emerges on the rack's other side where she awaits him.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
That's a fine Halloween costume.

ABNER
We're quite a pair. So, how do we
find the cafeteria, and what should
I do?

From her backpack, she pulls out a SILVER ROUND PIECE not much bigger than a coin and HEADPHONES attached to a rectangular metal piece with dials and gages.

ISABEL
I'll plant this bug on your uncle
so we can monitor how he's treated
behind closed doors. As for you,
you'll be listening in while hidden
in the janitor's closet.

She waits for acknowledgment that never comes.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Are you getting paranoid again? My
master plan is foolproof.

ABNER
It just seems too easy.

ISABEL
Trust me, now that we have our
uniforms, we'll blend right in.

ABNER

I hope so.

He leans in for a kiss that never comes.

ABNER (CONT'D)

Right. Stay focused.

Unseen, a CAMERA'S RED LIGHT stares ominously.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

RANDY, a giant water tank of a man, sits on the couch as George brings him a CUP OF COFFEE and sits next to him.

Beside Randy, George looks tiny.

There's an awkward silence as each man eyes the other.

RANDY

So, you got a message from Abner.

GEORGE

Do you think he can get in?

RANDY

They might, out of courtesy, allow for a visit with his uncle, but they generally don't like surprise guests. I'm starting to understand why.

George shifts in his seat and can't seem to look Randy in the eye before he finally does.

GEORGE

Look, I appreciate everything you've done for me. I've always owed you a debt for how you helped me during the war--

RANDY

I got your brother into that place.

GEORGE

I just think Abner needs to understand how his uncle--

RANDY

He's sick, but what he's saying has some basis in fact. Both can be true.

GEORGE

With Abner's uncle leaving a scary-sounding message, and now with you talking to him...

Randy's hand trembles and spills coffee from his mug as he rises out of his seat.

RANDY

Yes, I've got PTSD. That doesn't make me crazy. It doesn't make me delusional.

George stands and looks down at Randy's shoes.

GEORGE

I'm listening.

RANDY

I have good intel that tells me something's not right in Pandia. Men in high places, perhaps the highest place, have kept it under wraps as best they could.

INT. PANDIA - DAY

Buildings are arranged town square-style, with row upon row of buildings around a community center.

Adobe-brick buildings imitate the Pueblo Indians' style.

Faux sounds mimic nature. Birds chirp with none to be found.

Abner and Isabel see mini grey satellite dishes arrayed in intervals atop the wall that surrounds the complex.

A SOLDIER marches toward Abner and Isabel. He wears olive green fatigues and a black helmet with a glass face shield.

His chest has padded armor with the insignia of a tree growing out of a heart and the sun in the background.

They duck behind a bush.

After a moment, he passes them and, at the end of the block, turns around and comes back.

With the soldier going the other way, they get out from behind the bush.

She points to where the cafeteria building is a little farther down in the next row of buildings.

They walk with purpose to avoid attention.

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - DAY

Abner sits on a bucket inside the small, dark closet.

Wearing headphones, he balances Isabel's spy equipment on his lap, a small pen light his only means of sight.

He winces at a HIGH-PITCHED WHIRRING.

Plates clatter, drinks are poured, and diners murmur.

FRAYER (V.O.)

I've never seen you. Who are you?

ISABEL (V.O.)

Ruth.

Abner laughs and mouths Isabel's alias.

FRAYER (V.O.)

Ruth, you look like you need something to do. Take this bowl of pudding, and make sure everyone gets two tablespoons of it.

A moment passes.

NEIL (V.O.)

I won't eat the pudding, so you can cross me off your victims' list.

ISABEL (V.O.)

But it's good for you.

MAXINE (V.O.)

Is he being difficult again? Might be due for another treatment.

Abner grimaces at what he hears, his eyes fearful.

There's polite chatter, plate-scraping, and Western-style music. Isabel whispers, asking about the pudding.

MAXINE (V.O.)

What're you doing? Go make sure the others are eating their pudding. I'll deal with this one later.

Abner grows tense and fidgets in the cramped space.

MAXINE (V.O.)

Good afternoon. Everyone is making remarkable progress.

BOISTEROUS MALE (V.O.)

The years are peeling off like dead skin. I'm ready to fly out of this place and--

Boisterous Male's voice becomes too garbled.

MAXINE (V.O.)

That's wonderful.

(to a specific person)

Make sure he gets a double serving of the pudding.

NEIL (V.O.)

He can have mine.

Abner starts to laugh out loud but puts a hand to his mouth.

MAXINE (V.O.)

We must follow the Pandia Program. We're close to announcing our major breakthrough.

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - DAY

The door cracks open. Isabel enters and squats beside Abner.

He lends one side of the headphones to her.

ABNER

She's with my uncle now, and I think--

ISABEL

He's getting his treatment.

The crisp and close sounds suggest a small room. Neil's voice is shaky as he takes short, quick breaths.

NEIL (V.O.)

I didn't want the pudding. What's wrong with that?

MAXINE (V.O.)

There's a lot more at stake than your personal taste in desserts.

NEIL (V.O.)
Not old Sparky. Please! I'm not
cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs.

Isabel takes Abner's hand.

ISABEL
We don't have to listen to this.

ABNER
No, you don't have to.

MAXINE (V.O.)
If you mess up my study, we'll
never perfect the medicine that
will help so many...

Straps scrape on something metal.

NEIL (V.O.)
I'm behind the laundry room.

Neil's voice is now muffled.

MAXINE (V.O.)
Do you have a spy?

Isabel appears sheepish as she sighs.

ISABEL
I might've whispered you're here
when I put the bug on him. What
could I do? He gave me a fresh
look. I thought he should know.

Abner frowns at Isabel. A CRUNCH is followed by a HIGH-
PITCHED TONE, and then there's nothing.

With a shocked look, he sets the headphones down on his lap.

ABNER
What do we do now?

ISABEL
I know where we can hide. The witch
was dumb enough to smash the
breadcrumb that could lead her to
us.

INT. MAXINE NOBEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Maxine trims a dead hydrangea as Frayer enters.

FRAYER
 Sorry to startle you.

Maxine gives a bemused smile, wipes off the leaves before shaking her head, and turns toward Frayer.

MAXINE
 I don't have a green thumb, but no one can sneak up on me.

Frayer can't stand still.

FRAYER
 Then you know about--

MAXINE
 I saw those college preps when they "broke" in here.

Frayer appears confused.

FRAYER
 Preps? I was going to tell you how, thanks to you--

MAXINE
 My work has always been to help those girls who need a boost to give them a fighting chance.

Frayer smiles.

FRAYER
 Like you gave me, with my condition. Before gene manipulation, I'd've bled out after Elijah's bite.

She shows how the pinky has grown back on her bitten hand.

Maxine takes Frayer's hand and pats it.

INT. PANDIA - BUILDING BASEMENT - DAY

Light streams from four windows at the top, at ground level.

Props from this place's Native American-themed days sit in stacks: TOTEM POLES, DECORATIVE POTTERY, and WICKER BASKETS.

Abner and Isabel sit beneath the windows.

She grimaces as she stares at her laptop screen.

ABNER

Just give me the bad news. It can't get any worse.

ISABEL

Oh, it is. As I collected the last batch of data, I noticed something.

She points beneath a building: a SKULL AND BONES SYMBOL. To the left is a MEDICAL STAFF.

ABNER

Is that a hospital?

She nods.

ABNER (CONT'D)

So, there's poisonous material, bio-hazard stuff, stored in the basement.

ISABEL

There's more. I hacked what was preventing me from clicking on the symbol. This is what pops up now.

She clicks it and reveals a POP-UP TEXT BOX that he reads.

ABNER

Former residents? Are they dead?

ISABEL

With all the research I've been doing about this place, I don't think that's what former means.

ABNER

What if Uncle Neil is there?

He gulps.

ABNER (CONT'D)

I should go check it out.

She squeezes his hand.

ABNER (CONT'D)

You need to stay here and monitor everything.

ISABEL

I'm not arguing with you.

He gives a hesitant nod.

She shoves EAR COMMS into his hand.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
You keep me informed, mister.

He heads toward the door but turns around.

ABNER
'Bel? Before we entered this
place...

ISABEL
You mean when you spaced out on me
for like a whole minute?

ABNER
I remembered when my mother gave me
a pep talk.

ISABEL
Looks like that helped.

He nods and rushes out.

EXT. PANDIA HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAY

Abner hides behind a shrub as a voice buzzes in his ear.

ISABEL (V.O.)
Where are you?

ABNER
I'm going dark, but don't worry.
I'll contact you when I need to.

He puts the tiny balls in his pocket and spots an ambulance.

Two EMTs take a stretcher out with an ELDERLY WOMAN strapped
down, but that doesn't keep her from trying to break free.

EMT #1
Looks like we've got a real live
wire here.

EMT #2
It's sad, you know. We're having
more and more of these cases.

The EMTs roll the stretcher into the hospital, and Abner
follows a safe distance behind but close enough to be
mistaken as part of this patient intake.

INT. PANDIA HOSPITAL - DAY

The ER reception area is a wide counter with the RECEPTION NURSE standing behind a computer monitor.

The BEEPS, HUMS, and WHOOSHES of a hospital can be heard.

Abner follows the stretcher and stays several feet away.

DOCTOR

I thought you gave her a sedative.

NURSE

I did, doctor. She's a live one.

DOCTOR

She'll need more than Maxine's pudding. A great deal of therapy's in store for you, young lady.

The Reception Nurse stares right at Abner but rubs her eyes and keeps working a crossword puzzle.

Abner tries to look casual as he stands at the end of the reception counter opposite the nurse. He grabs a FILE and pretends to examine it.

RECEPTION NURSE

Are you new here?

Abner tries to appear even more engrossed in the file.

A pair of orderlies, BOB and SANDY, stand by a laundry cart.

RECEPTION NURSE (CONT'D)

Sweetie, are you the intern they sent to help with the filing?

Abner finally looks up at her.

ABNER

Sure. I mean, yeah.

RECEPTION NURSE

Don't be nervous, honey. Tomorrow, you don't need to wear scrubs.

ABNER

Huh?

RECEPTION NURSE

You're wearing scrubs like you're going into surgery.

Abner keys in on Bob and Sandy's conversation as the Reception Nurse's voice continues in the background.

BOB
I guess I got the short straw.

SANDY
Sorry, Bob. I know I don't like to go down there where the muties are.

BOB
Remember, we don't know about them. They're creepy, and having to handle the biohazard stuff is...

SANDY
I'd be glad to help, but I've got a date with Nancy.

The Reception Nurse, Nancy, smiles and waves.

BOB
You dog, you!

Sandy comes over to the reception counter and leans on it. His conversation with Nancy is in the background.

Abner moves beside Bob.

ABNER
You need a hand? I'm an intern.

Nancy signals to Bob.

BOB
Grab the cart, and let's get going.

They get on the elevator at the end of the hallway.

Bob takes out a KEY and puts it into the button labeled "B."

Abner stares at the ceiling while Bob taps his shoulder.

BOB (CONT'D)
An intern, huh? Hey look, no one's supposed to go down here except me and Sandy. So, whatever you see and hear, you didn't see it or hear it. Got that?

Abner tries to keep his stomach from going into his throat.

ABNER
Of course.

BOB

I mean, between you and me, I don't think they should be keeping those, um, patients down here. Maxine, though, insists it's for their own good.

ABNER

What about their families?

Abner almost bites his tongue and awaits Bob's wrath.

Bob removes his key from the elevator buttons panel.

The elevator doors WHOOSH open, and Bob pushes the cart forward and gives Abner a menacing look.

BOB

You know what? I don't give a shit. As long as I get paid.

INT. HOSPITAL BASEMENT FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Abner backs away from the Taser gun that Bob now holds up.

ABNER

And, of course, Maxine pays you.

BOB

You really are a fish out of water. Have you met Reggie? Robot-faced mean son-of-a-bitch, Reggie?

Abner grows pale.

Bob backs Abner toward a vault door on the right where a sign says, "Bio Hazard Quarantine: Off Limits." The room on the left has a sign that says, "Bio Hazard Laundry Area."

Bob punches buttons on a control panel, and the vault door opens with a hiss.

BOB (CONT'D)

Stupid mutie seniors.

Bob forces Abner inside the vault area and follows him.

Abner sees several doors with windows at the top. Pressed against one: Elijah's face with wrinkles like tire treads.

Elijah's eyes are like the FILAMENTS OF LIGHTBULBS radiating heat. Spotting Abner, he grins and disappears.

BOB (CONT'D)
 Hey, assholes! Do you know you're
 never getting out of here?

A hiss of mangled consonants and vowels answers.

Bob turns to Abner with a leer.

BOB (CONT'D)
 Guess who else isn't getting out of
 here.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
 Bob Simmons, paging Bob Simmons.
 Report to the main desk
 immediately.

Bob hesitates as he considers what he's heard but leaves the vault as the iron door clangs shut.

ELIJAH (O.S.)
 Don't worry. You can open it.

Abner looks for the owner of the voice. The five doors to the left and five to the right resemble those of a sanitarium.

Three residents to his left press their flesh against their window slats, and four to the right do the same.

The scarce lighting issues a SICKLY FLUORESCENT BLUE.

When the residents talk, their tone is raw and savage, with a grating of teeth and a clicking of the tongue.

RESIDENT #1
 I of we are you are who?

A few more residents yell non-intelligible non-sequiturs that have more in common with wild animals than humans.

Unrestrained, maniacal laughter spreads from one cell to the others like falling dominos.

From his cell window, Elijah, now an ancient-looking man, stares brightly at what could be his Christmas present.

ELIJAH
 Came back, did you?

Elijah's skin appears to be flaking in places.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
 There's humanity in your eyes. The
 eyes tell everything.
 (MORE)

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

I could design a robot that could
give the illusion of having a soul.
It's all a matter of numbers, as
they say.

Abner leans closer to the slit under the window of Elijah's door. He gestures up to where the P.A. voice came from.

ABNER

How'd you do that?

ELIJAH

I climbed near the air conditioner
duct. With the use of a modified
coffee can to give it the
properties of a megaphone,
procuring the electrolytic
capacitors was a challenge, it
sounds convincing enough for a
stupid, paranoid piss pot.

Abner stares awestruck.

There's a CLICK as Elijah's door swings open.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

You may enter.

Abner enters with careful and steady footsteps.

ELIJAH'S CELL - CONTINUOUS

Elijah is short and stands on a crate. He's got an arched back and wears a simple outfit of gray scrubs.

His wizened arms and legs look like stunted growths which give him the appearance of a recently unearthed potato.

ELIJAH

My escape is forthcoming. I'm just
awaiting the right moment, and I
think the right moment just walked
into my cell.

Elijah extends his gnarled hand.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

I'm Elijah. Elijah Turner.

Elijah's skin is so leathery it gives his eyes the appearance of being sewn into their sockets.

ABNER

Are you the one I saw when I visited with my dad? But you look...?

ELIJAH

More beautiful now?

Abner gives the tree branch of a hand a tentative shake.

ABNER

I'm here to see--

ELIJAH

Your uncle who left you a troubling message on your cell phone.

ABNER

How...? How in the world do you--

ELIJAH

It turns out there's a lot you can learn from a dear, padded cell. There's also your body language which tells a tale your lips are reluctant to let pass. Plus, good old Bob has a mouth a hundred times bigger than his brain. The ratio says it all.

ABNER

What did you mean when you referred to me as the right moment?

Elijah gestures to a chair across from a small bed. Abner sits in the former while his host plops down on the latter.

ELIJAH

You've come to shake up this place.

ABNER

Forgive my asking, but what's--

ELIJAH

You're horrified by my ancient appearance. Be even more horrified knowing I'm only 40.

Abner closes his gaping mouth.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

These doctors have a precocious sense of humor.

(MORE)

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

They call what you know as Frederick's Alzheimer's, Tum Feroci Mane--which means "then ferocious morning." It certainly kicked this manufacturing engineer's assistant's ass--woke me up to theories that should've taken me decades to ascertain.

ABNER

Making a megaphone must've been child's play for you.

ELIJAH

I've got the designs up here in my noggin, that of which the world has never seen, of magnificent robots that would transform the planet.

ABNER

And the disease and/or the cure has brought you inspiration.

Elijah's mouth contorts in anger.

ELIJAH

My mind's racing so fast, it's wearing my body down in record time. Miss Bony Bitch hit the jackpot when she came across me.

ABNER

You mean Maxine Nobel?

Elijah frowns as if to say, who else?

ELIJAH

I was a young specimen with such a virulent form of the disease that she thought curing me would lead to a breakthrough. That was, it goes without saying, before my mind and body went their separate ways, and she stuck me in here to rot.

Elijah pauses to study Abner.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

Someone close to you has hurt you, or you've recently fought, maybe?

(beat)

It's your father, I believe. Yes.

(MORE)

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

Again, I can't read your thoughts,
but there are thousands, if not
millions of tells that people give
by the slightest facial
expressions. Mathematical equations
are scrawling over your face.

Elijah's smile unfurls like a pirate's sail.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

I could build an army of robots
that would blend into the sea of
humanity and take them over before
anyone would be the wiser.

Abner keeps a straight face like a keen poker player.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

I've no intention of harming you. I
could've already twisted the rug
you're on, smashed your skull with
my megaphone, and pulled your
brains out through your nostrils
with my contraband fishhook.

Elijah reveals the hook in his hand as Abner gulps.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

Why're you angry with your father?

ABNER

It's not his fault, I now realize.
He's too simple a man for such
complex times.

Elijah's eyes light up.

ELIJAH

He's a regressive form of the male
species. People like your father
need to be shown the way.

Like a flipped switch, Elijah reverts to a meditative state.

Abner backs out and keeps his eyes on Elijah the whole time.

Abner opens and shuts the vault door.

He gets in the elevator.

HOSPITAL THIRD FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Abner gets out on the third floor, grabs a laundry cart, and hunkers down to hide as he heads to the reception desk.

An alarmed Bob heads straight for him.

BOB
How'd you get out?

Abner pushes the cart into Bob.

Bob tumbles backward with a crash.

Nancy, at her reception desk, gets on the phone, but Abner yanks out the phone line.

A PAIR OF ORDERLIES see this and start to grab Abner, but he dashes past them and sprints out the entrance.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Abner emerges from the sliding doors that WHOOSH. A PINGING SOUND alerts him, and he pulls out and puts in the ear comms.

ISABEL (V.O.)
Where are you? I've been worried
sick about--

ABNER
Just outside the hospital. I can't
talk.

ISABEL (V.O.)
Just get back here.

A SIREN BLARES. Abner puts his hands up but then spots a figure crouched at the far end of the hospital--Elijah.

Elijah waves and disappears down a road.

Abner ducks behind columns and bushes as he makes his way.

EXT./INT. BUILDING BASEMENT - DAY

The door opens before Abner can knock, and he enters.

ISABEL
Are they on to you? To us?

ABNER

Looks that way. Elijah distracted them.

ISABEL

Right. Now, who's Elijah again?

EXT./INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

On top of a box, Abner peers out a window and sees...

FLASHLIGHT BEAMS dart in every direction as the shadows of legs and feet move with urgency in the darkening night.

He sits on the box.

ABNER

This place puts on a show for the families when they're allowed to come. These people dump their elderly like so much garbage.

ISABEL

Hey.

Isabel sits and squares his shoulders to look him in the eye.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

You didn't dump your uncle here. Your father didn't, either.

She puts an arm around him.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

I think what you saw at the hospital shook you to your core. Ab, I've never seen you like this.

His head is in her lap as she strokes his hair.

ABNER

Did you know I planned on bringing you home to meet my father?

She frowns.

ISABEL

Am I a mind reader? What you said out loud was we should break up.

He frowns as he sits up.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Again, not a mind reader here.

He takes a few steps toward a pile of Native American masks.

ABNER
I was just thinking of my father
and how we never talk.

ISABEL
Hmm. Could be where you get that
from. One person I never hear you
talk about is your mother.

He sits in glum silence.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
She's a wound that's never healed.

He flashes an angry look at her.

ABNER
She's not a wound. She, herself,
was wounded, I guess.

She has a look of realization.

ISABEL
She committed suicide?

As she reaches out to him, he pulls away.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. That was dumb of me.

ABNER
You just said it out loud, that's
all. And it happened on the day of
my high school graduation.

She hugs him.

ISABEL
When she gave you that pep talk.

ABNER
I gave this dumb, rambling speech
as the valedictorian about all the
great things "we" could do. A
bright future, blah, blah, blah...
(beat)
Since then, my father's never been
the same.

ISABEL

You're all your father has.

They both reflect on this, and she falls asleep, leaning against his shoulder.

LATER - DAY

The morning light streams through the windows above.

Isabel wakes and sees Abner looking through a window.

He turns to her, and it is clear he has not slept at all.

ABNER

It was crazy to think we could
break in here in the first place.

ISABEL

It was your idea, and we did it.
You did it.

He is too tired and numb to celebrate.

She takes his hand and edges him off the CRATE he is on.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

We're going to help your uncle.

ABNER

How?

ISABEL

Isn't this crazy place having a
Thanksgiving picnic? Maybe we could
leave during all the commotion.

ABNER

There must be a way to cause a
distraction.

She kisses him which leaves him pleased but puzzled.

ISABEL

You just gave me a great idea.

ABNER

Yes?

(beat)

Mind sharing it before I go nuts?

ISABEL

Patience is a virtue. You lost that
and something else a long time ago.
I was thinking of the logistics.

He leans in for another kiss, but she stands up out of reach.

With a triumphant sweep of her hand, she removes a WIRELESS
MICROPHONE from her backpack.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

This is our ticket out of Dodge.

ABNER

You're going to sing us out of
here?

ISABEL

When I turn this on next to their
speakers the feedback should buy us
some time.

Abner goes in for a kiss only to be rebuffed.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

I just made an executive decision.
No more smoochy face. Not until we
all get out of here.

EXT. PANDIA - FRONT GATE - DAY

RELATIVES stream in through security checkpoints.

A WOMAN (50s) shoves a SECURITY GUARD who gets too handsy.
His PARTNER nearby shakes his head and chuckles.

Isabel and Abner watch from 20 or so feet away behind an old
kiosk from Native American tourism days.

A sign reads, "Pueblo Trinkets," and has a stereotypical side
view of a Native American appearing to holler on the warpath.

MEN AND WOMEN IN WHITE LAB COATS stand beneath a banner that
reads, "Welcome to Pandia's Fall Picnic: Autumnal Dreams."

They have smiles pasted on with the cheapest of adhesives.

Abner looks like he has an upset stomach.

Around the DOCTORS are impressive-looking PEOPLE IN SUITS.

In front of them all is Maxine with a smug expression.

A phalanx of MEDIA stand between the security screening and the folks in lab coats and suits. Their cameras flash.

Abner strains his neck to see old-timers in potato sacks along the green tarp before the bleachers.

ABNER

These people don't waste time
putting on a show.

Abner attempts to locate his uncle and his father.

Isabel takes his index finger to point out their location.

ABNER (CONT'D)

Dad looks worried and
uncomfortable.

ISABEL

Your uncle looks lost and damaged.

As the visitors head to the bleachers, a Latin tune blares from speakers about making the most of life.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Let's get behind these officious
pricks and blend in with the crowd.

BLEACHERS

They get behind the bleachers as everyone is seated, and the potato sack race begins at the FIRING of a STARTER PISTOL.

Scattered cries of concern for the old-timers are soon hushed. These participants beam with joy and life.

Abner's astonished at the real-time disappearance of wrinkles that line a silver-haired man's face.

The SIX PARTICIPANTS, their old skin sagging, look like their youthful selves are jumping out of their elderly frames.

The racers bob and weave in their sacks, with the occasional stumble, toward the chalk finish line. WOMAN #1, with an impressive grey mane, falls and the crowd issues a gasp.

A second later, she stands, brushes dirt from her face, and gives a broad smile and a wave to the crowd's delight.

Two are the clear leaders, but the TALLER, LANKIER GENTLEMAN spurts forward enough to cross the finish line first.

The crowd erupts in cheers as the WINNER blows them kisses as he's handed a trophy. The PAPARAZZI'S cameras flash.

The CONTESTANTS head to the front row of the bleachers.

Isabel gestures she is leaving to do her part. Abner nods.

ON STAGE

A platform raises about a foot in the air as daylight fades. Maxine stands behind a PODIUM at the center.

A VIRTUAL SCREEN halfway between Maxine and the crowd lights up with a flash of blue that changes to include a combination of all the colors to form MAXINE'S GIGANTIC FACE.

Her voice seems to boom from the center of her image.

MAXINE

Today, we gather together as one
under the blessings of this nation:
a determined, innovative country
that now regularly sends tourists
to the Moon.

The hovering virtual screen now displays space shuttles that fly near the Moon's craters. The crowd applauds.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

We've invented machines that take
care of all menial chores and
robots that tend to our greatest
worries. We have mastered the
heavens and the Earth.

Images flicker of various machines doing a variety of tasks. They work in concert, scuttling along the ground to pick up dust and buzzing in the air to grab the homeowner's bags as soon as they enter the house.

The crowd applauds these great feats of humanity.

The virtual screen magnifies Maxine's wide-set eyes.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

But the human race lately faces a
nefarious adversary who seeks to
undo all our progress and in fact,
deconstruct our brains--our sharp
tools against the encroaching
darkness of ignorance in an
unforgiving natural world.

On the giant virtual screen hovering against the backdrop of an indigo sky, Maxine's snarling face gives way to the scene of a SENIOR CITIZEN stumbling around and appearing confused.

That same woman, a tall and gaunt lady with paper-thin skin, appears in the next scene that comes into focus.

She now wears a brilliant smile. The cataract haze in her eyes has cleared. Her skin has a healthier glow.

The crowd gasps in awe as Abner works to get a closer view of Uncle Neil and his father.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

But now, as you can see, with our treatment program at Pandia, residents not only have beaten back the virulent plague that would overtake their minds, they have reclaimed their youth.

Joyous applause erupts.

STAGE RIGHT

With a microphone in hand, Isabel edges her way along a wall to get beside scaffolding by the speakers.

She looks all around to see if anyone has spotted her, but everyone is riveted by what they see on the giant hovering virtual screen about twenty feet away.

The speakers are Bluetooth projectile sound cones beaming their frequency into the middle of the virtual screen.

She climbs on the metal scaffolding, clutches the microphone, and inches upward toward the speaker cones.

BEHIND THE BLEACHERS

Abner is almost twenty feet away from his uncle. His uncle's body's there, but his mind isn't.

Abner edges near his tense father. Neil whistles a tune.

Abner starts to call to them when a hand grabs him and shoves him. He tries to cry out as a GAG'S shoved down his throat.

He's pushed to the back of the crowd. A SOLDIER wearing olive green fatigues and a shiny glass face shield pushes him away from the spectacle and toward the hospital building.

A scream splits the air followed by other panicked cries.

MAXINE

(surprised and enraged)

He bit a kid? I thought we took
care of him.

Abner attempts to see the drama, but a hypodermic needle jabs into his arm as a HOOD descends over his head.

Abner's legs go limp as he is dragged toward the hospital.

STAGE RIGHT

It is chaos as Isabel descends the scaffolding and sprints toward the bleachers. She finds Abner's uncle and father.

ISABEL

Mr. Davenport, I'm a friend of your
son's.

GEORGE

A friend of...

George's eyes widen as he looks upon her in a familiar way.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You're his girlfriend.

ISABEL

Let's just say it's complicated.
Look, Mr. Davenport--

GEORGE

George. Call me George. This is
Abner's uncle, Neil. She's--

NEIL

Carrie?

Neil tilts his head and presses her hand.

George's face has turned scarlet red.

GEORGE

Neil, this isn't... Let go of this
poor girl's hand, will you?

Near them, the GRIEVING MOTHER who screamed, sobs.

GRIEVING MOTHER

My son... My poor son...

Isabel moves closer to the Grieving Mother and brings George and Neil to the bloody scene.

On the ground a few feet away, BLOOD SQUIRTS from a boy's neck. Grieving Mother faints.

A BUZZING/RATTLING ALARM sounds as the crowd becomes a stampede. Isabel loses sight of George and Neil.

Maxine's voice is overheard on the PA system.

MAXINE (V.O.)

We have to call for a lockdown.

This creates increased panic as Isabel elbows through the crowd to try to find George and Neil.

She's elbowed in the forehead, and her feet keep getting stepped on, yet she pushes onward until she finds them again.

ISABEL

You have to leave--both of you.

GEORGE

(refers to Neil)

I can't leave him. My son's here.

You said--

ISABEL

I'll find him. He's got an earpiece like this one.

She holds up the QUARTER-SIZED BUG and waits until she gets a nod of recognition from George before placing it in his hand.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

This will help us communicate.

Neil looks confused again.

NEIL

Carrie?

George's mouth is a grim line.

GEORGE

No can do. I'm going after my son.

Mass chaos continues to swirl around them.

ISABEL

Look, Mr. Davenport, there's no time. Get out of here with Neil so you can help us from the outside.

George doesn't like taking orders from a young girl.

Neil, meanwhile, looks at him with scorn.

NEIL

Why didn't you take the job flying
to the Moon?

Isabel ignores Neil and speaks directly to George.

ISABEL

They're about to lock Pandia down,
and we need someone outside to make
contact with. I've got the
blueprint for this place, so I can
find Abner.

GEORGE

I should've taken my son's warning
about this place more seriously.

ISABEL

Mr. Davenport, there's a service
exit they may not think to monitor.
Go to that building to the right.
There should be some stairs leading
to the basement where a passageway
leads to a door that exits to the
garbage dump.

George's resoluteness falters.

GEORGE

Maybe you're right. Neil has to be
taken away from here immediately.

(beat)

But we're coming back for you and
Abner. I've got a contact or two
outside this place.

Neil looks from George to Isabel several times.

NEIL

Are we going on a field trip?

George appears devastated by his brother's confusion as he
leads him away.

Across from them, Elijah stands hunched over the blood and
gore of what was once a little boy.

Elijah has bits of flesh and streaks of blood smeared all
over his face as he grins from ear to ear.

Soldiers from either side advance with their RIFLES aimed and fire simultaneously, exploding Elijah's skull.

Isabel can't locate George and Neil but then spots them heading in the direction she pointed out.

She runs the other way as fast as she possibly can.

ALARMS BLARE.

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Pandia is on lockdown. Repeat--
Pandia is on lockdown. Stay where
you are and wait to be escorted to
a safe place. Stay where you are.

Yelling and confused, upset babbling comes from every direction as folks scramble like ants on roller skates.

Isabel hides behind what had once been a souvenir stand. A few feet away, an ADDLED MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN shakes her fists.

ADDLED MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

You'd better let me out now!

Others pick up on her phrase and start to say it.

Along the perimeter of where the biting incident took place, stalk FIGURES in bulky yellow suits and black, insect-like masks with a glass face that steams up.

For a moment, one of those figures glances at Isabel from afar through a clear patch in his mask.

She runs for her life, her legs and arms pinwheeling until she makes it behind the warehouse building from before.

She crawls inside through one of the basement windows.

INT. BUILDING BASEMENT - NIGHT

It's dark except for light cast by windows up by the ceiling.

Isabel catches her breath.

She steps on a wooden box to see a ghost town out the window.

INT. HOSPITAL BASEMENT FLOOR - NIGHT

Two soldiers drag Abner to where he met Elijah.

The Variants WHOOP and HOLLER, their insane sounds building off one another's animalistic intensity--ON THE WARPATH!

Abner's tossed into a white cell. The door clanks shut.

He stands in the middle, apprehensive and uncertain.

It's a room with white walls that have strange scribblings.

Scratches run up and down the metal door.

An UNSETTLING GIGGLE bursts out.

PATRICIA (O.S.)
Bunch of loons, aren't they?

Abner wakes from his trance and walks over to a crack in the side wall where Patricia's voice came from.

PATRICIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You'll get used to them.

Abner comes closer and puts his ear to the crack.

ABNER
I'm Abner.

PATRICIA (O.S.)
I used to be honey... And sweetie
and sugar...

Abner comes to a realization.

ABNER
Your husband passed away?

She LAUGHS with guttural aggression.

PATRICIA (O.S.)
Oh, he didn't pass away. He just
forgot about me. Put me in here and
forgot or was told I croaked, which
is the most likely story, I guess.
Like some unreturned library book.

He beams with delight.

ABNER
You're Patricia!

PATRICIA (O.S.)
I haven't heard that name in a
while.

ABNER

I met your sister. She doesn't know
you're still alive.

PATRICIA (O.S.)

Is this what you call being alive?

Abner sits with his back to the wall.

NONSENSICAL BANTER continues in the background.

ABNER

What happened to this place?

There is a deep intake of breath.

PATRICIA (O.S.)

It's like waking up from a foggy
nightmare. On the other side of
that bog, I swear I can see the
moment when my toes strayed into
the darkness. I'm sorry, dear. I
used to be a poet, so I find it
easier to speak in pictures.

ABNER

I've studied poetry in college.

The complete silence makes Abner's remark seem vapid.

ABNER (CONT'D)

Anyway, please continue.

PATRICIA (O.S.)

I was composing a new poem. It was
about how the shifting clouds that
form various shapes mirror our
emotions. And as I was writing a
line along that idea, I felt a
darkness overtake my mind.

Abner turns his side to the wall.

ABNER

You're describing when you first
got sick.

A LOUD HMM is like a sudden gasp for air.

PATRICIA (O.S.)

I didn't get anything. It came from somewhere within my cranium, as if by attack from the center of my brain--a figure lying dormant within and just waiting for the right moment to reveal its hideous, dark mass.

ABNER

It's a plague spreading through our country and soon the world.

PATRICIA (O.S.)

Are you the expert now?

ABNER

My uncle has it. He's in here.

A SOFT SIGH breezes through the crack.

PATRICIA (O.S.)

Then I probably know him. What's he like? Describe him for me.

ABNER

He's short with smokey-gray eyes and silver and black hair. He's--

PATRICIA (O.S.)

He likes to whistle. Little dude sure thinks he has some moves.

He hears a SOFT CRYING SOUND. The Variants are silent.

PATRICIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I admit I developed a crush on the old midget. He was fast becoming one of the Battle Axe's favorites.

ABNER

You mean that woman, Maxine?

PATRICIA (O.S.)

Who else? What happens when a zealot meets pandemonium?

The background NONSENSICAL CHATTER responds to Patricia.

PATRICIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Remember your uncle as he was--the midget who grabbed a star and tried to wrestle it to the earth.

Abner gazes upon the metal door of his cell. The numerous scratches and dents suggest previous occupants.

He turns his ear back to the crack in the wall.

ABNER

Are you still here? Patricia?

A long minute passes, and he drifts to sleep.

MOMENTS LATER

Abner still lies asleep with his shoulder against the wall.

PATRICIA (O.S.)

I'm still here.

Abner wakes, rises, and paces in front of the crack.

ABNER

I think you should know something.

He nods his head to confirm something to himself.

ABNER (CONT'D)

I have a friend out there who--

PATRICIA (O.S.)

(sounding different)

I'm still here.

ABNER

That's good. Yeah, that's real--

PATRICIA (O.S.)

I'm the walls that surround you.

Abner cocks his head in scrutiny of her words and tone.

PATRICIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm the crack left by another. The stale, white void that's your mother.

HOOTS erupt from the Variants. Abner grows worried.

PATRICIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The sky flew off with the sun. I'm bird poop wiped off the boot of a soldier like so much scum.

The Variants go from their nonsensical shouts to a unified chant: "Hey yah, hey yah, hey yah!"

ABNER

Patricia? That's an interesting but
sad poem.

Patricia joins the Variants in their chant.

Abner leans against the wall and slides to a sitting position
on the floor. He shuts his eyes and covers his ears.

INT. PANDIA - BASEMENT - DAY

Isabel sits on the floor with her laptop. Its glow
illuminates her intense-looking face. After a few rapid
keystrokes, she puts an earpiece in her ear.

ISABEL

Mr. Davenport? Can you hear me?

She hears nothing but static. Meanwhile, the battery level on
her laptop reads, "5%."

NATIVE AMERICAN MASKS stare at her as she frantically
searches for a power outlet.

Cradling the laptop in one arm, she crawls in search of an
outlet. A scream escapes as she clamps a hand over her mouth.

She continues to feel with a blind hand until she gets a
delightful shock. She plugs her charger into the wall outlet.

INT. MAXINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Abner's in a seat to the right of a desk and near the door.
He shakes off the cobwebs and observes his new surroundings.

There's a PLATE OF FOOD on the coffee table before him.

He sees Maxine's messy desk, the dead plants, and the picture
of Maxine and her sister when they were kids.

He gets up to reach for the doorknob when there's a CLICK.

He steps back while Maxine, looking twenty-something, enters
with a COUPLE OF BEERS.

He blinks at the tiny young woman.

MAXINE

I figured you were thirsty. Hungry,
too.

She sets a beer bottle down in front of Abner, and he stares at it. After a moment, he picks it up and takes a swig.

After a mouthful of mashed potatoes, Abner peers at the angular curve of her nose and comes to a realization.

ABNER

You're that lady... Maxine? But you look--

MAXINE

Much younger?

Abner puts his fork down and stands with his arms folded.

ABNER

Just what is going on here?

Maxine coolly finishes her beer.

ABNER (CONT'D)

Why am I here now, and why're you being so nice to me?

MAXINE

Your food's getting cold, and your beer's getting warm.

He stares into space for a moment and then gives in and eats.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

Your girlfriend is good but not that good. I saw when you "sneaked" in here.

ABNER

What have you done with her? Where is she?

MAXINE

I was hoping you could tell me.

He smirks.

ABNER

She's not good--she's the best! And you'll never get her.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Atop a box, Isabel looks out of a window. She sees satellite dishes in intervals along the walls that surround Pandia.

She climbs down and starts pacing.

ISABEL

Those satellite disks redirect
signals, but there must be gaps.

Inspired, she opens her laptop and accesses Pandia's
blueprint. A few keystrokes later, she traces the energy
field patterns created by the satellite dishes.

She cross-references the energy field of the satellite dishes
with the blueprint of buildings.

A gleeful squeak escapes her lips before she stifles it when
she hears footsteps outside.

Packing her laptop up, Isabel reaches for the door when she
hears someone trying to open it and then ARGUING VOICES.

ARGUING VOICE #1

You didn't bring the keys.

ARGUING VOICE #2

I'll go in first.

ARGUING VOICE #1

You just want the credit.

There's a BANGING and SHAKING of the door as Isabel climbs on
a box and reaches for the window latch, but it won't budge.

The noises cease.

ARGUING VOICE #2

Did you hear that?

She twists the window latch and grows desperate.

She spots the biggest Native American mask.

She hops down, grabs the mask, and throws it at the window.
It hits an inch below and clatters to the ground.

A CLICK comes from the door.

Isabel scoops up the mask and hurls it again.

The window shatters.

As the door opens, she crawls through the window, but her
oversized shirt gets snagged by glass shards.

She sees GUARD #1's HEAD as she maneuvers through the window.

INT. MAXINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Maxine scratches her arms, and she's got a facial tick.

Her CELL PHONE ILLUMINATES the breast pocket of her lab coat, which causes her to frown in irritation.

He scrapes his FORK on his plate.

ABNER

What do you want from me?

He stands and paces. Maxine won't look him in the eye, and he takes the opportunity to slide the fork into his back pocket.

MAXINE

First, I'd like to apologize,
Abner...

Maxine's scratching and twitching have intensified.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

I feel bad about how you got
involved in all this, and while it
was your choice, I fully understand
why considering your concern for
your uncle. And then there's your
mother...

He receives a powerful jolt as he realizes something.

He imagines the ABSTRACT PAINTING by his mother SUPERIMPOSED on her face: a perfect match!

ABNER

My mother went to you for her
treatments!

MAXINE

I tried to help her.

ABNER

What did you do?

She can't look him in the eye.

MAXINE

We altered her genes. At the time,
we thought that was a viable
treatment option for depression.

Abner peers into her eyes to force her to look at him.

ABNER

And now, you've developed a pill--
Mood-180!

MAXINE

It has relieved the suffering of
millions.

ABNER

You've treated my mother, my uncle,
and others like them as if they're
lab rats, Fake Maxine.

She walks behind her desk. She takes the PHOTO off the wall--
the one with two little girls with chocolate faces.

MAXINE

When I look at this picture, I
sometimes feel the same, but I
assure you, I am Maxine.

EXT. BASEMENT - DAY

Isabel drops to the ground and gets behind a bush.

Guard #1 pokes his head out the basement window.

GUARD #2

Where'd she go?

GUARD #1 (O.S.)

She couldn't have gone far.

Cursing to herself, Isabel rips a piece from the bottom of
her over-large shirt and wraps it around a wound on her arm.

She winces, removes the laptop from her backpack, checks the
blueprint, and puts the laptop away.

Scurrying from bush to bush, she hears a SCUFFLE and stops.

The two guards now chase an AFRICAN-AMERICAN SENIOR.

Slobber dribbles down his blue pajama shirt. His eyes look
like shattered headlights.

Guard #1 grabs him, and he squirms out and bites him.

Guard #2, older by ten years, points his silver gun and pulls
the trigger as his younger partner howls in pain.

Guard #1 stares at the skin hanging loose from his hand.

Guard #2 speaks into a black dot on the back of his hand.

GUARD #2

Need a surgical cart immediately.
We're in front of building C4.

(to Guard #1)

With more of the seniors turning,
we shoot first and ask questions
later.

An AMBULANCE SIREN WAILS.

Two more soldiers approach. After speaking with Soldier #4,
the other soldiers head in another direction.

Isabel draws closer to an ambulance that pulls up.

She follows them on foot into the hospital.

INT. MAXINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Abner's hand is in his back pocket where he put his fork.

She sits at her desk as if leading a stockholders' meeting.

MAXINE

I took a dose of Synderesis. Triple
the dose, actually.

He blinks for what seems like forever.

ABNER

You took what you give... So you
have--

MAXINE

Synderesis isn't just a treatment
for Frederick's Alzheimer's. It was
intended as a synaptic stimulant.

He strains to grasp what he's heard.

Maxine grabs a REMOTE and aims it at the wall to the right
above where Abner had slept.

A VIRTUAL BRAIN with Frederick's Alzheimer's appears.

The plaques look like volcanic balls that shoot fire at each
other from in between tangles of brain cells.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

When our synaptic connections break
down as we age, so do our bodies.

(MORE)

MAXINE (CONT'D)

With improved synaptic connections
that don't falter...

She presses a button, and the volcanic balls cease.

The synaptic connections turn GREEN and grow in every
direction into a LUSH, BRAIN CELL FOREST.

The results are impressive and dramatic to Abner.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

What I'm saying is, the original
purpose of Synderesis is as a
Fountain of Youth.

Abner staggers a few steps back and has to sit.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

Your uncle had responded well to a
higher dose, compared to those, um,
people in the hospital basement.

He's back on his feet and looks ready to charge.

ABNER

What did you do to my uncle?

She meets the fury of his stare and tone.

MAXINE

Where is he? He's an important
subject.

ABNER

They're subjects to you?

MAXINE

These people came to me, begging to
be a part of what they knew would
be a dangerous, experimental
program.

She takes out her phone and reads a message.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

Damn! We have about three hours.

ABNER

It's only a matter of time before
they get you.

She stares as if seeing someone that Abner can't see.

The tremor in her mouth has moved to her whole head. Maxine steadies herself and sweeps her desk free of the clutter.

MAXINE

Greedy, shortsighted imbeciles!

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Isabel observes how the RECEPTIONIST focuses on her computer.

The gurney with EMTs flies down the hall to the left. On the right, the NURSE studies a chart. No one notices Isabel.

An elevator bell DINGS to the right.

She walks calmly to it when there's a tap on her shoulder that almost makes her cry out but shushes when she sees a woman's finger to her lips.

Frustrated, she gestures for her to duck into the ladies' restroom beside the elevator.

INT. MAXINE NOBEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Taking a deep breath, Maxine steadies her body. She picks up the picture of her and her sister and faces Abner.

ABNER

Who's the other girl in the picture?

MAXINE

My sister, Francine. She had progeria, a progressive genetic disorder that caused her to age rapidly. I did what I could for her, but it wasn't enough.

She grasps her chair as her body trembles.

She manages to get up by using the desk to steady herself.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

Everything I've done has been for her, but I've learned a lot since then.

She now leans against it and faces him.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

Our president wants this powerful but unstable drug exclusively for himself and those in his administration.

In one swift motion, he seizes her, pulls out the fork from his back pocket, and presses it to her neck.

ABNER

Enough of your propaganda.

Reggie bursts into the room, his ROBOTIC EYES glaring.

REGGIE

Let her go!

MAXINE

But before the president risks his life, he wants to give the drug to all the people of Bellwether in their drinking water.

REGGIE

Max, what're you doing?

MAXINE

I wanted someone to see what was going on.

REGGIE

After all we've been working toward...

ABNER

Step aside, or I'll shove this fork so far in her throat...

Abner starts to plunge the fork into her neck but can't, so he ends up pushing Maxine into Reggie's arms.

Abner reaches for the handgun in Reggie's holster, but Reggie beats him to the draw and kicks him to the ground.

INT. HOSPITAL - BATHROOM - DAY

Backed up against the far wall, Isabel makes a fist as she sizes up Frayer's intentions.

The fluorescent lights FLICKER OFF as emergency lights on the ceiling BLINK ON.

A woman rushes from a stall and darts out the door.

ISABEL

You've got a nanosecond to explain yourself.

FRAYER

I'm Pamela, and Maxine Nobel sent me to--

Isabel punches the guileless Frayer in the nose, and it gushes with blood.

Isabel moves to go around her but sees something strange.

Frayer's nose stops bleeding.

ISABEL

How for fuck's sake did you...?

The DIM EMERGENCY LIGHTS make Frayer appear otherworldly.

FRAYER

I was one of Maxine's experiments. She meant well then, and now--

ISABEL

I don't care. I have to get someone.

FRAYER

Abner.

Frayer looks at her with pity.

FRAYER (CONT'D)

The cells have been unlocked by now in the basement.

ISABEL

I'm not leaving without him.

(beat)

Look, you might not be a bleeder, but I swear to God I'll find a way to separate you from your body parts!

Frayer hands Isabel a KEY.

FRAYER

For the elevator.

Isabel brushes Frayer aside and dashes out of the bathroom.

OUTSIDE ELEVATOR

There's mayhem as everyone runs around, and just like in the bathroom, it's dim with only the emergency lights on.

The elevator doors WHOOSH open.

INSIDE ELEVATOR

Isabel inserts Frayer's key below the buttons.

Her face reveals a vulnerable moment--a look from her that hasn't been seen.

The elevator doors WHOOSH open.

OUTSIDE ELEVATOR

Isabel gathers her nerves, parks herself on the floor, and removes her laptop from her backpack.

She hears a LOUD METAL CLICK.

As she edges close to the vault-like door that swings forward, INCOHERENT SOUNDS come from the other side.

In a jolt of recognition, she swiftly moves to pull the iron door toward her, pinning her between it and the wall.

The shuffling of feet and more BABBLING ensues as a small parade of the altered seniors goes by; she peeks, ever so carefully, at them from around the door.

ABNER (O.S.)
(animated whisper)
Get inside, and close the door.

Abner stands within the vault. Isabel's eyes grow big.

ABNER (CONT'D)
Before they come back in here.

She does so as the Variants wander over to the laundry side.

She abandons all restraint and gives him a passionate kiss and a tweak of the butt.

ABNER (CONT'D)
'Bel, I met the Wicked Witch.

ISABEL
You mean that woman, Maxine?

He raises his eyebrows.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

What did that crack whore do to my baby?

He gives a grim smile.

ABNER

She's not as wicked as we thought. She actually let us in so we could see what's going on.

ISABEL

She's grown a conscience as all hell breaks loose?

The Variants make noises outside.

ABNER

Maxine told me about the big plan...

LATER

Isabel appears stunned.

ISABEL

Those poor people who drink the water will end up... Your father... Your uncle...

He grabs a PLASTIC BUCKET from one of the cells and edges closer to the vault door entrance where she stands.

ABNER

My uncle is probably already--

ISABEL

We can contact them now.

Hope returns to his eyes.

He tosses the bucket to the other side of the room. The CLATTER draws the Variants away from the elevator.

ABNER

I assume they're still inside Pandia.

ISABEL

When all hell was breaking loose, I directed your father to take your uncle through the service building. And, of course, I gave him an ear comm.

Just as he's about to spring toward the elevator, she grabs him by the collar, which rips it a little.

An OLD CODGER with bushy grey eyebrows heads their way. His gown, soiled and with slash marks, clings to his body.

When the Old Codger spots Abner, his eyes get big and bloody.

A line of spittle runs from his mouth to his nose to his pointing finger. His pace increases as he lets out a howl.

Abner stands like he's dipped his toe in a surreal world, immobile, though Isabel tugs on him from the other side.

The Variant almost bites Abner's nose when PATRICIA (70s), with an owl-shaped face and buzz haircut, hops on him.

She rides the foaming-at-the-mouth man as if he's a bull. She steadies her head and looks Abner in the eye.

PATRICIA

Go for it.

Abner grabs Isabel's hand, makes a mad dash for the elevator, and hits the button like he's a man clinging to a cliff.

The other Variants shamble toward Abner as there's a DING.

The doors part, and before Abner gets dragged in the elevator, he sees the woman still tangling with her mount.

ABNER

Thanks, Patricia.

All humanity has drained from her face, replaced by a savage state of being as she rains blows on the old man under her all while she babbles non-stop.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Abner grasps Isabel's hand.

The elevator doors WHOOSH open.

INT. PANDIA HOSPITAL THIRD FLOOR - DAY

People scramble in panic.

ABNER

I'm guessing they know the Variants
are on the loose.

ISABEL

Maxine's not reformed, after all.
She wants to clean up loose ends.

ABNER

Reggie does.

ISABEL

Who?

ABNER

I'll explain later.

She guides him down a hallway on the right. Hospital
employees rush by without a glance.

A RED LIGHT flashes as she freezes in uncertainty.

They zip past the ER, derelict except for BEEPING MACHINES.
She tugs him one way to find a soldier in their path.

RUDY (mid-20s) wears the same olive green uniform as the
others. The face shield on his black helmet is up while his
SILVER GUN is held at the ready.

Rudy looks puzzled.

RUDY

You're that girl, aren't you? And
you, you're that guy.

ISABEL

We're nobodies--wrong place at the
wrong time visiting his uncle.

Abner tries to appear confident.

ABNER

So if you don't mind--

RUDY

I may be able to help. I'm Rudy.

INT. PANDIA HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Rudy leads the way as the trio walk down the hallway.

RUDY

I've been wanting to quit this place for a while now. But I'm paying off my college loan.

A sign reads, "Oncology Wing." Rudy swipes his ID along the scanner to the right, and the doors SWISH open.

He guides them into a dark, empty patient room.

ABNER

Why're we going in here?

With a funhouse-stretched grin, Rudy points his GUN at Abner.

RUDY

You know that was bullshit about my college loan, don't you? Besides, the end times are nigh. We're all screwed, so why not screw?

Abner reacts on instinct, grabbing for Rudy's gun.

They wrestle for it, and it goes off.

Abner and Isabel react as if Abner's been shot.

But it's Rudy's body that crumples to the ground.

Vacancy signs fill Rudy's eyes. He has an unnatural grimace.

Abner's stunned.

ABNER

Did I do that?

She nods and rests her head on his shoulder for a moment.

He grimaces and grabs the soldier's gun.

ABNER (CONT'D)

This may come in handy. We don't have much time.

ISABEL

If what you said is right, it might already be too late.

He takes her hand, and they make their way through the door.

In the hall, ALARM LIGHTS FLASH, accompanied by an ear-piercing sound. They run for the exit at the far end.

Past a nurse's desk and another wing of patients' rooms, they bolt until finally making it to the exit door.

EXT. PANDIA HOSPITAL - DAY

Outside on a landing of stairs, they catch their breath. The next building over is only a few feet away.

Isabel's fingers move at a blinding pace on her computer.

The warped sound of distortion soon clears up.

ISABEL

Mr. Davenport? Are you there?

ABNER

He doesn't know we're attempting to reach him.

Snatches of YELLING, DOORS SLAMMING, and SIRENS carry on the wind. Under all are artificial sounds such as BIRDS CHIRPING.

Isabel's silhouette sways while holding the laptop.

ISABEL

I'm sorry. My theory was wrong.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - OFFICE - SAME TIME

George's MILITARY MEDALS languish in a corner on a bureau.

PICTURES of fellow servicemen and women, including Randy, line the walls.

Carrie has her own wall--one lone picture of her gushing with joy as a new bride.

George leans over his desk and taps on the comms in his ears like he's trying to do Morse Code.

GEORGE

This is George Davenport. Over.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

ABNER

Hey, Dad, it's me.

GEORGE

Roger that.

Abner leans over the computer.

ABNER

You don't have to use CB lingo.

Isabel gives him a cross look and a punch in the arm.

GEORGE

Oh, okay. Is, um, your girl--

ISABEL

Isabel. I'm here.

George takes a DEEP BREATH and gazes at Carrie's picture.

GEORGE

Are you okay? It's amazing we can talk with what's going on.

A Variant shambles below Abner and Isabel.

His right cheek puffs out and in like the right side of his face is royally pissed.

ISABEL

We're fine, Mr. Davenport. How's Abner's uncle?

Isabel strokes Abner's cheek as they await an answer.

George glances over at Uncle Neil tied up in a chair.

GEORGE

Abner, I had to tie your uncle up.
For his own good.

Abner bites a knuckle as a tear drops.

George sighs at the peaceful figure of his brother.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

He's finally worn himself out and gone to sleep.

She rubs his arms.

George clears his throat.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 Your uncle helped you with things
 I--I just couldn't, not after your
 mother...

Isabel rubs Abner's neck and nestles against his side.

ABNER
 He'll be all right, Dad.

ISABEL
 We need to tell you something.
 They're dumping their "medicine"
 into Bellwether's water supply.

George runs a hand over his forehead as he eyes the STILL-FULL GLASS OF WATER perched on his desk.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
 It's a small town, isn't it, so it
 won't take long to warn everybody?

GEORGE
 Well, I can't tell everyone, and I
 don't have a computer. I'll just
 have to blow up the water tower.

She mouths "blow up the water tower" with a puzzled look.

ABNER
 He's got Air Force connections.

ISABEL
 The government might send planes to
 shoot you down.

ABNER
 Wealthy and powerful people have
 been funding this whole enterprise
 that's a Fountain of Youth scheme
 instead of a cure for Frederick's
 Alzheimer's.

George whistles.

GEORGE
 That explains quite a bit. But
 clearly it doesn't work. Not
 forever.

ABNER
 There's a lot more to tell, but
 time's in short supply. Remember
 how you used to say that, Dad?

George glances at Carrie's picture.

GEORGE

I was always in too big of a rush.
I wanted to fly to the Moon, but
then what if something happened to
me? You were, you are my
responsibility.

Abner looks flush, as if overcome by a warm wave.

Isabel holds his hand and watches with tear-filled eyes.

ABNER

Dad, I know you've done your best.
We've done our best.

ISABEL

Sir, I just met you, but I know
your son. And you did a damn fine
job raising him to be a sweet,
kind, and considerate gentleman.

There's SNIFFLING coming through the computer speakers.

Abner comes out of his haze enough to speak.

ABNER

There has to be another way.

Isabel squeezes his hand.

GEORGE

There isn't.

ABNER

What're you going to do with Uncle
Neil?

George checks on Uncle Neil, who looks like a kid dreaming.

GEORGE

You get out of there. When you do
escape, come check on him, will
you?

ISABEL

I'll bring your son back no matter
who I have to go through. But you
come back too, sir.

George sighs and bangs a fist on his desk.

GEORGE

It's the world that needs to come
back. We're the gatekeepers holding
the fort against madness.

His father's words impact Abner as he takes them all in.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I love you, son.

ABNER

Dad, I...

With a HIGH-PITCHED SOUND, Abner loses communication.

A voice booms from a bullhorn.

SOLDIER #5 (O.S.)

Come down from there now!

Soldier #5 points a SILVER GUN from below.

The hospital door shuts.

Isabel puts a hand on Abner's arm--the one with a gun.

ISABEL

What're you thinking of doing?

ABNER

Taking action for once in my life.

Abner fires a shot that strikes the guard in the chest,
pushing him over as if he's a bowling pin.

He turns ghostly pale. She runs a hand through his hair.

ISABEL

You did what you had to.

ABNER

I could've gotten you killed.

ISABEL

You saved me. No more room for
second thoughts.

EXT. EAST OF BELLWETHER/PRIVATE AIRSTRIP - DAY

SUPER: EAST OF BELLWETHER

A tin shack serves as an air traffic control tower.
Reflectors line the airstrip.

Randy comes out of a hangar and approaches George.

The two hug.

They grin like no time has passed since they were young men.

INT. PRIVATE AIRSTRIP HANGAR - DAY

George and Randy stand beneath the dim lamps of the converted barn and stare at a plane.

GEORGE
A 1981 Mooney?

RANDY
Right on the Mooney, so to speak.

GEORGE
I should've listened--to you and to
Abner. And now--

RANDY
Now we've got a new mission. Just
like old times: me on the ground,
and you up in the air. I'll bring
them home. My eyes are focused hard
on the mission.

EXT. PANDIA HOSPITAL - DAY

Isabel and Abner descend the stairs and avoid the dead guard.

They crouch beside a portable trash bin. He appears pensive.

ABNER
Not only are soldiers swarming the
area, but the Variants are loose.
Let's hope Dad's friend gets here
sooner than later.

EXT. PRIVATE AIRSTRIP - DAY

George examines the piston-powered, propellor-driven
airplane. It's dented with faded blue stripes.

He pats her and climbs aboard.

The ENGINES SPUTTER at first before showing signs of life, but she gets George into the air.

INT./EXT. GEORGE'S PLANE - DAY

George studies the Bellwether Water Works schematics in his lap and eyes the base of the elevated water storage tower.

His trajectory set, he shuts his eyes and flies the plane with a broad grin.

He opens them and is startled by the WHITE WALL in front of him. It's a cloud he flies right through.

GEORGE

Are you here with me, Carrie?

George sees a clear patch below. He noses the Mooney down.

Once he's steadied her, he spots the water tower up ahead with Bellwether in proud, glossy blue letters painted on it.

Below is a sheep with a bell on its neck.

The sheep's eyes look like it's been caned over the head.

EXT. PANDIA ENTRANCE - DAY

In his Desert Eagle truck, Randy eyeballs the entrance to Pandia. He wrings the steering wheel.

The SUN BURNS BRIGHT with a vengeance.

He hears a couple of helicopters heading toward Pandia.

He checks his LARGE FIELD PACK which stores a rope and grappling hook. He wears rubber gloves and rubber shoes.

He makes the sign of the cross, kisses his GLOCK 19, gets out of his truck, and heads toward the electrified wall.

EXT. PANDIA - OUTSIDE HOSPITAL - DAY

Abner and Isabel make a run for it out in the open when they hear voices that freeze them in the middle of the pathway.

VARIANT VOICE #1 (O.S.)

Have a heart.

VARIANT VOICE #2 (O.S.)

Have a foot.

VARIANT VOICE #3 (O.S.)

Kiss my ass!

Isabel laughs, but Abner covers her mouth. He points to the trio that shambles along about thirty feet away.

Since the lockdown, the compound has been preternaturally quiet except for the SYNTHESIZED SOUNDS OF NATURE piped in.

ABNER

(whispers)

Reggie's letting the Variants do his clean-up job. That's how they sounded in the hospital before they grew aggressive and violent.

In V formation, LATINO VARIANT MAN leads them and wears bunny slippers and a green and red bathrobe.

His black with silver hair looks like someone plopped it back on his head at an angle.

TWO WOMEN stumble behind him.

WHITE VARIANT WOMAN, short, wears pink jogging pants and a sweatshirt that says, "Grandmas Are Special."

To her left, ASIAN VARIANT WOMAN, tall and skinny, wears a baby blue sports bra and a pair of oversized yellow shorts.

LATINO VARIANT MAN

I don't know what I've been told.

Latino Variant Man's head bobs left and right as his bunny slippers stomp to keep time.

White Variant Woman dances an absurd jig.

WHITE VARIANT WOMAN

Eating people is pure gold.

Now the Asian Variant Woman shimmies, her almost fluorescent blue bra clashing with her withered and wrinkled skin.

ASIAN VARIANT WOMAN

Keeping you from growing old.

They all appear to have aged unevenly, with splotches of young-looking skin intermingled with wrinkled parts.

Latino Variant Man now has his hands on his temple, and he twitches. It's not in keeping time with the trio's march.

Asian Variant Woman slaps herself in the face, and seeing this, White Variant Woman helps her in this abuse.

They laugh the most hideous laugh.

The Variants lope, like bounding dogs, ever closer with a unifying hungry look in their eyes.

Abner closes his eyes as if preparing for sleep. He feels a violent tug and looks to find Isabel seizing his gun.

She fires at the three devastated humanoids before her.

Latino Variant Man's blown back; his bunny slippers flap up.

Like lava, blood pours from the chest of White Variant Woman's sweater, covering "Grandmas Are Special" in red.

Asian Variant Woman's sports bra flaps open to reveal old and now bloodied breasts.

The trio lie on the ground like scattered tree limbs.

Abner stands there stunned and unresponsive to Isabel.

ISABEL

What's wrong with you?

ABNER

I couldn't get Uncle Neil out of my head. And Patricia.

He takes her by the shoulders.

ABNER (CONT'D)

They were human beings. They're still... My uncle is still...

He's hunched over, seemingly out of breath or about to vomit.

From some distance, GUARD #1 and GUARD #2 argue.

ARGUING GUARD #1

It's safer inside.

ARGUING GUARD #2

We have a job to do.

Isabel and Abner see the guards march their way.

With the glass shield of the bigger one's helmet up, Isabel can see his malevolent glint. The other one, average-sized, still has the glass shield down, distorting his features.

Abner sings.

ABNER
Somewhere over the rainbow...

Variant Voices answer from varying distances.

VARIANT VOICE #4
Skies are blue.

VARIANT VOICE #5
I do like you, doo-doo.

VARIANT VOICE #6
That dude looks like a lady.

The security guards, momentarily forgotten by Isabel, have identical, puzzled expressions.

Isabel stares at the spectacle as Abner tugs on her arm.

80-SOMETHING VARIANT
I fee vow me bop to bits.

The 80-SOMETHING VARIANT with splotchy, leopard spots-like skin digs his head in for a bite of the big guard's throat.

Abner steers her to the side of a former information center for the Native American-themed park.

Dark green letters are discernible under sagebrush paint reading: "I for ation."

Abner moves to bust the booth-like window but stops when he sees Isabel open the door to the side.

INT. FORMER INFORMATION CENTER - DAY

Abner flips on a light switch near the door. They're inside a cubbyhole. He guides Isabel to a swivel-backed seat.

He looks all around for water but finds none.

Against the wall at the end, there's still a RACK OF PAMPHLETS about Native Americans.

On the thin counter before the window are PAMPHLETS FOR PANDIA, the words "Young at Heart" inside a cartoon of the organ that has it smiling, one of its eyes winking.

The GUTTURAL SOUNDS outside compete with their intimacy.

EXT./INT. GEORGE'S PLANE - DAY

The vibration of the Mooney keeps it real and personal.

The yellowish-brown desert terrain comes into sharper relief.

He gazes at his phone: a pic of Abner's first day of college.

He flinches as he passes through another cloud. He clutches at his chest and wipes perspiration from his brow.

With a grunt, he noses the Mooney down. On the town water tower, the sheep's saucer eyes grow bigger.

EXT. PANDIA ENTRANCE - DAY

The gray, militaristic-looking wall looms large.

Randy prepares to hoist his grappling hook.

The BLARE OF SIRENS and WHIR OF HELICOPTER BLADES get nearer.

The sun beats down on him as he wipes sweat from his eyes.

With a muted grunt, he slings the grappling hook up only to have it CLANG down beside him.

Looking around, he tries again. This time he gives the grappling hook a few twirls before heaving it skyward.

Success is met with a CLANK and a jolt traveling the length of the rope to his rubber-gloved hands.

He inches up the wall. At the top, he crouches on the two-foot wide ledge and waits for gunfire that never comes.

To his right and left along the ledge are snub-nosed satellite dishes about a foot and a half tall.

Inside are maybe a hundred of the elderly all grouped together, each in various states of dress and undress.

A GRANDPA munches on a severed human leg like it's a picnic.

Randy nearly loses his balance as he throws up in his mouth.

INT./EXT. PANDIA - FORMER INFORMATION CENTER - DAY

Abner, led by Isabel, emerges from the claustrophobic room.

A herd of BLEATING Variants awaits them.

Abner nearly has his nose bitten off as a Variant gets blown away by gunfire.

Isabel unloads Abner's gun on the crowd before them.

A TWITCHING WOMAN with alternating streaks of healthy blonde and dried-out grey hair collapses.

A HUNCHED-OVER MAN spits out his dentures that go flying past, just missing Abner's cheek.

The DENTURES CHOMP NON-STOP at the air.

EXT. ATOP THE ELECTRIFIED WALL - DAY

Randy peers through binoculars at Abner and a black-haired girl. She waves a gun, which draws the old ones to her.

Randy rappels down inside the compound.

He retrieves the hook at the end of the rope with a tug, coils it neatly, and stashes it in his field pack.

Staying low to the ground, he darts from building to building, moving from one row to the next.

He releases the safety of his gun and fires several shots toward the ceilings of structures near Abner and Isabel.

The BULLETS RICOCHET above as a few peel off from the group to go toward the vicinity of these sounds.

Randy runs about twenty feet around the perimeter of the community and edges closer to his real target.

He squares his shoulders and hips and fires a few rounds.

More twitching bodies twitch over to rush at whatever's disturbing their collective.

As he's closer, the odd CLICKING and SNORTING and mangling of English vowels and consonants suggest another language.

Sweat beads down his back as the sun shows no sign of going away. His breathing becomes labored.

Pandia residents stride toward him with surprising speed.

An INDIAN VARIANT with long black hair has a terrible smile, his sunken eyes like a rotting skeleton's.

Beside Indian Variant is SKINNY VARIANT WOMAN with flaxen hair and a garland of flowers about her neck.

Her deep grimace seems etched within stripes of skin that alternate between youthful to ancient in appearance.

Randy sees Indian Variant's shirt: "Pandia: Where Mental Fitness is a Way of Life."

Indian Variant grabs at Randy who jerks backward in time.

In one fluid motion, Randy aims straight at his attacker's head and shoots his Glock 19 as Indian Variant's smile is split in two with a CHOKING GASP and a final DEATH RATTLE.

Skinny Variant Woman's bony arms windmill at a manic speed.

Her eyes, TWO SHINY MARBLES, reflect Randy's shocked look.

He pulls the trigger. Skinny Variant Woman collapses.

He bolts another twenty feet around several buildings and fires. He does this routine once more.

EXT. PANDIA ENTRANCE - DAY

Abner eyes the entrance that could be his and Isabel's exit.

CRACK goes another bullet. CRACK, CRACK, CRACK--from another direction, a few feet from the other one.

Abner has a look of realization.

ABNER

Randy's distracting the Variants.

WIFE BEATER VARIANT turns toward them with slobber running from his mouth down his wife beater shirt.

Like a switch has flipped, Abner stands frozen.

ISABEL

Come on! We don't have much time!

The sound of TEETH CHOMPING surrounds them.

Abner is wide-eyed like a lamb led to slaughter.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Wake up, Ab!

Time goes slower than it should. Slobber from Wife Beater Variant squirts onto Abner's cheek.

Abner awakes and sounds the alarm.

ABNER

It's her! It's HERRRRR!

Isabel tracks Abner's pointing finger.

It's Maxine. She's part of the herd.

Maxine trembles now more than ever, and she looks even younger than when Abner last saw her in her office.

The sleeves of her lab coat have been scratched to ribbons. Her sandy brown hair has golfball-sized bald spots.

She shuffles closer with an idiot's grin, Abner in a trance.

Maxine appears to lean in for a kiss when she opens her mouth wide in preparation to take a bite out of Abner's neck.

Maxine's teeth close in on Abner's carotid artery when, in a flash from a gun, her whole MOUTH EXPLODES in a brief shower of blood, skin tissue, and bone.

Abner wipes the gory detritus from his face and sees the HORRIFIC HOLE that used to be Maxine's mouth.

Somehow Maxine's still alive and still moving closer when a second flash from a gun levels the top of her skull.

Isabel pulls Abner away where he can now see Randy.

It seems he's cleared a path for the them to Pandia's entrance, the bodies of Variants strewn on the ground.

RANDY

Abner. Isabel? I'm Randy. Come with me.

Abner gives a thumbs-up.

Randy smashes Fat Woman Variant on the top of her skull with the BILLY CLUB from his field pack.

He runs through a pathway, bats away a couple of Variants, and twists to fire his Glock 19 at another to send Tweed Coat Variant Man flying backward.

Isabel blasts another, Hair-Curlers Variant Woman, that falls flat in front of Randy who has to do a short hop over her.

Abner trips Sideburns Variant Man.

The trio advance toward the entrance gate as Isabel rustles through her backpack with a concerned look.

ISABEL

Our best way out is through the
service exit.

Her glance indicates it is in the building to the right of
the entrance gate and where most of the mob is concentrated.

Grinning, Randy pulls out a BLACK, ROUND DISC. Abner frowns.

ABNER

A hockey puck?

Randy grins, and as the mob rushes, Randy runs for the gate.

He attaches the disc to a facial identification panel and
motions for Abner and Isabel to move away.

After they do, Randy presses a button on his phone, which
causes a MASSIVE EXPLOSION to rain bits of steel all around.

A TRIANGULAR CHUNK narrowly misses Abner, and Randy feels a
moment of relief.

But Abner's shocked look causes Randy to glance down to see
METAL jutting from his right forearm.

Abner makes a motion forward as if ready to remove the
offensive metal from Randy's arm.

Randy, who winces but manages the pain, shakes his head.

Isabel gestures to the herd that lurches to the explosion.

Randy grunts and pushes himself up.

RANDY

Hurry. Don't worry about me.

They make their way to the iron door of the service building.

Randy pulls on the latch, which looks like it could be on a
freezer, and there's a HISS as pressure is released.

There's a horrific, collective sound like animals HUMMING.

The herd heads their way as they go inside.

INT. SERVICE BUILDING - DAY

Randy shines a flashlight on shelves with BOXES OF FOOD as
the three of them shiver in the cold environment.

The HOWLS from outside grow in intensity.

Abner and Isabel push a few boxes to block the door.

Randy appears to succumb to the pain from his wound.

Isabel and Abner's discussion sounds muffled.

ISABEL

Is he going to be okay?

ABNER

We can't leave him here.

ISABEL

Of course we can't, but they're getting closer.

Randy slaps himself in the face with the hand from his good arm, shakes his head, and grimaces.

RANDY

I'm okay. Let's move.

The trio progress with the aid of Randy's flashlight. Down a narrow hallway, they go left into another room with boxes.

The HOWLS echo on the slate-like walls. The trio share a moment with a look that says, "They're in here."

The three come to a standstill as a Variant at the end of the aisle CHOMPS HIS TEETH nonstop.

ISABEL

I remember the schematic for this place. Follow me.

They do so as she makes a right.

Abner yanks an EXTINGUISHER from the wall and sprays it on the floor behind them. Isabel flashes him a wink and a smile.

He sprays a little more and then heaves the extinguisher so it rolls like it's heading for bowling pins.

Randy, with his non-injured hand, yanks down a couple of SHELVES OF CANNED FOOD.

The HOWLS seem to be in response to this.

Isabel leads them down more aisles until they're at the exit door. She has a pained look upon seeing a new security panel attached to the outside of the latch.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

This wasn't here before.

Sweat beads across Randy's face as he grunts in pain.

ABNER

Come on, 'Bel. They're getting closer.

The HOWLS grow nearer, and amidst the nonsense, certain words ring with clarity.

VARIANTS

Get you. Hungry. Very hungry.

Isabel removes her laptop from her backpack. Her fingers fly over the keyboard as she works her magic.

Randy perks up.

RANDY

This girl's a keeper. If you don't make a move, then--

ABNER

Whoah there, Randy. Trust me, I know she's the best.

Abner turns to Isabel.

ABNER (CONT'D)

Watch this guy. He's got three ex-wives around the globe.

RANDY

Actually, junior, it's four.

A Variant scrambles over fallen shelves of canned food, BLOOD SMEARED in a circle about his face as his SILVER EYES GLINT.

He prepares to leap at them.

Isabel turns back to her work. She punches a few keys, puts the ID up to the scanner, and holds her breath.

There's a CLICK. She turns to Abner with a victorious smile as Randy heads straight for the blood-smearred Variant.

ABNER

No!

Isabel tugs Abner's arm, but it's like trying to drag a wall.

ISABEL

If we don't go now, we're done for.

She propels him out the door, CHOMPING TEETH and a SNARLED HISSING at their backs as they close it just in time.

EXT. PANDIA - NIGHT

Outside, it's a different world. The silence speaks volumes.

Abner and Isabel turn to each other.

ABNER

We could've--

ISABEL

We couldn't have saved him.

Again, there's an unbearable silence.

ABNER

There are no police.

ISABEL

Where are the helicopters and soldiers?

They walk past the dumpsters and see lots of vehicles and people, all belonging to news organizations.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Police and the Fed are waiting for this thing to burn itself out. I would've let those things eat me before I left you in there.

ABNER

That's what got me to move my ass when I did.

He motions for her to go back to the dumpsters-side to avoid the media. She follows him.

REAL BIRDS CHIRP. He appears stunned.

She puts her hand on his arm.

ISABEL

He made a choice. It was his choice, and maybe--

ABNER

He was a hero. My father would talk to his buddies about big, reliable Randy and how he'd changed since being anchored to his desk.

ISABEL
He wanted to help his friend's son.
It helped him...

ABNER
Regain a sense of purpose.

He laughs.

ABNER (CONT'D)
Something I've lacked.

She pinches his arm.

ABNER (CONT'D)
Ow. What was that for?

ISABEL
Don't forget it was you who
followed your gut instinct that
something was wrong and--

ABNER
Got us in trouble and Randy killed?

ISABEL
Saved your uncle and rescued him
from this godforsaken place.

ABNER
Not without you. But what good is
that if he's one of the Variants?
And then there's my father, who was
sent on what was probably a suicide
mission.

His slip of the tongue in saying the "s" word makes him glum.

She lifts his chin and makes him look at her.

ISABEL
We don't know that, and we won't
know until we get out of here.

He nods and puts his arm around her.

They head back to the front where the media's camped out.

ABNER
Look at those vultures. It's
probably being sold as a contagion
breakout.

ISABEL

How long will the government wait
before torching it?

The two look at each other with the same questioning eyes
regarding how to get out of there.

ABNER

We have to make a run for it.

Abner's car is still in the lot. It's in the garbage dumpster
area where they are but right at the line of visibility.

He turns to her, and they share a long kiss before she gently
shoves him away, grabs his hand, and propels him to his car.

REPORTER #1 spots them and climbs in his vehicle to give
chase. He rolls down his window.

REPORTER #1

Can you tell the world what's
happening inside Pandia?

Isabel hops into the driver's seat of Abner's car. He gets in
the passenger side and hands her the key.

Isabel floors it as a TRAIL OF DUST kicks up behind them.

EXT. BELLWETHER WATER TOWER - NIGHT

The sheep on the water tower stares with its saucer eyes.

INT./EXT. GEORGE'S PLANE - NIGHT

George noses the Mooney closer to his target. He clutches his
chest and winces from pain.

GEORGE

Keep your eyes on the prize,
Georgie.

His grin becomes an unintentional grimace as his throat
constricts. His breathing becomes labored.

He looks around as if feeling the presence of someone else.

CARRIE (V.O.)

(sings)

"Somewhere over the rainbow/Way up
high."

GEORGE
Carrie? Are you here?

The propellor sputters as the yoke becomes difficult to steer. George musters enough willpower and muscle to aim the plane so he'll soon be able to drop the bomb payload.

Coming up on the right, a military jet has the same trajectory as George. It catches him off guard, and he almost overshoots the mark he's been aiming for.

CARRIE (V.O.)
I've always been here, George.

He's able to pull on the lever to release the bomb, which plummets to its destination beneath the water tower.

During this sudden movement, though, George's plane careens off course and ends up in a spiral.

He yanks up on the yoke as all goes black.

EXT./INT. BELLWETHER - GEORGE'S HOME - NIGHT

Isabel nods at Abner.

He reaches into the mailbox at the end of the driveway and finds a key on top of a fishing magazine.

With it, he strides to the front door. She follows him with her hand on his shoulder.

A heavy uncertainty fills the air.

ISABEL
Be prepared for what we might find.

He carefully twists the door knob and opens the door. There's an awkward moment of silence.

From the kitchen around the corner, a MUFFLED VOICE calls out. It doesn't sound like English, although some recognizable vowels and consonants come out as a SNARL.

Abner turns to Isabel with a look of concern.

Neil appears at the entrance to the kitchen wiping bread crumbs from his mouth.

He spreads his arms wide.

NEIL
Abner, my favorite nephew.

Isabel grins and pushes Abner forward, mouthing, "It's okay."

ABNER

Uncle, I mean... Stargazer!

Abner rushes into his uncle's embrace.

NEIL

Are you okay? You looked like you'd never seen a man talk with his mouth full of food before. I do apologize, miss.

ISABEL

Sir, I'm Isabel. Abner's girlfriend.

Neil takes her hand, kisses it, and beams with a smile.

ABNER

Uncle... How, how, I mean... You seem well.

Neil strikes a dramatic pose and frames the scene with his hands the way a director does.

NEIL

You expected a deranged senior with bloodshot eyes and gnashing teeth, didn't you?

He shoves the remaining sandwich in his mouth. With bits of sandwich overflowing, he says something unintelligible.

Isabel strokes Abner's arm.

ISABEL

Your uncle's something else.

NEIL

I think she likes me. Uh, oh. Sorry, Abner.

ISABEL

I think I love you.

She plants a kiss on the old man's cheek.

Neil rubs his hands as he relishes all the attention.

ABNER

Uncle Neil, I just want to say I'm sorry I stopped visiting you for a while.

Isabel rubs Abner's arm as his uncle seems to misunderstand.

NEIL
Colorado's not that far, you
know...

Abner gives him a perplexed look.

ABNER
We're in California.

Neil looks lost in the wilderness.

NEIL
Who lives there, I mean here?

Isabel pats Neil on the shoulder, and he flinches.

NEIL (CONT'D)
Who are you?

ABNER
He's still suffering from--

NEIL
When you get to be my age, you
forget sometimes, but now I
remember. Yes, of course I do.

Neil gives his surroundings a good hard look.

NEIL (CONT'D)
This is my brother, George's house.

GEORGE (O.S.)
Yes, it is my house, and who are
all these strange people in it?

Neil brightens at the sound of his brother's voice.

George stands at the door with black smudges on his face and
blades of grass in his hair. He's got a dazed look.

Abner has a look of relief.

ABNER
Dad? You made it.

Neil goes in for a bear hug from his brother, not accepting
anything less. He then examines him.

NEIL
Which dumpster did you just crawl
out of?

There's an awkward moment before uproarious laughter.

GEORGE

What I crawled out of was a prop plane.

NEIL

You'd think maybe a person'd make an effort for Thanksgiving dinner.

Abner urges his father to sit down. It's clear he has a limp.

George starts to sit, but he's got a banged-up knee.

Isabel takes his hand to ease him into the chair.

Abner offers George a GLASS OF WATER, which he bats away.

ABNER

So, you weren't successful?

GEORGE

I'm not sure of anything, but after what we saw at Pandia...

George looks all around.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Where's Randy?

Abner looks like someone just punched him in the gut.

ISABEL

Mr. Davenport, your friend was the bravest man I'll ever meet.

Abner puts a hand on his father's shoulder.

ABNER

We were in a tight jam.

George appears stunned and shifts in his seat which causes him incredible pain.

ISABEL

Randy sacrificed himself so we could escape at the last moment.

George bows his head.

GEORGE

I got him into this mess.

Isabel and Abner can't look at him.

NEIL

I did. My brain sickness did.

Isabel and Abner grab Neil and pull him in for a hug.

GEORGE

I should've done better by you.

NEIL

It wasn't all bad at first. There were spurts of youthful return.

George looks closely at his brother's eyes.

GEORGE

Spurts of youthful return? Now that sounds like my brother!

They all laugh.

ABNER

What's going to happen to Pandia?

Like air escaping from a balloon, the mood becomes depressed.

EXT. PANDIA - NIGHT

From above, the SMALL FIRES COMBINE. The FLAMES LICK HIGH in the night sky as CURTAINS OF SMOKE BILLOW.

Fire trucks surround the facility and cover all four corners.

Only a few structures remain standing. One is the building that has Reggie's office.

INT. REGGIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Reggie huddles in the corner from ADVANCING FLAMES. With the phone in his robotic face, he speaks with the U.S. PRESIDENT.

REGGIE

Mr. President, where's that helicopter?

Reggie's ROBOTIC FACE WHIRS in dismay. His RED EYES grow weaker, as if they've lost some of their fire.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Sir... Mr. President, you said one would come. You sent the order, didn't you?

U.S. PRESIDENT (V.O.)
Thank you for your service to your
country.

With that, the PHONE LINE GOES DEAD.

Reggie watches in horror as FLAMES ENCROACH upon him. They
CONSUME HIM as a PULSATING FIRE destroys Pandia.

INT. GEORGE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

George and Neil sit on the couch as Isabel sits in one of two
chairs to the side brought in from the kitchen.

Abner comes in holding a TELESCOPE and sits beside Isabel.

On TV, FLAMES ENGULF Pandia.

GEORGE
I have to head out now.

ABNER
What're you talking about?

GEORGE
I blew up a water tower.

ISABEL
We're not leaving you behind.

NEIL
I'll take a slice of the breast and
some mashed potatoes, and stuffing
would be nice, too.

George looks contemplative as he looks at his brother.

GEORGE
I'll have to find a place for both
of us.

ABNER
We're all fugitives now.

GEORGE
You two have a bright future ahead.
You've got college to finish.

ABNER
They're probably out searching for
us now.

GEORGE
As for this young lady--

ISABEL
I'm sticking with you guys, or
rather, you're stuck with me.

Neil, behind Abner, has the shine of awareness.

NEIL
We're family. That's the answer
cutting through the fog.

Isabel beams at him.

GEORGE
Ab, when I was talking to you over
the computer...

ABNER
I love you, Dad.

George appears genuinely surprised to hear his son say that.

GEORGE
Your mother was with me on the
plane.

Abner grins and holds up the telescope.

NEIL
Carrie's up there. See, I remember!

ABNER
But where are we going?

GEORGE
North. We'll just keep driving.

ISABEL
And never look back.

EXT. ROAD ALONG NORTHERN CALIFORNIA - NIGHT

Abner's Ford drives along a ribboning highway.

Above, the stars are endless...

FADE OUT.

THE END