

Wasted Youth

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SHADOWY LABORATORY - NIGHT

We see a muscular, thirteen-foot-tall CREATURE with hooved feet and the head of a bull. Electrical hoops surround this being so closely that it cannot move except to turn its head as IV drips draw blood from its forearms.

A creaking noise draws the attention of the creature. The camera moves with the creature's gaze, revealing white-coated geneticists carting a gurney out from behind white drapery.

The gurney they push carries a MISSHAPEN FORM, hidden under a white sheet. The geneticists cart the gurney to an incinerator, when we hear a sliding door open from O.S. The geneticists pause as a human shadow falls over the floor in front of them. We hear an O.S. voice:

PAUL (O.S.)
Thought I got dibs on that.

The geneticists look uncomfortable and one steps forward.

GENETICIST
We, uh, we didn't think you'd want this one. He got it pretty bad so we euthanized--

PAUL (O.S.)
Show me.

The geneticist turns back to the gurney and lifts the white sheet. As he does so, we track toward the creature, thus we do not see what lies beneath the sheet.

PAUL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Get rid of it.

The creature snorts with contempt then looks away in disgust as the geneticists cram a tumorous, child-sized HUMAN LEG down the incinerator.

ROLL OPENING CREDITS.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

The city as seen from a church steeple during a heavy snowstorm.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - SAME TIME (ESTABLISHING/EYE-LEVEL)

A figure approaches the church to which the steeple belongs.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - A LITTLE LATER

The figure enters. It's a man: DOCTOR GUY FORESTER. British, early forties, short and thin. Guy stares past marbled floors and highly polished pews and sees a tall, heavysset Catholic priest named FATHER ROBBIE. He's Guy's age and addresses the congregation from behind a garish pulpit.

ROBBIE

You're nothing but rotting meat.
That may seem harsh, but look at it
this way. We strut around like
puppets, dangling from God's
strings. Some would balk at that
description, but even then, s'just
the Good Lord tryinna let us down
easy. Truth is, we're more like
meat. Meat rotting as it hangs from
a butcher's hook.

Guy shuts the entrance. The click draws Robbie's attention and he locks eyes with Guy.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

The outer layer 'a skin is called
the epidermis, right?

Guy bows his head as he takes a pew, avoiding Robbie's gaze.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

It's made up 'a nothing but dead
cells. Rotting meat, as I put it.
Take a minute to let that sink in.
In that time, another 25,000 flakes
of dead flesh'll have rotted off
ya.

A discomfited murmur arises from the congregation. Robbie tries-- unsuccessfully--to mask his grin before gesturing to the women.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

When you paint yourselves up
ladies, you're painting up a husk.

The women look upset. The men either look concerned or snicker. Guy watches, his expression a mixture of disappointment and pity.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

And gentlemen... when you lookit a woman with lust, you're coveting a cadaver.

Now it's the men's turn to look shocked. Robbie chuckles.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

That's what we are. From the time we're crawling through to when we get around to walking. Where body meets air, we're dead. Our skin's replaced every month, much like a butcher's spoiled meat.

Robbie looks at the children in the front pews next.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Kiss your grandma on the cheek kiddies, you're scraping skin off a skull.

Children cry. Robbie realizes that he's overplayed his hand.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Point is, the only part of you that's alive is inside. Even then, s'got a shelf life on it. Yet ya pour so much into your external appearances, and for what? Dead flesh? That's what your bodies are, yet you treat them like they're your god.

GUY

Your God?

ROBBIE

Not my God.

Robbie looks over his congregation smugly.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Your god.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - LATER

Mass ends. Guy sits in a pew as Robbie's flock leave, losing himself in the stained-glass windows and intricate furnishings as Robbie approaches him.

ROBBIE

Don't normally allow for interruptions. Not that ya attend enough to remember.

Guy grins at Robbie, soft and sympathetic.

GUY

Indeed. I suppose this apple has fallen rather far from the tree.

Robbie gestures contemptuously to the last of his congregation.

ROBBIE

Yeah, this church is one beautiful goddamn tree alright. One that every passing dog has to piss on.

Guy winces and looks away. His eyes fall upon a confessional.

GUY

I want to tell you my story. As my penance, if you will.

Robbie laughs as he approaches his side of the confessional.

ROBBIE

Oh, I will...

Robbie grins, holding open his side of the confessional.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

But what if God won't?

Robbie shuts the door with a click. Guy smiles reluctantly then slinks into the darkness within the other side...

INT. CONFESSIONAL - MOMENTS LATER

Guy is silent for a moment then he crosses himself. Robbie grunts.

GUY

Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It's been two years since my last confe--

ROBBIE

Okay, shoot.

GUY

Uh... you'll have followed my work,
so, I'll skip to--

ROBBIE

You would think that.

GUY

Very well. I'll begin with Harvard.

EXT. HARVARD UNIVERSITY - DAY (ESTABLISHING/BEGIN FLASHBACK)

The rainy October day gives the university a bored, lonely quality.

INT. HARVARD LECTURE HALL - DAY

The public sit with Harvard researchers, business reps, and visiting scientists. An ELDERLY MAN glides past them.

VARIOUS ATTENDEES

First public demonstration--/--
prove the futurevirus--/--show
investors--/--doubt he'll say mu-
-/--there's a place for stem cell
therapy, but--/--feel about
altering some autistic kid's--/--
just fixes the parts of the brain
that--

The elderly man takes a seat near three Harvard researchers.

FIRST RESEARCHER

--doesn't even drink, good Catholic
boy.

SECOND RESEARCHER

(interrupting)

'Cept when it comes to research.

FIRST RESEARCHER

--tries to justify it 'cause he
uses adult somatic cells, but--

THIRD RESEARCHER

--pure ego is what it is. Guy's
become quite the arrogant little
prick since--

ELDERLY MAN

Not an overly kind assessment of Doctor Forester. Do I detect a hint of jealousy?

SECOND RESEARCHER

Not considering his career prospects.

THIRD RESEARCHER

Yeah, prick won't reveal his technique to anyone so he can't get jobs or grants. Views collaboration as "beneath him."

FIRST RESEARCHER

What's it to ya anyway? You press?

The elderly man is about to respond when Guy's face appears on a LARGE VIDEO SCREEN, interrupting him.

GUY

(on video)

Uh, thank you all for coming. I'm Doctor Guy Forester. I'll be demonstrating how I addressed a client's autism.

Guy disappears from the video, replaced by footage of the fifteen-year-old girl named MARGARET. She huddles away from other children, clutching her head as she rocks back-and-forth and sucks on her fingers. When one child approaches her, she turns away in fear.

GUY (CONT'D)

(on video)

In treating young Margaret here, I faced four obstacles: our failure to nail down a neurological basis for autism, the immune system's rejection of stem cells, their tendency to cause cancer and the lack of cell division in the brain.

The video switches from Guy to x-rays demonstrating the overgrowth and unusual synaptic structure in Margaret's brain.

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

My first breakthrough was discovering that Margaret's hippocampus, amygdala and entorhinal cortex had a reduced cell size and increased packing density. In her hippocampus, the neurons' dendritic spines were too dense, long and thin, resulting in over connectivity.

A reaction shot from the impressed audience.

Guy's face returns to the screen.

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

Her cerebellum lacked Purkinje cells and she had excessive and abnormally large neurons, affecting her motor control, speech and behavioral development, as well as her attention span and memory.

The elderly man watches with a smug smirk.

On the screen, we see CGI animation, depicting what Guy describes.

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

To solve these issues, I convert stem cells into glial cells and neurons by introducing regulator genes through a special retrovirus. I call it my futurevirus. It gets neural stem cells to activate a nontoxic drug that kills cancer cells and imbues them with an artificial protein, fooling any immune system into accepting any cell.

Guy reappears on the screen.

GUY (CONT'D)

While a retrovirus affects actively dividing cells, the futurevirus allows converted stem cells to eliminate excessive cells of its type, replacing them in a corrective neurogenesis.

We see a close-up of someone using a central venous catheter to implant the futurevirus into Margaret through lumbar puncture.

GUY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 It travelled through Margaret's
 spinal cord, replaced the cells
 there, migrated and divided.

Once again, the footage on the screen changes to CGI
 animation that depicts what Guy describes.

GUY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 They replenished the Purkinje cells
 in her cerebellum and eliminated
 the excess neurons, reducing her
 brain size and improving its
 connectivity. The result--

The video goes dark and a door opens. Guy walks out from the
 door into the lecture hall. By his side is Margaret, now
 acting normal.

GUY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 --Margaret is cured!

Guy appears shorter after projecting himself on the screen.

He's also nervous while Margaret seems happy. She gives Guy a
 big hug.

MARGARET
 Thank you, Doctor Forester.

Guy looks encouraged. Yet instead of acknowledging Margaret
 further, he turns to the attendees. They all speak at once.

Guy only pays attention to the one holding up a business
 card.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1
 Want to negotiate the patent to the
 futurevirus? You'd help more folks
 if--

GUY
 I patented it because I'm the only
 one I trust with it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2
 You want people you can trust? I'm
 George Mahnke; I advanced the stem
 cell program in Toronto. If we
 collaborated--

GUY
 I don't collaborate.

Guy moves on.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3

I represent Harris Genomics. We wouldn't require you to share your process, but--

Guy looks interested.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3 (CONT'D)

--we're just starting out and--

Guy pushes past him.

GUY

That's nice.

Guy bumps into the elderly man.

ELDERLY MAN

You want something more becoming of a man of your status, kee-rect?

Guy tries walking around this strange man but finds no openings. He sighs and forces a grin.

GUY

I'm long overdue for that, yes.

ELDERLY MAN

Picky boy! I'm the same way. Always hadda eat dessert before my greens. But what if I were to offer you a sweet job without the Brussel sprouts, mm?

Recognition glimmers in Guy's eyes.

GUY

(disbelieving)

Your voice. You're not--?

ELDERLY MAN

(laughing)

--not too smart for you, apparently!

The elderly man rips off old age makeup and casts away his bland clothes, revealing a zoot suit-clad forty-two-year-old named PAUL PETERSON.

PAUL

Greetings gents. I'm Paul Peterson.

Upon seeing Paul, everyone in attendance goes wild with claps and cheers! Paul laughs and bows.

GUY

Standard Paul Peterson entrance?

PAUL

Hey, when you're as hot a commodity as I am, the only way to go is incognito. Especially as I didn't wanna take attention off your demonstration. Left me impressed enough to offer you a top-secret job at the Peterson Home for Youth. One that wouldn't require you to reveal any patented secrets!

GUY

I--

Paul places a finger to Guy's lips to shush him. Then with a magician's flourish, he shakes a business card from his sleeve and hands it to Guy.

PAUL

No need to come to a decision today, Guy my guy! Call my people; see if you find my terms agreeable. In the event ya don't, I won't do some song 'n dance convincing ya.
(whirls around)
I'm saving that for my exit!

Paul struts off, whistling and tap dancing with each step.

INT. CONFSSIONAL - INDETERMINATE TIME (END FLASHBACK)

GUY

(ashamed)

I accepted the job, though the contract was unusual. All I knew was I'd use the futurevirus to integrate "problematic" stem cells into the body. Cellphones were banned; internet was limited to research and e-mailing co-workers, we weren't--

ROBBIE

(interrupting)

Just to work with the jackass who inherited Peterson Petro, then did nothing with the money but reinvent himself as a media darling and pull publicity stunts?

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

And don't give me any crap that he helped people. It was all about--

GUY

--attention. But that's what I wanted.

Robbie looks surprised that Guy admitted that.

INT. JET - DAY (RESUME FLASHBACK)

Guy glances out the jet window while a video plays on a monitor situated above him.

PAUL

(on video)

Here's a bit've in-flight entertainment; get your refresher course over with!

BAD FILM SET - ON THE MONITOR - GUY'S P.O.V.

We see a model replica of a remote island with a mansion on it. The logo "Peterson's Island" appears on the screen.

The camera glides to the island as the video transitions to a cheap looking set, made to look like the front entrance to the mansion. Two puppets walk onscreen, a boy and girl named DAVID AND REBECCA.

DAVID

I can't believe we got accepted into the Peterson Home for Youth, Rebecca! Paul Peterson sure is swell!

REBECCA

Quite right! Who else would fly us out here just to give us a place to live?

Suddenly a COWBOY appears in the video, riding a horse.

COWBOY

If'n it ain't mah fav'rite
pardners, David 'n Rebecca! I shore
am mighty glad ya accepted mah
invitation to come 'n live at th'
Peterson Home fer Youth.

DAVID

Your invitation? Paul Peterson
invited us to live here himself.

DAVID (CONT'D)

He's even sponsoring us as we can't
afford it!

COWBOY

Paul does that for a lotta folk.
Garners him a whole heap'a praise.

REBECCA

With respect sir, then perhaps it
wouldn't do to try and pinch Paul's
praise for yourself!

The cowboy does a somersault off the horse, during which he
throws off his cowboy costume, revealing that he is Paul
Peterson!

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Oh, what fools we were! T'was the
glorious, handsome Paul Peterson
all along, fooling us with one of
his wonderful disguises!

PAUL

Naturally, kiddies! We like to have
fun here. And not just with
disguises! Why don't you follow me
inside? I'll show ya!

The camera follows Paul and the puppets through the doors and
into the next area of the set, where we see other puppet
children playing. One group of puppets behave similarly to
Margaret in the footage Guy showed. Rebecca points to these
unusual puppets.

REBECCA

Why Mr. Paul Peterson, whatever is
the matter with those children?

PAUL

My darling girl, aren't you aware?
When mental institutions were done
away with, my father gathered all
the newly dispossessed residents to
live here! Once yours truly
inherited the joint, I expanded it
into a home for all the castoff
children of society! But we still
look out for the, shall we say,
special ones in particular!

A puppet dressed as a scientist walks onscreen.

SCIENTIST PUPPET

Ab-so-lute-a-toot-ly! Why, upon
partnering with the Peterson Home,
the government hired us geneticists
to uncover new ways to help special
needs children!

REBECCA

Wow! Paul Peterson must be the
greatest person ever to live! In
fact...

Music plays as Rebecca takes in a deep breath, then--

REBECCA (CONT'D)

(singing)

Who is kind and good, showing more
kindness that any man should?

ALL PUPPETS

(singing)

Paaaul Peeeeeetersoonnn...

REBECCA

(singing)

Whose passion is compassion, whilst
most only care after a fashion?

ALL PUPPETS

(singing)

Paaaul Peeeeeetersoonnn...

INT. BACK IN THE JET - SAME TIME

The puppets continue singing as Guy glances out the window
and sees the sky growing foggier.

Time passes. The sky clears into pleasant sunshine as the jet
approaches a REMOTE ISLAND.

EXT. PETERSON'S ISLAND - SAME TIME (ESTABLISHING)

Perched upon the island's tallest mountain, is the PETERSON HOME. It is a real version of the model mansion Guy saw in the video.

EXT. PETERSON'S ISLAND - A LITTLE LATER (ESTABLISHING)

Five servicemen approach Guy as he gets out of the jet.

Except for SERVICEMAN 1, they collect his luggage.

SERVICEMAN 1

We'll get yer stuff to yer room an'
escort ya inside.

Serviceman 1 leads Guy across the garden while the others carry his luggage. As they make their way forward, two children run by, squirting each other with water guns. Guy sees other children in a sandbox, riding bikes, pulling each other in wagons, feeding animals, even playing on a jungle gym and in an inflatable castle.

We track in on the Peterson Home. The closer we get, the more we notice a sinister figure lurking in the attic windows...

INT. PAUL'S CHAMBERS/ATTIC - CONT'D

Paul stands at the attic windows, fortified behind shadowy blackness, out-of-date furniture and piles of toys. He notices Guy outside and lifts a TINY MARIONETTE from the pile and hangs it from the catch above the windowpane, creating the illusion that Guy and the marionette are the same size.

EXT. PETERSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

The serviceman leads Guy up the Peterson Home's front steps.

Guy notices video cameras embedded everywhere as another serviceman opens the door to the Peterson Home, ushering Guy inside.

INT. PETERSON HOME - CONT'D

The servicemen from the jet enter behind Guy, disappearing down a hallway with his luggage, led by the serviceman who escorted Guy.

Guy approaches the front desk as another serviceman takes his coat.

Yet another serviceman arrives with two cups of coffee as a woman emerges from a SLIDING DOOR located behind the front desk and approaches Guy. Her name is ANIKA. She's a curt, smartly-dressed forty-five-year-old with a slight Austrian accent.

 ANIKA
Guy Forester?

 GUY
Yes, pleased to meet you!

Guy shakes Anika's hand.

 ANIKA
Anika Schell; I run the genetics program.

Guy holds Anika's gaze long enough to show he's attracted to her. Anika breaks it to take a cup of coffee, not acknowledging the serviceman. He holds out the second cup to Guy, who accepts it then smiles at Anika through the steam wafting up from his cup.

 GUY
All this is a touch odd, eh?

 ANIKA
Mm?

Guy nods toward the serviceman.

 GUY
These aren't simply servants.
Secret Service, are they?

 ANIKA
They were hired to keep high behavioral residents in line, but that was before my time.

Paul appears, gliding down a SPIRAL STAIRCASE by the front desk.

 PAUL
Not strictly true.

 ANIKA
Coming off indiscreet, am I Mr. Peterson?

 PAUL
That would imply discretion is necessary.

Paul gestures to the serviceman while nodding to Guy.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Ex-Secret Service. Nowadays, these
 fellas keep tabs on security,
 transportation, all that rot.

Paul snaps his fingers; the serviceman escorts him past the desk. Paul motions for Guy and Anika to follow and they do.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 On that note, it's time for the
 tour!

Past the desk, they enter the glass enclosure through the sliding door, which the serviceman opens with a magnetic key.

INT. LABORATORY - CONT'D

Paul and the serviceman lead Guy and Anika into the lab. Upon its vinyl flooring are benches and workstations. Paul moves on, motioning for Guy to follow.

PAUL
 Right this way...

Paul leads Guy and the others to an area separated from the lab. It contains another workstation.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Here're your digs, Guy my guy!

GUY
 I get my own area?

ANIKA
 Yes, we agreed you needed privacy
 to protect your futurevirus.

INT. LABORATORY - LATER

The serviceman leads Guy and the others back across the lab.

ANIKA
 --covers quarantine. Next, we'll--

Guy sees a SECOND SLIDING DOOR ENTRANCE with controlled access.

GUY
 Why not show me in there?

ANIKA
Eh, it's just another storage area.

 GUY
Separated from the other?

 ANIKA
That's because it contains the stem
cells that we need your help
integrating.

 GUY
I should like to see it then.

 PAUL
Gonna have to deny that request,
bucko!

 GUY
If you please, I--

Paul's grin turns into a frown as Anika lifts a hand to Guy.

 ANIKA
We've provided you with a private
workstation to protect your
secrets. Is it unreasonable to
expect that other areas would be
off-limits?

 GUY
Very well. Shall we move along
then?

Paul grins once more, exposing his milk white teeth.

 PAUL
Let's.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Staff collect belongings from lockers as Guy and the others
pass. Guy sees contempt in Anika's face as she regards Paul.

 PAUL
I smell dinner. So, let's join the
party!

INT. DINING HALL - CONT'D

The serviceman holds a door open as Paul steps through it and
into a combined recreation room/dining hall.

Guy follows to see frontline workers reading to children and joining them in watching TV or playing video games and table tennis.

PAUL

Meet the frontline workers! Say one of the kiddies wants a playmate or swimming lessons; that's their wheelhouse.

The serviceman watches from the sidelines as Paul leads Guy and Anika toward the dining area. Paul takes a seat at the head of a long dining table and invites Anika and Guy to sit near him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

They also handle bathing, toileting... all the topics that're perfect for dinnertime conversation!

A mechanical bird flutters past Guy, amusing children with tinny tweets, before faltering.

Then BEN, a ten-year-old African American boy, zips forward in an electric wheelchair. He fiddles with a remote control and the bird flies correctly. Children cheer!

GUY

They act as if he built the thing.

ANIKA

He did.

Guy raises an eyebrow. Paul grins.

PAUL

That's Ben. I plucked him from a poor, inner city neighborhood in Boston. He caught my attention reworking old junkyard computers and spare parts into gadgets. I thought he'd make a good segment on my Peterson's Island show. Ben proves what even the most impoverished child can accomplish!

GUY

He was poor?

Paul dramatically puts his hand to his chest.

PAUL

Alas, feeling moved to assist with the boy's continued development, I personally sponsored his residency here.

Ben zips up to the table, catching the end of their conversation.

BEN

Just wish I coulda brought ma along.

PAUL

Ah, but remember son: yer mom insisted you go for a better shot at life!

ANIKA

And a better balance in her bank account.

Paul glares at Anika while Ben just looks away, sad.

BEN

Yeah, I know.

Ben's gaze inadvertently falls on Guy. The boy's face brightens.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hey, you're Guy Forester!

GUY

Did Peterson mention me?

BEN

Yeah! I overheard ya cured an autistic girl, right?

Guy looks intrigued but Paul shoos Ben away.

PAUL

Such a clever lad. But you'd best wheel along to the kiddie's end of the table, Ben m'boy. It's time for temptation.

Paul rings the bell beside his dining mat. The children join Ben, while the frontline workers sit with Paul, Anika, and Guy.

Servicemen arrive holding various plates filled with turkey, chicken and vegetables. The children tear into their meals, as does Paul. Anika eats slowly while Guy just stares.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Please Guy; partake.

GUY

I'm, er, not used to this.

PAUL

Shameful! We'll have a heck've a time getting you in on all our other fun.

GUY

Ah, must I participate? I was hired to--

PAUL

S'all part and parcel of working at th' Peterson Home for Youth, Guy my guy.

The servicemen return with a dessert that horrifies Guy: a cake, fashioned into the form of a child. Guy looks uncomfortable as Paul cuts into the cake, offering Guy the first slice.

GUY

I'm... confused. Why the, er, why the--

PAUL

All Hallow's Eve is upon us! We like to have fun here.

Guy gets up from the table and nervously leaves.

GUY

I, er, I should to see to my luggage...

PAUL

Your loss. But I think you might need some guidance for that...

Paul snaps his fingers. A serviceman escorts Guy out of the room.

INT. GUY'S QUARTERS - A LITTLE LATER

Guy enters. Due to piles of luggage, he cannot grasp the light. As Guy reaches for it, he knocks over a suitcase that pops open.

Along with clothing, a CRUCIFIX spills out. Guy stares at the crucifix. Then he hides it in a SECRET COMPARTMENT in his suitcase.

INT. CULTURE LAB - THE NEXT DAY

Guy places a culture plate under a microscope.

GUY'S P.O.V./THROUGH MICROSCOPE

The stem cells divide at an alarming rate, showing no sign of weakening or sustaining damage.

INT. CULTURE LAB - LATER THAT DAY

Guy talks to Paul and Anika, as they are watched by a serviceman.

GUY

--this rate, even the futurevirus
couldn't eliminate the unnecessary
cells quickly enough to prevent
cancer. Where did you get them?
They can't be huma--

ANIKA

(interrupting)
They're human, just modified.

GUY

I'd feel better if perhaps you
showed me how they're modifi--

Sudden anger fills Paul's face.

PAUL

You're here to get them safely
implanted. That's all.

ANIKA

(intervening)
Mr. Peterson, you're due back in
Boston to host the Oktoberfest
parade, correct?

PAUL
That's not for another--

ANIKA
Weren't you leaving once Guy was settled?

PAUL
I dunno, Anika. Seems our guy is distinctly unsettled.

ANIKA
You get ready; let me talk to him.
How about a walk, Forester?

INT. LABORATORY - A LITTLE LATER

Anika and Guy leave the lab through the FIRST SLIDING DOOR, leading to the front desk area. Paul and the serviceman watch.

SERVICEMAN
Shall I prepare your jet, sir?

PAUL
Maybe. Why don't we grab a snack first?

The serviceman nods and leads Paul to the SECOND SLIDING DOOR--the one Paul didn't want Guy entering!

EXT. PETERSON HOME - DAY

Anika leads Guy through a forest. They stop outside a CAVE.

GUY
I want to know what I'm working on.

ANIKA
Given your contract, we needn't oblige.

GUY
Either I'm part of this project or not.

ANIKA
Are you having second thoughts?

GUY
I've had second thoughts from the beginning.

GUY (CONT'D)

I've simply set them aside, as until now, I've been treated with respect.

ANIKA

That leads to a person overlooking a lot. I did...

GUY

What do you mean?

ANIKA

Do you remember the allegations that Paul shared his bed with children?

GUY

I recall that he was cleared. No impropriety has been reported since.

ANIKA

Not reported, no.

GUY

Have you seen something?

ANIKA

Just the kind of thing you observed last night, with the cake. Also that Paul has no security cameras upstairs...

GUY

I came out here to discuss those stem cells, not to speculate on--

ANIKA

They're related. If you want proof, I have authority while Paul's gone. I can kill the power so you're not recorded slipping upstairs; say it's a glitch.

GUY

What about the servicemen?

ANIKA

We can choose a time when they're doing their rounds elsewhere. I just need you to--

GUY

No, contact the authorities if you've seen--

ANIKA

I have nothing to report but my suspicion that if Paul monitors every floor but his, he has his reasons.

GUY

And what would that be?

ANIKA

I'm not comfortable saying more.

Guy turns to leave.

GUY

Then I'm not comfortable risking my job.

INT. INDETERMINATE LOCATION - SAME TIME

Paul and the serviceman walk past white drapes and to a row of beds with ODD SHAPES under their sheets.

A scrawny, misshapen arm lurches out from a sheet, connected to an IV drip via a catheter. The serviceman gestures to the arm.

SERVICEMAN

They said they were done with the follow-up tests on this one. He'll be disposed of soon anyway.

Paul quickly peeks under the sheet then licks his lips.

PAUL

Face is relatively unblemished...
Boston can wait. Let's sashay somewhere private!

INT. DINING HALL - THAT EVENING

Over dinner, Guy stares at Paul's empty seat. Ben notices.

INT. PETERSON HOME RECEPTION - CONT'D

Guy stares at the SPIRAL STAIRCASE near the front desk. Then he notices a security camera observing him as a serviceman arrives.

SERVICEMAN

Need help finding something,
Forester?

Guy steps back, lost for words. Then out of the corner of his eye, he sees Ben following in his wheelchair.

GUY

Ben was going to show me his
projects!

BEN

Uh yeah, I was taking him to my
room!

SERVICEMAN

I see. Shall I escort you?

Guy and Ben silently nod and let the serviceman lead them away.

INT. BEN'S ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

The serviceman sees Guy and Ben through the door then shuts it from outside. Guy puts his ear to the door, listening until he hears the serviceman walk off. Once he's gone, Guy turns to Ben.

GUY

I apologize for using you to-- my
word.

Guy sees that Ben has wheeled up to his own makeshift workstation where he tinkers with computer parts and pieces of machinery.

BEN

No biggie. What're you
investigating?

GUY

I was doing nothing of the--

BEN

'Cause I've been investigating
myself!

On his laptop, Ben brings up footage of a dark, metal corridor.

GUY

Is this--?

BEN

It's security footage from beneath this place!

GUY

You're just a child. There's no way--

BEN

Naw, it's easy! No one suspects a kid, even a techy one. I've hacked security cameras since waaaay before I lived here. I made this AI that gets me into the main server. I specify a target IP address, it finds network traffic, ARP cache lookup, and poisoning. I capture the traffic on my router, get the client IPs and MAC Addresses, spoof my own traffic, and boom, I've got access to old footage!

GUY

Uhhh, just the old footage?

BEN

Yeah, I haven't figured out how to get into intermediary servers yet. But I peek at some'a what they don't want us seeing.

GUY

Why show me? Aren't you afraid I'll report you?

BEN

No way! I heard your rep: you really care about kids. I know ya think something's up; I wanna help ya figure out what.

Guy shakes his head and starts leaving.

GUY

Ben, there's no evidence of anything untoward. If there is, you're putting yourself at risk. You'd do well to stop.

BEN

Please, I just wanna know what happens to the kids who move on!

Guy freezes just as he places his hand on Ben's doorknob.

INT. ANIKA'S QUARTERS - LATE EVENING

Anika's hand grasps a door handle. We track out as she closes the door, revealing that she's led Guy into her private chambers. It's a Gothic environment with buttresses recalling Robbie's church. Yet it's cathedral qualities make it seem cold and lonely for its lack of a congregation.

GUY

Residents simply "move on" with no explanation? Why didn't you tell me?

ANIKA

We're not a permanent residence. I thought you'd consider it normal. But based on your reaction to the cake, I--

GUY

It could be nothing. If you're wrong, we'd risk both our jobs and reputations.

ANIKA

Even if I'm right, I have nothing to back up my claims. If we were fired, who would look out for the children?

Guy recoils. Anika notices.

ANIKA (CONT'D)

This bothers you more than me.

GUY

Well... if you're right, it's sick, it--

ANIKA

It's more than that. As long as you've been in a position to choose your work, you've specifically taken jobs with special needs children.

GUY

They say I take jobs that flatter
my ego.

ANIKA

Helping children is something to
take pride in. But why these sort
of children?

Anika places her hand over Guy's, staring into his eyes. Guy
pauses, looking uncomfortable. Then finally, he speaks.

GUY

My sister, Charlotte... she had
Down Syndrome. Passed away when she
was four. Mother walked into her
room, started rocking her, and
realized she was... I forgot to
say, she had an artificial heart.
It, um, it had stopped working...

Guy's voice trails off. Anika strokes his arm, soothing him.

GUY (CONT'D)

I was eight. At the wake, you could
walk right up to the body. Touch
it...

Guy fights back sobs. Anika wipes tears from his moistening
eyes.

ANIKA

Shh, it's okay... Take your time.

GUY

(shuddering breaths)

I wanted to say goodbye, so up I
went, I reached out, and-- and--
She was so cold.

Guy takes another moment to contain his emotions, then
continues.

GUY (CONT'D)

I hadn't considered how cold a body
becomes after it... I just... I
remembered sitting on the floor,
playing with her... rocking her in
my arms. She was so warm, so alive,
and... and... Christ, she was four
years old but she'd never even
learned to walk!

ANIKA

So that's why you became a--

GUY

I spent a year in seminary first. Then I worked at a Christian charity until I realized they were pocketing their donations. A coworker refused to tell me how much the "nearly eighty percent of donations" going to special needs causes was. I quit; went back to school with an eye towards biomedical engineering. When I found my gift was in genetics, I decided that was God's plan for--

ANIKA

(surprised)

You believe in God?

GUY

(taken off-guard)

Hmm?

ANIKA

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have--

GUY

No, it's just... I'm not normally so open with people.

Anika wraps her arms around Guy's neck.

ANIKA

I knew I could trust you. It's a pleasant surprise to learn you trust me.

GUY

I... I may need time to--

Anika kisses Guy, cutting him off. Then she smiles at him.

Guy allows Anika to lead him onto her bed where she undresses him...

INT. ANIKA'S QUARTERS - LATER/NIGHT

Guy lies naked in bed with Anika.

GUY

You can cut the power to get me past the cameras. What about the locks?

ANIKA

They're fail safe on the other floors. Why not upstairs?

GUY

Might we have a look downstairs, then?

Anika snuggles closer to Guy again, kissing his shoulders.

ANIKA

(between kisses)

Let's focus on Paul's chambers...

Guy looks suspicious. Then his suspicions wash away in a tide of lust as Anika touches him under the sheets...

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT/SAME TIME

At his workstation, Ben hacks into the security footage again.

On his laptop, Ben sees Paul walking through the maze with the serviceman.

Ben raises an eyebrow and looks at the date on the security footage. Judging by the time, it was filmed yesterday afternoon.

On the laptop, Ben switches to footage of a huge underground lab. He watches Paul and the scientists entering through a THIRD SLIDING DOOR, then slipping behind white drapery along the back wall.

Ben stares, fascinated--when the lights in his room shut off!

EXT. PETERSON HOME - SAME TIME

The lights in the entire home shut off!

INT. PETERSON HOME RECEPTION - SAME TIME

Darkness.

A ghostly, pallid face materializes in the black.

It's Guy!

He dashes up the spiral staircase.

INT. HALLWAY TO PAUL'S CHAMBERS - CONT'D

Guy finds the door unlocked, even though it is not electronic and requires a normal key. He looks suspicious as he enters the room.

INT. PAUL'S CHAMBERS - CONT'D

Guy looks uncomfortable as he takes in the disarray in the vast, unkempt playroom that Paul calls his bedroom.

Guy shakes off his unease and approaches a bookshelf where he examines the spines. The books have titles like The Golden Age of Neglect and Naked as a Jaybird.

Guy pulls out a 1964 hardcover called In Search of Young Beauty by Charles Du Bois Hodges. He flips through it and looks disgusted. Guy puts the book back and pulls out another, entitled Boys Will Be Boys, edited by Georges St. Martin and Ronald C. Nelson.

As Guy turns the pages, he looks like he is trying to keep from vomiting. He puts the book back and moves on to Paul's bed. On Paul's bedside table is a pornographic magazine entitled Barely Legal.

Along the wall facing Paul's bed, Guy sees framed prints of children. None are explicit, but one features a boy pulling up the bikini bottoms he wears. Another depicts a girl with an umbrella imitating Marilyn Monroe. The one in the center provokes the most disgust in Guy's face. It's an extreme close-up of a boy opening his mouth suggestively.

MATCH CUT TO:

I/E. CAVE IN THE WOODS - SAME TIME

An extreme close-up of a wide-open, bloody, toothless mouth.

The teeth look as though they have been recently pulled out.

BLOODY MOUTH
Mommmeeee... Mommmeeee...

The voice coming from the bloody mouth is weak, weeping and unmistakably that of a child.

We pan from the mouth to a nearby man. He's on his knees and is just finishing zipping up his fly. It's clear from his zoot suit that he's Paul.

PAUL

Tsk, tsk, tsk... that won't do
bucko. Mommy loves money. Not you.

Paul gets up, and soon, we're looking him directly in the face. He grins with satisfaction. Over his shoulder, we see the serviceman. He holds a bloody wrench in one hand and a handful of bloody teeth in the other. Paul turns to look at the serviceman.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Thanks for the help getting ridda
th' kiddo's chompers. When I do 'em
in there, I've learned it's best to
defang 'em first! Anyways, I'm
done. Do your thing.

Whistling cheerfully, Paul practically tap dances his way off-screen, as the serviceman lets the teeth fall from his hand like pebbles, then tosses the wrench away. He flicks out a knife!

BLOODY MOUTH (O.S.)

Where are you Mommy? Mommmeeee...

The serviceman walks off-screen with the knife. The camera lingers on the cave, lit only by moonlight from its off-screen opening.

BLOODY MOUTH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Please Mommy... Mommy, pleeeeeease...
I'm scared, Mommy, I'm
scaaaarreed...

The camera tilts in the direction we saw the serviceman go until we see him leaning over an otherwise emaciated torso with massive, tumor-covered legs, each about the size of an average adult. It is as if someone glued a lumpy, avant-garde sculpture onto the torso of a child from a Nazi concentration camp.

BLOODY MOUTH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

WHERE ARE YOU MOMMY?
MOOOOMMEEEEEEE!

The torso's head is blocked out by the end of the screen and the serviceman. Nevertheless, we know what's happening as the childish voice of that bloody mouth dissolves into panicked gurgling.

The camera follows the blood flowing alongside the serviceman--and from the slit neck of the deformed thing that was once a child.

INT. PAUL'S CHAMBERS - A LITTLE LATER

Hyperventilating, Guy turns from the photos on the wall to the bedroom window.

Through the window, Guy sees Paul and the serviceman returning with an empty wheelbarrow. The marionette still hangs from the catch, creating the illusion that Paul matches scale with it.

INT. PETERSON HOME - CONT'D

Guy runs back down the spiral staircase!

INT. ANIKA'S CHAMBERS - CONT'D

Guy bursts in and slams the door shut. He's sweating.

GUY

Sorry! They may have heard m--

ANIKA

What did you see?

Guy turns to face Anika who seems calm and unconcerned.

GUY

I... there were photos. Books.
Nothing illegal, but-- they were--
there's no reason for Paul to have
them. Unless--

Guy turns pale.

GUY (CONT'D)

PAUL! He's back! Or he never left!
Or--

Shouting cuts Guy off:

PAUL (O.S.)

--the hell happened to the power?

GUY

I--

ANIKA

Get to your room. I'll handle this.

They both leave the room, heading in opposite directions.

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Darkness, save for the laptop lighting Ben's face. He looks transfixed and fearful as he stares at the screen. On the laptop, we see Ben is watching the same pieces of security footage over and over:

From various security cameras, Paul and the serviceman walk out from behind the curtain, carrying a familiar malformed shape under a sheet. It is the size of at least two average adults so the serviceman uses a wheelbarrow to transport it.

INT. DINING HALL - EVENING

A dinner plate overflows with food, though not a bite is touched. Guy sits over the plate, looking disturbed. Anika and the frontline workers sit with Guy but ignore him.

GUY (V.O.)

I worked that day as though I'd seen nothing. We heard no word of the power going out, nor of Peterson's return. As far as the Home was concerned, he was in Boston. Of course, I planned to speak to Anika privately that night. Yet--

Guy steals a glance at Anika as she calmly eats her meal.

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

--the unlocked door; the absent servicemen. It was all too convenient. Why did the basement remain off-limits yet she wanted me exploring Paul's chambers? I knew it was wrong. Yet something about her made me weak.

INT. CONFSSIONAL - INDETERMINATE TIME (END FLASHBACK)

Robbie stares at Guy through the confessional grille.

ROBBIE

'Course it did. Women were always yer weak spot.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

S'why ya never made it in seminary,
ya couldn't stick to yer damn vows!
Any time some pretty young thing
gave you the slightest--

GUY

Anika was hardly young, though she
was indeed a handsome woman. But
that wasn't what interested me in
her. Not primarily.

ROBBIE

What was it then? "Primarily?"

GUY

I liked that she was interested in
me. I was her hero, a knight in
shining armor, the only one she
could go to for--

INT. DINING HALL - EVENING (RESUME FLASHBACK)

BEN

(sotto)

--help.

Ben has wheeled up to Guy. The boy regards him anxiously. Guy looks anxious himself as he glances at Anika, who eyes him imprecisely.

GUY

Er, with... with what?

BEN

I just... look, I need to show you
something... I uh, need help
with... with--

A familiar voice interrupts Ben:

PAUL (O.S.)

My father always said that if one
desires help, one ought to help
oneself!

Confused, Guy and Ben turn in the direction of the voice.

They see servicemen carrying out a huge cake on a litter. The center of the cake has been hollowed out, and within it, stands Paul!

PAUL (CONT'D)
 So why don't you kiddies help
 yourselves?

As the servicemen place the cake down on the table, Paul grabs a glob of it in his hand and tosses that glob right on top of Guy's overstuffed plate.

GUY
 Paul! Er, ah you're... you're back?

PAUL
 Yesterday, I decided to dawdle in
 the forest a tick Guy m'guy!

Paul leaps out of the cake and lands next to the table.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 I was going to take my flight ta
 Boston today, but wouldn't ya know
 it... I just got word the
 Oktoberfest parade was cancelled!

ANIKA
 Why's that, Peterson?

PAUL
 Seems the weather'll be getting
 ungodly poor for weeks! Wouldn't be
 safe to fly.

Paul puts his hands together as though in prayer and glances up to the heavens, mock-piously.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 A spot of divine intervention,
 perhaps?

PAUL (CONT'D)
 The Good Lord doesn't want my one
 true love left out of the
 Oktoberfestivities?

Paul lowers his hands and glances at the children at the table.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 By "my one true love," I do mean
 you my darling children! So, let's
 have that Oktoberfest parade HERE!

Paul snaps his fingers! A serviceman tosses him a cane!

Another serviceman lifts up a boom box and turns it on.

Carousel music plays as Paul twirls the cane, leading the servicemen in a line as they serve cake to the cheering children.

Ben takes advantage of the spectacle to tap Guy on the back.

Ben nods in the direction of the doors. Guy leaves with Ben.

INT. BEN'S ROOM - LATER

Ben shows Guy the footage of Paul leaving the basement with the serviceman--and the thing under the sheet.

BEN

Lookit the time stamp. He was never--

GUY

No, he was. I saw him returning.

Ben turns to stare up at Guy for a beat, taken somewhat aback. Guy locks eyes with Ben and looks conflicted.

GUY (V.O.)

Ben was taking risks. But so was I. Thus, I told him everything.

Ben looks shocked and afraid.

BEN

Why's Anika have the authority to turn off the power? She's head geneticist, but she's still just a geneticist. Wouldn't Paul's guards question it?

Ben switches his computer to other security footage and points at the screen.

BEN (CONT'D)

The power was on downstairs when it went out up here. Why're you trusting her?

GUY

Trust her? Hardly. She doesn't want me seeing the bottom floor, the door to Paul's room wasn't even locked, she--

BEN

She's in on this Guy! They all wanted you looking around Paul's room.

GUY

But why?

BEN

To keep your mind off the basement. Maybe they planted the stuff you saw in--

Guy reaches over Ben and brings up the FOOTAGE of Paul leaving the basement with the serviceman and the thing under the sheet.

GUY

Except it appears that Paul Peterson is involved.

Ben pauses the footage and zooms in on the thing under the sheets.

BEN

Think they keep kids who "move on" down there?

GUY

Based on the shape, I doubt anything human's under that sheet, much less a child. Likewise, if they keep children down there, Paul's ah... appetites are the last thing they'd want me alerted to.

BEN

Should we show this to the police?

Guy shakes his head.

GUY

No. We've seen nothing illegal and we're the ones hacking security.

BEN

Okay, but supposing I find--

GUY

We lack phones, and the internet is--

BEN
I've admin hacked the firewall
serv--

GUY
Spare me the bafflegab, Ben.

BEN
Point is, I could probably install
an app to call--

GUY
Even if we uncover something
blatantly criminal, this is
technically a government facility,
so--

BEN
Y'think the cops already know
what's--?

GUY
I think that's a possibility.

BEN
Well, what can we do then?

Guy thinks for a beat.

GUY
I don't trust Anika. Yet it's clear
that she trusts me. Or she at least
considers me daft enough to be
misled. I'm confident that if I
play along, she'll reveal something
actionable regarding Paul. I'll
decide who to alert then.

BEN
Maybe. I mean, you're a genius,
Guy... but... Anika did get ya to
do what she wanted anyways.

BEN (CONT'D)
And now you think you can be the
one to play her... it's... well...

GUY
(rattled)
What? Pride?

BEN
Kinda, yeah.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEN'S ROOM - SAME TIME

We see a pair of black shoes outside Ben's door!

GUY (OS, IN BEN'S ROOM)
Indeed. Then tell me Ben, if I'm
the one letting my ego make a fool
out of me, why are you so confident
that your activities aren't leaving
any footprints?

INT. BEN'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Guy paces back-and-forth, frothing with fury.

GUY
You're just a child! You think you
can hack a government facility's
security?

BEN
Do you still want me to stop?

Guy ceases pacing and looks conflicted again.

BEN (CONT'D)
Maybe you were right, maybe I--

GUY
No.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEN'S ROOM - SAME TIME

The black shoes now silently walk away.

GUY (O.S.)
I mean, I need to know what's going
on down there. But--

INT. BEN'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Guy looks around Ben's room, anxiously.

BEN
Right, so we're a team then?

GUY
I don't know. This is so dangerous.
Why don't you show me how to run
your program myself?

Ben looks unsure, but in moments, we see him showing Guy how to use the program on his laptop.

GUY (V.O.)

Ben was reluctant, but he taught me everything.

Ben pauses the security footage and zooms in on the curtains.

BEN

This part's easy, ya wanna zoom in, ya--

Ben's eyes widen, noticing something he hadn't before.

BEN (CONT'D)

Now what the hell is that?

In the security footage past the drapery, there is grainy footage of electrical hoops caging a muscular, thirteen-foot-tall creature.

Ben hits play again.

THE CREATURE IN THE FOOTAGE

turns to look at the camera, revealing what appear to be horns.

BEN

pauses the footage on the horned creature.

GUY

leans in for a closer look.

GUY

What the hell indeed.

BEN

Oh my god. It looks like the devil or--

Guy tries to laugh that remark off, but it comes out sounding forced.

GUY

The footage is poor; this could be some optical illusion. Yet... yet the stem cells clearly aren't human.

A beat. Then Guy abruptly seizes Ben's laptop.

BEN
Hey! What're you--

GUY
It's not safe for you to have this.
When appropriate, I'll inform you
of any further developments.

Ben stares directly at the screen, his eyes wide and innocent.

BEN
'Kay...

INT. INDETERMINATE LOCATION - NIGHT

Extreme close on a pair of eyes that are almost entirely obscured by tumors. That doesn't stop Paul from licking the eyes as his jaw appears, mouth open wide and flicking his tongue. A child's voice protests, belonging to whoever possesses the tumor-obscured eyes.

CHILD'S VOICE
No! Stop! I don't like it! I don't
like it!

Paul pauses in a shot just wide enough to show he's standing before white drapery, although we still can't see who he's licking. Paul laughs, then leans in closer to continue licking.

INT. SHADOWY LABORATORY - SAME TIME

From a worm's eye view, we see the black shoes return. We follow them to the white drapery, behind which we can hear Paul laughing and a child crying.

The black shoes pause in the direction of the electric-hoop cage. From our perspective, we can only see the bottom of the cage. Whatever it contains has hooved feet.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
Stop! Please! Mom! MOOOOOOM!

PAUL (O.S.)
Mom what? HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!

TUMOR-OBSCURED EYES' P.O.V.

From this perspective, we see Paul's tongue sliding up and down the screen as a serviceman walks around the curtains, toward Paul. This serviceman looks nervous and wears black shoes.

SERVICEMAN

Mr. Peterson?

Paul reluctantly stops licking and turns to face the serviceman. We continue watching the two of them from the tumorous eyes' P.O.V.

PAUL (ANNOYED)

What?

SERVICEMAN

Um, I tailed Forester and the kid like you asked. Got something to report...

Paul listens to what the serviceman has to say. The dialogue is muffled by the rising ambiance of the soundtrack until--

PAUL

Whelp, I reckon it's Ben's time then!

INT. GUY'S QUARTERS - A LITTLE LATER

Guy removes his crucifix from the secret compartment in his suitcase and hides Ben's laptop in the secret compartment instead.

INT. CULTURE LAB - EVENING

A nervous Guy looks through a microscope in his private area.

GUY (V.O.)

I avoided Anika the next day.

Through the microscope, we watch the cells divide at a slower rate, although it's still too fast.

Guy sweats as he observes his progress.

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

My futurevirus had slowed the cell division. In time, it could stabilize it.

Anika appears behind Guy, her expression unreadable.

 ANIKA
 How are things coming along,
 Forester?

Guy doesn't turn.

 GUY
 Ah, fine Anika.

 ANIKA
 Anything to report?

A pause. Finally, Guy turns around.

 GUY
 Not yet.

Anika leans closer to Guy.

 ANIKA
 Some might think you're withholding
 progress.

Guy laughs nervously.

 GUY
 Now why would I do that?

Anika leans in close enough to Guy to kiss him.

 ANIKA
 (whispering)
 Because you might be right to do
 so.

Guy looks shocked.

Anika purses her lips and turns to leave.

 ANIKA (CONT'D)
 If you have anything else to
 discuss, drop by my room.

Intrigued once more, Guy follows Anika.

INT. ANIKA'S QUARTERS - EVENING

Guy stands before Anika as she sits on her bed, which is flanked by two beautifully designed buttresses. They seem to surround her like a Gothic picture frame.

GUY

You've got my attention, but first, I'll need answers. The items in Paul's room. You knew about them?

ANIKA

Well, yes. But--

GUY

Why was the door unlocked? Why was it so easy for me to slip upstairs?

ANIKA

Paul is not the most rational man, I could see him forgetting to lock his door without any servicemen to look after him. Getting upstairs however, that's another matter. There are certain staff members-- not many, but enough--who share my concerns.

GUY

Why didn't you tell me that from the--

ANIKA

You needed to see for yourself.

GUY

What of the basement? Why don't--

ANIKA

You can't risk going down there while Paul's on the island. Even if he leaves, you'd be recorded unless we shut off the power, which can't become a habit.

GUY

Very well, but I still need to know about the stem cells.

ANIKA

We developed them to divide too quickly so that once they were integrated, we could reverse-engineer how you created the futurevirus.

GUY

You're admitting to--

ANIKA

I admit I would have been party to that, yes. But even I have my limits. And given what I've seen, I know why Paul wants the futurevirus.

GUY

To usurp my status, to steal my--

ANIKA

No, think. Your most publicized success with it was in curing a young lady's autism. In altering her brain. I think Paul wants to use the futurevirus to make children more... compliant. I want to report him. But I need proof.

Guy stares Anika down for a beat.

GUY (V.O.)

Anika was willing to admit dishonesty. Yet was that evidence of genuine concern or further subterfuge? She said nothing of what Ben uncovered in the basement. If she was truly turning heel, wouldn't she reveal everything?

Anika's eyebrows twitch.

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

I fed her what I fed Ben.

Guy pulls Anika into a kiss. Stunned at first, she loses herself in the kiss, closing her eyes as she returns it with passion.

ANIKA

(between kisses)

I want you...

Guy breaks the kiss and smiles at Anika, knowingly.

GUY

I want you too...

Anika smiles back at Guy, strangely sincere.

GUY (V.O.)

We made plans to do just enough with the futurevirus to look like we were progressing.

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

Meanwhile, we'd gather evidence to make a case against Paul. Little did Anika know that I'd be gathering the same case against her.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - INDETERMINATE TIME (END FLASHBACK)

Guy hangs his head low. It is silhouetted against the confessional grille.

GUY

Yet little did I know. About a great many matters indeed.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING (RESUME FLASHBACK)

Steam and smoke fill the air as the kitchen buzzes with activity. Chefs stand above stoves, pans, and pots, cooking delicious meals.

One chef in particular pours gravy onto mashed potatoes on various plates. This chef is about to pour the gravy onto the potatoes on a BLUE PLATE when a serviceman stops him and hands him a vial.

The chef nods and sets the vial aside. He lets the blue plate wait until all the other plates have had their gravy poured on them.

Then, under the watchful eye of the serviceman, the chef pours the contents of the vial into the remaining gravy, mixes it well, and pours it onto the potatoes on the blue plate. The serviceman grins.

INT. DINING HALL - CONT'D

The same serviceman places the blue plate before Ben. Paul watches from the head of the table as Ben digs into his meal.

Guy notices Paul watching Ben. Unease fills his face.

Next, Guy notices two servicemen nearby, speaking in hushed tones. Yet they eye Ben as the boy shovels the gravy-drenched potatoes into his mouth, dabbing up any residual gravy with his bread before biting in.

Anika arrives late for dinner. As she passes the servicemen, they cease talking, a dark mood settling over them.

Yet Anika is unconcerned. She walks up to Guy and offers him a genuine smile.

 ANIKA
You feeling okay?

 GUY
Not particularly.

Anika giggles, uncharacteristically giddy. She leans in and whispers in Guy's ear.

 ANIKA
Drop by my room later if you need
cheering up...

Ben suddenly vomits all over his plate! With a shaking hand, Ben wipes vomit from his chin as the other children recoil in disgust.

 BEN
Guy? I don't... I feel...

Paul gets up and looks to the servicemen who are already preparing to sweep in. But before Paul can give the go-ahead, Guy is at Ben's side. He grabs hold of the handles of the lad's wheelchair.

 GUY
I'll get him to his room; you clean
up the mess!

Stunned, Paul and the servicemen watch Guy wheel Ben off.

Then Paul grows upset and looks to the servicemen.

 PAUL
GET AFTER--

That's when Paul notices all the children staring at him and the servicemen. The children look confused. Scared. Even suspicious.

One child regards his fork. He puts it down and pushes the plate away. Other children do the same.

Paul is lost for words.

INT. BEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Guy helps Ben out of his wheelchair and into bed as the boy clutches his stomach, moaning in pain.

GUY
 --caught Paul eyeing you, I think
 he put something in your--

Anika appears in the doorway with a towel over her shoulder.

She shakes a bottle of flu medicine. The rattling draws Guy's attention. In her other hand, she carries a bucket filled with soapy water and a sponge.

ANIKA
 Need a hand?

GUY
 We'll need more than that! Ben's
 been poisoned!

ANIKA
 I think it's just the flu.

GUY
 No, Paul was WAITING! He knew!

ANIKA
 If that was the case, it'd have
 taken hours to--

GUY
 You accelerated cell division, why
 not--

ANIKA
 Not in front of a resident!

Anika's characteristic forcefulness resurfaces and Guy relents. Then Anika's newfound (or newly revealed) sensitivity returns as she takes a seat on the bed next to Ben.

ANIKA (CONT'D)
 Hi there. It's Ben, right?

Ben recoils, not trusting Anika. She smiles and lifts the sponge.

ANIKA (CONT'D)
 It's alright. I just want to help,
 okay?

She runs her fingers through Ben's hair tenderly. Ben slowly calms.

BEN
(unsure)
I...

ANIKA
Shh, shh... it's okay, it's okay...
how about I clean you up, hmm?

BEN
(relenting)
Uh... kuh-kay...

Anika uses the sponge to wipe away the vomit on Ben's mouth.

ANIKA
Any clean clothes on hand?

BEN
Second dresser, first drawer.

Guy fetches some pajamas out of the drawer as Anika dries Ben with the towel and helps him into his pajamas.

ANIKA
There we go, it's okay.

Ben smiles as Anika tucks him in. Soon, he's snug and content. Anika shakes the bottle of medication.

ANIKA (CONT'D)
If you take these, I'll sing to
you.

BEN
My mom used to do that.

ANIKA
Guy, will you fetch Ben a glass of
water?

GUY
Oh, ah, certainly.

Guy heads to the door only to see servicemen blocking his exit! Anika notices them too.

ANIKA
We've got this handled, boys.

LEAD SERVICEMAN
Mr. Peterson told us to take him to
the medical wing for--

ANIKA

Won't be necessary, just a touch of
flu.

The servicemen exchange looks. Then to Guy's surprise, they
leave.

LEAD SERVICEMAN

Understood. We'll inform Peterson.

Suspicion creeps back into Ben's face.

BEN

Why're they listening to--?

Anika grins at Ben warmly.

ANIKA

What songs did your mom sing to
you?

Something about Anika's smile distracts Ben.

BEN

Um... there was this cartoon we
used to watch together. Had this
baby elephant. He got taken from
his mom but she...

Guy leaves the room as Ben continues describing the cartoon
to Anika.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Guy enters the bathroom where he pours Ben a glass of water.

INT. BEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Guy reenters Ben's bedroom with the water. He sees Anika
stroking Ben's brow as she sings to him. The song is a
pastiche of Baby Mine from Disney's Dumbo; just close enough
to be recognizable without infringing upon copyright.

ANIKA

(singing)

Child of mine, don't you cry. Child
of mine, look me in the eye...

Guy places the glass of water on Ben's bedside table.

ANIKA (CONT'D)

(singing)

I can see you'll be fine. Though
few can see how strong you will be,
child of mine...

Ben slips into unconsciousness as Guy arrives at Anika's side.

GUY

You never struck me as the motherly sort.

That makes Anika smile.

ANIKA

Maybe you're waking something up in me.

GUY

(teasingly)

Rather chauvinist of you, Anika!
Surely, you're not suggesting such qualities come naturally to women.

ANIKA

Not at all. In my experience, it needs to be learned.

GUY

Oh?

ANIKA

In my early twenties, I worked as a support worker in Linz. Admittedly, it was just until I could afford to earn my PhD in Vienna. The goal was always to work in genetics.

Guy gets up and takes a seat next to Anika, smiling.

GUY

Yet you chose to work with children again. You've shown such concern for--

ANIKA

Nobody likes seeing children hurt, Guy.

Anika pauses just long enough for us to tell that something about what she just said bothers her.

ANIKA (CONT'D)

Not if it can be avoided at least.
But... I-- you, you don't want to
hear this.

GUY

I assure you, I do.

ANIKA

Once I could afford school, I was
glad to be away from kids. Even
when I was young, watching them get
older, it... it was a constant
reminder that I was getting older.
I swore I'd never have children.

Guy doesn't pay much attention; he brushes his face against
Anika's cheek, trying to go in for a kiss.

GUY

Nonsense. If we-- if you were to
have children, you'd be the
proudest mothe--

Anika laughs and pulls away from Guy. Then she looks sad.

ANIKA

The people who love me the most are
always the ones who know me the
least.

GUY

What do you mean by--?

ANIKA

I'm sorry... that... um... Look,
we're here to look out for Ben,
correct?

GUY

I... suppose we are, yes.

ANIKA

Then let's focus on that. What do
you say we take shifts watching
him?

GUY

So now you're taking me seriously?

ANIKA

It's clear he only needs rest. No
one should have been sent to
collect him.

GUY

It surprises me Paul hasn't already sent more servicemen.

ANIKA

He will. But we can say we're looking after Ben whenever someone comes by.

GUY

That's not our job, how can we--

ANIKA

Trust me!

GUY

You've admitted to keeping things from me. If I'm to trust--

Anika wraps her arms around Guy and kisses him repeatedly.

ANIKA

(between kisses)

Everything will be clear soon, Guy. Just be patient. For your own good.

GUY

And for Ben's?

Anika doesn't reply. She just keeps kissing Guy until he gives in as Ben sleeps soundly.

INT. BEN'S ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Guy lies on a mat, disheveled from sleeping in his clothing and on the floor.

GUY (V.O.)

We took turns resting while the other kept watch. If anyone asked, we explained we were monitoring Ben's condition. No one questioned why that took two.

We see Anika sitting at Ben's workstation as Guy gets up.

GUY

Do you want me to take over now?

ANIKA

No, at least one of us should go to work.

GUY
Or we'll arouse suspicion?

ANIKA
Exactly. Why don't you freshen up
and head to the lab? Then you can
come back at noon and I'll head to
work for the rest of the day.

GUY
Very well.

Guy leaves.

INT. CULTURE LAB - MORNING

Guy--washed, shaved, and changed into clean clothes--walks
through a curiously empty lab to his private area and gasps
at what he sees! Geneticists and servicemen depart from Guy's
workstation, carrying off all his research, tools, and
supplies.

GUY
Hey!

Paul emerges from the crowd of looters.

PAUL
GUY! So, you were planning to
actually show up today? You should
have called. I would've had
catering.

GUY
Look, I'm sorry that Anika and I--

PAUL
Oh, you think I'm sore over your
slumber party? Not at all! While
the two of you were minding Benny-
Boy, I decided to have your
workstation searched.

GUY
But--

Like a magician, Paul reaches behind Guy's head and appears
to pull a contract from Guy's ear before shoving it into his
face.

PAUL

If I suspect you're making more progress than you let on, I'm authorized to seize whatever I want to investigate.

GUY

How did you find--

Paul theatrically whirls around.

PAUL

Let's discuss that in my office!

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

Guy sits before Paul in a chair flanked by two servicemen.

Meanwhile, Paul sits with his legs propped up on his desk, playing with a paddle ball as he "smokes" a novelty bubble pipe.

GUY

--Anika wasn't sure it would work on larger samples, we wanted to test it further before--

PAUL

Anika? Say boys, wasn't she the gal who brought that l'il nugget 'a wisdom to our attention?

Guy's eyes widen and he instinctively gets up to leave. Paul makes a jaw-flapping gesture with his hand.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No need for your seat to get cold Guy m'guy. You two can gab all you want here!

Paul snaps his fingers. The servicemen open the door to Paul's office and show Anika in.

GUY

Anika? But then who's--

Guy goes pale. Before the servicemen can stop him, Guy sprints out of the office.

INT. BEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Guy tears into Ben's room to find that Ben has vanished and the room is being ransacked by servicemen!

Guy screams in rage and is restrained by several servicemen, who pull him back out into the hall.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

GUY
WHERE IS HE?!?!?! WHERE'S BEN?!?!?!?

Paul dawdles onscreen as Anika follows.

PAUL
He's been naughty and not in a nice way. We just wanted to take him to the medical wing for checkup. But when we came by to collect him, we found a little evidence he's been peeking at things he shouldna!

GUY
TELL ME WHERE HE IS YOU--

A serviceman hits Guy in the chest, knocking the wind from him.

PAUL
Ah-ah, language. As for Ben, let's just say we've put him in timeout for now.

GUY
(gasping)
Take me to...

A serviceman hits Guy over the head, disorienting him before he is released into Paul's arms. Anika winces.

PAUL
I think I might have to send you to your room for a little timeout as well.

Guy opens his mouth to respond but Paul forces Guy into a French kiss with lots of tongue. Laughing, Paul pulls away as Guy gags in disgust.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I hear ya do whatever Anika says after a smooch.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Just wanna see if it works for me.
 Would make this next part easier...

Paul shoves Guy into Anika's arms.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 I'll level with ya Guy m'guy.
 You're on thin ice.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 But seeing how I'm a reasonable
 sort've chap, here's how ya make
 amends. Get work on the futurevirus
 done by next week. If not, then in
 the immortal words of President
 Game Show Host, yer fired.

GUY
 Anika, how--

PAUL
 Don't blame her. You've got your
 little tête-à-têtes with Anika to
 thank for it not being game over
 now. But no further questions.

Paul's hand juts out and squeezes Guy's crotch.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Unless they're about arranging a
 few teste-à-TESTES between us. You
 up for it, big boy? HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-
 HA!

Paul releases Guy's crotch and watches Anika help him to his
 room.

Along the way, Guy yells at Anika.

GUY
 You told them about my progress!
 Then you made sure I stayed with
 Ben while they searched my
 workstation! Did you order
 servicemen to come by so I
 wouldn't--?

ANIKA
 I did it to protect Ben! I didn't
 know--

Despite his disorientation, Guy throws off Anika as they approach his room. He stumbles through the door, which is oddly ajar.

GUY
BULLSH--!

INT. GUY'S QUARTERS - CONT'D

Before Guy finishes, he finds his quarters ransacked by servicemen!

GUY
GET OUT! GET--!

The servicemen shrug. Then they leave, punching Guy in the face on their way out! Guy sprawls to the ground with a bloody nose.

SERVICEMEN
Sure, nothing in here anyway.

Guy crawls through his ruined room and picks up his crucifix, which now lies on the floor, broken in two. Weeping, Guy tries to get up, only to fail and fall unconscious.

Anika stares at Guy. She steps forward... but just to shut the door.

Darkness.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Anika turns to look at a serviceman who remains behind.

ANIKA
Keep an eye on him.

The serviceman nods in agreement.

INT. GUY'S QUARTERS - LATER

Guy's eyes slowly open.

GUY (V.O.)
Eventually, I came to.

Guy blearily wipes his eyes and checks his watch. Then he buries his head in his hands, defeated.

GUY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I sat there for a few minutes,
 remembering. Praying to God that it
 was all just a dream.

Guy's eyes fall upon the broken crucifix. A look of
 acceptance overtakes his face.

GUY (VO)
 But it was reality.

In frustration, Guy picks up the crucifix, looking as if he
 is about to hurl it, when he realizes he's lifted the broken
 crucifix off his suitcase.

It's open and all the clothing has been thrown out. Yet the
 secret compartment remains shut... Guy crosses himself and
 whispers a hurried prayer.

Cautiously, he opens the compartment--revealing Ben's laptop
 inside! Guy almost cheers for joy, but then looks at the
 door.

Light in the hallway trickles in from under the door, yet the
 shadow of two feet partially blocks it.

Guy stifles his cheer and opens the laptop. The first thing
 he does is lower the volume to zero, then he hacks into the
 security cameras.

Guy checks the most recent footage, until he sees Ben
 strapped to a hospital gurney as he's wheeled through the
 basement maze!

Guy gets up, places his ear to the bedroom door, and hears:

SERVICEMAN 1 (OS)
 --sure I heard something.

INT. HALLWAY - CONT'D

SERVICEMAN 2
 Think he's come to? Maybe we should
 inform--

Suddenly, the servicemen hear a crash from inside Guy's
 bedroom!

INT. GUY'S BEDROOM - CONT'D

The servicemen throw Guy's door open! Guy has vanished, but Ben's laptop is visible on his overturned desk, near the back of the room.

On the laptop, the footage of Ben being wheeled through the basement is enlarged and paused.

The servicemen dash to the screen.

SERVICEMAN 1
SHIT! HE KNOWS! HE--

Behind them, the closet slowly opens. Guy creeps out, doing his best to be quiet. But he steps on a floorboard, causing a creak!

The servicemen turn and see Guy!

SERVICEMAN 1 (CONT'D)
HEY!

Guy breaks into a run down the hall!

INT. BASEMENT LAB - SAME TIME

Ben awakens. He's still strapped onto the gurney and staring at white drapery in front of him. Ben looks to his left and sees the misshapen forms under the sheets on other gurneys, quivering and moaning!

Shivering himself, Ben turns from the sheets to look at the drapery. We hear faint adult voices behind it.

BEN
H-hello? Where am I--?

The adult voices go silent for a moment. Then--

ADULT 1 (O.S.)
He's awake. Should we--?

ADULT 2 (O.S.)
Why bother? No one'll hear him down here.

Those words fill Ben with fear. He looks away again and gasps when he sees a horned, bull-headed creature staring at him from within a cage of electric hoops!

Ben screams!

Anika comes out from around the drapery. Ben grins with relief, but upon noticing the coldness in Anika's eyes, his grin vanishes.

Geneticists follow Anika out from behind the drapery with an IV drip and catheter/needle injection system. Ben opens his mouth to scream again. This time, only whimpers escape.

INT. DINING HALL - SAME TIME

The servicemen shout into walkie talkies as they chase Guy down the dining hall and into the kitchen.

SERVICEMAN 1

Maybe they're guarding Peterson,
but we need everyone else on
Forester's tail!

INT. KITCHEN - CONT'D

Guy scrambles through the kitchen, pushing aside cooks. He sees an open window, grabs a knife, and then leaps through the window!

INT. LABORATORY - CONT'D

Paul, accompanied by two servicemen, makes his way toward the sliding door that leads into the basement. One of the servicemen lowers a walkie talkie from his ear and speaks to Paul.

SERVICEMAN

Forester hacked the cameras! He
knows--

PAUL

Who cares? There's no way off the
island! Now, let's focus on
important matters. Like me
relieving some tension...

The servicemen sigh and nod as they use their security cards to open the sliding door and escort Paul through it.

EXT. PETERSON HOME - DAY

The home is behind Guy as he bolts toward us! The camera turns around as Guy runs past, revealing he is running into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - CONT'D

Guy arrives at the cave and pauses a moment before entering.

INT. CAVE - CONT'D

Guy is horrified to find the corpse of a deformed, tumorous thing. Although it's been partially eaten by animals, we can tell from its huge, muscular legs that it's the same misshapen thing that Paul had the serviceman kill. Its torso is emaciated, its throat is cut, and its toothless mouth hangs open in a silent scream.

Yet as Guy looks closer, we finally get a good look at its face. We see that its comparatively normal facial features are unmistakably those of a child; an innocent child who had years of love, laughter, and life stolen.

Sympathy overtakes Guy's face. As he lifts the child, the torso easily tears off its misshapen lower half, partly due to the weight of its massive legs and partly because animals were at it.

Tears fill Guy's eyes and he shuts them tight as he holds the child's body close, hugging it like his own child.

GUY
(weeping)
Charlotte, Charlotte...

Then, from outside the cave, Guy hears:

VARIOUS SERVICEMEN (OS)
You check the cave/I'll check the
forest/I'll check by the cliff/I'll
check--

Guy opens his eyes to see a KNEE-HIGH CRAWLSPACE in the rocky wall.

A serviceman arrives in the cave and immediately sees the child's massive, tumorous legs. The serviceman turns away in disgust and sees the crawlspace. He looks around and determines that it is the only way deeper into the cave.

Reluctantly, the serviceman looks inside and sees something wearing Guy's shirt stuck in the crawlspace. The serviceman reaches for it and pulls out--

--the torso of the dead child?

The serviceman drops the child and opens his mouth to scream but a shirtless Guy appears behind him, rising up from between the tumorous legs and holding his knife to the serviceman's throat.

GUY

Take me to Ben. Now.

INT. BASEMENT LAB - SAME TIME

A geneticist prepares Ben's arm as Anika applies spray to a needle. Ben desperately calls to her.

BEN

Don't let them do this!

Anika ignores Ben. Through the needle, she inserts a catheter into his forearm.

GENETICIST

Let's pray it works this time.

Anika looks up at the electric hoops caging the horned bull creature.

ANIKA

Prayer has no place here.

PAUL (O.S.)

I should say not!

Anika turns to see Paul arriving, flanked by the two servicemen.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I haven't a prayer of doing any children while they're ripe!

EXT. PETERSON HOME - SAME TIME

Guy approaches the entrance, holding the knife to the serviceman's throat. They stealthily hide behind trees and abandoned attractions until they get inside.

INT. PETERSON HOME - CONT'D

A child sees Guy holding the serviceman at knifepoint!

INT. BASEMENT LAB - SAME TIME

ANIKA

Despite your agreed reward
Peterson, the children are
primarily test subjects. That's top
priori-

BEN

AAAA!

The cry interrupts Anika. She turns to see Ben's skin festering as tumors overtake his flesh like bubbles in boiling water. Anika and Paul watch with zero compassion as Ben continues screaming. The boy's muscles balloon until they look like they're about to burst. His limbs expand, accompanied by the crackling of his bones as his clothing rips.

PAUL

Never could quite square how they
live through that.

ANIKA

That's what we want to find out;
why they don't just die outright
like adult subjects. Then hopefully
we can-- HEY!

Anika's eyes widen as something about Ben attracts her interest.

INT. PETERSON HOME - SAME TIME

Guy and the serviceman freeze as the child stares at them.

A beat.

Then the child grins, recognizing Guy.

CHILD

Watch your step, Mr. Forester!

Guy looks down and sees that he and the serviceman were just about to walk into a tripwire made from jump rope. Guy looks up at the child, surprised, as he and the serviceman step over the tripwire.

GUY

Did you--

The child points upward. Guy looks to see that the tripwire would have sent a fire extinguisher down a rope and into his face.

CHILD

The workers wanted us to keep to our rooms. But we saw how they poisoned Ben, so we started making plans!

An air vent pops open above Guy. Inside, a second child looks down, holding a bucket filled with rocks that he is waiting to drop.

SECOND CHILD

Plans we put into action when we saw the guards chasing you!

CHILD

We know you're on our side! Ben told us.

GUY

Ben's in danger! I need access to the lab!

CHILD

Then follow me then so the others know you're cool!

With the serviceman hostage, Guy follows the child past the front desk, where he sees frontline workers tied up on the ground. They have slipped on marbles and are guarded by children with wrenches. The child grins upon watching Guy's jaw drop.

CHILD (CONT'D)

You should see the cooks in the kitchen!

Guy shakes his head and turns to the sliding door.

GUY

(to serviceman)
Open it.

The serviceman lifts his pass card and complies.

CHILD

Need any help?

GUY

You've put yourself in enough danger.

With that, Guy and the serviceman walk through the sliding door.

INT. BASEMENT LAB - SAME TIME

We hear Ben crying in pain from off-screen as Anika and Paul watch him.

BEN (O.S. PERSISTENTLY)
It huuurts... it huuurts... it
huuurrr...

ANIKA
(excited)
It stopped! He's...

Anika's excitement deflates as she takes in Ben's finished form.

PAUL
We've seen worse. He looks human
for one thing. Seems the ol'
futurevirus eliminates some of the
cancer, so--

ANIKA
He's still a failure. But he'll be
useful for follow-up tests,
especially as there's been at least
some progress thanks to Guy's work.
We can eliminate the other subjects
later; they won't provide more
findings. Still, if only Guy had
the chance to adapt the
futurevirus.

Upon saying that, Anika walks up to Ben and sneers in his face.

ANIKA (CONT'D)
We have you to thank for that, Ben.
He wasn't ready to see this, but
you had to show off your technical
chops.

The horned creature looks up when Ben's technological gifts are mentioned.

Anika starts leaving with the other geneticists.

ANIKA (CONT'D)
 I need a break. He's all yours
 Paul. Just make sure he's not too
 damaged for us to test later.

BEN (O.S.)
 (fearful)
 W-what...?

An evil gleam dances through Paul's eyes.

ANIKA
 (anxious)
 And, er, don't start until we're
 gone.

PAUL
 Of course, Anika! Why, if I've got
 the go-ahead, and thus needn't be
 sneaky 'n speedy, I dare say I
 ought to make a day out of it! I'll
 need some time to prepare the
 proper attire, the right music...

ANIKA
 Whatev--

Anika pauses. Then she laughs.

ANIKA (CONT'D)
 Music? Hey, wanna know his favorite
 song?

The horned creature watches Anika and then snorts.

INT. LABORATORY - SAME TIME

With the serviceman held at knifepoint, Guy observes the
 empty laboratory as they advance through it.

GUY
 Where are the other--

SERVICEMAN
 All the geneticists are down there.

The serviceman nods at the SECOND SLIDING DOOR.

GUY
 Are they doing something to Ben?
 Like what they did to the child in
 the cave?

SERVICEMAN

If he's lucky, that's all they'll do.

Guy looks quizzical as the serviceman uses his pass to open the second sliding door.

INT. STEEL LABYRINTH - CONT'D

Guy and the serviceman exit an elevator and cautiously make their way through the metal maze. While there are flickering lights here and there, Guy makes sure they keep to the shadows.

They arrive at a THIRD SLIDING DOOR, which once again, requires controlled access. Guy and his hostage pause as we track through these doors.

INT. BASEMENT LAB - CONT'D

Anika and the geneticists are just about to leave through the sliding doors when Paul calls out:

PAUL

Anika? One more thing.

The doors automatically open as Anika and the geneticists approach them, only to close again as they turn from them.

Before the doors close, we catch a glimpse of Guy and the serviceman. Guy looks terrified. If Paul hadn't called to Anika, they would have been seen.

ANIKA

What is it Paul?

PAUL

Once you get the cells working, you will give me my reward, correct?

ANIKA

Paul, the next step would be adapting the treatment for adults.

PAUL

But that's not fair!

ANIKA

The government agreed to cover up your activities in exchange for providing us with children.

(MORE)

ANIKA (CONT'D)

Your reward is just extra
incentive. If you stop cooperating-

-

Paul stamps his feet like a child, interrupting Anika.

PAUL

You said I'd get the pretty ones
when it worked! Ones that'd be
little forever, thanks to the stem
cells! Ones that the futurevirus
would fix so they'd never fuss when
I touched them, never bite or
snitch to mommy and daddy, never--

ANIKA

We don't have time for this!

INT. BASEMENT MAZE - CONT'D

As Anika says that, she steps out into the maze where we see
Guy hiding in the shadows! Luckily, she doesn't notice him.

Guy holds the knife hard enough against the serviceman's neck
to draw blood. He sweats but keeps silent as Paul stands in
the sliding doorway, preventing it from closing.

PAUL

I just want what's coming to me! I
just want my fun!

ANIKA

Then go have it.

Guy bristles at that, but keeps his cool. Paul sighs and
allows the other geneticists to leave with Anika. Guy keeps
to the shadows until he's sure they're gone. Then he nods at
the serviceman, who leads him up to the sliding doors.

INT. BASEMENT LAB - CONT'D

Paul walks around the drapery again. With his pinky, he
strokes the tumors of a misshapen thing that we can't fully
see.

PAUL

You're not so pretty now Benny-
Boy...

Paul opens his mouth and slowly licks a tumor-obscured face,
as though testing its taste. Then he grins.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 ...but you'll do in a pinch.

Extreme close on the tumorous-obscured eyes.

BEN
 This... this isn't really happen--

PAUL
 I assure you Ben. It most certainly
 is.

INT. BASEMENT MAZE - CONT'D

Guy nods for the serviceman to open the doors. He complies.

INT. BASEMENT LAB - CONT'D

Paul approaches a nearby computer, and brings up a playlist.

He makes a selection and a familiar Disney-style song plays.

It drowns out the noise of the sliding doors opening as Guy and the serviceman enter. Paul is so eager to get back behind the drapery that he doesn't notice them.

Guy cautiously approaches the drapery but pauses to stare in disbelief at the electric cage and sees that it contains a muscular, thirteen-foot-tall man with IV drips inserted into his forearms, hooved feet, and the horned head of a bull.

Behind the drapery, Paul grins evilly at Ben who remains off-screen.

PAUL
 I confess you've got me too hot and
 bothered to go change into my
 Sunday best. But thanks to Anika, I
 was at least able to choose the
 correct music. Do ya like it,
 Benny-Boy? Do ya?

Extreme close on Ben's tumor-obscured eyes.

BEN
 No... NO! NOT THIS SONG! NOT--

Paul cackles with glee as he pulls down his pants. The song playing is the pastiche of Baby Mine from Dumbo that Anika sang to Ben.

Now we clearly see Ben in all his mutated glory. He is covered in tumors and his limbs are muscular and elongated, but he is recognizable not only as a human, but as Ben. He remains strapped to the bed and screams uncontrollably.

BEN (CONT'D)
NOT THIS SONG! PLEASE! IT'S ALL I
HAVE!

PAUL
(singing)
Bitch of mine, time to cry...

Guy hears Ben screaming and forgets all about the bull creature. He bolts around the drapery, leaving the serviceman.

Paul attempts to mount Ben, who shakes violently as he screams.

The gurney that Ben's strapped to falls over as Guy appears.

Guy meets eyes with Ben, but the boy doesn't notice him. He just continues screaming and shaking.

BEN
AAAAAAAAA! AAAAAAAAAA! AAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Ben shakes as his new muscles flex, inadvertently breaking the straps holding him to the overturned gurney. Once freed, the traumatized Ben crawls across the floor, desperate to escape.

BEN (CONT'D)
MAAAAAAAAAAMAAAA!
MAAMAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Guy looks from Ben to Paul, who awkwardly pulls up his pants.

PAUL
Uh, hey Guy m'guy... How'd you--?

GUY
AAAHHHHHHRRRRGGHHH!

Guy rushes at Paul, waving the knife! Before he can attack, the serviceman appears behind Guy and bashes a chair over his head!

Guy drops the knife as he sprawls to the ground. The serviceman restrains Guy using a chokehold.

Laughing, Paul scoops up the knife from the ground.

SERVICEMAN

Peterson! You won't believe what's happened up--

PAUL

Hold off on the exposition a tick. There's something I wanna try...

Paul walks up to the catheter/needle injection system, passing the electric hoop cage along the way. Ben is on the ground before the cage, hugging its metal base as he mumbles in a state of psychosis.

BEN

Mama... Mama... Mama...

Paul places the knife down and instead grabs the injection system and brings it over to Guy as he is restrained by the serviceman.

PAUL

If you think Benny-Boy's got it bad, you ain't seen nothing yet, Guy m'guy. He's a kid, so whatever else happens, he lives after we stick 'im. You, on the other hand, are fucking dead.

The bull creature stares down at Ben, still mumbling and hugging the base of the cage. The sight awakens something in the bull creature. It speaks!

BULL CREATURE

Ben.

The mutant boy does not respond.

Guy tries biting down on the serviceman's arm, but it does no good. He's losing consciousness.

PAUL

Spread his forearm for me!

SERVICEMAN

He's almost out. Can't we wait?

PAUL

I want him conscious for this!

Reluctant, the serviceman tries to spread Guy's forearm while maintaining the chokehold.

The loosening of the serviceman's grip allows Guy to kick the needle from Paul's hands! Startled, the serviceman loosens his grip even more, allowing Guy to run.

The serviceman grabs Guy, but Guy bites him in the nose, drawing blood. The serviceman screams!

The bull creature stares at Ben as the boy mumbles. The bull creature thinks a moment, then starts to sing.

BULL CREATURE
(singing)
Few can see how strong you will be,
child of mine...

Ben looks up at the bull creature, madness still clouding his eyes. Yet his mumbling stops, the song having roused the boy's attention.

BULL CREATURE (CONT'D)
You're still there, Ben. Paul
hasn't broken you. You're too
strong for that.

Now the bull creature's eyes are glowing.

BULL CREATURE (CONT'D)
Believe me, I know. I can see your
soul.

Close on the bull creature's eyes, as the angels of heaven fly around within them!

Awareness returns to Ben's eyes.

Paul picks up the needle again as Guy bites deeper into the serviceman's nose, as viciously as a rabid dog. The serviceman pushes Guy off, causing Guy to bite off his nose!

SERVICEMAN
AAAAAAAAAA!

Paul lunges at Guy with the needle, but misses as Guy falls.

Paul trips over Guy and injects the serviceman with the needle instead!

The bull creature continues talking to Ben, leading him out of psychosis.

BULL CREATURE
They took me, Ben. They took me and
siphoned my cells, hoping to make
themselves immortal.
(MORE)

BULL CREATURE (CONT'D)
 Never accepting that the angelic
 cells of the Nephilim are
 incompatible with mortal DNA.

The serviceman screams as he balloons out into a pulsating blob of tumors, then explodes, splattering Guy and Paul with gore.

The bull creature smiles at Ben.

BULL CREATURE (CONT'D)
 But God worked you into the plan,
 Ben. Forester's virus diminished
 the disease my undying cells cause.
 Thus, you are blessed with some of
 their boons. Strength, Ben. Outer
 strength to match your inner
 strength!

Comprehension joins the awareness in Ben's eyes now.

BULL CREATURE (CONT'D)
 You have the physical strength to
 tear off the metal sheathing. You
 have the mental strength to know
 which wires to pull. You just need
 the inner strength to will yourself
 back to us. Do it, Ben! Free me!

Guy lies on the ground, covered with gore. He spits out the serviceman's nose in disgust and tries to get up when Paul appears.

PAUL
 MOTHERFUCKER!

A gore-drenched Paul climbs on top of Guy and pounds his fists on Guy's chest, like a petulant child throwing a tantrum.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Motherfucker! Ruined my fucking
 fun! You won't get away with this!
 AHHHH!

Guy tries shoving Paul off, but Paul punches Guy in the face, disorienting him.

Close on Ben as he rips the metal sheathing off the base of the electric cage, exposing the wiring beneath it!

Paul forcibly turns the disoriented Guy over onto his stomach. Then he pulls down Guy's pants and starts undoing his own fly.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I'll show you, motherfucker! I'll
FUCK YOU! I'll FUCK YOU, FUCK YOU,
FUCK YOU!

Ben stares at the wiring through his tumor-covered eyes.

Trembling, he reaches in and pulls at it.

The circles of electricity surrounding the bull creature disappear, as do the electric bars.

Paul is just about to start thrusting into Guy when the bull creature grabs Paul by each side of his head and turns him around so that they're making direct eye-contact.

Ben runs to Guy's side, checking if he's alright.

BEN
GUY! Are you--

Ben suddenly realizes something.

BEN (CONT'D)
Oh my god.

Ben looks down at his elongated and tumorous yet muscular legs.

BEN (CONT'D)
I can walk!

The bull creature snorts with contempt after staring into Paul's eyes.

PAUL
So, you're free. Be wanting your
revenge, I expect? Go ahead! I've
had decades of fun! I always knew
I'd have to pay the toll
eventually.

BULL CREATURE
The toll is eternity.

Within the bull creature's eyes, Paul sees himself screaming as demons tear him limb from limb, then put him back together in different configurations, only to tear him apart again!

Only now does Paul look afraid, finally comprehending his fate.

PAUL
Wait! I re--

Too late. The bull creature crushes Paul's head. Then he casts aside the decapitated body.

Paul's body spasms as Ben helps Guy pull his pants up. Guy tenses upon seeing the bull creature and starts stammering.

GUY

Buh-wuh... buh-wuh-wuh? Wuh...?

The bull creature simply walks over to the nearby sink where he washes gore from his hands. He gives Ben a sidelong glance.

BULL CREATURE

I'm grateful, Ben.

The bull creature turns and approaches Guy and Ben. Upon regarding the latter's deformities, the bull creature looks upset.

BULL CREATURE (CONT'D)

And I'm sorry.

BEN (FORCED GRIN)

Well, I can... at least I can walk!

The bull creature moves past Guy and Ben, approaching the drapery.

BULL CREATURE

Every sacrament has its boons.

The bull creature tears down the drapery, and goes from gurney-to-gurney, throwing off the white sheets. Beneath each sheet, lies a deformed mutant child. They moan in pain.

BULL CREATURE (CONT'D)

As well as its costs.

These mutants resemble the child Guy found in the cave. Like Ben, their limbs are elongated. Unlike Ben, their limbs are disproportionate to each other and their tumors are far more prevalent. Ben is also consistently brawny while some parts of the children are emaciated while others are muscular.

Guy stares at the children as he chews his fingers, gibbering. His eyes are wide with madness, empathy and horror.

GUY

Nuh-nahhh-nahhh-naaaaah--

The bull creature's eyes glow as he addresses the children.

BULL CREATURE

Look into my eyes, children.

The children's screams subside as a look of hope fills their faces. They observe glimpses of heaven in the bull creature's eyes. The bull creature then turns to look at Guy and Ben.

BULL CREATURE (CONT'D)

Bring him to me.

Ben leads Guy to the bull creature, who stares into his eyes.

They glow again and Guy stops gibbering.

BULL CREATURE (CONT'D)

My name is Asterion.

BEN

You know I'm Ben. So I guess you know he's--

The bull creature, now identified as ASTERION, smiles at Guy.

ASTERION

Guy, I believe.

GUY

(stammering)

Forester. Guh-Guy Forester.

ASTERION

You have nothing to fear from me.

Asterion turns to the deformed children in the gurneys.

ASTERION (CONT'D)

Using my undying cells, they attempted to cheat death and circumvent aging.

Asterion leans closer to the children, addressing them.

ASTERION (CONT'D)

Yet they only caused your suffering. Consider what they've taken from you. Your bodies, your futures...

GUY

Their very innocence.

Asterion grins at Guy, knowingly.

ASTERION
No Guy. Never that.

Asterion's eyes glow again, conjuring a rotating, circular portal, through which we can see angels flying; it's a portal to heaven!

ASTERION (CONT'D)
All children are innocent, and thus, have automatic entry to heaven. Now that I'm free, I can use my abilities to deliver them there. That is, if they make that choice. What say you, children?

MUTANT CHILD
What about our mommies and daddies?

ASTERION
Your parents are the ones who sold you. Do you really wish to return to them?

The mutant children grow concerned and stop to consider this.

Then with the exception of Ben, the children get up and enter the portal where they shed their tumorous bodies and become winged angels!

Outside the portal, Ben looks to Asterion with concern.

BEN
What about Guy?

ASTERION
He still has work to do here.

BEN
Then I want to help him stop Anika!

ASTERION
That isn't Guy's work. The Lord has informed me that the children upstairs have already put a stop to them.

Asterion looks into the portal and it briefly changes from a vision of heaven to a vision of what has transpired upstairs: Anika and the servicemen are restrained by the children's ropes after falling prey to their traps.

Then the portal returns to a vision of heaven.

ASTERION (CONT'D)

The children will require an adult to contact the authorities in order to be taken seriously. Guy's testimony will also be necessary to support their story in court. He must remain here.

Ben's voice starts trembling. His eyes grow moist.

BEN

But, but won't he need me for proof of what happened? The others have gone!

GUY

Ben, I think it's best you go with Asterion and accept your rewa--

Ben is crying now. He pulls Guy into a hug.

BEN

I don't wanna!

Guy is taken aback, then slowly hugs Ben in return.

GUY

Ben, I don't want you to live like this.

Through his tumor-obscured eyes, Ben stares up at Guy tearfully.

BEN

I know now that mom never loved me... an' I never knew my dad. You're like, you're the only grown-up who's ever cared about me. I don't wanna leave you.

Sorrow passes through Guy. Then, despite the sadness in his eyes, he smiles at Ben. It is the smile of a loving father.

GUY

That may be so. But your father in heaven loves you more than you could ever know. Go be with him. One day, I'll join you.

Ben stares into Guy's eyes a moment longer.

BEN

We'll see each other again?

GUY

Sooner than you think. I promise.

Ben smiles at that. Despite his deformities, he looks every bit the sweet little boy he is. Then his tumorous flesh cracks like an eggshell. It falls away, revealing an angelic version of Ben.

Ben flutters in midair for a moment, testing his new wings.

Then Ben smiles at Guy and flies to him. They exchange a final hug. Ben takes Asterion's hand and they enter the portal together.

Guy watches as the portal shrinks into nothingness after Asterion and Ben have entered it. Then Guy lowers his head, displaying a level of humility that he has never truly practiced until now.

INT. CONFESSION BOOTH - INDETERMINATE TIME (END FLASHBACK)

Through the confessional grille, Robbie regards Guy.

GUY

I contacted the authorities. Then it was a simple matter of standing guard over Anika and the others until they arrived.

ROBBIE

I thought the government was--

GUY

I knew they were involved, but had no idea how high up this all went. Even now, I kick myself for not destroying my advancements on the futurevirus, but I thought it would be necessary evidence.

ROBBIE

Okay, then riddle me this: what was Anika's deal?

GUY

As I stood guard over her and the others, she claimed they never intended to use the futurevirus to Paul's ends. Anika said she just told him that to ensure--

ROBBIE

I mean the runaround she gave you!
See, your story is fulla holes.

GUY

Anika had this daft idea that if she revealed the truth gradually, I'd "come around." That I'd see how important her work to cure death was. She believed she could convince me it was worth tolerating Paul. That in fact, ending Paul's activities would provide further motivation for me to complete my work all the sooner.

Robbie laughs at that.

ROBBIE

I wonder how that woulda gone down in court.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Guess we'll never know, considering the Olympic gold metal shit she pulled.

INT. SOLITARY JAIL CELL - NIGHT (INSERT SHOT)

Anika is locked in the cell, under observation by guards and a security camera. Suddenly, the security camera shuts off!

Anika's guards leave as two MEN IN BLACK enter; one restrains a panicked Anika while the other breaks her neck!

INT. CONFESSION BOOTH - INDETERMINATE TIME

Guy looks surprised.

GUY

You don't believe she committed suicide?

ROBBIE

Oh, she offed herself alright. The bitch wanted to avoid doing time for the deaths she was involved in. What I don't believe is that the government knew anything about your fairy tales about minotaurs, mutants, and immortality.

(MORE)

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

If they wanted to shut her up, why haven't you been rubbed out?

Guy grins dolefully.

GUY

Ah, but my assassination came courtesy of the media.

Over Robbie's shoulder, we see that he's browsing the internet on his cellphone. Robbie swipes through various news articles, each dismissing Guy as a conspiracy theorist.

ROBBIE

Yup. You're a regular Alex Jones now, champ.

Guys sighs and shakes his head.

GUY

Believe me or not, I've confessed my part in what's to come. Will you give me my prayer of contrition?

ROBBIE

(dismissive)

Sure, sure...

Guy leaves the confession booth and makes his way to the exit. Still chuckling to himself, Robbie leaves his side of the booth and continues swiping through news articles on his phone when one catches his eye.

On Robbie's phone, we see the article. It is about how the government has developed a new technique to slow down aging.

"IMMORTALITY POSSIBLE?" reads a link to another article.

Robbie looks up in the direction Guy just walked off, his mirth having evaporated.

The doors to the church exit click shut. Guy is already outside.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY (ESTABLISHING/EYE-LEVEL)

At the church doors, Guy stares into the snowstorm. He pauses a moment to process the blizzard before him. Then, like a humble passerby, Guy disappears into the blinding whiteness.

FADE TO BLACK.