

ENLIGHTEN

Written by

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INT. CHINESE LAB - DAY

A brightly lit field of workstations with microscopes and computers. Electronic walls covered in images of stem cells experiments, cutting, prodding, splicing....

Chinese scientists balance perfection and drive as they hustle in silence. Few words passed in curt whispers.

An air burst as the lab door opens and FUNG, 35, slick and slimy, in a flashy suit struts in as he wraps up a call. Feigned confidence conceals frayed nerves.

FUNG
Business-Class, next available!
Those bastards dare low-ball me.

Chinese dialect/English subtitles

FUNG (CONT'D)
Bring it. Now!

Work ceases and fearful gazes fall upon him. A scampering TECH, 25, presents a tablet and bows.

TECH
Dr. Fung, sir!

Fung twists the tablet.

FUNG
I can't read this. Is it done?

TECH
We reach standards.

FUNG
No! I guaranteed delivery!

TECH
A dispatch to certify our work...
your work. A final warning against
splicing human embryos.

FUNG
Idiot! What's the point of a
clandestine lab? I'll deal with the
premier. Finish this now!

In English.

FUNG (CONT'D)

Delays. Now a leak. No matter. When this deal is done, I'm set for life!

The staff scramble except for TUSCAN YU, 35, keen, formidable, who sets down a report and loosens his tie.

A US location circled on a global list of DNA Microscope purchases.

He tears at the freshly scarred tissue of his reddened fingernail bed and considers options. Some blood seeps through the wound and he sighs.

His hardened gaze trails Fung's departure as he sends a text.

INT. FUNG'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A spacious executive office overlooking the Shanghai skyline.

Fung dresses down and snorts cocaine as he watches lesbian porn. He whips his hair as the high washes over him.

A shadowy figure creeps from the darkness beyond the door.

Chinese Dialect/English Subtitles.

FUNG

Out! Do not disturb me!

In English.

FUNG (CONT'D)

Oh, it's you, Yu. That never gets old.... Tell me again about the Italian girls. They'll like me, no?

Fung cuts a line and fails to notice Tuscan's sweaty brow.

TUSCAN

They'll love you, Dr. Fung. They are all about the money!

FUNG

Good stuff you got me. I like you Tuscan. Impeccable references, sterling endorsements... can't calibrate a micrometer. I can't wait until Rome... gonna smack those girls around!

TUSCAN

Wait! What?

FUNG

Never mind. Did your buyer respond?

TUSCAN

They replied to your new terms.

FUNG

They had no choice. I'd find another buyer. Of course, you'd miss out on your commission, wouldn't you? More headaches, more money. Bring the tablet here. The tiniest hurdles sets us far apart.

TUSCAN

Us?

FUNG

The West. We don't do slow in Wuhan. Impossible they said. You need a wolf to make sheep run. People need motivation.

TUSCAN

Money works.

FUNG

It certainly does! I'll be rich, Tuscan... slapping hoes!

Tuscan's jeer ends Fung's tacky slapping gesture.

TUSCAN

Congratulations, again. Is the project stored on your server?

FUNG

Yes. Once the wire hits my--

An unnatural pop beyond the doorway.

TUSCAN

The team celebrates your accomplishments... Champagne.

FUNG

What kind?

TUSCAN

Moet White Star.

FUNG

Not Dom? Who cares. Will I see you
in Rome?

TUSCAN

I have a job lined up. Stateside.

FUNG

Cunning. Resourceful. You're a
younger, uglier version of myself!
I thought you were another simple
villager playing capitalist. Few
have the guts to traffic in spliced
embryos. Not to mention, your gift
to find who is playing the field.
How again did you find me, Tuscan?

TUSCAN

Trade secret, Dr. Fung! I'm little
more than a pioneer racing along
the bleeding edge of science.

FUNG

Collect your fee and race away from
this pit of hapless villagers.

Fung studies the charts. He glances at the doorway after a
distant primal gurgle and sounds of a struggle.

Tuscan creeps beside him. Destain covers his face as he
whispers to himself.

TUSCAN

An orphan to these slums. I
channeled pain to focus past a
hunger unknown to most. Adopted by
a Rhodesian diamond smuggler...
raised a Conex. I am
extraordinarily unlike you.

Tuscan rips the power cord from a computer.

FUNG

Hey?

With crisp and powerful movement, Tuscan overpowers Fung and
strangles him.

TUSCAN

To become a... medical mercenary.
If there's such a thing. Wolves you
once told me... tend to feast.

Tuscan ties the cord to a ceiling joist and hangs Fung's body. He smashes the server and rips out the HARD DRIVE.

INT. CHINESE LAB - NIGHT

Tuscan strides past a field of desks occupied by face down technicians. Some writhe and gurgle. He steps over a few bodies on the floor.

The Tech clutches his throat. Red-faced, his eyes bulge as he staggers and pirouettes.

Tuscan calmly swipes away a hand that grasps his leg. He doesn't react as the Tech collapses.

Some HENCHMEN arrange bodies. One wields a smoking gun.

TUSCAN

Bullets don't kill in a fire.

Tuscan rises from above a body. Cuffs rolled above his bloody hands as he slips some bullets into his pocket.

He tries to light the fuse on a fire bomb. The fancy lighter doesn't work. He scans for help and notices the hard drive on a distant desk and recovers it.

TUSCAN (CONT'D)

Close call.

He tries the lighter and this time it surprisingly works.

Smoke rises from several areas.

Flames erupt as Tuscan exits.

EXT. LAB - DAY

An imposing rod iron perimeter fence surrounds a hardened and foreboding brick commercial structure.

PROTESTORS rally and wave graphic signs "Burn CRISPR-cas9," "Say NO! to Transgenic" and "Right-to-life."

ARNIMUS MUTH, 45, outdated eccentric and impulsive, couldn't walk faster without jogging as he frantically pats his pockets.

He conceals his brilliant white lab coat behind his duffel bag and blends with pedestrian traffic as he nears the fence.

His untied boot slips off. He trips and his lab coat falls.

A PROTESTOR, 30, disabled and agitated, grabs Arnimus and shakes him.

PROTESTOR
Frankenstein! Pagan!

ARNIMUS
Let go!

PROTESTOR
What you're doing is immoral!

ARNIMUS
Tell that to the sick and dieing!
I'm on verge of curing COPD! It
will save countless of lives.

Arnimus wheezes and feigns a fit of coughs. The charade and answer resonates and the Protester lets go.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
Think of the greater good.

The furtive activity gathers attention and the chants grow.

A red paint filled balloon smashes near Arnimus' feet as he waves his ID and scurries through the gate.

The laboratory's formidable checkpoint. EMPLOYEES are searched and surrender phones to GUARDS.

A BURLY GUARD, 30, dim and determined, prepares for an issue as Arnimus maneuvers past waiting employees to the Handicapped Access line.

BURLY GUARD
Sir, the line is over there.

ARNIMUS
Uh... I have cystic fibrosis.

BURLY GUARD
Okay. Shoes can stay on.

ARNIMUS
Damn those slack-jawed miscreants.
Don't realize what I'm doing will
change the world.

BURLY GUARD
What are you doing?

ARNIMUS

Uh... I'm late. If you queued correct, you'd eliminate those damn bottlenecks! Is this necessary?

BURLY GUARD

Yeah. Gotta keep the crazies out.

ARNIMUS

Your job is to keep me and my work safe! Ensure those activists and their blood-filled balloons stay clear so I can focus on saving humanity!

The metal detector alerts as Arnimus passes.

BURLY GUARD

A bit of both I guess. Gotta wand you. Any metal on you?

The Burly Guard searches and discovers a barbed fishing lure and a belt-worn gravity KNIFE.

ARNIMUS

Uh... only to flay. You know, born to fish, forced to work.

BURLY GUARD

No fish here. I gotta report it.

ARNIMUS

Wait! Hmm....

Arnimus wants to dispute but he's tardy and dashes.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

Executives and doctors in a board meeting well underway.

THERESA, 50, dry and driven, waves a clenched fist. She scans a series of portraits of sketchy older men along the wall.

THERESA

Care to know how much the university spent on our shiny new toy? The promises I had to make.... Now we have these silly protestors and their ruckus.

Most avert gaze. SADIE KARIS, 40, slithery and sanguine, slyly scrolls saved photos on her phone of luxury purses. She toggles to a negative balance in her bank account.

KARIS

Harvard has six. No protests there.

THERESA

Dr. Karis, I don't give a bloody hell! Harvard is not burdened by our history. The DNA Microscope consumed half our budget! The genius in this room has the ability to analyze the very fabric of human life because of the risk I undertook. Squandered. Not a notable white paper among you. This lab will not shutter under my watch!

She saddens as her eyes settle upon her aspiring image in the final photograph.

KARIS

Policy limits us to experiments the board approved as safe. To be rendered safe, someone must have already done it. If I try something new, I risk my job.

THERESA

We wouldn't want that, would we?

Karis squirms and carefully considers next words.

The door flings open and Arnimus stumbles in.

ARNIMUS

Sorry Theresa.

Arnimus scampers for a distant seat. He draws sideways glances as he snatches a half-eaten donut and takes a bite.

THERESA

What in bloody hell? No Internet in back country? HR e-mailed you a furlough notice.

ARNIMUS

Wait! What? Why?

THERESA

Simple Dr. Muth. For funding, your thesis need be approved. For that, it need be submitted. Where is it?

ARNIMUS

It's uh... all up here.

Arnimus taps his head and Theresa tosses him a NOTEBOOK.

THERESA

Put it down there. Go on, we'll wait. That's what I thought. Dr. Muth, clean out your desk. Turn in your ID by COB.

ARNIMUS

I'll need my badge when I return.

THERESA

That's presumptuous.

EXT. RIVER - DAY [DREAM SEQUENCE]

Serene and peaceful. The babble of running river. Vibrant colors of grass field under a clear sky.

The whiz of a fly-reel. An immaculate hand-made Woolly Bugger sails and lands in a glassy run.

With ample gear, Arnimus teaches XAVIER, 8, nimble and witty, to fly-fish in the shallows.

ARNIMUS

Xavier, step, flick and release.

Xavier flicks the rod and the fly sails.

XAVIER

First try... nailed it!

ARNIMUS

A natural! Casting usually takes practice. No man is born an angler.

XAVIER

I want to be an angler.

ARNIMUS

Me too... someday.

Xavier's perfect cast. A trout snaps the bait.

XAVIER

Got one!

A giant splash as Xavier slips and submerges.

Panic overtakes Arnimus face. He drops his rod and dashes.

ARNIMUS

Xavier! No!

Xavier climbs to his feet, smiles and shakes it off as Arnimus struggles to calm himself.

XAVIER

Shoot. Slipped, dad. He got away!

Karis skips into the sunlight. She slips off her shoes and recovers his rod.

KARIS

Relax, Arnimus. He swims like a fish.

ARNIMUS

Xavier, ensure you have sure-footing when you set the hook!

XAVIER

Yeah dad!

KARIS

I love family time. You're an amazing father, Arnimus. Patience of a saint. A terrible fisherman.

Karis kisses his cheek as he studies the empty hook.

Arnimus flips open a case filled with an impressive array of custom bait. He struggles to affix a Parachute Adams lure.

ARNIMUS

I could always tell when it was time to change bait! Fishing is the ultimate slippery never-ending quest to arrange expectation.

KARIS

Let me.

Impressed, Arnimus watches as Karis expertly knot the lure.

ARNIMUS

I couldn't ask for more... except maybe a bite.

With aplomb, Karis grins and casts.

The fly whizzes and drops in a distant run. The moment it lands, a trophy trout snaps up the bait.

The family hoots and celebrates.

INT. LAB - DAY

Dimly lit and vacant.

A cluster of semi-private lab stations. Computers, microscopes and industrial equipment abound.

A high-forced volume thermal convection oven hums and emits an orange glow. A Tupperware container of Artisan scones with humanoid figures. The air bends and the figures writhe.

The Tupperware and figures melt. The puddle hisses, burns and turns to ash. The dust circulates.

Smoke rises from the oven.

Asleep at his station with his face stuck to a Field And Stream magazine, Arnimus's smile fades as he sniffs.

The fire alarm sounds.

Arnimus snaps awake and panics.

The Burly Guard sprints inside ready for anything. He unplugs the oven and discharges a fire extinguisher.

BURLY GUARD

Doc, you okay?

ARNIMUS

I only closed my eyes....

BURLY GUARD

Asleep? I hope it was worth it.

ARNIMUS

It was... the best dream... ever.

Arnimus waves a framed photo to dissipate the smoke. He slips several photos of Xavier and the notebook into a box.

BURLY GUARD

Yeah, if you dream about burning. I thought you was out of here?

ARNIMUS

I got to find a new job... and write a new thesis.

BURLY GUARD

What you got?

Arnimus swipes a Vegemite jar into a waste-bin.

ARNIMUS

I'm afraid... nothing. Lured into complacency. Like mackerel on ice... awaiting the monger.

BURLY GUARD

Bad attitude. Rest when you dead. Until then, it's out there, get it. Anyway, I gotta report this too.

ARNIMUS

Do what you like. I'm going home.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY - ESTABLISHING

Remote and modest colonial rancher on a sprawling lake-side property surrounded by woods. Fresh snow blankets the wavy terrain.

An oppressively cold winter day in the Pacific Northwest. The sun peeks through a low ceiling of gray skies.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Frugal with fusty and bland decor.

The notebook flexed open to a blank first page.

A McCann's Oat Meal tin with Certificate of Award, Uniformity of granulation by Judge Chas Keith. Steel-cut oats lined up.

Arnimus cinches his bathrobe and squats as he studies an odd oat's disparate size among a Helix pattern of oats between strands of spaghetti.

ARNIMUS

Chas should be defrocked. A packed skyscraper. Lets replace a clerk on the 89th floor with a VP.

He tries to remove the odd oat and disturbs the pasta. Frustrated, he wipes the design away.

He readies to pour a scoop of Vegemite into the simmering pot of oat meal. He yelps and it topples to the floor.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

Damn it! Keep the handle off the flame! Clean this up, will you? My gout is acting up.

He steps outdoors and grabs a handful of snow.

Snowflakes drift to RHONESHIA, 35, frail and forgettable, as she loiters along the wall. She begins to clean the mess as Arnimus answers the phone.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
Hello, who is this?

He's shaky but commits to making a good impression.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
I'm very interested. Nights and weekends sound great. I can start right away. I sound desperate? Why does that matter? I'm overqualified and you need help.

A squeaky voice reluctantly agrees as Arnimus looks worried.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
References? If truly necessary....

He tosses the blank notebook upon a bin of children's coloring supplies.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

A stressed and frantic a SLEAZY MOM, 35, drags a teary-eyed GOOFY BOY, 6, towards the Red Cross of a Minute-Clinic.

SLEAZY MOM
Hurry up! Best not take long.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

A cramped reception area with an alcove for patient examination. Dreary pastel colored walls in a dimly lit room.

A dusty SNOW GLOBE of an antiquated setting sits atop a shelf. A somber fisherman, his wife and son, stand aside a lake encircled with trees.

BERTA, 30, loud mouthed and lazy, puts down her novel peeks through the cracked door.

BERTA
Doctor. Yes, you. Your 2:30 is still here... waiting.

ARNIMUS
A minute.

Arnimus lifts his head from a genetic industry publication. He dons his lab coat and shuffles to meet the patient.

BERTA

You is on corporate time. Dilly-dally on your dime.

The Sleazy Mom shoves the Goofy Son into a chair.

SLEAZY MOM

If yer father was here, you'd know the belt. Quit cryin! I'm missing my damn show cuz of you.

ARNIMUS

Hello, I'm Dr. Muth. What is the issue?

SLEAZY MOM

Tell him. I dunno. School sent him home. Said he need see a nurse.

ARNIMUS

Well, I'm a doctor.

The way he says it sounds unusual to them both.

SLEAZY MOM

I ain't paying for no fancy doctor.

ARNIMUS

The cost is the same.

SLEAZY MOM

Tell 'em boy.

The Goofy Son cowers as Arnimus huffs.

ARNIMUS

I knew a boy who'd pretend to be ill to prey on people's sympathy to get what he wanted. Or perhaps to get out of a test? Well?

SLEAZY MOM

Tell him!

The Goofy Boy stutters and weeps.

ARNIMUS

I don't have time for this. He's fine.

SLEAZY MOM

You've done nothing so I ain't paying!

Arnimus sighs as and returns to his studies as the Sleazy Mom drags the Goofy Boy out.

INT. HOUSE -DAY

With a coffee and scone, Arnimus prepares to buckle down and work. He opens the notebook and notices the first page is a child's crayon drawing of a father and son fishing.

ARNIMUS

To hell with this. Xavier, let's fish! Tie up the gear. I'll pack snacks. Don't forget your mittens, it's brutal out.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Arnimus champions a moment as he stands atop a mound and looks over the lake. He sucks in a healthy deep breath. An oversized and enthusiastic stretch.

ARNIMUS

The great outdoors! I love it! Isn't it great Xavier?

XAVIER (O.S.)

Meh.

Arnimus forges ahead as he jerks a sled loaded with ice fishing gear bound with knotted twine.

His words race with his thoughts as he glances behind him.

ARNIMUS

Poorly taut bowlines turn to knots. The lazy relish knots. Never a loose end! You'd be better if you spent less time coloring.

Xavier lumbers through the deep snow. A sheet of paper falls from between his gloved hand and bare hand.

XAVIER

Sorry, dad. I'll get it next time.

ARNIMUS

You already broke that promise.

XAVIER
I'll try harder to remember better.

Xavier falls as he struggles to pick up the paper. He lands chin first with an oddly delayed yelp.

Arnimus poorly conceals his disgust.

ARNIMUS
Your mitten too?

XAVIER
You're mad.

ARNIMUS
No. Keep your hand in your pocket.
The ice is thin along the edge. Try
not to get water in your shoes.

XAVIER
I don't like water. I like milk.
Fruity hot cocoa! The Skittles melt
and make it super good. Can I have
some when we get home?

ARNIMUS
Disgusting. Sure. You'll drink that
but won't touch Vegemite?

XAVIER
It smells like poop.

ARNIMUS
Doesn't taste much better.

XAVIER
Why do you eat it?

ARNIMUS
Someone said it was good for me.

XAVIER
Who? Mom?

Arnimus kicks snow and makes a clearing.

A dead fish protrudes at the surface. Its open mouth and shiny eye make it appear surprised.

ARNIMUS
You knew this was coming.

XAVIER
Can you help him?

ARNIMUS

I can't. He's dead. His time passed. There's no coming back.

XAVIER

Did the pump kill him?

They focus on an area along the distant tree line which disappears with a pulse of flurries.

ARNIMUS

No. We moved here for the fishing. The quiet. Not to hear that racket!

XAVIER

Mom said we moved because you were embarrassed. I wasn't perfect like you expected.

Arnimus wipes some snow off Xavier.

ARNIMUS

I love you very much Xavier. We moved to be--

XAVIER

--Alone.

ARNIMUS

Together. Yet... alone is good.

XAVIER

Mom said you don't like anyone.

ARNIMUS

Not entirely true. Some people, for good reason.

XAVIER

You think you're smarter. You can't get along--

ARNIMUS

--Most. Maybe. I get along perfectly fine with--

XAVIER

--you talk to people like pets.

ARNIMUS

What? Wait. Enough!

Arnimus seeks lighten the moment.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
 Maybe he ate Skittles and got
 diarrhea? Death by doo-doo.

XAVIER
 Gross! Fish don't poop? Do they?

ARNIMUS
 Everything poops! Let's go. Be
 careful. If the ice cracks....

XAVIER
 Fall to my belly and penguin slide!

ARNIMUS
 Yes, and if it fails, tee your
 arms, stay low and don't panic. Got
 it, X-man!

XAVIER
 A-ok!

Arnimus glances at the drawing.

ARNIMUS
 I love your drawings, Xavier. This
 needs work.

XAVIER
 I just started. He wanted to go
 fish when it was dark.

ARNIMUS
 He had the right idea... fish bite
 better early.

The thin ice breaks and murky water fills Arnimus' boot. He
 stumbles and stomps.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
 Damn it!

XAVIER
 Look! Wow!

A thick crack fissures across the lake. The creepy echo
 lingers. A final deep rumble leaves an unnatural silence.

Xavier spots something on the distant tree-lined shore.

The FIGURE, gray-scale and wiry, teeming with sores, sunken
 eyes and errant and coarse hair in tattered cloth. Ridged
 body squared, head turned away. A hazy pale green aura.

XAVIER (CONT'D)

There!

A frigid breeze whips and Xavier blinks.

The air calms and flurries pause in perfect silence.

ARNIMUS

There what?

Xavier scans the empty space where the Figure had stood.

At the treetops, the elevated Figure rises skyward and disappears into the skies as a new squall begins.

XAVIER

I saw.... never mind. Why doesn't
mom fish with us?

ARNIMUS

She's not invited.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Yellow rubber gloved hands scrub charred oatmeal in a pan.

Rhoneshia trembles and wipes her eyes. She reacts to the echo and spots Arnimus and Xavier at the lake's edge.

See glances at a child's drawing of a father and son taped to the fridge. A photo of Arnimus of Xavier smiling at a park. A Father's Day card. She's absent from all memorabilia.

She sobs and slumps to the floor.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Xavier starts a rhyme as he swings from Arnimus' hand, jumps and lands two-footed as he grins.

XAVIER

Then I... stomp its little head.

ARNIMUS

Stomp that way.

XAVIER

A little bird with a yellow bill.
Landed on. My windowsill. I coaxed
it in....

ARNIMUS

Disturbing what passes as a nursery
rhyme.

Arnimus yanks the tether and the sled accelerates. He jutes
and stumbles as the sled pirouettes and overturns. He curses
as his other boot breaks ice and fills with brackish water.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

So much for warm feet.

Arnimus kneels and gathers the spilt supplies.

The sound of a breeze muffles Xavier's rhyme and stomps. He
dances to his chorus as he nears the lake's center.

XAVIER

--Its little head. And then I....

Xavier lowers his hands to his side and goes still.

A breeze whistles and a light flurry falls.

Xavier disappears through the surface. No panic nor splash.

ARNIMUS

A saucer wouldn't flip. I gave your
mom simple instructions. Who
doesn't know a sled from a saucer?
Her! What good is genius if no one
listens?

Arnimus drags the sled and follows Xavier's footprints.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

Gonna get frostbite. May be our
shortest trip ever, X. Let's set
lines. Assuming I can break ice.

A breeze carries flurries which obscure Xavier's trail.

Arnimus flips his scarf and realizes Xavier is not in front.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

X, stay where I can see you.

He spins and sees nothing. Traces of footprints lead towards
the lake's center and disappear. Some panic creeps into his
voice.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

Xavier? Xavier!

He releases the tether and jogs. He notices a fissured patch. Frantic, he dashes.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

No. No!

He wipes the patch and peers through the ice. He repels at a twisted gray scale reflection. He refocuses and bangs his fists. The patch reluctantly cracks.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

No! Please, no!

In the serene and murky world beneath the ice, the current dances Xavier's angelic and frozen body. Head tilted down, tiny bubbles escape roil past his open eyes.

Arnimus glances at the pick axe on the distant sled and decides to grab his pocket knife.

Some violent stabs dislodge ice chunks.

The errant blade closes and slices a few fingers to the bone. A brutal slaying. Blood droplets fly and splatter. The patch gives way.

The current shifts and pulls Xavier into the green darkness as Arnimus submerges his head and sees nothing.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

No. This can't be!

At the distant tree line the Figure floats skyward.

Arnimus searches snow drifts.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

Xavier! Xavier!

He refocuses on the ice. He grabs the axe and unleashes a fury of random slashes.

Exhausted and in disbelief, he breaks down and buries his face in his hands.

The ice moans as a squall begins.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Arnimus clenches his bandaged hand while Rhoneshia stares out the window as a pair of flashlights approach the house.

There's a distance between them. Some bland tea and salt crackers sit untouched. The mess from earlier remains.

ARNIMUS

You should probably eat something.
Clean up later.

Despondent, she ignores him.

A soft knock and a shivering Cop lets himself in. His face says is all.

Arnimus dashes past the Cop.

Rhoneshia accepts the moment with lifeless indifference. With strange relief she watches Arnimus crazed dash.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

Arnimus races towards the Rescue Team. He realizes the encircled men are studying Xavier.

Time slows and stops.

Xavier's eyes and mouth are open, his frosty hair and his matte blue skin reflect flickers of moonlight.

A DIVER prepares to pick up Xavier. He notices Arnimus creep near.

DIVER

I'm so sorry. We need to carry him.
Can't bring the skidoo out. Sir?

The Diver recognizes Arnimus is in shock.

DIVER (CONT'D)

Get him inside, he's gonna freeze.

ARNIMUS

He's alive? Wait! His brain--

The Team exchanges worried glances directed at Arnimus.

DIVER

Not this long. No pulse, no
dilation, nothing. I'm very sorry.

In an unsettling moment, the Diver peels Xavier's body from the ice. The sound of Velcro separating as the frost between the body and the ice rips.

ARNIMUS

Please, let me. He's my son.

Arnimus lifts Xavier's body. He weeps and forces himself to look at into Xavier's eyes.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A gasp for air as Arnimus snaps awake. He scans and sees Xavier's silhouette at the window. Confused and doubtful, he's hopeful to awaken from a dream.

ARNIMUS

Xavier?

The figure shuffles.

XAVIER

Dad?

Overcome by emotion, Arnimus slides to the edge of the bed, ready to dash and embrace him.

ARNIMUS

Oh my God, Xavier! It was terrible.

Arnimus recognizes a strange waterlogged gait as the figure shuffles its feet and sloshes. Faint concern registers on his face as he remembers.

XAVIER

Can I come home, dad?

In disbelief, Arnimus stands and studies the lumpy shadow.

ARNIMUS

You are home.

Arnimus realizes something is wrong as he hears Xavier weep.

XAVIER

Dad, help me.

ARNIMUS

Of course, of course!

He kneels at Xavier's feet.

XAVIER

You took me to die. Why?

ARNIMUS

I didn't. I... I'm so sorry. So very sorry.

XAVIER

Do it again.

ARNIMUS

What?

XAVIER

Make me.

ARNIMUS

I can't.

XAVIER

Yes. You can.

ARNIMUS

I won't. No. What we did was wrong.

Xavier shuffles into the light and Arnimus sees him just as he looked after he drowned. The shimmery moonlight reflects off his shiny blue skin and frosty hair.

Arnimus jumps awake and looks around. He sees Rhoneshia in the window. Some calming breaths and he decides this moment feels real.

He notices she shuffles with a familiar waterlogged gait.

She stops a foot away from him and whimpers. Desperate for a hug, she raises her arms and sobs.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

This is over. Collect your things and move back to your father's. I'll stay in the guest room.

He coldly brushes past her.

Rhoneshia refocuses on the moon above the snowy lake.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Arnimus hasn't slept and looks horrible. He struggles to make sense of what happened as he paces the quiet kitchen.

He opens his notebook and sees Xavier's drawing. Deeply bothered, he weeps. He alerts at an unnatural noise.

ARNIMUS
Rhoneshia?

He senses she's not inside. He senses something amiss,
fastens his pajamas and steps outside.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

He stumbles and loses his slippers in the snowdrift. Some
urgency compels him to continue barefoot.

He jogs and tumbles.

A snow covered kneeling figure near lake center.

He dashes.

As he draws near he realizes.

ARNIMUS
No. No. No!

Snowdrift covers her legs and shoulders. Head angelically
canted and hands locked in prayer.

Rhoneshia's frozen face.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
No. Please. God, no!

He reaches to embrace her and slips. He stumbles and knocks
her ridged body over.

Supine, their eyes meet.

Icy tear tracks arc across her frosty blue cheeks.

The Figure at the distant tree line remains unnoticed.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Unshaven and frazzled, Arnimus is greeting a NEW PATIENT as
the Sleazy Mom drags the Goofy Boy inside.

Arnimus alerts as he remembers the Goofy Boy. He notices the
Goofy Boy whimper and clench his belly.

ARNIMUS
Miss, I can see your son now.

BERTA
Ain't their turn.

The Sleazy Mom drags the Goofy Boy into the examination room. Disinterested, she snatches a feathered celebrity magazine.

SLEAZY MOM
Tell 'em why we back.

The Goofy Boy sobs and wrings his hands.

Arnimus squats to the boy's level.

ARNIMUS
Hello young man. Remember me? I want to help you feel better. Can you tell me what's bothering you?

SLEAZY MOM
You best speak up!

ARNIMUS
Miss, please. Have you checked his temperature? Pupil dilation?

WOMAN
What? No! Isn't that what you do?

GOOFY BOY
I don't feel well.

ARNIMUS
Where exactly to you feel pain?

GOOFY BOY
I don't know.

SLEAZY MOM
Don't mind him. He dumb like daddy.

ARNIMUS
Miss, do you mind? I'm going to take your temperature.

Arnimus begins a compassionate examination.

SLEAZY MOM
Dead beat. Lazy ass. Womanizer.

GOOFY BOY
My stomach hurts.

ARNIMUS
What did you have for breakfast?

GOOFY BOY
Nothing.

ARNIMUS
Dinner, last night.

GOOFY BOY
I ain't had no dinner.

ARNIMUS
When was his last meal?

GOOFY BOY
Ma gave me hard candy yesterday.

The Sleazy Mom flips the pages faster.

SLEAZY MOM
The boy is slow but can done fend
for himself! I got things about.

Arnimus takes offense.

ARNIMUS
You didn't feed your son? What kind
of unfit mother are you? You treat
him like a curse.

A close confrontation. She pokes his chest.

SLEAZY MOM
What you accusin me of? You ain't
got no right. I'm gettin yer boss!

ARNIMUS
Get the boy a meal. He not sick,
he's malnourished! There's EBT.

A cordial moment as she accepts the last of Arnimus' money.
Money safely in her clutch, her face twists.

ANGRY MOM
You don't tell me shit! You ain't
got no right. What do you think yer
doing here?

Arnimus emphatically watches the Goofy Boy get dragged away.

ARNIMUS
What am I doing here?

He closes his eyes and shakes his head. He sees a vision of
Xavier's blue skin. The jacket peel from the ice. A
realization sets in.

He feverishly scribbles in his notebook.

He searches the drawers for something. He's troubled by the clinics lack of resources.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
I need a proper lab.

Invigorated, he rises and marches away.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Alone in gloom, Arnimus taps his pen and places a call.

A fresh diagram of a blueish shell around genes and a page of notes.

ARNIMUS
Hello, Theresa.

He realizes he sounds shaky and gathers himself. He moves near a window and some light shines upon his face.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
I'm ready.

INT. DNA MICROSCOPE ROOM - DAY

A contained laboratory workspace with expensive equipment. A wall covered white-board displays a kaleidoscope of shaded dots gently pulsing into each other and bouncing apart.

Arnimus twists a dial and pushes a button as Tuscan works a keyboard. He scans his notebook and quickly shuts it.

ARNIMUS
The sugar phosphate backbone which bound the chromosomes was removed. Beyond a double strand break, Helix assemble is impossible. My hypothesis may be wrong, but I doubt it. Let's see.

TUSCAN
My last lab had a dozen DNA Microscopes. None of this silly waiting weeks for an hour access.

ARNIMUS
Why did you leave?

TUSCAN

Uh... an ill-advised fiduciary miscalculation led to an unwarranted dispute. Some people just can't take a hint.

ARNIMUS

Self-interest is contagious!

TUSCAN

We've been at this nearly an hour. What am I looking for? Why can't you do this yourself?

ARNIMUS

You're new and my RA is acting up. Watch close, Dr. Yu. Focus and be calm. No one catches fish in anger.

TUSCAN

Sorry, I didn't know. Doesn't rheumatoid arthritis get in the way of being a fisherman?

ARNIMUS

I manage. I fancy myself an angler. I fish not to find myself but to be lost. Do you fish? Perhaps we--

TUSCAN

God no! What a waste of time. I mean its a good hobby for you. If someone cares to do something like that.

ARNIMUS

Quiet! Now watch... wait for it.

A squad of blue shaded dots distribute and bind with the other dots and form spiral tree-shaped helix.

TUSCAN

Cutting edge genius, you did it! You really did it. You'll be rich! This will be worth millions.

ARNIMUS

The bind isn't enough. The wild gene can't copy onto the maternal chromosomes.

Arnimus stoops close as the structure collapses. He stands quickly, swoons. He loosens his tie and appears clammy.

TUSCAN

How did you come up with it?

ARNIMUS

Ice. Ice molecules exhibit eighteen packing geometries. Super-cooled strands form medullary rays.

Arnimus gags on a mouthful of Smarties. He notices Tuscan's scabbed nail bed as he accepts a bottle of water.

TUSCAN

Are you alright?

ARNIMUS

A bit dizzy. I skipped breakfast. What happened to your finger?

TUSCAN

Uh... caught in door.

ARNIMUS

Just the one?

Tuscan notices Arnimus' scarred fingers.

TUSCAN

Lucky... I guess. That's a nasty scar. Car door too?

ARNIMUS

Uh... fishing mishap.

Tuscan slyly swaps the mapping pen for an artist's pen.

TUSCAN

I know people who'd be interested in your work. Very interested. Heck, I could even secure a paid speaking arrangement.

ARNIMUS

I dislike crowds... people in general. Besides, the university will stake claim.

TUSCAN

Perhaps. Why tell them? What did they ever do for you? Laid you off when things got tough.

ARNIMUS

Still, they have all the resources. Never leave fish to find fish!

TUSCAN

I know people. They'd report to you. Not tell you what to do. I could get you a team?

ARNIMUS

I did this alone. Rather devote my time unlocking secrets than building sandbox friendships. Besides, I'll need the board's approval for more HeLa material to finish. Unless....

TUSCAN

Oversight is bad business. Theresa will assign a panel. Your work will be hijacked. No exclusive rights.

ARNIMUS

Those plagiarizing hacks.

TUSCAN

I can keep a secret. In the meanwhile you'll want this vetted.

Tuscan reaches for the notebook and Arnimus jumps.

ARNIMUS

No! I'll mind the research!

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

A crowded workplace eatery with prepared foods and an upscale station.

Arnimus unwraps scones and prepares to spread Vegemite as Tuscan sets down a healthy tray of sushi.

ARNIMUS

It's Vegemite, a great source--

TUSCAN

--I know. My chef in Auckland put it on everything. Tastes like garbage... smells worse. Are you on a diet?

ARNIMUS

No. The health benefits are....

TUSCAN

Are what?

Arnimus crumbles up the scones in the foil. He pours a sleeve of Smarties in his mouth.

ARNIMUS

I don't know. I wasn't hungry.

TUSCAN

As I was saying, Doc. Validation is key to monetizing. Remember Dr. Fung in China? Faked research... committed suicide. Idiot set fire to his lab and killed everyone.

ARNIMUS

Tragic, yes. But science lost nothing. Genefusion just announced findings he so desperately sought.

TUSCAN

Let me broker this. We could be partners?

ARNIMUS

Team work is over-rated. I needed an extra set of hands... not advice.

TUSCAN

You needed a signatory and you kicked the other kids from the sandbox.

ARNIMUS

Perhaps. Do you have children?

TUSCAN

No... no thank you! I'm loving a bachelor's life. You?

ARNIMUS

I... uh... yes. A son. Dr. Yu, nothing is greater, more powerful, than the love a parent has for their child. A child will teach you humbly, compassion, and there's more to life than a paycheck. Their love is priceless.

TUSCAN

You'll see I'm right. You'll come around.

ARNIMUS

I agree with your take on privacy.
Let's keep this under wrap.

TUSCAN

If you don't tell the board, how
can you get more genetic material?

ARNIMUS

Let me worry about that.

TUSCAN

Promise you'll consider. Doc, money
can buy anything! Take your son
fishing in New Zealand, or sledding
in Aspen. Buy your wife....

A frazzled CLERK, 25, attractive, paces in search of a seat.
Arnimus offers his chair.

ARNIMUS

Miss. Please, have my seat. Dr. Yu,
can you explain to this young lady
your thoughts on currency?

EXT. UPSCALE EATERY - DAY

Frustrated after a long day, Karis pulls her modest sedan to
the side of the road and patiently waits on casual loiterers
to vacate a parking space.

A CASHIER, 20, dashes out with a to-go bag.

CASHIER

Sadie... that will be \$24.75.

KARIS

Thanks, Kevin.

CASHIER

Uh... Kevin's not here anymore.

She hands over the last of her money.

KARIS

Oh, sorry. I thought he liked it
here?

CASHIER

He did, but if you're motivated,
there's always something better.
That is, if you're willing to look.

The answer oddly sits with her.

EXT. KARIS APARTMENT - DAY

Sadie parks among a vast row of modest vehicles. She negotiates between small apartment buildings.

FOOTBALL DAD (O.S.)
Post pattern! Past the tree and
break right!

She alerts at the familiar tone.

She rounds the corner as a FOOTBALL SON, 8, sprints past in a blur. She stops walking and takes it all in. This could be her son. Although unlikely, she scans for Arnimus.

The football spirals into the Football Son's arms.

The FOOTBALL DAD, 30, hoots.

Karis gets a good look and realizes its not Arnimus.

FOOTBALL DAD (CONT'D)
Sorry miss. We in your way?

KARIS
Uh... no.

INT. KARIS APARTMENT - DAY

A sterile and modest apartment. Karis sits on the floor and washes down her light fare with a healthy glass of wine.

She removes a new luxury shoes from the box and slips them on her sore feet.

She tries on several dresses with the shoes but none do justice. She gives up and returns the shoes to the box.

EXT. LAB - DAY

Karis parks in a generic spot among a field of nicer cars. She stumbles as her heel snaps off. Not the first time, she huffs and considers ways to reattach it.

An intimidating rev of a sleek ultra-luxury car. A series of horn blasts alerts some loitering pedestrians to clear a reserved parking spot.

Tuscan glares as the gaggle disburses. Karis takes it all in.

TUSCAN
Dr. Karis. High flyer!

KARIS
Me, no.... Dr. Yu. Nice car.

TUSCAN
Fruits of a surprise bonus.

KARIS
I heard the corporate sector is
lucrative.

TUSCAN
Also cut-throat! I have the
pleasure of assisting your Ex with
his new thesis.

KARIS
Pleasure? I doubt that.

TUSCAN
Did he discuss his project with
you? He's rather tight-lipped.

KARIS
No, but don't take it personal. He
prefers to work alone.

TUSCAN
Curious. On a completely separate
topic, are you happy here?

KARIS
Uh... yeah. Why?

TUSCAN
Stop me if I'm out of place. I have
a buddy at Genomics who is looking
for someone exactly like you. Would
you entertain a job offer?

KARIS
I can't shop jobs. I'm under
tenure.

TUSCAN
Their lawyers slice red tape like
Angolan veil. It'd be lucrative....

KARIS
I suppose there's no harm in
listening.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

Theresa and the advisory panel listen as Karis finishes a lackluster presentation. She fiddles as the bored panel seeks distractions.

KARIS
Questions?

THERESA
This sounds much like the paper
Hopkins published last quarter.

KARIS
I....

THERESA
Next time dear, better camouflage
your paraphrase. Lastly....

Theresa's sly smile as Arnimus averts gaze.

ARNIMUS
Nothing to share.

THERESA
I see you've cleaned up. Job
interview, perhaps? No matter. Are
you sure?

ARNIMUS
Inspired, motivated, yes. My thesis
is coming along but I don't have
anything worthy.

THERESA
Dr. Muth, I have your logs! Exactly
what are you working on? I'll have
you shown the door.

ARNIMUS
Alright! It's premature. But I'm
able... with limited success... to
construct helix.

Theresa's jaw hangs as the panel clamors.

BOARD MEMBER
Impossible! Nonsense.

THERESA
Theoretically, you mean? I'm sure
your research falls within the
global accord on ethics.

ARNIMUS

Of course.

Theresa watches Arnimus squirm.

THERESA

When can we expect your paper?

ARNIMUS

There's isn't one. Only notes.
Like I said... it's premature.

Karis watches Arnimus clutch the notebook.

The room filled with an indecipherable murmur of ethics.

Theresa wanders close to Arnimus. Some nervous enthusiasm as she studies his eyes for clues.

THERESA

You've done it, haven't you? I'll
need to publish something. Generate
buzz. Get these vultures off my
back. Have Dr. Karis validate.

ARNIMUS

No! She's a uh....

THERESA

Dr. Yu then! Get it done!

INT. KARIS OFFICE - DAY

Downtrodden, Karis hangs up the phone.

KARIS

His exact words... No way in hell.

A Manila folder slides across the pristine surface of an impressive executive desk.

With reluctance, Karis squares and opens the folder.

TUSCAN

In the strictest of confidence as
we have a common financial goal. He
won't talk to either of us. Maybe
that won't be necessary...

KARIS

Copies of his notes.... You stole?

TUSCAN

Harsh ugly words, but yes. So? It appears he laying ground to rebuild helix without mutant HLA.

KARIS

A cure for MS?

TUSCAN

Strange, right. I thought he'd target RA... out of self-interest. Whatever. My associates must be able to replicate his findings. Or, are they your findings? No matter to me. I'm just a simple broker vouching for an associate.

Karis flips the folder open and skims the block paragraphs and intersecting lines on a graph. In disbelief, she flips the pages and checks some figures.

KARIS

A solution to cell suicide? This isn't related to MS. No. He can't.

An illustration of a skyscraper with a question mark adjacent to scattered dots and a quote "What if the building was but a single story?"

TUSCAN

What's he working on?

KARIS

I... don't know. This is beyond me.

TUSCAN

If you want to be on top, get him to explain! You want this job, you must deliver!

Her mood worsens as she locks the file in a desk safe and slides her hand across her stomach.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

A miserable day, gusty wind and sleet. Arnimus walks the lake's edge. He focuses on the lake's desolate center and reminisces.

He shuffles his weight. A Velcro like-noise of leaves crunching beneath the snow.

A distant gray-scale Figure catches his eye. He slips and stumbles. He scans and decides it was nothing.

He looks at some exposed leaves and remembers the Velcro noise. An idea resonates and surfaces.

INT. DNA MICROSCOPE ROOM - DAY

Tuscan adjusts the microscope as Arnimus hovers over him.

ARNIMUS

The other way. Damn it man! You've been a lab all your life! Focus!

Arnimus remembers the Velcro sound and glances as someone knocks and tugs on the locked door.

TUSCAN

You should really be showing this to Dr. Karis.

ARNIMUS

Do you see it now?

TUSCAN

I don't know. What am I looking at?

ARNIMUS

The pre-crystalline fungal bind. Natures Velcro.

TUSCAN

Uh... yeah. Is it holding?

ARNIMUS

Yes, it is. Now sign the acknowledgement.

TUSCAN

Dr. Muth, I know someone who'd pay just to hear more about this.

ARNIMUS

No! Damn you.

TUSCAN

Why not just hear them out?

ARNIMUS

Have you no soul? Where is all this talk of money gotten you? A chair at a table signing papers for me!

Arnimus pops a few Smarties. He notices another of Tuscan's fingernail are missing.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
Whacked again?

TUSCAN
Umm... yes.

ARNIMUS
Be more careful. Sign the log and co-sign another lab request.

Loud knocks on the door. Tuscan prepares to answer it.

TUSCAN
Who signed for today? I'll get the door.

ARNIMUS
Don't! Dim the lights.

TUSCAN
You've got 15 minutes left.

Keys fumble with the lock. Stern voice beyond the door.

ARNIMUS
No, I think we're done.

The door flies open and Theresa and the Burly Guard march in.

THERESA
Dr. Muth, you will adhere to schedule! My office, now!

Arnimus accidently bumps into the Burly Guard.

The Burly Guard on edge considers retaliating.

Arnimus senses danger.

ARNIMUS
Oops. Parkinson's is acting up. So sorry.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

Arnimus and Karis sit at opposing ends of a table and take turns presenting to Theresa and a panel.

Arnimus presents with gravity and Karis squirms. Theresa notices he swoons and breaks out in a clammy sweats.

As Karis presents, Arnimus disrupts by crinkling the Smarties cellophane wrapper and a water bottle.

THERESA

The allocation of DNA Microscopy access and CRISPR materials is contentious. We must resume lead!

ARNIMUS

We go through this every quarter. Do you want safe, or results?

THERESA

Dr. Muth, I can't make heads or tails of your white paper. Fragmented hodgepodge of gibberish.

ARNIMUS

Not everyone packages thoughts as grocery. I wrote as it came to me.

THERESA

Your projects will merge and Dr. Karis will lead.

ARNIMUS

What! Better to let the janitor test mop water.

THERESA

Entitled and truculent... refusal to conform. The clock is ticking for you to deliver.

ARNIMUS

But I....

Theresa and the panel gathers their effects and depart.

Arnimus and Karis sit alone.

Feeling guilty, she gestures for his attention.

KARIS

She doesn't trust you. Your project can't be that secretive.

Stern, Arnimus rises.

ARNIMUS

No. But it's mine.

KARIS

Please. I just want to be a part of it. Unless of course... well. How is he, by the way?

Arnimus' face softens and he stammers.

ARNIMUS

He's fine.

KARIS

I'd love to see him. So, you heard her. Will you consider? It's best for us both. You've done what's best for yourself. You have no choice, really.

ARNIMUS

We'll see.

She's confused by how he says it.

Arnimus rises and marches away.

KARIS

How's Rhoneshia? She's well too?

Arnimus freezes.

She studies him for a reaction. Puzzled, she hears a faint sob as he scampers away.

INT. PRIVATE EXECUTIVE BATHROOM - DAY

Tuscan sits on the toilet as he slyly talks on his phone.

TUSCAN

I'll deliver... I always do. Her? No, only a pawn. Muth talks a big game. I'm working him from both angles. Then there's always Plan C.

The door flings open and Tuscan conceals his phone.

Teary-eyed Arnimus dashes to the sink and struggles to look himself in the mirror.

ARNIMUS

Why? Why? I can't....

TUSCAN

Hey! You mind?

ARNIMUS
I didn't... sorry.

Tuscan returns to his call after Arnimus leaves.

TUSCAN
There's cracks in that wall. He'll
play.

INT. FOREST - DAY [DREAM SEQUENCE]

A grainy gray-scale pine tree forest on a warm spring day.

Disappointed, Arnimus studies the bottom of an empty bucket as he gathers the last of the fishing gear.

XAVIER
Why do we have catch and release
when we can just make more?

ARNIMUS
The life cycle takes time. A
natural process at hatcheries.
Scientists ensure a higher quality
of fish survive.

XAVIER
Like me.

Arnimus swallows a bad taste.

Brittle pine needles crunch under footsteps.

Arnimus shields his eyes from the brilliant sky as he follow
Xavier around a maze of trees.

XAVIER (CONT'D)
The coyote falls off a cliff. An
anvil lands on his head. In every
show he's back.

ARNIMUS
Cartoons. In real life roadrunners
obviously can't....

XAVIER
It's doesn't have to be this way.
You know that dad. I could be
someone different. Anyone.

Arnimus scans the forest and wonders if this is a dream. He
glances past the Figure commingled among the trunks.

ARNIMUS

This is difficult for me. I know
you're dead.

Xavier stops walking. His waterlogged shuffle.

XAVIER

I'm not dead.

ARNIMUS

I'm dreaming.

Arnimus wipes a tear and studies the ground. He shuffles and pine needles snap.

An unnatural noise in the distance. Arnimus scans, sees nothing and dismisses it.

XAVIER

This isn't a dream. I'm alive.

ARNIMUS

You are not, you drowned! I was
there! And I will live with regret
every single moment for the rest of
my life!

Arnimus stomps away between rows of trees.

XAVIER (O.S.)

Don't go! Don't you want me back?

ARNIMUS

You're dead. It was wrong last
time. It would be wrong. Immoral--

A growl.

Arnimus freezes. He scans and notices a flash of movement as a coyote disappears behind a tree.

More growls.

XAVIER (O.S.)

Dad, help!

Arnimus hears Xavier's primal scream and he dashes.

ARNIMUS

Xavier, I'm coming!

Arnimus reaches the clearing as coyotes encircle Xavier.

XAVIER
Dad, save me!

ARNIMUS
I got you.

Arnimus snatches Xavier and dashes. He trips and falls. He wildly swings a branch as coyotes surrounds him.

Xavier crawls behind a shrub.

XAVIER
Don't let them get me!

ARNIMUS
I won't. Stay back!

XAVIER
Save me!

Xavier yelps. Growls and the sounds of tearing flesh from inside the bush.

ARNIMUS
No! Xavier.

He pulls back branches and sees torn flesh and blood.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
No.

Silence.

Arnimus snuffles. He falls to his knees and weeps.

A growl behind him and he turns.

An airborne coyote. Fangs and slit eyes bear down.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Arnimus jumps from bed and checks his forearms for injury.

He scribbles notes with the imperial pen. With haste he dresses for work, grabs his keys and dashes.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

A much needed late-lunch break.

Arnimus waits in line to pay for sushi. He pulls \$10 from his wallet. It's not enough.

ARNIMUS

Does anyone have...

Met with a field of glares, he abandons the fare. He scans the buffet and selects a boring sandwich.

The lone vacant seat in the busy cafeteria next to Karis.

KARIS

Well, hi!

ARNIMUS

The other seats are taken.

Her smile fades as he sheepishly sits and focuses on dissecting the sandwich.

KARIS

Okay then.... Ditched the Vegemite too? Still need Vitamin B... gotta regulate your blood sugar.

He rolls cold-cuts into cylinders and rearranges the layers.

ARNIMUS

It wasn't homemade. Do we fix mistakes or vainly bury them? Transpose layers, feign solutions. Is it really up to us? If we could, should we try to make it right?

KARIS

I'm not saying forget the past, Arnimus. It's about how we chose to move forward.

Something clicks and a smile breaks upon his face.

ARNIMUS

What matters most is what's next?

She's optimistic as he makes eye contact with her.

KARIS

All we can do is forge ahead. You pretend to be so tough. I like seeing you... vulnerable. Perhaps we could grab dinner? Arnimus?

ARNIMUS

What I do next....

Arnimus rises and absconds.

Clueless and rejected, she muses at the sandwich remnants.

KARIS

Damn, damn, damn. Why do I keep
letting him do this to me?

INT. LAB - DAY

Tuscan and Theresa loiter and debate.

THERESA

If Dr. Muth engages in ethical
fatigue, report to me, not the
board. There's nothing, right?

TUSCAN

Uh... right.

THERESA

He'd have my blessing if he brought
back the Northern White Rhino. The
press would love it! God's
creations man destroyed. But if he
plays Frankenstein again....

TUSCAN

What?

THERESA

Never mind. Just keep me apprised.

TUSCAN

Understood.

THERESA

Religion. Policy. A moral compass.
Regulation can't stop innovation
fueled by a pile of money.

Theresa wanders away as Tuscan lets it marinate.

TUSCAN

That'd depend on how big of a pile.

Crazed and disheveled, Arnimus clings to his notebook as he
strides past.

ARNIMUS

Stay away from her, she's trouble.

TUSCAN

You say that about everyone.

Tuscan hands him a water bottle and falls in behind Arnimus as they negotiate some hallways.

ARNIMUS

What's that idiot want? Never mind.

TUSCAN

Rambling about religion.

ARNIMUS

There's no place for it.

TUSCAN

You mean in the workplace?

ARNIMUS

Sure.

TUSCAN

Ethics.

Arnimus glares and walks faster.

ARNIMUS

The amassed opinion of idiots bound to the bottom. A tether to protect a dying dynasty.

Tuscan jogs to catch up.

TUSCAN

Nothing another zero on a check can't fix. Rearranging the building blocks of life. A stepping stone to constructing an embryo. No mom or dad. No soul. Life in a petri dish. Some may say this is immoral.

Arnimus stops short and glares at Tuscan. A serious moment.

ARNIMUS

If you're bothered, leave. People will forever talk about what I'm will do.

TUSCAN

Doc, I can't believe I'm saying this, but... you may want to slow down. You don't sleep, you don't eat. The seams are coming apart.

ARNIMUS

You're only concern is your paycheck.

(MORE)

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
Faked research, preposterous!
Secure a batch of catalyzing
reagents.

TUSCAN
You can't without Theresa!

ARNIMUS
She'll cave. You said it.
Everyone's blinded by greed.

Arnimus's accelerates to the board room doors.

No knock.

He slams the doors open.

Theresa and a table of executives stop mid-meeting.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
Unrestricted access or I will take
my research and leave!

EXT. TUSCAN APARTMENT - DAY

Tuscan drives up to the valet at his luxury high rise
apartment building.

INT. TUSCAN APARTMENT - DAY

Tuscan hums an upbeat classical tune as he shuffles into his
barren apartment. He tosses his high-end suit jacket on the
floor, undresses and leaves a trail of clothes.

He misses a beat. He shrugs off his forgetfulness and resumes
humming. The broken hum turns somber.

A set of pliers.

He clenches his jaw and tugs scar tissue from his missing
fingernail bed. His face registers some relief as blood drips
from the wound.

Naked, he kneels and opens a vault. He studies tall stacks of
money. He's concerned as they no longer give him pleasure.

He crawls into a king bed adorned with decorative pillows.
Troubled, he studies the ceiling for answers.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

A private examination room.

Arnimus sees a slew of patients with routine ailments. He makes odd inquiries as he screens patients.

ARNIMUS

Are you sexually active? What are your thoughts on abortion?

PATIENT

What gives? It's an ear infection?

Exhausted, Arnimus swoons. He breaks out in cold sweats and excuses himself.

He swaggers past Berta and a lobby of waiting patients.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Arnimus searches the candy shelves.

XAVIER (V.O.)

I love these!

He skims past Smarties and grabs SKITTLES. He queues in the only register line behind a slew of customers.

The slowest cashier ever RAY-RAY, 40, back country simpleton, has all the time in the world.

He grows impatient.

Berta pops her head out.

BERTA

Doctor, you have patients waiting.

He opens the Skittles and pops a few in his mouth.

ARNIMUS

Be right there! Miss, can I just pay for these later? Miss!

RAY-RAY

If you want 'em, you gonna need to pay for them.

Arnimus returns the Skittles to the shelf.

RAY-RAY (CONT'D)

You can't do that. They open. Kirt!

She looks for KIRT, 30, a dim bully, the loss prevention associate.

KIRT

Yep?

RAY-RAY

This here gentleman opened them already. He don't want to pay.

Kirt steps close eager to escalate an issue.

ARNIMUS

I want to pay. Here.

KIRT

Sir. I can't be takin your money. You must pay the proper cashier.

ARNIMUS

That's what I'm trying to do!

KIRT

Don't raise your voice.

ARNIMUS

I'm not raising my voice!

RAY-RAY

I'm tryin to do my job. You may be a fancy doctor but you need to wait your turn like everyone do.

Berta pokes her head out from the clinic.

BERTA

Doc! Patients are waiting. Do I need to call corporate?

ARNIMUS

No! Can you stand in line for me?

BERTA

I answer phones, Doc. That's it. We've covered this.

ARNIMUS

Damn it! Damn the lot of you!

Arnimus flails and Skittles spill and bounce across the floor. He skirts around Kirt and marches toward the clinic.

KIRT
Pay, Doc, else I'm gonna be forced
to take action.

RAY-RAY
Notify the authorities!

KIRT
Those fellas are useless.

RAY-RAY
Are not.

KIRT
Am too. The only thing they got
that I ain't is a gun.

RAY-RAY
If you stay'd out of trouble. You'd
still have yers.

EXT. BEACH - DAY [DREAM SEQUENCE]

A beautiful sunny day on a pristine beach. A seagull cackles.

XAVIER (O.S.)
Dad. Wake up.

Xavier playfully tugs on Arnimus' fingers.

Arnimus raises his sunglasses and sits up.

ARNIMUS
What? What is it?

XAVIER
Aren't we gonna fish?

ARNIMUS
No bother. You took too long to get
ready. Its late. Fish bite better
early.

He suspects it may be a dream.

He takes a deep breath and his face softens as he stares
across the vastness of the ocean.

A shoveling sound behind him. He sees Xavier dig a hole with
a toy shovel and pail.

XAVIER
Play with me.

ARNIMUS

Not right now, I'm busy.

With some remorse, Arnimus realizes his instinctive reply and takes interest in the hole.

XAVIER

It's okay, dad. It's not dark down there. I thought it would be. But it isn't.

Arnimus notices the water table fills the shallow hole. He refocuses on the ocean.

ARNIMUS

You dug too close. Move further up the beach if you want to dig deep. You should know that.

XAVIER

You told me that before too. I don't know why I forget. There's a problem with my brain. Some wires came loose. You told mom that. You said its her fault.

ARNIMUS

No. I didn't mean....

Sorrow overcomes Arnimus' face.

XAVIER

It's my fault.

ARNIMUS

No, it's mine! What we did... what I did... was wrong.

XAVIER

This is fine, dad. When the water fills the hole, they'll drown too.

Something clicks and Arnimus realizes it's a dream and some panic sets in.

ARNIMUS

I've never been to the beach.

XAVIER

Me neither.

Xavier glances at the ocean and refocuses on digging the hole as some seagulls cackle.

ARNIMUS

I always wanted to take you. I'm so
sorry. I wasn't a good father.

Arnimus weeps.

A flock of seagulls circle and shriek. A few swoop close.

XAVIER

We can still go, dad. She needs
this as much as you.

Arnimus buries his face in his arms.

A tug at his shirt. He shakes it off.

ARNIMUS

Tell me what to do.

His shirt jerked as his anger rises. An angry squawk.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

I don't know what to do. What!

Xavier yelps.

Arnimus realizes a large seagull yanks his shirt.

XAVIER

Help! Dad!

ARNIMUS

No! Xavier!

Xavier squirms and writhes as seagulls swarm him. Beaks
tipped with blood. Black tipped wings flap. A cacophony of
shrieks as the seagulls frenzy.

Arnimus struggles to get close enough to rescue Xavier.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

Xavier!

Some seagulls attack Arnimus and he repels and raises his
hands to defend.

XAVIER (V.O.)

Nothing stops you, dad.

A seagull's beak jabs to Arnimus' face.

He flails and falls back.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Lyla, 25, dim and pitiful, sits up on the examination table and rubs her lower back.

Preoccupied with his syringe and test tube, Arnimus fidgets as he slyly slips the tube into his satchel. He's upbeat as he scribbles down some notes with the imperial pen.

ARNIMUS

You've been really great.

LYLA

How soon before the results?

ARNIMUS

Uh... maybe a week.

LYLA

Should I just come by?

ARNIMUS

No, don't! I mean... I'll call with the results and schedule follow up. Go ahead and get dressed.

As Berta peek through door, he shoves it shut.

LYLA

Do I pay at the counter?

ARNIMUS

No charge. Medicare covers it.

Distracted Arnimus picks up a Clinic pen and pockets it.

LYLA

Should I see a gynecologist?

ARNIMUS

You could... but they'll pawn you off to some clinician. Here, you get doctor's care.

Arnimus offers a fake grin to settle Lyla's nerves.

He escorts Lyla past Berta's watchful eye.

The door slams. The snow globe white powder rises and pirouettes around the fisherman and a woman.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

A single open register and a line of grumbling customers.

Arnimus waits with a basket of groceries. In a trance, he stares at the bags of Skittles and remembers Xavier and recalls his laughter.

Ray-Ray glares as Arnimus reaches for the Skittles.

RAY-RAY

Hey! We don't want to repeat of
earlier mister!

Arnimus retracts his hand.

Unseen by everyone, against a far wall, the Figure silently lowers from the ceiling and softly lands. Body squared towards Arnimus, head twisted away.

Arnimus snatches the Skittles, tears open the bag and pops some into his mouth. He's ready for a conflict and glares at Ray-Ray.

Arnimus puzzles as Ray-Ray seems to avoid looking in his direction.

The unnoticed Figure rises up through the ceiling.

Something catches Arnimus' eye and he looks to the empty space just occupied by the Figure. He shakes off an uneasy feeling.

INT. DNA MICROSCOPE ROOM - DAY

In darkness. Some light trickles in from the ajar door.

Arnimus hurriedly works in silence. He's been at it all night. The computer screen hue silhouettes his face. An image of an embryo on the screen.

He adds a myriad of exotic items, assembles a helix and shifts several strands.

Some distant footsteps approach.

The door softly closes and locks.

Arnimus glances back and puzzles at the shut door.

Someone tugs the locked door and Arnimus alerts.

BURLY GUARD (O.S.)
Hey, someone in there?

Arnimus notices the locked door and shakes it off. He works fast to manipulate the helix and inserts the strands.

Keys in the lock. The bolt retracts.

Arnimus panics in a race to finish.

The door is shoved but doesn't budge.

BURLY GUARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Open up!

ARNIMUS
A minute.

BURLY GUARD (O.S.)
Is that you? You're not supposed to be in there!

ARNIMUS
I'm must have dozed off... my narcolepsy. Just a second.

Arnimus rushes some keystrokes. He shaky, and tries to insert the helix into the embryo.

The embryo's surface rejects it.

BURLY GUARD (O.S.)
Open the dam door!

ARNIMUS
Damn! Calm yourself. A moment.

Arnimus calms and focuses.

He inserts the helix as the door buckles under the Burly Guard's efforts.

Arnimus slips the embryo into a tube in his pocket as the busted door and the Burly Guard hit the floor.

BURLY GUARD
You!

ARNIMUS
Yes, me.

BURLY GUARD
Get out! I'm--

ARNIMUS

I know. Reporting this to Theresa.

INT. LAB - DAY

Tuscan reviews some papers as the Clerk shuffles near and waves a paper sack.

CLERK

For Dr. Muth. Can you make sure he gets this, or do I have to pay you?

TUSCAN

I'm not like that. Usually... I mean... he'll get it.

Tuscan studies her departure. He peeks at a bottle of prenats and a vial labeled TATA.

He hears familiar frantic footsteps and pretends fill out forms as Arnimus strides in.

Arnimus slips the sack in his duffel as Tuscan hands him a bottle of water.

ARNIMUS

Stay hydrated... got it. I've never met someone so fixated on water. Were you a marine biologist in your past life?

TUSCAN

More likely a calligrapher. I have an eye for ink. Really though, I've known thirst and can't say I cared for it. Bottoms up! You should hit the head before you hit the road.

Arnimus slips the notebook into his duffel.

ARNIMUS

Any more and I may spring a leak.

As Arnimus walks out of sight, Tuscan snatches the notebook and skims a few pages. He recognizes the new notes by the change in the font.

TUSCAN

One page, Doc. Lazy. Why prenats?

A Clinic Pen holds an early page in the notebook. He notices the margins have newly added notes.

TUSCAN (CONT'D)

Crap!

He scampers to an adjacent room and makes two copies.

ARNIMUS (O.S.)

Watch it, damn salmon!

Tuscan places a copy in a Manila folder and tucks the other under his shirt. He dashes and returns the notebook to the duffel as Arnimus reaches the doorway.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Tuscan waves a bottle of water. The clinic pen in his pocket.

TUSCAN

One for the road!

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Tuscan delivers a Manila folder to Karis.

KARIS

Astounding progress. He's testing with far more material than requisition. Where's he getting it?

TUSCAN

I don't know. What's TATA?

KARIS

A genetic binding protein... Why?

TUSCAN

You tell me why! You better have answers at the Genefusion meet!

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Lyla nervously reclines in a surgical gown.

BERTA

Doc, that door need stay open!

Arnimus slams it shut and examines Lyla's privates.

ARNIMUS

You need to only listen to me.

LYLA
But God says--

ARNIMUS
--God may be right. But who really
knows? If you're ill, unable to
care for yourself, what good are
you to others? Doctor's orders!

He chuckles and grabs an exotic syringe and injects her.

LYLA
What's that?

ARNIMUS
Vitamins.

In the snow globe a few flakes jump and dance.

INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

Tuscan slyly follows as Arnimus takes a backwater exit off
the highway.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Tuscan makes a serious call and twirls the clinic pen. He
watches as Arnimus hands Lyla a familiar bottle of pills.

TUSCAN
We may have work. Be ready.

He follows Lyla as she drives away. Some pedestrians in the
crosswalk dive out of the way as he pins the gas to avoid
losing her.

EXT. LYLA'S HOUSE - DAY

Tuscan watches Lyla enter a dilapidated back-country home.

INT. XAVIER'S ROOM - DAY

Arnimus passes the open door.

He shuffles back and peers inside. The room hasn't been
touched.

He creeps inside and sadly takes it all in. He notices some
drawings scattered across the desk.

A glimpse of the Figure in the mirror's reflection.

He spins and sees nothing as the Figure passes through the ceiling.

He selects the drawing of Xavier and Arnimus as they hold hands and smile. In a happy moment, a tear falls from Arnimus' eye. A blue crayon rolls off the table.

His happiness is overtaken by regret and he sobs.

An unnoticed and incomplete drawing. Xavier and the Figure fish from a small boat as a blue-shaded Arnimus floats beneath the lake's surface.

Arnimus rips the drawings and stomps away.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Karis watches as Tuscan skims printouts of Arnimus' email.

TUSCAN

Combined with the notes. Clear, but still incomplete. I thought you couldn't access his email?

KARIS

I don't report to you.

TUSCAN

You don't trust me! You need to forget your loyalty to him.

KARIS

I just can't do that.

TUSCAN

Why?

A somber moment as Karis reminisces.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Karis takes the podium and delivers a crisp presentation as Arnimus stands offstage and totes her materials.

KARIS (V.O.)

We met in university. Me, prized and recruited. Him, to fill a vacancy.

(MORE)

KARIS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He was a sheep, cute, without aspiration yet desperate for attention. He fell in place. Well... we married.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

She spreads Vegemite on his toast and acknowledges feelings for him.

KARIS (V.O.)

We wanted children so badly. You know what drives you the most? What you can't have. As a genomic pioneer I knew I carried a the MS expression. Which...

TUSCAN (V.O.)

... skips a generation.

KARIS (V.O.)

Arnimus told me it ran in his family too and if we worked together we'd find a cure.

TUSCAN

Wait. MS?

KARIS

That's another story.... The idea of a family sidetracked us. We were the cutting edge... the forefront. Why not remove the mutant gene?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A GIRL, 8, returns from school. She goes ridged in the kitchen as a SICK WOMAN, 30, in advanced stages of MS, wobbles on crutches, face twists in pain.

KARIS (V.O.)

My mother passed at 27. A wreck. I watched it unfold. Return home from school. The nurse left care to me. Later I learned of Arnimus' sympathy. I thought he knew the pain I suffered and that's why.

TUSCAN (V.O.)

Driven yet torn.

INT. LAB - DAY

Arnimus works throughout the night.

KARIS (V.O.)

Arnimus said being driven was not enough. He was convinced he'd find a way. I was the brilliant academic. He was free. Lateral thinking. Concepts beyond textbooks.

TUSCAN (V.O.)

Splicing was unethical.

KARIS (V.O.)

Mildly put. We tabled a Vanilla study. Got funded. Profiled patients. Hid our plan well.

Rhoneshia completes an survey.

Karis feign compassion and tells Rhoneshia she's pregnant.

TUSCAN (V.O.)

You needed a surrogate. Who would carry until term and allow a couple of wealthy doctors to adopt.

Theresa sees invoices, becomes upset and picks up the phone.

KARIS (V.O.)

Yes. But Theresa suspected and froze funding. We made it appear like an accounting error.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Arnimus releases Karis's hand.

KARIS (V.O.)

We were determined to protect our project. She needed medical care. Specialized tests. It wasn't easy. But we agreed to separate so he could--

TUSCAN (V.O.)

--Marry her.

Karis watches as Arnimus takes Rhoneshia's hand. He grows distant and avoids Karis.

Karis sees Arnimus and a very pregnant Rhoneshia at lunch.

Karis sobs over his empty dresser drawer.

END FLASHBACK

KARIS

Insurance and a parental claim. The way he looked at her. He wasn't supposed to fall in love. I don't know if he truly did. Or because she gave him what he needed most. He kept me away. I never saw our son. He won't even speak of him.

Karis wipes a tear and struggles to focus.

INT. LAB - DAY

Tuscan pretends to work and awaits Arnimus arrival.

ARNIMUS (O.S.)

Watch it! Stupid salmon!

Tuscan places a bottle of water on Arnimus' desk.

TUSCAN

Morning, Doc! How's the weekend?

Arnimus flips through folders and skims his notebook.

ARNIMUS

Fine.

TUSCAN

The family?

ARNIMUS

Fine.

TUSCAN

Do anything fun? Doc?

Arnimus shuffles some papers and chews on a pen.

ARNIMUS

What!

TUSCAN

Sorry. I know you're not a fan of small talk.

ARNIMUS

I went fishing.

TUSCAN

Alone?

ARNIMUS

With my son.

TUSCAN

Wow! Tough. Did you catch anything?
Like a foot of snow fell. Much
better for sledding....

ARNIMUS

We sledded too.

TUSCAN

Nice to have a family. What else?

ARNIMUS

Enough! Stop it! I'm here to work.
Not play 20 fucking questions! Is
the DNA microscopy room set up?

TUSCAN

You aren't on for today.

Tuscan trails as Arnimus storms towards the microscopy room.

Theresa and Karis argue outside.

KARIS

Bumped?

THERESA

We will get you another slot soon.

KARIS

These shenanigans wouldn't happen
at Harvard! Who took my slot?

THERESA

Priority work took precedent.

Arnimus rams Karis' shoulder as he marches past.

ARNIMUS

Big tuna coming through! You're
gonna need a bigger boat!

KARIS

Him! I don't know what's going on
but I don't like it!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Tuscan pulls his car curb side and watches as Arnimus enters his home. He notices the other car is buried under snow.

Moments later Arnimus exits and drives away.

Tuscan approaches the house. He sees a dozen tire tracks where Arnimus parked and notices the buried car hasn't moved.

He peeks in the window and doesn't see anyone.

A duffle and lab coat in an otherwise barren room.

A sink filled with dirty dishes.

A pair of urns.

He wanders the yard and sees a broken sled under snow.

EXT. LYLA'S HOUSE - DAY

Tuscan watches Lyla exit and follows her.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Tuscan watches Lyla stroll inside.

He creeps toward the church and shields his eyes as the sun silhouettes the crucifix.

He plows into a BOY, 8, aplomb and poised, in tattered clothing. Tuscan stabilizes the Boy and recognizes a shared physical appearance. He retrieves some money from his wallet.

TUSCAN

Sorry... I didn't see you. Here.

BOY

I don't want your money.

TUSCAN

You don't want money?

BOY

There are more important things.
You should look where you wish to
be, not where you are.

Tuscan smiles at the familiar logic.

TUSCAN
Right! But money helps.

BOY
Did you learn nothing as a child?

TUSCAN
Actually I did quite well for....

The Boy dashes away.

Tuscan notices the Boy's oddly bare feet and familiar drab.

He consider the peculiar feeling and glances at his scabbed fingernail beds.

He steps and the sun blinds him. He shakes off a bad feeling and hurries inside.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Lyla sits in the front pew and prays. She rubs her stomach and stares at a statue of Jesus for answers.

Tuscan feels unsettled as he sits in the shadows and takes it all in. He fiddles with a bible and puts it down.

He mumbles a long forgotten prayer in Italian.

Tuscan remembers who he is and scowls. He sets a hand between the pew and the bench. He slams his hand and his eyes bulge. He settles and takes some satisfaction.

A PRIEST recognizes a commotion and rushes over.

PRIEST
Are you okay my son?

TUSCAN
Uh... yes.

PRIEST
Do you seek communion?

TUSCAN
No. I'm not religious.

PRIEST
Often those need God most.

TUSCAN
Uh... yeah. Peace be with you.

PRIEST
Hollow words my son.

TUSCAN
What?

PRIEST
The Lord shines over all. He offers
some fulfilment, the rest,
salvation.

TUSCAN
So I've heard. The Lord should
shine on the hungry bare-foot boy
outside. He needs--

PRIEST
That boy has everything. He is at
one with himself and God. The
missive of greed and hate need be
forgotten. Are you the man you were
destined to be?

The words catch Tuscan's attention. He shakes an unsettling
feeling off and jutes.

TUSCAN
I don't have time for this.

The Priest obstructs his way and is met with Tuscan's glare.
He squeezes Tuscan's shoulder and makes eye contact.

Tuscan squirms and settles.

PRIEST
There is something terribly wrong.
Troubled your entire life. An anvil
tied to your throat. God is with
you. Now, be with God. Are you not
the shepherd?

Tuscan softens as the words and some realization sets in.

The Priest lets go and watches Tuscan shuffle towards Lyla.

Tuscan struggles to gather himself. He remembers his purpose
and forces a smile as he nears Lyla.

TUSCAN
I too find answers in solace. May
I? I've always wondered what more a
beautiful woman prays for.

LYLA

Please. I'm not praying for me.

Tuscan follows her hand as she rubs her stomach.

TUSCAN

A man. The father. He will come around.

LYLA

I didn't know at first. I'm still not sure.

TUSCAN

Does this man pray for you?

LYLA

Sure. He's always here. Dead son. No wife. Abandoned in this world by family. Without a shepherd. God ensures no child born without parents yet even God needed a mother for his child. Would you help in his moment of need?

Tuscan wonders if she's crazy as she stares at the crucifix.

TUSCAN

With all my heart.

LYLA

I suppose. I'm off to see him now.

Tuscan watches Lyla gesture towards the altar and leave.

He refocuses on the crucifix and has second thoughts. Confused with his feelings, he scans for the Priest. Antsy, he tries to pray but it doesn't feel right. He's torn.

He remembers Arnimus' words.

ARNIMUS (V.O.)

Indecision, a child's problem. Xavier couldn't pair shoes. Yet he'd take crayons and scribble. A mess, but he always found answers to triumph confusion. Never a plan. He drew and answers poured out.

INT. TUSCAN APARTMENT - DAY

Tuscan dips a tiny brush in a vial of paint and swipes at a sheet of paper. He feel better.

Invigorated, he rises and exits.

He returns with an arm full of painting supplies. He dumps them along a blank wall.

By candlelight, he paints with some focus and determination. Dark shades blend upon the canvas.

Compelled, he paints and a crude mural takes shape.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Arnimus examines Lyla.

She's at peace and blankly stares at the snow globe. A fisherman near a pregnant woman. A few flakes playfully dance.

ARNIMUS

Not long ago, woman gave birth at home. In remote areas it is still quite common.

Lyla's face registers acceptance.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Tuscan feints shopping and hides as Arnimus escorts Lyla from the clinic.

Arnimus adjusts his name tag and scans the candy display and does a double-take. He sees Ray-Ray and a line of customers.

CUT TO

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Kirt watches a panoply of cameras. He recognizes Arnimus' suspicious behavior. He zooms in to get a better look as Arnimus reaches for a bag of Skittles.

KIRT

C'mon baby, bite!

The monitor flashes and Kirt sees Arnimus empty hands.

KIRT (CONT'D)

What?

CUT BACK

Frustrated, Kirt shuffles onto the floor to lay eyes on Arnimus. He has an uneasy feeling as Arnimus walks past.

ARNIMUS

Kirt.

KIRT

Doc.

Along a distant wall, the Figure rises through the ceiling.

At the clinic door, Arnimus senses something. He freezes, turns and studies the far ceiling. He sees nothing, puzzles and dismisses the feeling.

Kirt sees Arnimus eat Skittles and stroll into the clinic.

KIRT (CONT'D)

Damn it! Damn. Damn. Damn!

INT. LAB - DAY

Ragged and worn, Arnimus crunches some numbers and writes in his notebook. He sees Xavier's drawing and reminisces.

The Clerk recognizes Arnimus' sour mood and reluctantly interrupts.

CLERK

Uh. Dr. Muth. I wanted to let you know that your requisitions frozen. You'll need to see Theresa.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

Theresa sits among a field of vacant chairs each marked by stacks of research papers and empty water glasses.

She readies for a skirmish as Arnimus march towards her.

THERESA

Dr. Muth, tell me what your doing with prenatals and TATA. Tell me or you're not getting them.

A tough decision. Theresa expects him to acquiesce.

ARNIMUS

Fine! Have it your way.

Arnimus turns and strides out.

INT. LAB - DAY

Tuscan watches as Arnimus coyly attempts to trick the Clerk.

CLERK

Okay, but I'll still need to give her a call.

ARNIMUS

No, please!

CLERK

Sorry. I'd love to help you.

The Clerk scoffs at Tuscan. She sets the bag on a nearby shelf and disappears to take a call.

Tuscan starts to walk away and realizes Arnimus lingers.

TUSCAN

Doc, what's so important?

ARNIMUS

Let me guess. You know a guy with a bag of money who'll get me everything I desire, no questions?

TUSCAN

Uh... no. About that....

ARNIMUS

Barely a difference between a fisherman and an idiot standing on the beach. Keep an eye out.

TUSCAN

What? Arnimus, stealing?

Arnimus skips over the counter. He steals the meds and snatches several exotic vials.

In a flash, he skips back over.

The two scamper away.

Arnimus rounds a corner and plows into the Burly Guard. He angrily flails and waves his arms.

BURLY GUARD

Hey....

ARNIMUS

Stupid salmon!

The Burly Guard shoves Arnimus into the wall in a choke hold.

BURLY GUARD

What you say? I've had enough of
you and that attitude!

Tuscan grabs the Burly Guard's wrist and overpowers the
larger man. Arnimus takes it all in.

TUSCAN

Hey, keep your hands to yourself.
Come on, Arnimus. Let's go!

The Burly Guard rubs his wrist as the men scamper away.

ARNIMUS

Uh... thanks. How....

TUSCAN

That... nothing. I was thinking you
may want to rethink things. Maybe
open up discussion with the board.

ARNIMUS

Those indecisive lips flap as the
world passes you by. Consider this
a crash course on results!

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Arnimus places a droplet of TATA a prenatal and injects Lyla
with the exotic vial.

LYLA

I'm sorry about your son. I can't
imagine the pain. I really....

ARNIMUS

Can't understand.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Fireplace flames reflect in Arnimus' eyes as he desperately
seeks answers in his notebook. He shakes his head to clear
his thoughts.

He tears out Xavier's drawing and hurls the notebook towards
the flame.

Teary-eyed, he staggers away.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

A calm sunny day.

A red disc sled pulled across the snow.

Arnimus marches ahead. He expects to see Xavier and glances behind him and sees nothing. He refocuses on the path ahead.

With some satisfaction, Arnimus watches the tethered disc glide down the slope onto the ice. He unfastens the cargo net and off-loads his gear.

Some efficient axe swings break ice.

He sets the fishing hole, drops bait and settle into a collapsible chair.

Almost immediately the rod jumps and bends.

He whoops and reels in a spirited fish.

ARNIMUS

Whoa! Wow! Gotcha!

Excited to share the moment, he displays the prized catch. He realizes he's alone. He remembers Xavier and his smile fades.

Silence.

The fish discarded into a snow bed.

He settles into his chair as a tear splatters on Xavier's drawing.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Arnimus stomps slush from his boots as he marches inside with a cooler of fish.

ARNIMUS

Hun, come see what we caught! They were really biting!

He dumps the fish into the sink.

A lively fish flops.

Arnimus restrains the fish. He's caught up in the moment and glances down the hallway.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

Quick! You won't believe the fight
left in this one! Sadie! Uh...
Rhoneshia!

The lively fish knocks over some items from the window sill.

An urn topples.

The struggling fish is too much and Arnimus erupts. He grasps
the fish by its tail and slams its against the counter.

A few increasingly violent smacks.

The fish shudders and goes still. It's familiar open eye and
gaspng mouth.

Arnimus notices the toppled urn and remembers. He glances
down the dark hallway, goes fetal and sobs.

He looks at Xavier's drawing and calms.

Invigorated, he retrieves the notebook and marches past the
second urn upon the sill.

EXT. LAB - DAY

Arnimus grooms himself as he shoves a SNIDE WOMAN and cuts to
the front of the newly designed queue.

ARNIMUS

Excuse me. Urgent business.

The Burly Guard takes some satisfaction as the metal detector
beeps and a red flight flashes.

BURLY GUARD

You. Hold up.

Arnimus jutes and the Burly Guard blocks his path.

ARNIMUS

Not this again. I'm in a hurry!
Stupid machine.

BURLY GUARD

Hands up.

ARNIMUS

Nonsense! I have work to do.

The Burly Guard waves a metal detector and notices the knife.

BURLY GUARD
Weapon! Hands where I can see them!

ARNIMUS
It's not a weapon! It's the same
knife as last time. Is this a joke?

The Snide Woman shrieks as Arnimus flicks open the knife.
Guards draw guns as the Burly Guard clicks his radio.

BURLY GUARD
Code Red, Gate 2, armed hostile.

ARNIMUS
This is bull shit! Let me go!

Guards force Arnimus' hands behind his back as he resists.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

The Burly Guard strong-arms Arnimus into the room and
displays the knife to Theresa.

ARNIMUS
You can't do this!

BURLY GUARD
Told you that mouth of yours....

Arnimus collapses into a chair and sizes up his situation.

THERESA
Some whittling, perhaps? No matter.
You are on verge of exceeding your
merit.

ARNIMUS
It's a misunderstanding. I have
moderate Tourette's.

Arnimus feigns a nervous tick.

THERESA
Is it on file with HR?

ARNIMUS
Well... yes.

THERESA
Then I don't want to know a thing
about it!

INT. LAB - DAY

Tuscan lacks focus as he prepares some samples under a microscope. He recognizes erratic footsteps and places a water bottle atop Arnimus' cluttered desk.

ARNIMUS (O.S.)
Fish or cut snare!

Arnimus clears a space and sets Xavier's drawing next to the notebook. He searches the drawers.

TUSCAN
Doctor Muth. There's something I
wanted to talk to you about.

ARNIMUS
Fine, talk. Where's the damn tape?

TUSCAN
I....

Arnimus grabs his notebook and stomps away.

He readies some tape and realizes the drawing is missing.

ARNIMUS
Where is it?

TUSCAN
What? I was thinking you need to
advise the board.

Arnimus slams his palms upon the desk.

ARNIMUS
Look at me when I speak to you!

From the corner of his eye, Arnimus notices the Figure glide from the ceiling and land. He cocks his head and stares.

TUSCAN
Are you... alright?

The Figure rises as Tuscan turns.

ARNIMUS
Did you see that?

TUSCAN
What? Her.

Arnimus rubs his eyes and sees Theresa rummage in the area. He shakes off a bad feeling and has doubts.

ARNIMUS
No, not her. Something.

TUSCAN
Who?

ARNIMUS
I don't know.

Tuscan notices a paper on his desk that wasn't there before.

TUSCAN
Is this what you're looking for? I
was saying....

Arnimus snatches Xavier's drawing.

ARNIMUS
Keep your hands off my desk!

EXT. LAB - DAY

Arnimus lingers in doubt as he visits the security office.

BURLY GUARD
Man. You rolling the dice. You
ain't getting your knife back!

ARNIMUS
I'm here to see the cameras.

BURLY GUARD
Ain't your cameras to see. No fish
here neither. You a one-man
distraction. Unlike you, I've got
work.

ARNIMUS
Nothing to do with fish. I....
It's about missing supplies.

BURLY GUARD
Stolen? When?

ARNIMUS
A moment ago.

BURLY GUARD
A hot one! Sure. I got you.

The Burly Guard pulls up the video. The video plays in fast-forward of Arnimus as he rants at Tuscan.

ARNIMUS
I lost my balance, cerebral palsy.

BURLY GUARD
Wait... that's something different
than what you said last time.

ARNIMUS
No it isn't. There! Freeze it!

A grainy streak on the video. It could be anything.

BURLY GUARD
What?

ARNIMUS
There. That!

BURLY GUARD
That's nothing. The iris flares
when the light changes.

ARNIMUS
No, it was something. It fell from
the ceiling and then rose back up.

BURLY GUARD
A ceiling tile was stolen?

ARNIMUS
No. A person.

BURLY GUARD
A person stole a tile? Time for you
to go! Last time you said you
had....

ARNIMUS
I really must go.

Arnimus leaves as the Burly Guard steps near.

The Burly Guard watches on camera as Arnimus plows into a
guard and berates him.

BURLY GUARD
Oh, my eyes open now!

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Kirt sets a trap for Arnimus. He pulls the candy display
beneath a camera and lay in wait.

Tardy and frantic, Arnimus rushes in. He grabs Skittles and tears into the bag as he heads towards the register. He realizes his wallet is empty and absconds.

Along the distant wall, the Figure lowers from the ceiling.

Kirt lunges as Arnimus reaches the clinic.

KIRT
Gotcha!

ARNIMUS
What? Get off me!

KIRT
Let's see what you got in that
there pocket Doc.

Kirt goes ridged and convulses.

Arnimus watches with detached fascination as Kirt collapses.

RAY-RAY
Oh my God! Do something! Help him!

Slow to react, Arnimus sputters.

ARNIMUS
Someone... call 911.

Something catches Arnimus' eye. He does a double-take as the Figure rise through the ceiling.

BERTA
The defibrillator is ready. I've
got the leads attached. She's
charged. You're all set.

The defibrillator commands.

Arnimus' finger hovers above the button. His eyes gloss past the defibrillator and return to the distant wall.

RAY-RAY
Doc! Save him!

Ray-Ray shakes him. He focuses and pushes the button.

Kirt convulses and awakens.

As an EMT rolls Kirt past, Arnimus eats Skittles and stares at the back wall.

INT. GENEFUSION - DAY

Ornate executive conference room.

Karis waits as a suited EXECUTIVE scans an array of notes.

EXECUTIVE

First, you must explain everything.
Nothing can be left out. No
details, no check.

KARIS

If I tell you, what guarantees
you'll pay me?

EXECUTIVE

What guarantees you'll deliver? Are
these notes yours? Come to terms
Sadie. You're playing a dangerous
game.

INT. KARIS OFFICE - DAY

Tuscan watches as Karis paces the floor.

TUSCAN

You mind explaining? We turn him in
for stealing and then we....

KARIS

Steal his notebook and force him to
explain everything to us. It's
simple.

TUSCAN

It's not simple. I don't like this.
We should walk away.

KARIS

Where's your cut-throat attitude
now?

EXT. LAB - DAY

Arnimus swipes his badge. A noticeable pause as the badge
reader remains red and flashes. Nervous, he swipes again.

As the Burly Guard rises the light turns green.

ARNIMUS

See, we're good.

As Arnimus passes, he notices the Burly Guard make a call. He senses something amiss and walks faster.

INT. LAB - DAY

Arnimus reaches his desk. He takes out his notebook and notices some things have been moved.

Tuscan loiters nearby and pays particular attention.

The Burly Guard appears carrying a night-stick.

BURLY GUARD
Theresa's office. Now.

Arnimus places the notebook in his desk and locks it.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

Theresa is all business.

ARNIMUS
Suspended! My project can't wait!

THERESA
I'm dealing with larger issues at the moment. I gave you leash and turned a blind eye. Nothing in return to show.

ARNIMUS
Fine! I'll just gather my things.

THERESA
Things? It's all university property.

ARNIMUS
Thieving, two-timing bitch!

The Burly Guard restrains Arnimus as Theresa seeks safety behind the table.

INT. LAB - DAY

Tuscan easily picks the desk drawer and takes the notebook. He notices the Clerk sees him. He feels some remorse as she scoffs and walks away.

EXT. LAB - DAY

The Burly Guard releases Arnimus beyond the gate.

BURLY GUARD

Michael J Fox is my damn hero! You
just a fool!

Arnimus kicks the air and stumbles. He gathers himself and notices the Protestor studies the spectacle.

ARNIMUS

Happy now? It's all over. A giant
waste.

PROTESTOR

I'm sorry... I think. I still
disagree with what goes on in
there. I'm not a hardliner. There's
worse things. I guess you'll learn
to cope with COPD.

ARNIMUS

With what?

PROTESTOR

You said.... What good is you?

Arnimus paces a circle as Karis emerges from the crowd.

KARIS

You were never this passionate when
we were married. Except of course,
about him. Perhaps her too....

Arnimus swallows a bad taste and reflects.

ARNIMUS

Always him! She was only the means.

KARIS

Novel, almost heroic. You had what
you wanted and were gone.

ARNIMUS

I'm truly sorry. If I could I would
take it back and do differently.
Please forgive me.

KARIS

Only God offers that. You left me
with nothing. You owe me.

ARNIMUS

I have nothing you'd want.

KARIS

Your current project. Let me work with you to develop it.

ARNIMUS

It's nothing. Just conceptual.

KARIS

Dumping genes in a sack and building DNA from scratch. When you remove beams from a skyscraper it collapses and can't be reassembled.

ARNIMUS

Absurd. Helix don't repair. Cell suicide is not preventable.

KARIS

Plunging from the rooftop of a skyscraper.... What if the building was but a single story?

Arnimus recognizes the phrase from his notebook.

ARNIMUS

You... you're behind this!

KARIS

You said the fish never change, only what's inside the angler. Do you ever listen to yourself?

ARNIMUS

When you're going through hell, you just keep going.

KARIS

Explain your project and this can go away. I have the pieces... it's only a matter of time.

Karis looks at her watch. Her eyes lead his to the building.

ARNIMUS

My notebook! You scavenger!

KARIS

Last chance, Arnimus. We'll can both still win.

ARNIMUS
Both win? Never!

KARIS
Sadly, the thing I want more to
succeed is to see you fail.

Enraged, Arnimus dashes past the Burly Guard as he races to the lab. A pack of guards give chase.

INT. LAB - DAY

Wily and quick footed, Arnimus dodges tackles and reaches the lab's locked door.

He peers through the glass and sees Tuscan with his notebook.

ARNIMUS
No!

The Burly Guard tackles Arnimus.

EXT. LAKE - DAY [DREAM SEQUENCE]

A simple white screen.

Some texture appears. The contours granulate.

A glove wipes snow and exposes a dark sheet of ice.

Arnimus lowers his nose to the surface and studies his black-eyed reflection.

A flash of movement beneath the ice.

ARNIMUS
Xavier?

Arnimus punches the ice.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
Xavier!

With fury, he pounds his fists against the ice.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)
Xavier, Xavier!

The ice cracks. Arnimus plunges his arms and head beneath the surface. He's under only seconds but they feel much longer.

Arnimus yanks Xavier to the surface.

A warm moment as Arnimus embraces Xavier's limp body.

Xavier lifts his head.

XAVIER

I knew you'd do it. I love you dad.

ARNIMUS

I'm so happy! You're okay. I thought I lost you.

XAVIER

You did.

Arnimus studies Xavier's serene face.

ARNIMUS

What? You're okay?

XAVIER

You killed me. I'm coming back now. But first, you need to kill him.

In disbelief, Arnimus sobs.

ARNIMUS

This can't be happening. Kill who?

XAVIER

You know.

Arnimus considers and realizes.

ARNIMUS

I can't kill.

XAVIER

You've done it before.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Arnimus snaps awake. His wet hands glisten. A crazed look in his eyes.

INT. TUSCAN APARTMENT - DAY

Tuscan exchanges glances between his torn fingernail beds and the wall before him as he contemplates a difficult decision.

He grabs a bag of cash and a gun from a secret compartment. His indecisive and jagged voice while on a call.

TUSCAN

Yes I have it. Things have changed.
No, it's not the money....

Tuscan studies an unfinished MURAL of God watching the fiery Apocalypse unfold beneath him.

TUSCAN (CONT'D)

Because I'm the shepherd.

He has a second thought and deliberates as an angry voice squawks an objection. With some conviction he presses the phone to his ear.

TUSCAN (CONT'D)

When I finish, I'm coming for you.

Tuscan coldly ends the call.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The Priest discovers Tuscan's bag of cash.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

Antsy, Karis sits in a meeting. She notices a blocked call and becomes uncomfortable and reluctantly answers.

KARIS

Hello? I told you never to call.

Shock replaces her angst.

KARIS (CONT'D)

It wasn't delivered. Dr. Yu was supposed to... what? No!

INT. TUSCAN APARTMENT - DAY

Tuscan flips pages in the notebook with his bandaged fingers. He studies the margins and shakes his head with disbelief.

A pound on the door and Tuscan jumps.

ARNIMUS (O.S.)

Open up! I know you're in there.

He creeps away and tucks the gun under his shirt.

The knob twists. A flurry of pounding.

The door bulges and buckles as Arnimus rams it.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

Tuscan! I want it back!

Arnimus marches inside and sets his sights on Tuscan.

Tuscan raise the gun.

TUSCAN

Stop, Doc! I don't want to see anyone hurt.

Arnimus stutters to a stop and raises his hands.

ARNIMUS

You mean you didn't plan to be caught. What next? Sell my work?

TUSCAN

Initially, yes. My biggest payday yet. But now... something else. I realize you were never supposed to succeed.

Tuscan softens his grip and lowers the gun.

ARNIMUS

Karis! That no-good bitch.

TUSCAN

No. I realized I'm here stop you, stop this horrible experiment. I'm going to destroy it.

ARNIMUS

Destroy it, then! I'm done. All I ask is to keep the first page. Please, it's personal.

TUSCAN

And you'll give up?

ARNIMUS

Yes. My work is done. I just don't want it in her hands.

TUSCAN

What do you mean done?

ARNIMUS

I did all I set out to. I did it.

Arnimus picks up the notebook and tears out the first page. He discards the notebook and reminisces at the drawing.

Tuscan studies the floor as he assembles the puzzle.

TUSCAN

The girl. The clinic. A baby?

ARNIMUS

Due any day.

TUSCAN

You harvested stem cells.

ARNIMUS

Initially. Then I implanted a embryo. A blanket of perfection.

TUSCAN

You couldn't. Beyond God's purview.

ARNIMUS

I'd stop at nothing to bring my son back. Taken by God. At the end of the day, I am in fact God.

TUSCAN

You don't understand!

ARNIMUS

Xavier was all that mattered.

TUSCAN

This is against all that is right. It's not your son, Arnimus!

ARNIMUS

Under my hand, he'll be born again.

Tuscan lowers the gun as his mind races.

TUSCAN

A child can not be born without God. There are implications.

ARNIMUS

Rubbish! If God were real, he wouldn't have taken my son!

TUSCAN

This madness must stop!

ARNIMUS

People will soon build their offspring. Pick ingredients like a recipe. I'm the trail blazer. Why should I wait? I should be rewarded with what I want! Deserved.

TUSCAN

Don't you get it? You've left me no choice, she must die!

ARNIMUS

No!

Tuscan raises the gun. Arnimus' speed surprises him as he rushes and flicks his knife.

A shot.

Two men collide and wrestle over the gun.

Arnimus winces as blood spreads across his sleeve from a glancing bullet.

The knife slides from Tuscan's stomach as he collapses. He spits up blood and struggles to offer his final words.

TUSCAN

Your child must not be born. All will be lost. Eternal darkness.

Arnimus shakes off the warning. He notices some Henchmen in the driveway and absconds.

INT. LYLA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lyla vomits. She looks in the mirror and caresses her belly.

LYLA'S DAD (O.S.)

Hun. You okay?

LYLA

Yep. I'll be out in a minute.

She hides her belly and opens the door to his scrutinizing stare.

LYLA'S DAD

You alright?

LYLA

A bad stomach. Something I ate. I
may take a ride up to see Auntie.
I'll be fine.

LYLA'S DAD

Will you be back for church?

LYLA

I may stay a while.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

Theresa takes her photo off the wall and wipes a tear as
folders as Karis nervously shuffles inside.

KARIS

Hi. You wanted to see me?

THERESA

So much for us women sticking
together.

KARIS

Pardon?

THERESA

It would be a funny story if we
weren't getting shut. I just got
off the phone with a good friend of
mine... rather, ours... over at
Genefusion.

Guards escort Karis from the facility.

EXT. CIRCUS - DAY [DREAM SEQUENCE]

Gloom at dusk.

Arnimus contemplates as he prepares to cast a simple wooden
rod.

He flicks his wrist.

With some hope, he watches an oddly colorful magnetic hook
splash and attach to a fluorescent fish.

The festive hoots of guests and sounds of a roller coaster on
a miserable overcast day.

Arnimus struggles alone at the filthy counter of the gimmicky
Fishing Booth game.

CARNEY, a filthy Tuscan resembling man, dour, studies as Arnimus carefully extracts the fish.

The magnet slips.

Anticipation turns to frustration as the fish plops into to the water.

CARNEY
More to fishing than a hook.

Arnimus glares at him.

CARNEY (CONT'D)
You've been at it a while. Ain't a sport, it's a state of mind. Fella, go clear your head. Come back.

Arnimus shuffles away.

CARNEY (CONT'D)
I'll be here. Alright, Doc.

Arnimus' head snaps back and he scampers away.

A Ferris Wheel spins.

Two hands grip the seat's protective bar.

The city skyline backlit by an eerie orange glow that spreads across rooftops towards Arnimus.

Childlike, he smiles, loosens his grip and relaxes. He giggles and swings his legs.

XAVIER
Dad!

He realizes Xavier sits beside him.

ARNIMUS
Isn't this great! This was always my favorite! Remember the time....

XAVIER
We've never been.

Confused, Arnimus tries to determine what is happening.

ARNIMUS
What? I... We....

XAVIER
You have work to do.

Arnimus waves him off and tries to refocus on the ride. A seagull screeches overhead.

ARNIMUS

That time... I can't remember.

XAVIER

Dad! Pay attention!

Arnimus scans for answers. He spots a coyote disappear among the guests. The orange glow disappears. Darkness.

DARK VOICE (V.O.)

Arnimus!

Arnimus goes ridged and notices Xavier's glare.

XAVIER

They'll try to stop you. Ask mom,
she'll help.

Arnimus weeps and presses his head against the safety bar.

ARNIMUS

Xavier, your mother can't help,
she's dead.

XAVIER

No, not her. My mom.

ARNIMUS

I can't.

Delirious and giddy, Arnimus paws his face.

XAVIER

Call her. No loose ends?

ARNIMUS

No. No. I miss you so much. I don't
know what to do. I want you back so
we can be a family. Like we should
have been.

XAVIER

We can be together. If we survive.

Arnimus panics and looks for the seagull and the coyote.

The chair creaks... and falls.

Arnimus reaches to embrace Xavier.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

A blast of mace.

Arnimus releases a LITTLE GIRL, 8 and shields his eyes.

The IRATE MOTHER, 35, drags the Little Girl away.

IRATE MOTHER

Creep!

Arnimus realizes he's in a busy strip mall parking lot.

ARNIMUS

Sorry. I... my son.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Frantic and gasping, eyes reddened from the mace, Arnimus bursts into the store while on a call.

ARNIMUS

Yes. Berta, I'm here now. Please don't call corporate!

A candy display set along his path. He grabs a bag of Skittles.

Jaundiced with scurvy, Kirt pops a few pills and leans heavily on a wall as he places a call.

KIRT

Yep, just now. You just down the street, then get here! I ain't waiting. My friggen heart is fine!

Kirt tackles Arnimus and Skittles fall from Arnimus' coat.

LATER

Arnimus loiters under a COP's watchful eye as Berta wanders over with a slip of paper.

BERTA

Fresh from corporate... suspended pending termination. Gonna mail your final check. Tho' don't deserve a God-damn penny.

ARNIMUS

Fire me over this? Get these cuffs off... I'll clear this up.

COP

Relax Mr. Muth. Gotta take you in
for processing. Store has you on 5
more videos boosting.

INT. JAIL - DAY

Drenched in sweat, Arnimus awakens from a violent nightmare.
It takes a moment to orient himself as he glances at the
barren ceiling from the aluminum bench.

A PRISONER, 50, lanky and worn, stands entirely too close and
stares.

PRISONER

You alright fella?

ARNIMUS

A little space, please.

PRISONER

You seen 'em too? They comin' you
know. They come for me. All of us.

ARNIMUS

Who?

PRISONER

Horsemen. Why I won't sleep no
more. Bringing death. We ain't
under God no longer.

Arnimus scoffs and pats a welt on his forehead as the Cop
opens the cell.

COP

Mr. Muth, you're free to go.

With some grit and resound, Arnimus rises.

ARNIMUS

That's Doctor.

Arnimus considers the Prisoner's warning.

Kirt stumbles and coughs as he rages.

KIRT

Ain't no hoax! You fools ruined it!

COP

Kirt, the tapes are blank.

KIRT
That the last time he steal without
paying!

COP
Relax. Don't do anything stupid.

KIRT
I'll show you stupid!

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Invigorated, Arnimus marches to the sidewalk. Unsure what to do, he considers next steps.

EXT. LAB - DAY

The Burly Guard escorts Arnimus away from the building.

ARNIMUS
Let me talk to Theresa!

BURLY GUARD
Her orders. You ain't welcome.

EXT. LYLA'S HOUSE - DAY

As Arnimus steps upon the porch, Lyla's Dad answers the door.

ARNIMUS
Hi, I'm Doctor--

LYLA'S DAD
--I know who you is and what you
done. Step near her again, I'll add
some holes you won't care much for.

Lyla's Dad produces a shotgun.

Arnimus takes a step back and holds his ground. He peers past the barrel at a crucifix hanging on a distant wall.

ARNIMUS
God... I did it for God! Let me
explain. Please!

LYLA'S DAD
You'd be one of those Mormon fellas
trying to impregnate everything
that walks or crawls.

ARNIMUS

No sir, I'm not.

LYLA'S DAD

Tell me how my Lyla went in your dang clinic with the runs and nine months and a dozen check-ups later, she be pregnant. How you gonna adopt a baby that ain't even born!

ARNIMUS

There's an understanding.

LYLA'S DAD

Now you is just asking for it!

ARNIMUS

Between her and... God.

Lyla's dad lowers the shotgun and considers.

LYLA'S DAD

Are you saying she asked for this?
You look like you is lying.

Arnimus is jittery and twitches.

ARNIMUS

No. This? Just a mild case of...

INT. LYLA'S HOUSE - DAY

Arnimus paces and fidgets as he waits. He scans a bookshelf and selects a book on The Apocalypse. He skims past an ominous photo of the Four Horsemen.

A picture of HADES atop a pale green horse catches his eye. A striking resemble to the Figure. A realization begins but is interrupted as... Lyla's Dad aids bulging Lyla to a seat.

Arnimus searches for delicate words.

ARNIMUS

I was worried. You are so....

A smile breaks upon her face.

LYLA

Pregnant. 37 weeks I reckon. Just about due.

Lyla's Dad gestures towards the book.

LYLA'S DAD

People believe God need protect us from unstoppable wrongs. We ain't helpless. That's why evil incarnate sends plagues and be possessing folks and what not. They incapable of doing on their own. Got powers, yep. Ain't immortal. I ever come to face with one of 'em. Ain't nothing some buck won't tear through.

ARNIMUS

There's probably more to it.

LYLA'S DAD

Better to be a part of the Lord's plan. Lyla's safety and the health of this baby she carrying, is all that matter. You'll be taking her to a hospital? Not that damn clinic in the grocery store no more.

ARNIMUS

Yes, of course.

INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

Arnimus and Lyla sit in awkward silence.

Lyla clenches her stomach and yelps.

ARNIMUS

Are you having contractions?

LYLA

Not till now. The baby is coming.

ARNIMUS

Lay down. You're going to be okay.

An intersection in the road.

A blue placard for the local hospital.

The car goes another way.

Arnimus makes a call.

EXT. GENEFUSION - DAY

Karis pulls up to a visitor parking space. A few executives sip coffee and chat. She blasts the horn and revs to clear them out.

INT. GENEFUSION LOBBY - DAY

Karis emphatically rehearses her pitch. It's almost pitiful.

KARIS

My research is solid! You need me
and what I bring to the table! I'll
be the best thing to happen to this
place! Geez, I sound like Arnimus...
but desperate.

The patchwork of tape and glue give way and her heel collapses. She scans for a way to fix it and saddens.

She answers her phone.

KARIS (CONT'D)

Hello?

Concern and indecision grip her face. Her other heel breaks.

A decision made as she drops both shoes in a trash can and scampers away barefoot.

An EXECUTIVE opens the door.

EXECUTIVE

Reservations, Dr. Karis, but
they'll hear you out... Dr. Karis?

INT./EXT. STREET - DAY - MOVING

With Lyla's head in his lap, Arnimus looks for a distraction.

LYLA

Are we almost there?

ARNIMUS

Yes. You're doing fine.

LYLA

I've been thinking... can I keep my
baby?

Arnimus studies her and considers.

ARNIMUS

I have a place on the lake. You can visit us. Do you like to fish?

Wham! The car jumps as an SUV slams into it.

Arnimus adjusts to keep the car on the road.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

We got company!

Arnimus sees the SUV, the Henchmen and Tuscan's wild scowl.

Tuscan waves a gun. He leans out the window and shoots.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

Hold on!

The car brakes and swerves but is unable to lose the SUV.

Two vehicles side by side. A bend in the narrow road.

Xavier stands in the middle of the road. Body squared, ashen colored face turned slightly away from the oncoming vehicles.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

No!

Arnimus cuts the wheel and induces a skid.

The SUV veers off road. It flips and sends Tuscan sailing through the air.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

Are you ok?

LYLA

I think so.

Arnimus notices Xavier stands beyond the steaming car's hood.

ARNIMUS

A moment....

Cautious, Arnimus cracks the door and steps out. He's confused and studies Xavier's turned face. A question lingers.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

No loose ends?

Xavier is unresponsive. A fissure appears on the smooth surface of his skin.

Arnimus picks up Tuscan's gun and shoots an unconscious Henchmen with the last bullet.

A second struggling Henchman crawls. A shadow blocks the sun.

Darkness.

Lyla peeks over the dashboard and sees Arnimus stride towards the car and drop the tire iron.

Arnimus alerts to a distant whimper and notices Tuscan.

TUSCAN

You can't! You can't let it happen,
Arnimus. It will be the end. A
child born without God's blessing
be the end. You must kill her. Kill
her and the child!

Arnimus listens and some doubt surfaces. He glances at Xavier and wonders if he's real. Another fissure appears.

LYLA

My baby is coming!

Lyla yelps and Arnimus refocuses on her. He realizes he needs to go but worries about Tuscan.

TUSCAN

Arnimus! Kill her! Kill her now!

Arnimus reacts to Lyla's cries and pins the gas. He glances in the rear-view mirror as the SUV backs over Tuscan.

He notices Xavier is gone.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

The car screeches to a halt.

Lyla notices a customer push a grocery car as Arnimus helps her into a wheelchair.

ARNIMUS

I know, I know. No time. We just
need to get you in. For your baby.
Okay? Do you trust me?

She recognizes a man on edge as he squeezes her arm.

LYLA

You won't hurt my baby?

ARNIMUS

Trust me.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Kirt lazily watches some teens goof and plan a beer heist. He cracks his knuckles and neck as he prepares for a brawl. He's disappointed when they wander away empty-handed.

He sees Arnimus help Lyla inside. He shuffles closer to get a better look and places a call.

KIRT

It's me. You know who just walked in? Not yet, but he's gonna....
What you mean, after? You best get here or else!

INT. CLINIC - DAY

A lobby filled with grumbling patients. An overwhelmed NURSE falls further behind.

Berta files her nails while taking a personal call.

Arnimus bursts in as he wheels Lyla inside.

Berta leaps to her feet.

BERTA

What in damn tarnation! You don't work here!

ARNIMUS

I was reinstated. Go ahead, call corporate.

BERTA

You bet I will.

ARNIMUS

You. Leave!

Arnimus shoves the Nurse towards the door. He helps a patient from the examination room table as he guides Lyla inside.

NURSE

Gladly.

LYLA

Is everything okay?

ARNIMUS

Yes, fine. Let me handle this.

Lyla takes notice of the snow globe, the fisherman, his pregnant wife, and a beautiful light snow.

Berta presses the phone to her ear.

BERTA

Hiya. This is--

Arnimus rips the phone base station from the wall.

ARNIMUS

The clinic is closed. Go home!

He marches into the room and slams the door shut as patients exchange puzzled looks. An ORNERY MAN, 60, glares and lowers a Field and Stream magazine.

ORNERY MAN

He ain't talking to us?

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tuscan clings to life as he crawls towards toward the SUV. Some determination surfaces as he gathers himself.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

The grocery store doors open as Karis strolls inside and scans for Arnimus and the unexpected.

Berta waves a cell phone in Kirt's face as the Nurse watches them with detached annoyance.

BERTA

I'm calling corporate! Better yet, the police.

KIRT

Screw that! Gonna deal with this fool myself.

NURSE

If Dr. Muth wants his job back, he can have it. This is shit. I'm leaving. Fuck the lot of you!

Karis overhears and notices the clinic.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Karis shuffles inside and scans. Her eyes gloss past the snow globe, a fisherman, his pregnant wife, and off-white flakes pirouette.

The Ornery Man studies her.

ORNERY MAN

I'm next! The doctor said they closed but I ain't leaving!

KARIS

I'm not a patient.

ORNERY MAN

You work here! I've got plantar fasciitis that need skimming.

Karis opens the examination room door and sees Lyla on the examination table as Arnimus haphazardly searches for random items. In a flash, she realizes what he's done.

KARIS

You bastard!

ARNIMUS

I need your help Sadie. Please.

KARIS

We need to get her to a hospital.

ARNIMUS

There's no time.

Karis scans Lyla and contemplates an advantage.

KARIS

I'll help. One condition. I get your notebook.

ARNIMUS

Yes. You can have it!

KARIS

And you explain everything.

ARNIMUS

Yes! Just help us.

Karis evaluates Lyla.

KARIS

Who's the father?

Arnimus looks away.

ARNIMUS

I don't know.

KARIS

Is she... are you the mother?

LYLA

I... What do you mean?

KARIS

Who does the baby belong to,
Arnimus? Is it yours? Mine? Ours?

ARNIMUS

Technically. No one's. I build the
helix with wild chromosomes. No
definably paternal genes.

KARIS

That's impossible!

ARNIMUS

Science made impossible reality.

KARIS

Make! It's not a holiday meal,
Arnimus. You're playing God!

ARNIMUS

I can't begin to say how sorry I am
for what I did to you. This time it
will be different. I realized what
went wrong with Xavier.

KARIS

What went wrong?

Arnimus stares at Lyla's belly.

ARNIMUS

I'll make it right. You and I and
Xavier. We can just get away. The
three of us. Together.

KARIS

You're crazy, Arnimus. This is
insane! What's Rhoneshia say about
this? Does she even know?

LYLA

She dead. And the boy. They both
drowned last year.

KARIS
 What? No! Tell me she's lying,
 Arnimus! Tell me Xavier is alive!

Karis sobs as she recognizes the horrid truth in his disposition.

The door swings open.

BERTA
 They is in here!

Arnimus sees a Cop and an EMT follow Berta.

ARNIMUS
 No!

COP
 You were warned, Mr. Muth. Hands
 behind your back!

KARIS
 Tell me my son is alive! Arnimus!

The EMT sees the snow globe, a fisherman, a woman supine, and two men dressed similarly as the EMT. Flurries uniformly spin around the globe.

ARNIMUS
 She's about to deliver!

COP
 Who is she?

ARNIMUS
 My wife!

EMT
 I got this. Everyone, out! I'm
 gonna need to get you to the
 hospital.

KARIS
 I'm a doctor. I can assist.

EMT
 A medical doctor?

KARIS
 Well....

EMT
 Assist by staying clear.

ARNIMUS

I'm a doctor.

EMT

You too? That's just great....

ARNIMUS

Get these cuffs off me. I'm going to delivery my baby!

LYLA

My baby! You ain't taking him!

Confused glares abound.

EMT

This is someone else's ugly. All you all, get!

The Cop strong-arms and cuffs Arnimus.

ARNIMUS

Get these cuffs off me, I have a condition!

COP

What?

ARNIMUS

Muscular dystrophy.

In shock and sobbing, Karis scoffs and shuffles out behind Arnimus.

Tuscan, hastily disguised as an EMT, limps unnoticed past Arnimus into the room.

TUSCAN

Need a hand? I was shopping....

EMT

Sure! What station you from?

TUSCAN

I... uh.

EMT

You're bleeding. Are you okay?

TUSCAN

Just a few scratches. I'm good.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Arnimus settles down and the Cop loosens his grip.

COP

I have it in my mind to take you to jail right now.

KIRT

Take him!

COP

You, keep quiet! She's your wife and that's your baby, I'll let you stick around. No baby need see their daddy in cuffs. Stay back and let people work. Understood? I'll get these cuffs off.

ARNIMUS

Yes, I understand.

KIRT

You're letting him go! Again!

COP

Kirt, shut-it.

KIRT

This is bull shit!

COP

Settle down!

KIRT

I ain't settling down! You good-for-nothings. Do you damn job! This thievery has gone on too long! Makes a mockery of us good Christian folks! Damn inbred pagans!

COP

Who you calling inbred?

INT. CLINIC - DAY

An EMT peeks his head out and gestures for the Cop.

EMT

Not safe to move her. We deliver here. If that lady doctor can settle down, get her back in here.

The EMT give the snow globe a second look. There's a flurry of gray-scale snow and a blue man lays on the floor. The Figure among the distant forest.

EMT (CONT'D)

Lucky you! Get help deliver a baby!
Glove up.

TUSCAN

Indeed... my lucky day.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

The Cop wanders over to Arnimus.

COP

Doc, don't go no where.

Arnimus nods. He senses something and wanders a circle.

Kirt cusses under his breath and slyly loiters.

Arnimus wipes sweaty brow. His shaking hand grabs a bag of Skittles. He tears the bag and several fall and bounce away as he pours half a bag into his mouth.

He assumes a place at the end of the customer line and notices Ray-Ray stares at him.

ARNIMUS

I'm going to pay for them.

RAY-RAY

You better. We catch you stealing
again....

The Protestor stands in line and glares at him.

ARNIMUS

It was a misunderstanding. My
scleroderma was acting up.

PROTESTOR

Tightened skin is no excuse for
thievery? You never had COPD, did
you? You never had nothing!

ARNIMUS

I... uh, am diabetic. Uh... Type-2.
Well... actually... pre-diabetic.
Too much sugar in my diet.

PROTESTOR

You've done that to yourself!

ARNIMUS

Environmental factors contribute too. I always thought I'd need be afflicted to be driven to find the cure. Along the way I may have played on people's sympathy.

Arnimus recognizes the Protestor affliction.

PROTESTOR

What say you now about greater good? Maybe if you suffered through life with Spina bifida you'd find a cure for that?

ARNIMUS

I never thought about anyone else. Sorry about earlier. I was upset.

PROTESTOR

Tell the cashier what you've done for all mankind. You was out for yourself the whole time.

The Protestor scoffs as Arnimus finishes off the last of the Skittles and crinkles up the wrapper.

RAY-RAY

You still paying even if they is all gone! You is a piece of work. People with less doing what's right. God fearing folks we is. You people tread all over. God notices.

A series of beeps as Ray-Ray scans groceries.

ARNIMUS

I'll pay! I've paid. I always have. I've never stole anything!

The pitch of the beeps rises.

RAY-RAY

That's a lie. A God damn lie!

Arnimus sees her lips move but only hears beeps. Disoriented, he sees the customers glare at him.

Kirt fumes as Arnimus shuffles out of line.

KIRT
I've had enough of this!

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Tuscan peeks out the door as the lights flicker and soften.

EMT sniffs the air as Tuscan slips behind him.

EMT
Rotten eggs?

TUSCAN
Nope. That's sulfur.

EMT
Maybe an outlet gone bad?

Tuscan twists the EMT skull and snaps his neck.

Tuscan pulls a long knife from his jacket and reads an Italian chant as he centers over Lyla.

LYLA
No! No. Please don't hurt my baby.

TUSCAN
The sins of man may be forgiven.
Our father--

Karis walks in as Tuscan raises the knife.

KARIS	TUSCAN
--I found these--	--who art in heaven, hallowed be--

KARIS
--What are you doing? No!

Karis lunges at Tuscan as Lyla topples to the floor. Her savage attack is quickly repelled.

TUSCAN
What needs to be done.

Lyla shoves a chair and trips Tuscan. His jaw smashes on the counter and he drops the knife. He's wobbly.

LYLA
No!

TUSCAN
You don't know what's at stake.

The snow globe gray-scale flakes whip. Two blue men supine. Two women and the fisherman stand. The Figure in the treeline.

Dust particles gently float and dance their way across the room. Some pieces of ash drift past.

Tuscan shoves Karis. She careens into a wall and falls to the floor. He steps in to finish. She splashes rubbing alcohol and it stings his fingers.

A moment of searing pain. He slips and goes down hard.

A beat.

Lyla contracts.

Tuscan rises to his knees. His eyes are crystal focus. Blood trickles down his forehead. A moment as he fixes his hair.

The knife is beyond Karis' reach.

He grabs her ankle, tugs, and crawls upon her. Composed and determined, he wraps his mangled hands around her throat.

Her vision blurs as she's about black out.

Lyla grunts.

A sloshing sound. Tuscan grimaces as he peers over his shoulder. His grip loosens.

Karis' blurry vision watches Tuscan slump. A fuzzy dark figure absconds.

KARIS

Xavier?

Karis wipes her eyes. She scans for Xavier but sees nothing.

A bloody knife deep in Tuscan's back. In his final moment, he hopelessly reaches for the blade.

Karis refocuses on Lyla.

KARIS (CONT'D)

Did you see.... Just hold on. I got you. We're going to deliver your baby! Arnimus! Help!

LYLA

My baby's coming!

More ash circulates.

KARIS

I see the crown. Beautiful black...
hair... I think. Stay with me. I
need you to... push. There's....

Karis realizes something amiss as her speech slows.

LYLA

What?

KARIS

Some... blood... dark... ness.

A blank stare overcomes Karis's face. Her complexion fades to gray scale and her movement slows. She picks at her cheek. The sound of Velcro as her skin peels and exposes bone.

Her face fissures.

Lyla's series of grunts.

The snow globe hums as a blizzard rages. The skin peels from the woman and fisherman's faces as they disintegrate. The Figure stands among them.

INT. GROCERY STORE - INT

Repetitive beeps as Ray-Ray scans groceries.

Arnimus takes Skittles from the display rack and stands in line. The familiar sound of the wrapper crinkle.

He hears vivid sounds of dry leaves cracking. He smiles as he remembers Xavier hoot while sledding and fishing.

A fuzzy Xavier in Arnimus peripheral hums his nursery rhyme, snatches a bag of Skittles and dashes.

Arnimus awakens from his reverie. He alerts as a gray-scale XAVIER with a hazy green aura drifts down from the ceiling, covered in sores, head slightly turned away.

Arnimus is unsure what is real. Something dawns on him.

ARNIMUS

Xavier is gone.

Some worry registers upon his face.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

Nothing I do will bring him back.

Arnimus throws the Skittles against the wall. The candies ricochet across the floor. A few rest near Kirt's foot.

KIRT

Damn son of a bitch! That's it!

Kirt sees the indifferent Cop chew gum to pass time.

ARNIMUS

Wrong. Terribly wrong. All this.

Ash flakes fall from the ceiling and wildly dance.

An ash settles and melts in Arnimus's hand. A realization.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

A son. I only wanted a son. To not be alone. To have someone... to not fish alone. What have I done?

Kirt grabs the Cop's gun and fumbles with the safety.

KIRT

You!

Arnimus hears Lyla's primal scream behind the closed clinic door. He refocuses upon Xavier and rubs his eyes.

He alerts as Xavier remains.

Time slows down for all but Arnimus.

Rage overtakes his confusion.

ARNIMUS

No? No. It can't be. You. You!

He decides to attack Xavier. A customer obstructs his way. He climbs atop the grocery belt and leaps onto the next in a direct path towards Xavier.

In slow-motion silence, Ray-Ray and some customers react.

Jaw clenched and frozen in time, Kirt's finger on the trigger. A puff of gunpowder midair.

Arnimus flicks his knife open.

Color and sound fade from everything aside from Arnimus. A sleet of ash in a torrential downpour as a humming begins.

Feet away, Arnimus slows. His skin fades to gray-scale and fissures like ice on the lake.

The sound of a distant team of galloping horses drawing near.

Driven by will, Arnimus grunts and squirms as he pushes the knife inches closer.

The knife's tip at Xavier's neck.

Arnimus struggles to move. He freezes.

The humming grows as a torrent of ash whips.

The blade cracks. Friable. The cracks spread up the handle and across his fingers.

He helplessly watches both disintegrate to ash and are swept up by the wind.

With some regret and realization, he surrenders.

A tear hisses and evaporates as it rolls down his cheek. The sound of building heat. His gray lips quiver and split to the sound of Velcro.

ARNIMUS (CONT'D)

No.

The sound of a cinder block dragged against concrete as Xavier's neck swivels.

Jagged teeth drift apart as Xavier's mouth hinges open. Emotionless and sunken eyes swivel toward Arnimus.

Time stops.

Blackness.