

INT. UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

A massive TITANIUM SCREEN takes up the front stage in the empty assembly hall. The hall is empty.

The titanium screen is luminous, almost liquid on the surface. It seems to be lit from within.

The room is silent. The screen sits, implacable.

INT. INDOOR POOL - MORNING

A man is swimming laps. He wears goggles and waterproof headphones through which classical music plays. His arms cut the water like razors, propelling him with nary a splash.

EXT. BALTIMORE STREET - MORNING

A woman in running clothes and an all-weather hoodie jogs through the early morning air, passing Fort McHenry in downtown Baltimore.

This is DANIELLE FLINT, 31, blonde, lean, and angular, with Slavic features and icy blue eyes.

She runs hard and confidently, her breath measured, eyes focused on a vanishing point far in front of her.

A smartwatch on her wrist chimes and she slows her pace, checking her pulse as she brings the watch closer to her face to read it. A call coming through from "George".

She considers this for a moment as she stops running, then taps the watch to answer.

INT. NEW YORK CITY, JAMES' APARTMENT - MORNING

JAMES Mason replaces a cover on a BOX on his desk and walks to the kitchenette. He is 31, with soft hands and faint stubble on his cheeks. He is wearing a collared shirt and jeans, and a jacket.

He puts on a pair of glasses, adding an air of artistic intellectualism. He starts loading a digital SLR CAMERA into a shoulder bag.

He fills a small bowl with dry dog food and a PUG scampers from his bedroom and begins eating. James scratches its neck folds affectionately.

On the kitchen counter is an open LAPTOP. An open file, halfway written, is on the screen, titled "All Access Pass: ARIA ONE and the Impending Singularity."

The title is visible for a moment before James closes the laptop and stows it in his bag.

He grabs a donut from a box on the counter and holds it between his teeth as he throws the bag over his shoulder.

As he walks to the door he grabs an ID CARD on a lanyard from a hook near the door.

As he slings it over his neck, it can be seen to read "James Mason" and "PRESS" in large letters. It bears the UN LOGO.

INT. INDOOR POOL - MORNING

The swimming man stops at the end of the pool and wipes water from his face. He checks his watch.

He hauls himself out of the pool. This is GREGG OVERHAUFF, 62. He is in tremendous shape for a man of his age. Wealth surrounds him like a cocoon.

He pulls off his goggles and runs a hand through his wet, silver-shot hair.

A redhead woman clad entirely in black steps towards him with a robe. He pops out his headphones and the music stops.

He allows her to drape the robe about his shoulders and walks to the door of the pool room, which another black-clad female attendant opens for him.

OVERHAUFF
(to himself)
Showtime.

OPENING CREDITS: "FOR THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE"

INT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - MORNING

TITLE: "THEN - YEAR 1988"

DR. ROLAND FOURNIER is teaching a class. He is in his mid-30s, with bright intelligent eyes, shaggy unkempt hair, and boyish good looks that have initiated many coed crushes.

The class is made up of graduate students who feverishly take notes. One student in particular watches Roland from the front row, not writing down a thing.

This is JEANNE CORBETT, 25, a striking brunette, long legs crossed in a short skirt.

Roland is writing on TRANSPARENCY PAPER with markers, using an old-fashioned PROJECTOR to enlarge his images onto a board above the blackboard at the front of the class, itself laden with diagrams.

ROLAND

Dr. Hayflick described three phases in a cell's life. "Phase one" was the way the cells started out.

(beat)

No one ever accused anatomists of being poetic.

There is some LAUGHTER, less than Roland thinks he deserves.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Then, the period of previously described cell proliferation he called "luxuriant growth." Which would probably seem more apropos to a shampoo commercial.

More LAUGHTER. Roland smiles, more satisfied by the response.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

He was the first to describe phase three: the onset of senescence. Cell growth tapered off and cell division stopped altogether. The so-called Hayflick Limit. Why does this happen?

Blank stares. Jeanne confidently raises her hand.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Miss Corbett?

JEANNE

Telomeric shortening. Each mitosis progressively shortens the telomere cap on individual DNA strands. Once enough are lost, the cells initiate apoptosis.

ROLAND

(nodding)

Programmed cell death.

(MORE)

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Which is potentially of great value to cancer research. By exploiting the Hayflick Limit for certain cell lines, we can push our targets - in this case cancer cells - towards the extinction cascade.

(beat)

Very good, Jeanne.

Behind Jeanne, a female student whispers something to her neighbor, and both snicker.

INT. LONDON SUBURB, BRITISH CAB - CONTINUOUS

It is a typical grey London day as a cab moves through airport traffic.

In the back seat sits CHARLES BRAHMES, 58. He is wearing glasses and the tweed jacket of an academic, and sifting through a sheaf of papers on his lap that are covered in complex chemical and molecular diagrams.

He glances up as the cab passes a large monument that reads "Welcome to Heathrow Airport." Brahmes checks his watch and starts packing away his papers in a small hand luggage.

INT. COLUMBIA RESEARCH LABORATORY - DAY

Roland is at the soapstone laboratory counter. In front of him, next to an ORIGINAL MODEL GENETIC SEQUENCER is a GLASS CUBE. Inside is a BUTTERFLY, a Thaumantis Diores with brilliant blue wings ringed with brown undersides.

He takes a test tube RACK OF VIALS from a fume hood workstation and puts it into a large INCUBATOR laden with similar vials and stacks of petri dishes.

There is a BEEP from the direction of the door as it opens.

JEANNE (O.S.)

Hi, Professor.

Roland turns. Jeanne is standing at the door. She smolders in her short skirt and loose silk blouse. She is holding an

ACCESS CARD.

ROLAND

Hi, beautiful.

Jeanne strolls around the lab, running her fingers across the counter, setting the card down as she does. The card bears a picture of an older man, with the name "Charles Brahmes, PhD".

JEANNE

I think I'm falling behind in class. Could use a little extra credit.

ROLAND

Could you at least pretend to take notes?

JEANNE

I took tons of notes last semester.

ROLAND

And you got an "A". And yet you feel the need to audit a class you've already aced.

JEANNE

Can I help it that you're irresistible?

ROLAND

Please.

JEANNE

I just like to see you squirm.

ROLAND

Now that is at least believable.

Jeanne looks around the lab expectantly.

JEANNE

Where's Dr. B?

ROLAND

England. No one's supposed to know. You know how secretive he is, always thinking someone's out to quash his research -- He's enlisting a friend for molecular analysis of some of our cultures.

JEANNE

Leaving you all alone?

ROLAND
(shrugs)
The cure for cancer's not going to
just find itself.

Jeanne hugs him from behind, clutching his chest.

JEANNE
That's not what I meant.

Her hand trails downwards to explore the front of his pants.

ROLAND
Without Dr. B around, you have the
whole day to play hooky with me.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
I have to pick him up at the
airport around ten.

With her other hand she takes his left wrist and holds his
watch up so that they both can see that it is around noon.
His watch is a STAINLESS STEEL ROLEX MILGAUSS. A scientist's
watch.

JEANNE
Gives us more than enough time.

She nuzzles his neck from behind, and he tips his head back.

ROLAND
Jeanne...

She cups him harder and whispers in his ear.

JEANNE
Now that's what I call "luxuriant
growth."

He turns and grabs her by the back of the head, kissing her
passionately. She melts into him. Lips enmeshed, she fumbles
at his pants. He unbuttons her blouse as he backs her against
the lab counter.

He grabs her waist with strong arms and lifts her up to sit
on the counter.

He pulls away from her and stares into her eyes, hands on her
thighs. There is an electric anticipatory beat.

ROLAND
This is real, isn't it?

Jeanne's expression softens, shyly serious. She nods.

He kisses her again, love replacing passion, his hands sliding up her pale bare thighs, hiking her skirt up.

INT. BLACK ROOM, UNKNOWN LOCATION - CONTINUOUS

The room is dark with cubicles set up. In each cubicle, a person sits with headphones on. On each desk is a notepad, recording equipment with tapes rolling and a tube TV screen.

At one of the desks sits an AGENT. He is around 30, with sandy brown hair cut short and sharp aquiline features. As he look at the screen in front of him, his right index finger nervously keeps rubbing his upper lip. On the screen, is a

surveillance view of Roland's lab. Roland passionately

kisses Jeanne as she sits on the counter.

In the agent's headphones, the WET SOUNDS of their mouths, tinny and distant. On the screen, Roland buries his face in Jeanne's breasts, kisses her taut stomach.

ROLAND (ON SCREEN)
Your turn to squirm.

He continues his southerly path.

The Agent impassively jots some notes down.

On screen, Jeanne arches her back and moans, breasts heaving.

INT. CAR - MORNING

TITLE: "NOW, FORT MEADE NSA HEADQUARTERS, MARYLAND"

Danielle is behind the wheel of her car. She is still in her running clothes. She pulls up to a gated entry for a massive complex behind high security walls.

A MILITARY GUARD steps out to meet her. He recognizes her and his expression softens as he gives her a half wave.

She hands him her badge and he takes it into the guard kiosk to scan. He emerges with it a few moments later and hands it back to her.

EXT. FORT MEADE NSA HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Danielle drives into the complex to see the massive sleek obsidian building standing like a monolith at the center of the large lot.

INT. DANIELLE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The office is spartan and well organized. Everything in its right place.

Danielle pulls off her jogging gear down to a sportsbra and spandex shorts, slips on a plain white button-down blouse, and wriggles into a navy blue knee length skirt.

GEORGE (O.S.)
Danielle?

In bumbles GEORGE WAVERLY, 36, a thin, gregariously dorky career NSA tech analyst. He is carrying sheaves of paper, a laptop, and a COFFEE. He stops short at the sight of Danielle pulling on her skirt.

DANIELLE
Eyes, George.

George immediately does an about-face to stare at the wall.

GEORGE
Sorry.

DANIELLE
It happens. What are we looking at?

GEORGE
Lowell wanted to get an early start. Washington sent some heavy hitters to monitor. It's a full security impact assessment. The big guns want a debrief.

DANIELLE
For that I have to cut my exercise routine?

GEORGE
Who else? It's pretty far above my pay grade.

DANIELLE
And pretty far below Lowell's. The guy knows the game too well.
(MORE)

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
He wants someone else holding the
hatchet.
(beat)
How do I look?

Georges turns. Danielle has rapidly put herself together. She finishes the last button on her blouse and shrugs on a matching navy blue jacket.

GEORGE
Thumbs up.

DANIELLE
(indicating coffee)
Is that for me?

Georges hesitates. The side of the cup has "George" written on it in permanent marker. Danielle grins.

INT. NEW YORK CITY, TAXI - DAY

James is in the taxi, putting a new SD card in his camera. He slings it around his neck, at the ready.

TAXI DRIVER
I don't know how much further I can
get you, bud.

The taxi has stopped due to a LARGE CROWD of people picketing and milling about. James looks up.

JAMES
Right here is fine.

TAXI DRIVER
Suit yourself. Fifteen eighty.

James hands up a twenty.

JAMES
Keep it.

He opens the door and steps out.

EXT. UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

The crowd is assembled outside the gates of the building, which are cordoned off and guarded by policemen.

There are PICKET SIGNS reading "Beware the A-I-pocalypse", "P-ARIA-H", "Too Many Secrets". Clearly some differing viewpoints.

James makes his way to the front of the cordon where other members of the press are being admitted. He shows his badge to one of the policemen.

JAMES

James Mason. New Yorker e-mag.

The policeman scans his badge with a reader, which lights up green. He waves James through towards a security checkpoint at the gates to the facility.

James stands for a moment looking at the imposing structure.

He snaps a photo, then starts to walk towards the security checkpoint, slipping his bag off his shoulder with a practiced air.

INT. HEATHROW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

TITLE: "THEN - HEATHROW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, YEAR 1988"

Standing at the Pan Am ticket counter, Charles watches the middle-aged ticket agent, a woman with a thick British accent, slides his ticket across with his passport.

TICKET AGENT

There you go, Dr...Bra--mes?

BRAHMES

Brahmes.

TICKET AGENT

(nodding)

Your flight is set to depart from gate 27R, as in Robert. Looks to be on time. You'll be back in New York before you know it.

BRAHMES

(smiling)

Thank you.

He checks his watch. Ever mindful about the time.

INT. HEATHROW GATE 27R - A BIT LATER

Brahmes is seated in a chair by the gate. He is hand-writing a POSTCARD. He signs it and adds it to a pile of five OTHER POSTCARDS, identical, pictures of Big Ben.

He stands and looks out the airport window as planes taxi, land, take off in the night.

POV BRAHMES: The lights are illuminated on the runway, whites, reds, greens. EVERY RED LIGHT THAT HE SEES SEEMS TO GLOW MUCH BRIGHTER THAN THE OTHER COLORS. End POV.

Brahmes takes off his glasses and rubs his eyes.

He walks to the gate kiosk and asks something of the gate agent, who points across the terminal. He thanks her.

He turns and starts walking and almost runs into a MAN IN A PILOT'S UNIFORM who is wheeling a small hand luggage.

They do an awkward back-and-forth who-goes-which-way dance.

Brahmes finally smiles and steps aside to let the pilot pass.

The pilot does not return the smile, but tips his pilot's hat and heads towards the jetway of gate

Brahmes drops the postcards in a mail depository and sees a nearby bank of PAYPHONES. His eyes dart back to the gate; boarding hasn't started yet. He walks to the phones, an international calling card in hand. He dials a number and waits anxiously as the dual beep international RINGTONE sounds.

There is no answer and the answering machine picks up.

BRAHMES
Hey, it's me, pick up.
(beat)
Pick up.

He checks his watch.

BRAHMES (CONT'D)
Where are you? It's the middle of
the day there.

INT. RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

Roland and Jeanne are eating a late lunch at an Italian bistro in Manhattan. They both have a post-coital glow, and appetite to match.

Outside the window are CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS.

JEANNE
It's good. I mean, it's
pappardelle.
(MORE)

JEANNE (CONT'D)

In my view, it's really hard to screw up pappardelle.

(beat, then coyly)

Any particular reason for the oyster appetizer and the linguini with clams?

ROLAND

I'm doing all I can to keep up.

JEANNE

Should we get out of here then? We can be at my apartment in no time.

ROLAND

I have reactions to run, hon. You're going to have to wait til tonight.

JEANNE

Aw, really?

ROLAND

Brahmes would kill me if I torched a whole day. And I'm not eighteen anymore. I need a little recovery time.

JEANNE

I don't want an eighteen years old you. I'm happy curling up as you whisper data sets on endothelial progenitor cells and anti-tumor VEGF inhibition. That brain of yours is a bigger aphrodisiac than a half dozen oysters.

There is a pensive beat as Roland weighs his thoughts.

ROLAND

I keep thinking I'm going to wake up. This... whatever... is really good. But sometimes I worry I'm keeping you from something. If this is a fling or whatever, that's fine. But I just want you to-

JEANNE

(getting closer)

It's not a fling. I've had flings and they don't last eight months, believe me. This isn't me fulfilling some daddy issues or something like that.

(MORE)

JEANNE (CONT'D)
This isn't me blindly surrendering
to my primordial brain.

ROLAND
All I'm saying-

JEANNE
I love you, Roland Fournier.

Roland leans back in his chair. He looks at her and she holds his gaze, unflinching, confident. He smiles like a boy.

ROLAND
I love you too, Jeanne. I always
have. And at this moment, here,
now, I can honestly say that I
always will.

Jeanne's whispers back, her eyes beaming the sincerity of a young everlasting love.

JEANNE
Always.

INT. PAN AM FLIGHT MAIN CABIN - DAY

The main cabin of the Boeing 747 is almost full to capacity and the flow of boarding passengers is finally slowing.

Brahmes is seated mid-cabin, on the aisle, looking through and annotating his diagrams. He hears a loud laugh and looks up. He sees the man in the pilot's uniform joking and flirting with a pretty stewardess towards the front of the plane.

Brahmes goes back to his diagrams.

CAPTAIN'S VOICE (OVERHEAD)
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.
This is your captain Jim MacQuarrie
speaking. On behalf of my wonderful
flight crew I want to welcome you
on board PAN AM flight 103 to JFK
International Airport. Looking to
be clear skies across the Atlantic,
so grab your pillows, it'll feel
just like a waterbed the whole way
over.

As the captain speaks, the stewardess followed by the man in the pilot's uniform, walks down the aisle, looking up seat numbers to finally stops next to a YOUNG MAN, in his early twenties sitting in an aisle seat.

The man in the pilot's uniform comes forward and exchanges a few words with the young passenger. At first, the passenger appears annoyed; but finally he gets up, grabs his luggage and overcoat from the overhead compartment and recalcitrantly follows the man off towards the jetway.

EXT. COLUMBIA RESEARCH LABORATORY - AFTERNOON

Roland scans his ID on a plate near the door to the laboratory. It turns green WITH A BEEP and the door opens.

INT. COLUMBIA RESEARCH LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS [SEE NOTE]

Roland enters. He pushes play on a small BOOMBOX in the corner and EIGHTIES MUSIC fills the room.

Next to the boombox is a telephone and an answering machine. The light on the machine is BLINKING but Roland doesn't notice.

BEGIN MONTAGE: CELL CULTURE EXPERIMENT

Roland takes some Petri dishes out of the incubator.

Roland is sitting at the laboratory station under the fume hood and opens the Petri dishes.

Using a pipette, Roland bathes the surface of each dish in a nutrient medium.

He draws up fluid out of each dish and distributes it into new empty Petri dishes, amplifying his cell culture.

He returns the new dishes to the incubator and retrieves a test tube of fluid labeled "JL3" from the rack of vials.

Using a micropipette, he applies tiny drops from the JL3 vial onto each dish.

END MONTAGE

Roland stacks the Petri dishes and starts walking back to the incubator. He slips on something and the dishes go crashing to the ground, the JL3 with it.

He looks helplessly at the mess and bends down to see what he slipped on. He picks up a pair of LACY BLACK PANTIES. He smiles despite himself and tucks them into his pocket.