

Homo Tyrannus

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COLD OPEN

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Breathing, slow and steady. A group of PEOPLE huddle in the darkness. They are of varying ages and genders, all Southeast Asian. We focus on an elder, terrified. The silvery light filters through the leaves across their face.

CUT TO: Shadows flit through the trees. Heavy creatures move, obscured by the dark. Their bulk rockets upward into the tree tops, shattering limbs, raining leaves and debris.

CUT TO: The people cringe from something unseen, eyes locked on the tree tops that seem empty. The adults begin to scream and pray, but the elder is simply paralyzed. All other sounds are **muted**. There is still only the elder's breathing.

A large shape approaches, its form obscured by the darkness and foliage.

(Breath)

The creatures in the trees rattle the limbs. Their hunt is over.

(Breath)

The elder closes their eyes slowly, accepting what's come.

(Breath)

Some of the people make a break for it, running in all directions. We see their silhouettes pulled upward into the canopy.

(Breath)

The Elder's face fills the screen. A shadow slowly creeps across their wizened face.

(Breath)

BLACK SCREEN

A new breath, heavier, deeper, more bestial begins. It grows louder and louder until it is a deep, foreboding rumble.

ACT I

INT. RESEARCH LAB, HALLWAY - DAY

We open on a woman walking briskly- DR. VIVIAN ATLEY. She's alone, her hair in a tight bun, a lab coat billowing behind her. Her stride is stiff, measured, she is all business.

She passes through a sealed door, flashing a key card with practiced precision.

INT. RESEARCH LAB - MAIN LAB

Atley enters a large office space. Her colleagues, DR. ANNABETH BLALOCK and DR. CHARLES HUXLEY are chattering excitedly. There's an intimacy between them, old friends. Or more.

HUXLEY

Perhaps some kind of extant offshoot from the Heidelberg Man? Before you say it, I know the jaws don't match up, but maybe this is some kind of relati-

BLALOCK

More that doesn't match up, it doesn't resemble *anything* we have on record. Maybe we should call in Eric for a brain scan?

ATLEY

Do that and I'll put your head on a spike.

Startled, they both turn to her. She's not kidding and they know it. Atley devours the warmth in the room. She is unbothered by their unease, might even enjoy it.

ATLEY

Last night, I noticed one of the files missing. The one with the most of the swab results. Explain.

She pins Huxley with a glare, mechanical and predatory.

HUXLEY

Uh, I-uh, well I thought that maybe, since we obviously can't do a deeper analysis without damaging or distressing him, I wanted to see if I

could find anything like food stuck to his teeth. See if he's actually from the area... or get some clues to his diet?

Huxley is intimidated. Practically shaking. The discomfort is clearly weighing on Blalock as well.

ATLEY

Hm. Acceptable. Next time, send a message about it. I don't want anything misplaced.

Both doctors relax and nod in ascent.

BLALOCK

Any word from collection? It'd really speed things along if we had just a few more specimens to -

ATLEY

You have everything you need at the moment.

BLALOCK

Ah. Well. Today we planned on giving him a bit of a rest, he's not responding to any of the stimulation we've provided. We wouldn't want to agitate him too much -

ATLEY

"It."

BLALOCK

What?

ATLEY

"It" is an "It."

HUXLEY

With all do respect, the *specimen* could be more-

ATLEY

Do your jobs, preferably *well*, and you can dictate to me about the proper *dignity* it deserves after our preliminary findings. Understand?

(BEAT)
Do I make myself clear, Dr. Blalock?

BLALOCK
Y-Yes, Ma'am

Atley briskly walks past her angered colleagues. She pretends she cannot hear them whisper behind her.

BLALOCK
My god, what a **pill**. What was that about?

HUXLEY
I know, right? She's always been kinda drill sergeant. Never known her to be **this** on edge, though.

BLALOCK
Yeah maybe, I dunno. It's the anniversary of that thing at the seed bank, maybe she's one edge about being back in the field?

HUXLEY
OOOH, that could be it. You don't hit the ground that bad and just hop back into it.

BLALOCK
You really don't, I'd respect it...if she didn't suck SO MUCH.

HUXLEY
Agreed. Maybe she's just super awkward? She might actually like you and just isn't sure how to say it.

Huxley chuckles about the comment, only half-serious. They absentmindedly reach out to brush lint from from Blalock's coat, deciding to straighten the collar as well.

BLALOCK
Fat chance. I've never heard of her *liking* anyone.

HUXLEY
No one?

BLALOCK
No one. As far as I know, she's never

mentioned a partner, favorite student,
family, not a single person she's ever
spoken a kind word about. Total closed
book.

CUT TO: Atley stalks out of the room, perfectly collected.
She checks her phone; 0 messages, 0 emails, 0 notifications.
She sighs.

ACT II**EXT. DENSE FOREST - DAY**

Two people in tactical gear crouch together. They're close, trying to remain unseen. One man in the front has a patch on his shoulder with a green circle. He is ANDREW GRAYLING. They speak through ear pieces.

GRAYLING

Fold around the side.

The second person, MORGAN STENSER, checks their weapon while stealthily moving into the underbrush.

STENSER

Weapons hot.

GRAYLING

On my signal-

Grayling is now moving, both of them taking opposite sides of a nondescript copse of trees. They're wary of movement, keeping eyes on each other as best they can.

Finally in position, Grayling takes a deep breath. He steadies himself, ready for what is coming. He suddenly stands, crashing through tree limbs and screams -

GRAYLING

FOR NARNIA!!!

Rapid fire *bangs* rip through the quiet. From the far side, Stenser concentrates fire upward. Return fire flies back in a hail of carnage. Grayling goes down suddenly with a strangled cry. As quickly as the chaos began, it stops.

BATROS

(unseen, from above)

FUUUUUCK, we're out, you got us, you got us.

STENSER

(breathing heavily)

AAAH YEAH, eat it losers!

In the midst of Stenser's celebration, two more people in gear drop down from the canopy. They are wearing identical body armor, save for the red X patches on their shoulders. MIKHAIL BATROS and RORY ABADI. Both covered in bright, orange paint.

Grayling only has a single splotch of purple on his thigh. They definitely got smoked.

BATROS

Yeah, yeah, drinks on us.

GRAYLING

God, it's hard to be this good. Bats, I pray you never know the burden of such incredible talent.

ABADI

(through gritted teeth)

I swear you guys are always aiming for my fuckin knee? WHY?

BATROS

You look so quick, gotta make sure you can't run away. Think of it like a compliment.

ABADI

(dryly)

Ha. Ha. Next time, I'll be giving one of you a "compliment." See how you guys like it.

STENSER

Now, now ladies, no need to fight. You're both very pretty, and we can ALL just go to prom *together*.

The men laugh, continuing to rough house as they head inside.

INT. PREP ROOM - DAY

Grayling is in a large room full of chairs, set up for some kind of presentation. He is playing a game on his phone, clearly enjoying himself, bright colors flash on the screen as cartoon mascots and loud sound effects signal he is winning.

STENSER

Hey man, you all good?

GRAYLING

Yeah, dude, why?

STENSER

Nothin, nothin...just, um, I noticed

you were a little slow out there.

Grayling's smile evaporates. The friendly hand on Grayling's shoulder seems less friendly. Stenser seems more aggressive than necessary.

GRAYLING

(visibly deflated)

No, no, I'm fine man, I'm all good.
Just um... just, uh, an elbow thing
from practice.

STENSER

GREAT! It's important we stay on track
for this job. And afterward, we can
take some time off, collect ourselves.
Get our lives in order again.

Stenser pulls Grayling close. He's affectionate, extremely comfortable with the contact between them.

GRAYLING

You said the score was big, but
what're we doing exactly? I didn't get
a brief yet?

STENSER

Oh, this contract is special. FED
MONEY. we're gonna be rich. Search and
destroy. Captures get a bonus! Easy
peasy.

GRAYLING

Where we going?

STENSER

Somewhere Near India? It's not very
developed, but we're supposed to pick
up all our gear when we get there.

GRAYLING

I mean, that sounds pretty easy.
What's with the extra cash?

STENSER

It's some kind of indigenous group of
rock-chewers. Definitely not kosher to
do in public. You know how it goes. We
make some threats, throw some petty
cash around, they clear out, easy.

GRAYLING

(nonplussed)

Hmmm. Was kinda hoping we'd be going after somebody who kinda deserved it this time? You said after the last one

-

STENSER

(annoyed)

Since when do you give a shit? It's a pay day for barely any work.

Stenser's grip tightens around Grayling.

GRAYLING

Y-Yeah, you're right

STENSER

(placated and affectionate)

You bet I am. Just let me give this to you and be grateful. We're all gonna be sitting pretty after this, so try not to screw this up. I don't need you making a *mess*. **Again**.

Grayling looks down, docile. Stenser walks off as happy as ever, seemingly indifferent to Grayling's turmoil.

INT. BUNKS - DAY

Grayling sits on his bunk. He rummages through a bag under his bunk frantically, pulling out a phone, unlocking it and tapping a familiar rhythm before holding it to his ear.

The sound of his breathing is loud. A message begins to play, a conversation between himself and a woman.

WOMAN'S VOICE

So I know you...I, I know you're upset with me. I-I wanna talk about this.

GRAYLING

What's there to talk about?

WOMAN'S VOICE

That's not fair! You don't get to act like this is all my fault!

GRAYLING

How **isn't** this your fault? I -
[indecipherable]

WOMAN'S VOICE

Don't you EVER judge me, I know
EVERYTHING! You made this as much as -

GRAYLING

You don't know shit about what I can
do. You never believed in me! Stenser
told me -

WOMAN'S VOICE

Oh my g- I'm so SICK of your excuses.
You wanna know exactly what you're
capable of? You -

Grayling ends the message, shaken. His hand flexing around
it, his face a mask of agony, eyes closed, he's a million
miles away, a thousand years in the past.

(audio flashback)

A woman's voice is heard, indistinct but frantic. She's
screaming, angry and scared. Grayling's voice is a wordless
roar, all rage, all pain. Wet sounds echo, again, and again,
and again.

Grayling looks more and more disturbed, a darkness falling
over his features. He is weak. he begs the silence to comfort
him. We hear the quiver in his breath as he fights tears.

INT. PREP ROOM

The men have gathered in a room of the cabin filled with
folding chairs. Stenser stands at the front projecting
documents from a laptop on a screen. The screen bears a map
of most of Southeast Asia.

STENSER

Alright boys, games are over, time to
get to work.

BATROS

We got a new job boss?

STENSER

Yessir, funds are running low and my
old lady is breathing down my neck.

Stenser suddenly becomes solemn, tears coming to his eyes as
he stares at Batros. As if on cue, Batros places his hand
over his heart.

STENSER
(emotional)

J-just one more job. For my son. One last job and I'm getting out the game, once and for all.

BATROS
I'll follow you boss...I know we're finally gonna make it out of this Minnesota hood -

STENSER
We'll go to a ball game together, finally catch a fly ball, like we always dreamed -

BATROS
Watch the kids get older, find a body in the woods on top of a stack of porno mags -

Stenser immediately breaks character, laughing uncontrollably. Batros is right behind him.

STENSER
MINNESOTA? The *mean streets of Minneso*
- HA. You're so stupid.

(catching his breath)

Ok. Ok. Business. Business. We're dropping into a small outpost in this extremely rural area.

Stenser begins to gesture to the map, pointing at an area between Nepal and Bhutan.

We're meant to have a guide when we get there. Just a local to say, "don't eat that," "don't sleep there," and in Bats' case, "Don't piss on that."

BATROS
IT WAS ONE TIME!

STENSER
After we make nice with the natives, we set up shop, start scanning for targets to integrate and/or neutralize. Easy-peasy, shouldn't take

more than a week or five.

ABADI

Ok, so I kinda like what I'm hearing so far, but I'm thinking you're leaving the whole WHY of this thing? I like money as much as the next guy, probably more, but this isn't the usual mop up. Shouldn't they send like a Jane Gooddall type or something?

STENSER

Good question, the answer is - I don't care. Maybe they're scared, maybe they just want this done quick, either way, it's not our problem. They offered the contract and I know the guy behind it personally, he's above board, practically a favorite uncle.

ABADI

Again, not complaining, but if we're walking into a -

STENSER

Bats.

BATROS

Got it.

Batros, as casual as a smile, puts a gun to Abadi's head.

BATROS

You're kinda new, so I get it. We been getting comfy, being mates, havin a laugh. But let me help you with something. Stense is your new boss. That means Stense is your new god. And as far as you're concerned, I'm **very** devout in my faith. Have you acknowledged your personal savior?

GRAYLING

Bats, its enough alright. He was just asking questions.

STENSER

Gray's right Bats. It's all copacetic. You'll have to forgive Batros his *zealous* nature, he was born without enamel on his teeth. All is forgiven.

Right, Mr. Abadi?

ABADI
(nods nervously)

BATROS
Just like to be clear about things
newbie. Promise, no hard feelings.

Batros was not asking a question, simply stating that he was finished caring. Abadi's face says there are definitely hard feelings.

The men, finally settling in, look up at the screen. The speaker begins the powerpoint, the name of the mission coming on screen: HOMO TYRANNUS

ACT III**INT. RESEARCH LAB - VIEWING ROOM - DAY**

The good doctor is alone in a large room, dotted with various pieces of equipment. Screens show camera feeds of various areas of jungle. a large table dominates the room, chairs oriented in such a way to face the glass panel behind her. Immediately on the other side of the glass is a blacktop area dotted with various toys and food scraps, foliage can be seen further back. Atley checks her email and text messages on a computer. There's nothing. There's a blank look on her face, unsurprised, but a deeper flicker of pain beneath.

She looks away abruptly, staring into the enclosure. Is that affection she feels? We do not see what she sees.

She turns back to the computer, pulling up a file, deleting a number tag designating the "subject." She types the name "Karna" into the file heading and looks satisfied for a moment.

The screen goes blank, a green circle appearing in the center.

VOICE

Hello, Victoria. It's been awhile.

The voice comes directly from the computer. Atley remains unfazed.

ATLEY

This wasn't the approved check in time.

VOICE

Yes, yes, I know- but the times between calls is SO boring.

ATLEY

I could've been with someone.

VOICE

(laughs)

Sure. Victoria, I don't see why we can't be more friendly. I'm not trying to put more pressure on you than strictly necessary.

ATLEY

I'm more than prepared to present our findings so far.

VOICE

(exasperated)

Unnecessary, I have total faith in you Victoria. I just - is it too much to ask for a *little* warmth here?

This has touched a nerve. Atley's hand curls into a fist.

ATLEY

Yes. FAR too much.

VOICE

Noted. Perhaps you'll change your mind when I tell you I've made some arrangements. I'm going to give our boy some playmates.

ATLEY

(shocked)

You've found more? Where? How're you moving them?

VOICE

Weeeeell, I haven't exactly located them yet, per se, but we've got a number of promising reports and we've sent an extraction team.

ATLEY

Who is their expert? I know everyone in the field worth a damn.

VOICE

...We've decided to be more...direct with this extraction. Avoid unnecessary leaks.

ATLEY

What? You can't possibly think - what if they hurt one of them? We have no idea how fragile this population is, the utmost care is need -

VOICE

I see we've found some affection in

you after all? Surprising to see you so emotional.

Embarrassed, Atley begins to draw back inward.

ATLEY

I just don't want anything to happen to the original population. Especially since introduction of more individuals can have unexpected impacts on our subject.

VOICE

Sorry, are we having like a beauty and the beast thing going on? Are you jealous he'll get a girlfriend or something? You know what this thing is right?

ATLEY

An animal, sir?

VOICE

No, it is a *problem* that I have to *fix*. And that means *you* have to fix it. I've got ten people screaming at me every day about this thing and believe me, they've all got HORRIFIC breath. Make this go away for me?

ATLEY

(tense)

Wouldn't you rather I just kill it then?

VOICE

WOAH, my - jeez, no! We want to *understand* this, not eradicate it. We're not supervillains, everything doesn't need to be scorched earth, ya know?

ATLEY

I understand. I'll get you your answers. Will, will my payment be ready this week?

VOICE

(comforting)

Of course Victoria, you'll have your first installment in a few days. they're very excited to speak with you.

Something washes over Atley. An indescribable agony and a joy without compare. She is a deep, dark hole and she's been promised daylight. The Voice snaps her from her thoughts.

VOICE

Oh, and one last thing. I said don't get attached to the others, not "be an enormous asshole." You know you can relax a bit. This doesn't *need to be* life or death, right? Ya know...unless you screw up.

The circle on the screen disappears, ending the call. Atley looks very tired. She checks her messages again. Still nothing. Facing the enclosure, the camera finally pans around to show us the subject, Karna.

An ape-like creature, much larger than an adult man, stands perfectly upright in the glass enclosure. It ignores the various toys and food scattered around, but slowly turns toward Atley, as if sensing her attention. It is nearly entirely covered in black fur, its feet unmistakably simian, huge and hand-like. Yet, its face is a cross between chimp and something decidedly more human. Its movements are entirely too purposeful. Eyes with black sclera bore into Atley's through the one-way glass.

What must the creature think of her?

Perhaps less than she'd hope.

EXT. RANDOM VILLAGE

Side story, a small village is shown. There's no english dialogue. We see them going about their everyday lives, just getting by, until another elder (different from the intro) Hears something in the trees. It takes them some time to convince others they've heard something and the villagers eventually follow the old man into the undergrowth. They find a young boy, beaten and barely alive.

In the bushes there're eyes watching the scene. Black sclera mark them as much more than human. They're waiting. Their trap is set.