

REJECTION

Written by

Gabriel Henneman

Based on the life of  
Dr. Thomas Starzl

**DARKNESS**

The sound of the irregular beating of a dog's heart.

FADE IN:

**INT. SHABBY GRANGE HALL - DAY**

**ON PROJECTOR SCREEN** - the beating heart is revealed in the open chest of the dog whose liver is being removed.

Dr. Thomas STARZL (27) stands heroic in front of the footage.

STARZL

Once the low pressure portal vein has been divided, a clamp is placed on the lower vena cava and the upper vena cava. The hepatic veins are divided and the liver can now safely be removed from the canine.

Starzl goes across the stage

STARZL (CONT'D)

Then a donor liver can be put in place and reattached in the reverse order. A portion of the bowel is then attached to the bile duct and fed back into itself. We have found a great deal of success in our trials on animals and hope this research can continue and prove useful in the near future.

Starzl wears a pleased look on his face.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Are there any questions?

The pleased look diminishing as he looks upon the sparse and bored audience.

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

Starzl brings his bags down the sidewalk on his way to his jalopy, when he sights a room-for-rent sign at the pub.

**INT. PUB - DAY**

Starzl sets his bag down at the bar and hails the TAVERNER, gesturing to the ceiling at the rooms upstairs. The Taverner looks up that way and shows four fingers.

Starzl opens his wallet, considers the meager cash within.

**INT. JALOPY - NIGHT**

Half tank of gas. Starzl wipes his eyes at the long empty highway ahead.

**EXT. LONG EMPTY HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

The jalopy passes a sign that reads: Cleveland 365 miles.

**INT. SHABBY GYMNASIUM - DAY**

Starzl stands before the same footage as before.

STARZL

... We have found a great deal of success in our trials on animals and hope this research can continue and prove useful in the near future.

Starzl looks on at the half-asleep crowd.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Any questions?

**EXT. JALOPY - NIGHT**

Starzl sleeps in the parked car.

A COP raps on his window and Starzl wakes with a start. He waves an apology and fires up the rig.

**INT. CLEARED OUT CAFETERIA - DAY**

Starzl stands before the shabby projector screen.

STARZL

... We have found success in our trials on animals and hope this can prove useful in the future.

Starzl looks out at the audience that seems more accustomed to a freak show than surgical theater. He just packs up.

**ENTRANCE**

Starzl passes the JANITOR.

STARZL

Do you know where a fella can get  
some work around here?

Janitor raises an eye at him.

**EXT. FACTORY - DAY**

Starzl looks up at the sign that reads "Machinists Wanted: No Experience Necessary" as the day shift crew exits and the much younger swing shift machinists enter.

**INT. FACTORY - NIGHT**

Starzl sews a machinist's finger back on. The machinist pulls his hair out in pain, so Starzl grabs up his bottle of rubbing alcohol and gestures for the machinist to drink the admixture. He chugs it and Starzl gets back to suturing.

**EXT. JALOPY - DAY**

Starzl passes the "Entering Minneapolis" sign.

**EXT. TINY OPERA HOUSE - PARKING LOT - DAY**

Starzl's jalopy chokes toward a spot.

**INT. JALOPY - DAY**

Starzl scratches his stubble as he watches the empty fuel gauge. Shifting into neutral, he wobbles into the spot and lets out a big sigh of relief.

**INT. OPERA HOUSE - DAY**

Starzl stands before the nicest projector screen yet.

STARZL

The hepatic veins are divided and the liver can now safely be removed from the canine. Then a donor liver can be put in place and reattached in the reverse order. A portion of the bowel is then attached to the bile duct and fed back into itself. We have found a great deal of success in our trials on animals and hope this research can continue and prove useful in the near future.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Are there any questions?

A lone hand raises. Piqued, Starzl picks his chin up.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Yes, you.

A VOICE speaks from the crowd.

VOICE

What is your survival rate?

STARZL

So far, we have yet to keep a subject from rejecting the organ for longer than twenty four hours. But we are hopeful --

VOICE

Could you remove the spleen?

STARZL

Well that would require -

VOICE

And the kidney and the bowel and the pancreas?

STARZL

I'm sorry, I can't quite see you in the crowd there. Could you please stand?

Dr. HUME (28) stands proud and the look on Starzl's face instantly deflates.

HUME

Why not transplant the spleen and  
the appendix and the stomach and  
the heart?

Starzl stares into the middle distance with impotent rage.

HUME (CONT'D)

Heck, why not just take a dog from  
this table and simply place him on  
the other? That seems to be about  
as useful as what you have actually  
accomplished here.

Starzl packs up his bag.

HUME (CONT'D)

No further questions.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY**

Glowing, Starzl stomps down the street and takes a right  
turn into a grassy driveway.

**EXT. STARZL'S HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY**

Boxes from their recent move still all about. Starzl enters  
to his wife BARBARA, stroke-ridden father ROMAN, and father-  
in-law CONRAD sitting around the dinner table.

BARBARA

You made it!

Starzl just keeps moving through the space to the garage.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

My father was just asking about  
your name...

Barbara watches him leave.

CONRAD

Good to know he's still got his  
charm.

Conrad takes another drink and elbows Roman.

Barbara frowns at the remark and hands Roman a full spoon  
before exiting.

**INT. GARAGE - NIGHT**

Starzl digs through the packing boxes labeled "garage."

Barbara enters.

BARBARA  
Thomas, what are you doing?

STARZL  
Looking for something.

BARBARA  
Okay, well, my father is in there  
and we're having dinner. You need  
to come join us.

STARZL  
I can't right now.

BARBARA  
He came all the way from Iowa, Tom.

Starzl finds the gas canteen.

STARZL  
I need to do this first.

BARBARA  
Is something wrong with the car?

STARZL  
Don't worry, I'll fix it.

He starts to exit, but stops short of the door.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
Do you have any cash?

She relents a nod.

**KITCHEN**

Barabara finds her purse and gives Starzl a couple of bucks.

BARBARA  
This should be plenty.

Starzl starts to leave.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Will you at least say hello to my  
father?

STARZL  
I don't have time.

BARBARA  
The man just bought you a house,  
Tom.

STARZL  
A fact of which I am certain he  
will remind me.

### DINING ROOM

Conrad watches Barabara and Starzl argue over in the kitchen.  
He takes another sip of booze and looks to Roman.

CONRAD  
Roman.

Roman stares blankly.

CONRAD (CONT'D)  
Translates to "Famous Man" in  
German, no? I suppose your parents  
had high expectations for you.

Conrad drinks some more.

CONRAD (CONT'D)  
You want a sip?

Roman shakes his head no. Conrad tops off his glass.

CONRAD (CONT'D)  
Come on, just a small one.

ROMAN  
(garbled)  
No. Thank you.

CONRAD  
Here I'll even raise it to your  
lips like my saint of a daughter  
does.

Conrad gets closer.

CONRAD (CONT'D)  
Let's just tip you back.

Primal fear lives in Roman as Conrad presses the glass to his  
lips. His stroke-ridden hands just flop in resistance. Then  
Barabara follows Starzl in and Conrad straightens up.

CONRAD (CONT'D)  
Everything alright?

STARZL  
Hello, Conrad. Thank you for coming  
to dinner.

Barbara gives Conrad a plaintive smile.

BARBARA  
How was everything out here?

Conrad gives Roman another fraternal smack.

CONRAD  
Was just discussing with Roman here  
the Germanic roots of his namesake.

BARBARA  
Thomas' family is German, right,  
Thomas?

STARZL  
Emigrated in the late 1800s.

Conrad gestures to the gas can in Starztl's hand.

CONRAD  
Need some gas do ya?

STARZL  
Yep.

CONRAD  
Here, I can give you a ride.

STARZL  
That's quite alright, I can walk.

CONRAD  
Let me just get my coat.

Barabara gestures for Starztl to "go - go. Take the ride."

Conrad turns back around kisses her on the cheek.

CONRAD (CONT'D)  
Thank you for the dinner --

He looks down at Roman.

CONRAD (CONT'D)  
And the stimulating conversation.

BARBARA  
Goodnight, dad.

Starzl watches Barbara and Conrad hug. Barbara mouths to Starzl to "Thank him for the house," and he rolls his eyes.

**INT. CONRAD'S PICKUP TRUCK - DAY**

Starzl looks out the passenger window then musters a sigh.

STARZL  
Thank you for the house.

CONRAD  
Of course, I'm just happy to get you off the road. I can't tell you how many nights I lay awake at night worried that my Barbara has to support herself off working as a real estate agent.

Starzl grits his teeth.

CONRAD (CONT'D)  
It's a fine hobby, but not a real means of income.

STARZL  
She doesn't have to anymore.

CONRAD  
And I'm glad of that. I'm sure that the research and experimenting was fun, but now with a real job you --

STARZL  
I am still a research doctor, Conrad.

CONRAD  
Well, there's always room at my private practice waiting if you ever want to make some real money.

STARZL  
Thank you.

CONRAD  
God forbid I pass and my Barbara is reduced to living in some hovel, forced to cook up a piece of pig or fowl you've taken from your lab.

STARZL  
It's mostly dogs. And we don't eat  
the animals.

CONRAD  
I was only making a joke, Tom.

STARZL  
Right.

Conrad brings the pickup to a stop. Starzl unbuckles.

CONRAD  
I'm glad we had this talk.

STARZL  
Have a safe drive back to Iowa.

CONRAD  
Good luck on your first --

Starzl shuts the car door.

CONRAD (CONT'D)  
Day...

Conrad resigns to putting it in drive and pulling out.

**INT. FARRELL'S OFFICE - DAY**

John FARRELL, 20-30 years old, red and rubbery face, reviews documents. Starzl sits across from him.

FARRELL  
(reading)  
Graduated top of your class at  
Westminster College, exemplary  
honors for neurosurgical research  
at Northwestern Medical school,  
then a mere semester at Johns  
Hopkins and...

Farrell looks up at him.

FARRELL (CONT'D)  
Nothing. For three whole years?

STARZL  
I took time off, sir.

FARRELL  
Time off, from medicine?

STARZL

I had some personal issues. I spent the time at my wife's home. In Iowa.

FARRELL

You're not a head case are you?

STARZL

I am perfectly sane, sir.

FARRELL

Hopefully not too sane. You're working the emergency room after all.

Farrell looks up, but Starzl is unimpressed by the joke.

FARRELL (CONT'D)

So why come to Minnesota? They certainly have hospitals in Iowa.

STARZL

They don't have ones with research funds like you offered, sir. You see, I have a new hypothesis involving the replacement of multiple... I'm sorry, sir, but didn't we go over all of this during the interview process? It was my understanding that I already had the job.

FARRELL

The purpose of this meeting has to do with a letter I received only just this morning.

STARZL

What letter?

FARRELL

"Dear, Dr. John Farrell. I am writing to warn you of the behavior of one Thomas Starzl."

Starzl's rigid eyes search.

FARRELL (CONT'D)

"He is a capable doctor, but his proclivity for alcohol and his interest in female nurses severely limit him.

(MORE)

FARRELL (CONT'D)  
I sincerely hope that you consider these inefficiencies when assigning the man responsibilities." Signed Dr. Werner Keouwenhoven, M.D.

STARZL  
Why would Keouwenhoven write to you? I haven't seen him in years.

FARRELL  
So it is true?

STARZL  
Of course it's not true!

FARRELL  
All the same, I think I will be heeding his warning. As such, you'll be starting off in a probationary role.

Starzl inspects the letter.

FARRELL (CONT'D)  
At a reduced salary of course.

STARZL  
And the funding for my research?

FARRELL  
Frozen of course. You expect me to hand over a bunch of cash so you can fraternize with the nursing staff under the auspices of quote unquote research?

Starzl pops up out of his seat.

STARZL  
I am not a womanizer!

FARRELL  
Tell yourself whatever you want, we all need to sleep at night I suppose.

Starzl shakes his head, fuming.

FARRELL (CONT'D)  
Now, if you'll excuse me, I have another meeting I need to prepare for.

Clenched, Starzl exits.

**RECEPTION AREA**

Starzl exits and stands outside the doors in state of confusion and frustration.

The secretary, JODY, looks up at Starzl with guilt.

JODY  
Dr. Starzl?

STARZL  
Huh? Oh, yeah right. Sorry.  
I'll get out of your way.

JODY  
No, that's not it. You see, I've  
got something to confess.

Starzl draws closer.

JODY (CONT'D)  
The letter was a fake. Dr. Farrell  
had me type it up this morning so  
he could read it to you.

STARZL  
What kind of a sick joke is that?

JODY  
It was just a tactic you see? But  
when I saw you feeling so bad that  
your friend spoke ill of you, I had  
to come clean.

STARZL  
What kind of a hospital - what kind  
of a man does this!

Starzl steps back toward Farrell's office, but stops when he sees, across the lobby, Dr. Hume walking and discussing charts with a few other doctors.

JODY (O.C.)  
He's not a bad man.

Starzl snaps out of it.

JODY (CONT'D)  
He just drinks a little too much.  
In fact, I based most of the letter  
on things he does.

Starzl cracks open the door to Farrell's office and peeks the man humming as he pours a heavy drink.

JODY (CONT'D)  
But it's not his fault! He's been  
given tremendous responsibility for  
his age.

Starzl continues watching as Farrell settles into his drink.

JODY (CONT'D)  
You try running an entire hospital  
at the age of twenty six. Just try  
it!

STARZL  
I'm not going to stand for this.

Starzl goes to enter Farrell's office.

JODY  
Go ahead, confront him! See what  
that will do for your career.

Starzl stalls.

JODY (CONT'D)  
Perhaps you think that no job is  
better than a job at reduced  
salary. However, I believe you and  
I both know that would be a  
mistake.

Starzl holds incredulous eye contact with the absurd woman.

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY**

Starzl wipes his tired eyes and reads patient charts. One  
after the other. After the other. After the other...

COOKE (O.S.)  
Make way!

Francis COOKE (23) and a few NURSES all wheel in a giant  
BODYBUILDER (21) who is hemorrhaging from his groin.

Starzl glides - calm as a cucumber - behind the operating  
nurses as he gloves up.

STARZL  
What's going on in here?

BODY BUILDER  
Aaaaah!

COOKE

Stab wound near his groin. Can't get the bleeding to stop.

STARZL

What are you doing? Get a tourniquet.

COOKE

This guy is massive, we don't have any that'll fit.

Tight quarters, Starzl gets around Cooke. Still calm.

STARZL

The Russians can put a dog in space, you'd think we could at least get some decent equipment in here.

COOKE

Losing a lot of blood here, doctor.

STARZL

Nurse, get me some surgical tubing, about a three feet of it.

Nurse rushes off. The pale body builder grabs Starzl.

BODY BUILDER

Am I gonna die?

STARZL

No.

She brings the tubing and Starzl puts it around his leg.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Okay, um, we need something, uh...

COOKE

Got it!

Cooke smashes the nearest chair and grabs a leg from it.

STARZL

Perfect! Alright, turn him on his side.

They all do.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Now, everyone, I'm gonna need your help on this. Twist. Twist. Twist.

Cooke helps from the Starzl side.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
Alright, that's enough. Go ahead  
and tape him off.

The nurses tape the makeshift tourniquet in place. Starzl turns to Cooke.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
Take me to the morgue.

Cooke nods.

**INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - DAY**

Cooke enters and leads Starzl through the dark basement. They pass through this narrow hallway as it opens to walls lined with cold storage lockers.

Starzl breezes through, reading the associated charts of several deceased while Cooke follows.

COOKE  
I don't believe I caught your name.

Starzl keeps reading charts.

STARZL  
Dr. Thomas Starzl.

COOKE  
Dr. Francis Cooke.

STARZL  
Great.

COOKE  
I mentioned to Farrell that we should have a storage for arteries or vein grafts, but he says it's un-Christian. That's when I stopped working hard for him and started working hard on my resume. I mean, what business does he got telling me what is and isn't Christian?

STARZL

This may come as a surprise to our oddly pious Dr. Farrell, but clinics in the bible belt, really any modern hospital setting, has a cold storage for vein and artery grafting.

Starzl pulls open the locker, revealing a deceased old man.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Except us.

Starzl takes up a scalpel and begins working at the groin.

STARZL (CONT'D)

What is it you want to do? With your resume that is.

COOKE

Pediatrics, podiatrics. I don't know. Ain't like I got much in the way of experience. Wanted to be a priest, but I didn't have a chance to finish seminary school before the war started, so I field trained as a doctor and here I am. How'd Farrell trick you into coming here?

Still operating on the cadaver.

STARZL

He said he'd fund my research.

COOKE

Egad, that's a new one.

STARZL

Egad indeed.

COOKE

What's your uh - you curing polio again or something?

STARZL

Liver transplant.

COOKE

Excuse me?

STARZL

I want to take the liver from a dead person.

He gestures to the cadaver.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
And transplant it into someone who  
is alive and in need.

Starzl points and Cooke brings the small metal dish over.

COOKE  
That's disgusting.

STARZL  
You are entitled to your opinion.

Starzl plops the graft into the dish and doffs his gloves.

COOKE  
How do you even get started with  
something like that?

They start walking out the way they came.

STARZL  
The way any good research starts -  
a lengthy obsession at the library.  
Then independent research. Then you  
have to get funding, and as a final  
step - put together a team.

They close the door behind themselves.

#### **INT. GARAGE LAB - DAY**

Starzl enters and puts his jacket away. His nose curls at the smell of something foul.

Dropping to one knee and checking his surroundings, he unlocks the drawer to find the rotting post-op dog corpse.

Lifting the power cords in frustration, he follows them to an outlet that is overloaded with several different plug-ins.

He shakes his head. A sudden urgency enters his expression. Closing the first drawer and unlocking the second, he finds the other post-op dog breathing. Unconscious but alive.

Starzl hauls the dog corpse in a trash bag, but the sound of something crashing over in the hallway beckons him.

**HALLWAY**

Starzl, still carrying the dog/trash, finds fallen tubs that surround Roman sitting there, rummaging in old boxes.

STARZL

What are you looking at there, dad?

Roman looks up with his empty eyes.

ROMAN

(garbled)

Used to be easier to write than to speak...

Starzl gets a look at the open notebook in Roman's hands.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

But now I can't - can't...

Roman starts to cry. Starzl takes the notebook and reads.

STARZL

I remove my finger and I remain. I  
remove my arm and I am the same.  
How long can I stay whole? What  
organ contains my soul?

Roman does the closest thing he can to smiling.

ROMAN

I miss being able to try. Trying  
is... good.

Starzl inspects his confused father's accidental wisdom.

STARZL

You did a lot, dad.

ROMAN

What?

STARZL

Trying is good.

ROMAN

It is.

Starzl watches Roman hobble away. Then looks down at the draft of his father's work "Artifice of the Simulacrum."

The sound of the front door draws his attention.

BARBARA (O.S.)  
Honey, can you give me a hand?

STARZL  
Love you, dad.

Starzl heads over.

**FOYER**

Barbara is overwhelmed with carrying groceries and clutching a potted plant against her chest.

BARBARA  
Oh thank god you're here.

Starzl helps her set things down.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
I was on the phone with Janace and she gave me this great idea for a newly wed thing.

STARZL  
Oh?

BARBARA  
It's where we get a tree.

She holds the baby tree up for him.

STARZL  
Done.

BARBARA  
And we plant it here and it grows at the same rate as our marriage. She and Henry did it and she said it was great. They used a Japanese maple of course and this is a cherry blossom, but what do you think?

STARZL  
Think about what?

BARBARA  
Can you plant it? It would be our marriage blossom.

STARZL  
Uh, sure. I mean, well it's October.

(MORE)

STARZL (CONT'D)  
 You sure we should plant it now?  
 It's gonna freeze next month.

BARBARA  
 Oh shoot, you're right. We'll keep  
 it in the house until spring?

STARZL  
 Sure, Barbara. That sounds great.

Barbara's nose curls.

BARBARA  
 What is that smell?

Starzl steps back over to the doggy bag.

STARZL  
 I uh - found an old bag of trash  
 the previous owners must have left.

BARBARA  
 (holding her nose)  
 Take it out. Take it out!

STARZL  
 I was just on my way to.

Starzl starts out the door, but then turns back.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
 When I come back, I have something  
 kind of big to talk to you about.

Barbara nods with naive anticipation and Starzl exits.

**INT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL - DAY**

WALLACE watches the television in the security booth.

**ON SCREEN:** Black and white footage of the dog LAIKA being prepped in her tiny spaceship. The footage continues with animations of Laika's soon-to-be trip. The cute dog's face is superimposed over the rocket's tip.

ADILYA KOTOVSKAYA  
 Pozhaluysta, prosti nas.

**ON SCREEN SUBTITLE:** Please forgive us.

Daylight floods in and Barbara enters, flanked by Starzl.

BARBARA  
Bring it all in, boys. Come on,  
we're burning daylight.

MOVERS start loading in lab equipment.

WALLACE  
Hey! This place is off limits.

BARBARA  
Barbara Starzl, National  
Association of Realtors.

Wallace reads her card.

WALLACE  
Barney finally sold this place?

BARBARA  
That's his name on the dotted line,  
isn't it?

More garage doors open and movers continue.

WALLACE  
I think I had better call him  
still, just to make sure.

BARBARA  
You do that.

Starzl inspects the breaker box. Barbara approaches.

STARZL  
Are you sure about this?

BARBARA  
My father bought us the house. He  
didn't say we couldn't mortgage it.

STARZL  
Thank you, Barbara.

BARBARA  
Remember what we agreed on. When  
this is all over --

STARZL  
Yes, yes. You get your picket fence  
and Avon Tupperware.

She embraces him.

BARBARA

And you slow down long enough to see forty years old. Get whatever this is out of your system.

STARZL

I just need a year, Barbara. One year.

She grabs around his waist.

BARBARA

Good, because that's all you're getting.

He kisses her hard and runs for his car.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

(hollering)

Where are you going?

STARZL

(hollering back)

I've got to get to work!

BARBARA

But you quit!

She watches him drive away.

**INT. COOKE'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Tiny studio apartment. Cooke comes in and begins opening his bag on the table, but is beckoned by the ringing telephone.

COOKE

Hello.

Yes, absolutely.

Um, sure - one second.

Cooke finds a pen and scratch paper.

COOKE (CONT'D)

Alright, go ahead.

Two. Six. Seven. Maple Thorpe

Drive...

**INT. HOSPITAL - PAYPHONES - DAY**

Starzl talks on the other end of the line.

STARZL  
Have you got it?

Starzl watches down the hall as Hume exits the oncology room.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
Great. I will see you this evening.

Starzl chases after Hume.

**INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY**

Starzl catches up to Hume.

STARZL  
Dr. Hume.

HUME  
Good to see you, Starzl. Heard you  
were taking the mantle over in the  
emergency room.

STARZL  
I quit. Can I show you something?

HUME  
Uh, I suppose.

Starzl reaches into Hume's office and grabs the man's jacket.

STARZL  
Here, you are going to want to  
bring a jacket.

Starzl heads out. Hume sets down his stuff and dons his coat.

**INT. STARZL'S JALOPY - NIGHT**

Starzl focuses on the road. Hume in the passenger seat.

HUME  
It may be a more comfortable ride  
if we talked some.

STARZL  
I find it's easier to write.

They pull up to the abandoned strip mall.

HUME

I'm sorry for what I said at the opera house, but please, Starzl, you don't have to murder me.

Starzl just stares at him.

HUME (CONT'D)

It's a joke, Starzl. Just a joke.

Starzl gets out of the car.

HUME (CONT'D)

Or maybe not.

**INT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL - NIGHT**

Starzl heads for a table with some small pillow-sized thing under the cover atop it. Hume follows.

STARZL

You were right, Hume.

HUME

About?

Starzl pulls off the cover and Hume steps forward.

STARZL

This is Chimera.

Hume sees the stitched up dog.

HUME

What have you done?

STARZL

I did what you said, replacing more than just the liver. I replaced the spleen, appendix, gall bladder, stomach, and kidneys. And despite your cruel intentions, it has kept her alive for the last thirty seven hours.

HUME

What are you using as an immunosuppressant?

STARZL

Just a low dose of radium.

HUME

I think I'm gonna be sick.

STARZL

It's proof, Hume. Proof that rejection can be overcome.

Cooke enters, waves to the doctors, and hangs up his jacket.

HUME

What do you need from me?

STARZL

I need your partnership.

Hume responds with a suspicious look.

STARZL (CONT'D)

I need your help, Hume. You get us a grant so we can move onto human trials and you can have the glory. We're partners. Fifty-fifty.

HUME

And what do you get?

STARZL

I get to work.

**LATER**

Starzl draws a chalk diagram for Hume and Cooke.

STARZL

The liver has two sources of blood supply. The hepatic vein from the heart carrying a high pressured seventy-five percent of the blood flow. And the portal vein, carrying the remaining, lower pressured, twenty five percent.

COOKE

I don't mean to sound stupid here, but have you tried just taking it out and putting a new one in?

STARZL

Replacing it isn't the hard part.

Starzl continues drawing. Hume throws Cooke a lifeline.

HUME

The hard part is figuring out how to get the patient to accept it.

COOKE

Suppose a bottle of wine and some chocolates wouldn't help.

STARZL

Chocolates, no. Wine - maybe.

COOKE

Really?

Starzl stays silent as he finishes at the chalk board.

HUME

Wine weakens the immune system, so technically, it would help.

Starzl turns back to them, revealing the drawing of liver removal and replacement.

STARZL

The term is tolerance, Dr. Cooke - tolerance of the immune system.

COOKE

Uh huh.

Hume slaps a full IV bag on the table.

HUME

Imagine that this is your immune system. It fights to destroy the new liver it views as foreign. So our job is now to fight the immune system, with this.

Hume holds up a pin.

COOKE

What's that?

STARZL

A pin.

HUME

Yes, but in this example it represents one of three things - radium, Imuran, or a steroid such as cortizone. We give the patient one of those drugs and --

Starzl watches Hume poke the bag full of holes.

HUME (CONT'D)

It weakens the immune system so that it is no longer capable of rejecting.

STARZL

But fixing one issue creates another. Since the immune system is weak, it can't fight off basic things like infection.

Starzl starts taping up holes.

STARZL (CONT'D)

So we have to give the patient a strict diet and antibiotics.

COOKE

Why not just give them all three?

STARZL

What?

COOKE

Steroids, radium, and Imuran. Why not just give them all three?

HUME

(piqued)

That's an interesting thought.

Starzl glares at Hume.

STARZL

The trick is finding the perfect spot, which is difficult enough with just one of the drugs. Our goal is to balance two.

COOKE

And what happens if you don't find the perfect spot?

Starzl and Hume share a look. Then Starzl brings his fist down hard on the IV bag and it bursts!

**LATER**

Starzl flips the chalk board, writing out a schedule.

STARZL

We'll run experiments in shifts. Five dogs on radium. Five dogs on Imuran. Five dogs on Cortisone. And five control subjects. Once we have data from these twenty subjects, we will move on to a series of Imuran, radium, and cortisone cocktails at three different levels.

COOKE

When do we move on from dogs?

STARZL

Sixty eight days. A subject survives sixty eight days and we can move to human trials.

HUME

Sixty eight days and a massive amount of charm from me to secure a grant that is.

STARZL

That's not the only reason you're here.

HUME

No?

STARZL

We need you to supply us with the Imuran? You work in oncology, you're the only one here with direct access.

HUME

You don't seriously expect me to steal pharmaceuticals from my workplace do you? Farrell may be a drunken fool, but he is a drunken fool who pays me quite well and I intend to keep it that way. No, I think the best strategy would be to have someone who isn't an employee at the hospital get the Imuran. I work at the hospital. Cooke, you work at the hospital. Starzl do you...

Starzl's glares in response.

HUME (CONT'D)

Oh that's right, you quit.

COOKE

It'd be so much harder for him to access it than you.

STARZL

No, he's right. I need him here and he can't stay here if he's not employed.

HUME

So we are in agreement. Excellent! I will see you fellows tomorrow.

Hume dons his jacket. Cooke approaches Starzl, who stares at the chalk board stroking Chimera's fur.

COOKE

You want me to --

STARZL

Go home, Dr. Cooke. I will see you tomorrow.

COOKE

Right. See you tomorrow, sir.

Cooke exits. Starzl pets Chimera, staring at the chalk board.

STARZL

Sixty-eight days, Chimera. Sixty eight days.

#### **INT. STARZL'S HOME - DAY**

Starzl races, throwing his jacket on.

STARZL

Let's go, Barbara.

He turns the corner into the dining room.

#### **DINING ROOM**

Starzl comes upon Barbara unpacking boxes and Roman eating his breakfast.

STARZL

We need to leave.

BARBARA

Your father's still eating.

Starzl grabs up the bowl of porridge.

STARZL  
He can eat it in the car.

Barbara takes the bowl back.

BARBARA  
We've got time.

STARZL  
I have not got time.

BARBARA  
We do if you let me drop you off  
and take the car for the day.

Starzl stares at her.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Take a seat and drink your coffee.  
We've got time.

Starzl does as he is told. Barbara goes back to unpacking.

STARZL  
I'm going to be late.

Roman stares at him.

ROMAN  
Where's Nancy?

STARZL  
Just... Eat up, dad. Alright?

Barbara adjusts, then admires, the vase of flowers she just placed in the center of the table. Then she looks past them, sobering at the sight of Starzl sitting there, facing the door and tapping his leg.

**EXT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL - DAY**

Starzl gets out of the parked car. Barbara extends a paper sack out the driver-side window.

BARBARA  
Don't forget your lunch.

Starzl nabs it and rushes in.

**INT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL - CONTINUOUS**

Starzl floods the space with daylight when he opens the door. Hume and Cooke are already in full scrubs.

HUME

Jesus, you nearly blinded me.

Starzl throws his things down and washes up at the slop sink.

STARZL

Are you two ready to begin?

HUME

No time for tea first?

Starzl turns back with wet hands down to the elbow.

STARZL

No.

Without drying, Starzl fits his arms into the gloves.

Cooke clocks Hume rolling his eyes.

HUME

Go ahead and prep the first canine,  
Dr. Cooke.

Cooke nods and gets one from the kennel.

**LATER**

The three men are elbow deep in a dog. Starzl does not look up from his work unless otherwise stated.

STARZL

Clamp the venna cava.

COOKE

Yes, sir.

STARZL

This is not Korea, Cooke. You do  
not need to keep calling me sir.

COOKE

Sorry, sir.

STARZL

I can call you private if that  
makes you feel more comfortable.

COOKE  
I was an officer.

STARZL  
That's surprising.

Cooke looks offended at Starzsl's remark.

Hume watches Starzsl focus on his work and then --

HUME  
You fought in Korea?

COOKE  
That's right.

HUME  
Did you ever kill anybody?

COOKE  
I was a medic.

HUME  
That doesn't answer my question.

COOKE  
Not intentionally. No - I did not.

HUME  
Death is something you have to get comfortable with, right, Starzsl?

STARZL  
Scissors.

Hume hands him a pair of scissors.

HUME  
In medical school, our class had a tontine.

Cooke stares back at him.

HUME (CONT'D)  
A death pool.

Cooke understands the clarification.

HUME (CONT'D)  
Last doctor to have a patient die wins. I did fairly well - came in second place.

(MORE)

HUME (CONT'D)

Was developing a procedure so that patients could share a circulatory system during open heart surgery. Sort of like one healthy patient on loan to help their sick friend.

COOKE

That's an awfully nice friend.

Starzl keeps his head down as he works.

HUME

An awfully dead friend now. But he wanted to give his buddy a chance to die of old age so who was I to deny him.

STARZL

No one dies of old age.

HUME

What's that?

STARZL

It's always a heart attack or flu or something. No one dies just because they reach a certain age.

HUME

Well I suppose he wanted his friend to reach a certain age then and I let him try.

STARZL

And that's why the patient's death is on your hands. Poor ethics.

Hume scoffs. Starzl looks up and gives an order.

STARZL (CONT'D)

I have got the bile duct. Go ahead and divide the portal vein.

Cooke applies clamps on the large vein. He takes up a scalpel, but Hume grabs his arm.

HUME

Hang on...

(devious)

You can't let go of that until we've put in the new liver, can you?

STARZL

It would ruin the procedure.

HUME

The stomach acid would taint the other organs, yes... Finally an opportunity to get some real answers from you.

Starzl pales. Cooke does an uncomfortable chuckle.

HUME (CONT'D)

Let's see, what do I want to know? How about, how did you and your wife meet?

Starzl glares at him.

HUME (CONT'D)

No - no, even better. What's your favorite part of a meal?

STARZL

Part of a meal?

HUME

No no no, what I see here is a much more experimental opportunity.

Starzl glares at Hume and then looks to Cooke for help, but he has a half smirk on his face too.

HUME (CONT'D)

Testable question: If Cooke and I here were to leave right now, would you release your grip or remain until we come back?

STARZL

Are you asking for a hypothesis?

HUME

Will you spoil this procedure or will you stay here and save this one insignificant life in the hopes that we don't waste your research?

STARZL

We're partners here, Hume.

Hume puts his hands up in defense.

HUME

Hey now, this is a democracy.

He smiles like a mean kid with a magnifying glass.

HUME (CONT'D)  
And I vote that we can skip right  
to the application phase. What do  
you say, Cooke?

Starzl again looks to Cooke, begging with his eyes. Cooke's smirk wavers.

Hume unclamps the large vein. He turns to grab his coat.

HUME (CONT'D)  
Cooke, come on. He's got an ethical  
decision to make.

Starzl continues begging Cooke with his eyes.

COOKE  
I'll see you later, sir.

Cooke follows Hume. Starzl clenches in place and flinches at the sound of the closing door as the men's exit is final.

**MONTAGE:** Day becomes night as the long kennel of dogs on the far wall go from restless to sleeping.

Barbara enters, exposing the night's sky.

BARBARA  
Thomas?

Starzl, still elbows deep the dog, stares forward.

Barbara goes to him.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Where is everyone?

He looks at her with a traumatized expression.

She looks down at the puddle of piss at his feet.

STARZL  
They had to get lunch.

BARBARA  
Thomas, it's eight o'clock.

Tears well in his eyes.

Barbara gloves up.

STARZL  
What are you doing?

BARBARA  
You're not staying here until the morning.

STARZL  
You do not know how to --

BARBARA  
You're gonna talk me through it.

Starzl looks terrified.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Communicate.

**INT. JALOPY - NIGHT**

Starzl drives. Barbara in the passenger seat. She goes from looking up at the stars to looking at Starzl.

BARBARA  
It's gonna be alright, Tom.

She puts her hand on his leg in a comforting way, but they both pull away. Barbara wipes the wetness off on her seat.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

Barbara watches Starzl staring at the road, teeth gritting.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
You know, Janace brought in her lunch today and I guess I didn't realize she was Greek, but it turns out they put lemon on everything.

STARZL  
Uh huh.

BARBARA  
She let me try some of it and it was so fresh.

STARZL  
Yeah I'll bet.

BARBARA  
We should start doing that.

Starzl nods. His expression still hard as a stone.

STARZL  
(mumbling)  
Three hundred fifty. Then -

BARBARA  
Are you listening to me?

STARZL  
Sorry. I just need to figure  
something out first.

She watches Starzl mumble to himself and then resigns to sinking in her seat and watching the road.

**INT. STARZL'S HOME - NIGHT**

Starzl and Barbara enter. She heads up the stairs.

BARBARA  
You coming to bed?

STARZL  
I'm going to go talk to dad first.

Barbara comes back down the stairs.

BARBARA  
I'll pitter around the kitchen  
then.

Starzl heads for Roman's room.

**INT. ROMAN'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Starzl watches Roman a moment before jostling him awake.

STARZL  
Hey, dad.

ROMAN  
(garbled)  
Hi.

STARZL  
I had a hard day at work today.

ROMAN  
I'm sorry.

Starzl searches Roman's vacant eyes.

STARZL  
We were friends, right? Do you  
remember that?

ROMAN  
I'm your father.

STARZL  
But we were pals too, right? You  
liked me?

ROMAN  
(nodding)  
Mm-hmm. I still like you.

Starzl pats Roman on the leg and gets up to leave.

STARZL  
Thanks, dad.

ROMAN  
Good friends are hard to come by.

Starzl stops in his tracks and looks back at Roman.

ROMAN (CONT'D)  
Your mom liked gifts.

Starzl nods with appreciation.

ROMAN (CONT'D)  
Say, where's Nancy?

The name stings. Starzl kisses Roman on the forehead.

STARZL  
Good night, dad.

**INT. STARZL'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Starzl comes in to Barbara doing the dishes.

STARZL  
I need the car tomorrow.

BARBARA  
What for?

STARZL  
Don't worry about it.

BARBARA  
Hey.

He looks up at her. She shakes her head.

STARZL

(sigh)

I need to visit the hospital.

BARBARA

Because...

STARZL

Because I need to steal a large amount of drugs for my research. It's called Imuran. It's a chemo therapy drug and... And we just need it, okay?

BARBARA

You have to steal it?

STARZL

It's impossible to purchase unless you are a - well unless you are a hospital.

Starzl stares at the floor and waits for her to say no.

BARBARA

Okay.

He looks up.

STARZL

Okay?

She goes back to doing dishes.

BARBARA

Just be safe.

Starzl perks up, nods. Barbara dries her hands.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Now lets go to bed.

**INT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL - DAY**

Hume and Cooke sip coffee. Starzl enters with cookies.

STARZL

Good morning.

Cooke and Hume come over.

HUME

What's that?

Starzl sets the rest of his things down.

STARZL

I thought I would bring a early apology of sorts. I do not usually eat sugar in the morning, but bringing cooked eggs seemed... Well, sugar is not healthy, but uh... Did I ever tell you about the patient I had in medical school with sugar diabetes, Dr. Cooke?

Cooke shakes his head "no."

STARZL (CONT'D)

His liver was failing and he was nearly going into cirrhosis. Have you ever seen a patient go into cirrhosis?

COOKE

No, I have not...

STARZL

It is a fate that no one should have to experience nor witness. Your liver effectively clogs. The blood has no where to go but around the liver and into the collaterals, which tend to be heavily concentrated at the junction of the esophagus and the stomach.

He touches the base of his throat.

STARZL (CONT'D)

There is no more terrifying sight in medicine than an ashen and panic-stricken patient, bleeding internally into the esophagus and vomiting their life's blood onto the floor before anything can be done to help.

Cooke looks really uncomfortable.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Anyway, so in medical school we rerouted this patient's blood supply from his portal vein to his hepatic vein to prevent the cirrhosis and in doing so, we cured his sugar diabetes.

COOKE

That's great.

STARZL

Only after reading several articles on the subject, at the uh - at the library, did I learn that the procedure was an anecdotal case and not a legitimate cure for diabetics.

HUME

Does this story have a point, Dr. Starzl?

STARZL

My point is that I am leaving to thieve the Imuran this afternoon so I apologize, but I will not be able to assist with surgeries today.

HUME

You couldn't get Barbara to cover for you?

STARZL

Barbara is not a trained surgeon. Besides, she's at home watching my father all day.

HUME

It was a joke, Starzl.

STARZL

Ah, I see. Very funny.

Hume bites a cookie like he's checking if it's real silver.

HUME

Why do you have to watch your father?

STARZL

He suffered a stroke several years ago and is susceptible to harming himself.

HUME

Why didn't you mention that earlier?

STARZL

It felt rather personal.

HUME

We shouldn't be operating on dogs if you've got a sub-human primate at home we can use.

Starzl swallows his pride. Cooke glares at Hume.

STARZL

I will see you both tomorrow.

Cooke watches Starzl head toward the door.

HUME

Boy has he got eyes for you. Cookies and a story, next thing you know, he'll be asking you on a date.

Cooke keeps watching Starzl exiting. Hume goes over and starts scrubbing up.

COOKE

Who won your tontine?

HUME

What?

He turns off the sink to hear.

COOKE

Your death pool in college. You said you got second place. Who got first?

HUME

... He did.

Cooke watches with new-found respect as Starzl exits.

**INT. JACKSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - DAY**

Empty nurses station. Starzl walks past it.

Farrell comes down the hall.

Starzl ducks behind a corner. He watches as Farrell stands at the vacant nurse's station.

FARRELL

Hello?

Farrell pounds the bell a few times.

FARRELL (CONT'D)

Are there any nurses on duty?  
Hello!

Farrell storms off.

FARRELL (CONT'D)

Unbelievable.

Farrell exits the other way and Starzl dips toward oncology.

### **ONCOLOGY**

Starzl loads a dolly with boxes of Imuran. He takes a big breath and tilts it back, but --

FARRELL (O.S.)

Nurse Jacobs!

Starzl crouches down and hides beneath the open blinds. NURSE JACOBS and Farrell meet in the hall, just outside.

NURSE JACOBS

What do you need, Farrell?

Starzl watches through the small crack in the door.

### **HALLWAY**

Farrell wags his finger at Nurse Jacobs.

FARRELL

Where is the rest of your team?

NURSE JACOBS

They're --

FARRELL

Are they hiding? Huh? Am I gonna find them here in the dark?

Farrell throws the oncology room door open.

**ONCOLOGY**

Starzl clenches and sweats bullets as he watches Farrell, mere feet above him, waving his arms around rhetorically in this dark and presumed empty room.

FARRELL

Hello, nurses? Where are you?

Starzl flicks his gaze toward Nurse Jacobs, who would see Starzl if she wasn't glaring daggers at Farrell.

NURSE JACOBS

The few nurses we have left are with patients.

Farrell turns back to her.

**HALLWAY**

As he turns, Farrell shuts the door, still open a crack.

FARRELL

You may not like working late. You think I do? All these loafers keep dropping at the wayside. I have no respect for men not wanting to advance their station in life. None whatsoever.

NURSE JACOBS

Sir, we're doing the best that we can.

FARRELL

That's not good enough. I am here. I am here for my hospital.

Farrell stomps his foot.

NURSE JACOBS

Swing shift just ended, I can't simply call them back.

FARRELL

We can't have a hospital without nurses!

NURSE JACOBS

It's gonna be slow until morning, John. We've got plenty of help until then.

FARRELL  
This is a serious problem.

NURSE JACOBS  
(sigh)  
What do you want me to do?

FARRELL  
I want you to find more nurses!

NURSE JACOBS  
Whose gonna watch my post then?

FARRELL  
I will of course!

### **ONCOLOGY**

Starzl watches Nurse Jacobs shake her head as she leaves. Then he watches Farrell takes a seat at Nurse Jacob's post. Starzl's trapped - his only exit in Farrell's clear view.

### **INT. STARZL HOME - NIGHT**

Barbara sets the table for three. She stalls, staring out at the empty front driveway.

ROMAN  
Where's Nancy?

Barbara does a polite smile and goes back to table setting.

### **INT. JACKSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - ONCOLOGY - NIGHT**

Starzl stays down, spying Farrell at Nurse Jacob's station down the hall.

He sits back against the cabinets, checks his watch, and rubs his weary face.

### **INT. STARZL HOME - DAY**

The sun is shining on the oaken interior. Barbara comes downstairs and sees Starzl passed out on the living room sofa, still fully dressed. She rolls her eyes and exits.

**DINING ROOM**

Barbara comes upon the dining room table to find it covered in large cardboard boxes labeled "Imuran."

She looks to the corner of the floor, where her vase of flowers has been crammed.

She storms toward Starzl but stops suddenly when she notices something on the end of the dining room table.

Approaching it, she raises and inspects the lemon before releasing a pleased breath and hugging it close to her chest.

**LIVING ROOM**

Starzl lays there, contorted in a deep sleep. Barbara tucks a blanket over him and admires his furrowing brow as he sleeps.

**INT. JACKSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY - DAY**

Cooke reads from a hospital chart at the end of a patient's bed. He wipes his nose and tries to shake the tired off.

FARRELL (O.S.)

Dr. Cooke!

Cooke whips into a military-grade posture.

FARRELL (CONT'D)

At ease, soldier.

Cooke recognizes and relaxes his stance.

COOKE

What can I help you with?

FARRELL

What, no "sir." I'm not a good enough leader for that?

COOKE

I'm not in the best mood, Farrell.

FARRELL

You sleeping alright?

COOKE

Sure, sure. Just had a rough night.

FARRELL

We had a large quantity of Imuran go missing last night. You don't know anything about that, do you?

COOKE

Why would I know anything about chemotherapy drugs?

FARRELL

You know enough to say that they are chemotherapy drugs.

COOKE

I've been studying.

Cooke looks past Farrell at Hume watching the conversation.

FARRELL

Dr. Hume said you've been helping him out some. Apprenticing as it were.

COOKE

He say that?

FARRELL

Also told me you were good friends with Dr. Starzl?

Cooke again looks past Farrell at Dr. Hume wearing a smug smile, as he watches Cooke get interrogated.

COOKE

I don't know that I'd go as far as to say... He was only here what, a week?

FARRELL

So you're not the one taking his mail?

COOKE

His mail?

FARRELL

In the staff mail room, Starzl's box was overflowing and then this morning, empty.

COOKE

Strange.

Farrell scrutinizes Cooke's poker face, sweat forming on the military man's temple...

FARRELL

Welp, seeing as Hume thinks the missing Imuran is just an administrative oversight. We have been down on nurses after all.

COOKE

Right.

FARRELL

I guess I'll have to just agree with him.

Cooke, still tense, nods. Farrell turns to leave and Cooke gets an inhale of a relief, but --

FARRELL (CONT'D)

Oh and one more thing. If you do see Starzl. Tell him I'm still open to rehiring him. There are hard feelings, but we need the staff.

COOKE

I'll do that, sir.

Cooke wipes the nervous sweat off his face as he watches Farrell leave. Then he glares as his eyes focus on Hume leaving from down the way.

**INT. STARZL HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Starzl and Barbara unpack large boxes. Barbara watches her stoic husband inspecting the percolator.

STARZL

It runs on electricity?

BARBARA

(laughing)  
That's right.

A call from the kitchen draws Starzl. Barbara watches him go.

**KITCHEN**

Below the phone is a stack of mail. On the top of the stack is an opened letter from Sir Roy Calne from London, England.

Highlights from the letter: "Similar research," "A fourth option," "Please call at your convenience."

Starzl answers the ringing phone.

STARZL  
Starzl residence.

ROY CALNE  
Starzl! Brilliant to hear from you.

STARZL  
Whom may I ask --

ROY CALNE  
Sir Roy Calne, London England.  
Glad that you received my letter.  
Sorry for some of the poor grammar -  
we're a bit understaffed and I  
didn't have the ability to dictate  
it to my usual girl.

STARZL  
That's alright. The content is  
surprising.

Barbara observes from by the boxes back in the dining room.

ROY CALNE  
Yes! I was surprised to hear that  
someone else was tackling the  
immunosuppressant issue as well.  
Our research is in conversation,  
you understand, Dr. Starzl.

STARZL  
I am not sure that I do understand -

Barbara gestures for Starzl to come back and help. He covers the receiver with his hand.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
I'll finish it later.

He turns back to the phone and her shoulders slump as she goes back to unpacking alone.

ROY CALNE  
Hello, Starzl, are you still there?

STARZL

Still here. What is the exact purpose of this letter, are you requesting that I stop? Being territorial?

ROY CALNE

On the contrary, I would like for us to work together.

STARZL

Would you come here? I don't think I can come to the United Kingdom.

ROY CALNE

Absolutely not. I am suggesting an exchange of information! We teach each other.

The sound of Roman banging his wheelchair around distracts Starzl. Barbara takes care of it and Starzl turns away.

ROY CALNE (CONT'D)

Divide and conquer as they say.

STARZL

What's that?

ROY CALNE

What I'm asking is, are you interested in working together?

STARZL

Yes, I - I suppose I am.

ROY CALNE

Good. Now tell me, where are you at in your research?

STARZL

We have just attained our Imuran. My colleague wants to begin a cocktail of that, Cortisone, and radium as soon as possible. And then of course --

ROY CALNE

No no, don't do that. We have tried with a success rate of zero. Absolute zero. That's why we began looking into alternatives. Specifically ALG.

STARZL  
What is ALG?

ROY CALNE  
I might suggest you ask young Dr.  
Cooke about that.

STARZL  
Is that how you found me?

ROY CALNE  
Indeed it is. Dr. Cooke reached  
out. Is that the correct  
pronunciation - "Cooke?"

Starzl looks over at the sound of Barbara struggling to fit  
the wheelchair into the closet with all of Roman's junk.

STARZL  
It is.

ROY CALNE  
Fabulous. We have much to learn  
from each other, Dr. Starzl. It was  
a pleasure to meet you. I'll be in  
touch.

STARZL  
Same here.

Starzl hangs up just as all of the stuff in Roman's closet  
comes falling down. Barbara looks back at him like scared dog  
and he goes over to help.

**INT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL - DAY**

Starzl enters. Cooke is already sitting there waiting. He  
watches Starzl wash up at the slop sink.

COOKE  
Hume is at a meeting with some  
potential investors, but said he  
should be here at some point today.

STARZL  
Alright.

Starzl dries his hands.

COOKE  
How are you feeling?

STARZL

Fine.

Cooke follows Starzl while he finishes scrubbing up.

COOKE

I was thinking that Hume might be on to something.

STARZL

Oh?

COOKE

Not necessarily that we should combine Imuran and radium, nor Cortisone and radium right away, but what if those aren't the only options for suppressing the immune system?

STARZL

I spoke with Roy Calne last night.

COOKE

You did?

STARZL

How did you find this man?

Cooke grins from ear to ear and puts his bag on the table. Starzl approaches.

COOKE

Like you told me when we first met.

Cooke pulls out a stack of research articles and periodicals.

COOKE (CONT'D)

It all starts with a lengthy obsession at the library.

Cooke gives him a cute smile and Starzl looks him in the eyes, doing a near grin in recognition.

COOKE (CONT'D)

At first I couldn't find anything.

Starzl watches as Cooke sorts out a newspaper from the pile.

COOKE (CONT'D)

Then I started checking the foreign periodicals. Specifically from the United Kingdom. And this guy, a knight - sir Royal Calne --

Cooke hands Starzl the article and he sees a picture of the proud Roy Calne with his staff of doctors.

COOKE (CONT'D)  
 -- has been experimenting with rabbits to create a sort of serum. Anti Lymphocyte Globulin.

STARZL  
 (reading)  
 ALG...

COOKE  
 That's right. Essentially Calne injects a rabbit with human DNA, which the animal's immune system fights and then he has found a way to extract those anti-human immune system cells. Like rattlesnake anti-venom.

Starzl continues reading the article.

COOKE (CONT'D)  
 What do you say, can we try it?

Starzl looks into Cooke's eager eyes for a moment before giving him a nod of approval.

**LATER**

Barbara grimaces as she uses a hose to spray the tufts of fur, blood, and waste out of some of the empty kennels.

On the other side of the shop, Starzl and Cooke have a rabbit on the table. Cooke pulls back his sleeve to draw some of his own blood, but Starzl stops him.

COOKE  
 What?

STARZL  
 It needs to be dog blood. Dog transplants. Dog lymphocyte globulin.

COOKE  
 Right.

Starzl takes the syringe, goes over to Chimera, and draws some of her blood - soothing her as he does. He comes back over to the rabbit and they inject the dog blood.

COOKE (CONT'D)

That's it?

STARZL

That is it. For now.

Hume enters.

HUME

I have done it, I have done it!

Starzl applies pressure to the spot he drew blood from.

STARZL

Done what?

HUME

I got us a meeting, a pitch really,  
with the Markle Foundation.

COOKE

That's great news.

STARZL

When is it?

HUME

Three months, so there isn't any  
time to waste. We have to skip to  
the next phase.

STARZL

We have plenty of time.

HUME

Did you not just hear me, we have a  
meeting. We have to have something  
to present.

STARZL

If we rush into a cocktail of  
Imuran, Cortisone, and radium it  
could wipe away all the work we  
have done so far. In fact, I am  
fairly certain it will.

HUME

We're not gonna get a second chance  
at this.

STARZL

What we are not going to do is  
panic.

Starzl returns to the rabbit. Hume approaches.

HUME  
What is this?

STARZL  
We have begun working with an  
Englishman.

COOKE  
You see, we're injecting dog DNA  
into a rabbit to --

HUME  
Not Roy Calne?

STARZL  
You know him?

HUME  
Yeah, I know that snake oil  
salesman.

STARZL  
His findings look legitimate.

HUME  
Uh huh, yeah - sure. Where are we  
at with the Imuran trials?

STARZL  
We have yet to start.

HUME  
So while I've been out there  
busting my ass to get funding,  
you've been in here playing...  
Playing...  
(finding the word)  
Alchemy!?

Hume pounds the table.

Barbara startles at the sound on the other side of the shop.  
She ties up a couple of garbage bags and takes them out.

HUME (CONT'D)  
We are supposed to be partners. You  
and me, not you me and Roy Calne.

STARZL  
We are partners. In a democracy of  
three.

Starzl looks to Cooke.

Cooke looks back and forth between Starzl and Hume.

COOKE

I think we should give the ALG a shot.

Hume starts moving tables into place to operate.

HUME

Now we absolutely have to start the Imuran-radium cocktail trials.

STARZL

We have plenty of time.

HUME

Plenty of time for what? You wanna present in three months that radium is an effective immunosuppressant? Not effective enough, but effective. That's not a discovery!

STARZL

Calm down, Dr. Hume.

HUME

What are you waiting for, Cooke. Get your ass in gear.

Starzl puts his strong hand on Hume's shoulder.

STARZL

The answer is no, Dr. Hume.

HUME

Why? Because we'll kill a few extra dogs? Don't you think the lives of people, many real people that we can save outweighs the few of them, huh?

STARZL

Because it is not scientific.

Hume gestures incredulously at the rabbit.

HUME

Where is the line?! What makes your greater good so much better than everyone else's?

STARZL  
We'll do the Imuran trials and then  
begin the trials with ALG.

Starzl and Hume hold a staring match, neither budging.

**EXT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL - DAY**

Barbara drags the trash to the dumpster and heaves it in.  
The door flies open and Hume blows past her on the way to  
slamming his car door and speeding off.

**INT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL - DAY**

Barbara re-enters and approaches Starzl and Cooke.

BARBARA  
What was all that about?

STARZL  
Everything's fine.

Starzl turns to back to Cooke.

COOKE  
Hume is in a rage. The rabbit isn't  
safe here.

STARZL  
One of us is gonna have to take it  
home then.

He looks to Barbara.

BARBARA  
Absolutely not. You're not bringing  
that thing into our home.

They hold their look even longer.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
I'm saying no and I mean no.

**INT. STARZL'S HOME - GARAGE - NIGHT**

Barbara watches with crossed arms and disgust as Starzl finds  
a space for the caged rabbit in their garage.

STARZL  
It's just until Hume calms down.

BARBARA

But why does it have to be in our home?

STARZL

It just does.

Barbara's disgusted yet tamed face watches Starzl exit.

**INT. COOKE'S PLACE - NIGHT**

Cooke heats beans while reading from a large book. Turning the page, he finds a photo of Dr. Keith Reemtsma.

Text pops out: "kidney transplantation," "chimpanzee-to-human," "similar organ size," "most living between one week to two months," "crimes against nature," "no survivors."

Cooke holds on this last text. Smoke fills his nostrils and he rips the burning beans off the stove.

**INT. STARZL'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Dark room. Starzl and Barbara both lie in bed facing each other. Barbara watches his closed eyes as he tries to sleep.

She curls up against him. He rolls away from her. She spoons him from behind and he tenses. She slides her hand into his pajama bottoms and he frowns. She starts kissing him all over the back of his neck and ear.

The phone rings from the other room and Starzl takes the opportunity to try to get out, but Barbara hugs him close.

BARBARA

Let it ring.

Starzl removes her hand from his trousers.

STARZL

It could be Roy.

BARBARA

It's one o'clock in the morning.

Starzl gets out of bed and starts putting his slippers on.

STARZL

Not in England it's not.

BARBARA  
(begging)  
Stay with me.

STARZL  
I'll be right back.

Barbara watches him go.

**INT. STARZL HOME - KITCHEN - DAY**

Daylight washes over the tile of the counters and floor. Cleaned and shaven, Starzl pours himself a cup of morning coffee, ready to go. Barbara enters also clean and ready.

STARZL  
Are you ready to go?

BARBARA  
I'm taking the car today. Janace and I have four showings and she can't do them all herself.

STARZL  
Can you drop me off?

BARBARA  
And who is going to watch your dad?

STARZL  
I have work to do at the - I'm no good here all day.

BARBARA  
Maybe you could do some of the unpacking then and feel useful that way. Or plant that cherry blossom.

Starzl glares at the boxes.

STARZL  
Can't plant anything. I told you, it's gonna freeze soon.

Barbara kisses him on the cheek.

BARBARA  
I'll be back this afternoon.

She leaves Starzl in a daze.

**LATER**

Starzl unpacks a few books and looks confused at the candelabra that he pulls out. He releases a sigh and then looks over at the phone and gets a bright idea.

**EXT. STARZL HOME - DAY**

Cooke's car rolls up in the driveway and he hops out with a couple of dogs. It starts to snow.

Starzl comes out with a dolly and straps some of the anesthesia gear to it. Cooke looks up at the snow.

COOKE

You think this'll stick?

STARZL

We should be done before the roads get bad.

Starzl finishes loading the dolly.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Where's Hume?

COOKE

Said he couldn't make it today - grant stuff.

The two men head into the house.

**INT. STARZL HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY**

Starzl and Cooke are scrubbed up. They've got one dog asleep on the table.

**LIVING ROOM**

Roman sits on the sofa, petting the other dog.

**LATER**

Starzl and Cooke have blood up to the elbows of their scrubs.

STARZL

I'll sew him up if you want to grab the next one.

Cooke doffs his gloves and exits.



Cooke wheels the chair past.

COOKE  
Some stuff fell.

Starzl watches Cooke exit. The sound of Barbara pulling up in the car draws Starzl's attention in the other direction. He works the suture as fast as he can.

Cooke comes in with the unconscious and vomit-covered Roman.

COOKE (CONT'D)  
Okay, where do I put him?

Barbara opens the front door to find the cluster of a scene. Starzl looks at her incredulous face.

**EXT. STARZL'S HOME - DAY**

Crashing sounds come from the inside of the house.

BARBARA (O.S.)  
IN OUR LIVING ROOM?

More crashing sounds.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
In our home where we eat?

Even more crashing sounds.

BARBARA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Get out! Get out NOW!

Starzl and Cooke gurney out the post-op dog in a sheet.

Barbara hauls the gear out with her bare hands.

STARZL  
I'm sorry.

She looks pissed and broken. Cooke comes out with the dog.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
I'll see you tonight.

She stays frozen.

Starzl and Cooke load into the car.

Barbara watches them drive off and for the first time, she starts to pick at the skin on her bicep.

**INT. COOKE'S CAR - DAY**

Starzl, Cooke, and the dog all sit in the front seat, driving down the long frozen highway.

**INT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL - DAY**

Starzl and Cooke come in on Hume drinking some coffee.

HUME  
Ah, late again.

STARZL  
Cooke and I were working at home.

Starzl sets down the gear and notices two dogs on the tables.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
What is that?

HUME  
I think you call that one Chimera?

STARZL  
What did you do to her?

HUME  
I went ahead and started her on a half dose of Imuran and Cortisone.

Starzl rushes over. Chimera is panting on her side in agony.

HUME (CONT'D)  
I figured since you guys are trying an extra experiment with the ALG, maybe I should try an extra experiment too.

STARZL  
You just ruined weeks of an experiment.

HUME  
At least this one didn't die.

Starzl looks at the dead dog on the table next to Chimera.

HUME (CONT'D)  
And at least now we know it doesn't work.

Starzl grabs Hume by the shirt collars.

STARZL

(crying)

We already knew that it does not  
work! Now all we have are two dead  
patients!

Hume removes Starzl's grip.

HUME

Dogs, Starzl. Not men, dogs. We  
have two dead dogs.

Starzl storms off to the other side of the room and  
aggressively washes his hands.

Cooke stares at Hume.

HUME (CONT'D)

(whispered)

What?

COOKE

Say something.

Hume rolls his eyes.

COOKE (CONT'D)

Go...

HUME

Fine.

Hume approaches the pacing and tense Starzl.

HUME (CONT'D)

Listen, Starzl --

STARZL

(blurted)

My wife thinks it would be a good  
idea if we carpool.

HUME

Carpool?

STARZL

Ride together as a group. Do we  
have a deal?

Incredulous, Hume stares Starzl's extended hand before  
shaking it.

HUME

Deal.

STARZL

Good. Now let's get to work.

Hume watches with a twisted form of respect as Starzl walks off and jumps right into working.

**MONTAGE:**

- A foot of snow. Cooke and Hume pick up Starzl.
- Starzl, Hume, and Cooke operate on dogs.
- The kennels depopulate and repopulate.
- Barbara salts the snowy stairs to their home, picking at the sores on her arms and face. She watches with a crooked smile as Starzl runs up the driveway to catch his ride.
- Cooke sweats through a procedure.
- Melting snow on a rainy day. Starzl gets out of the front seat so Hume can have it and Hume recognizes/appreciates it.
- Starzl has his hands full while trying to hang an IV and Hume comes in to save him. Mutual respect forming.

**INT. STARZL'S HOME - DAY**

Hume knocks and opens the door. The spring sun shines on Barbara feeding Roman. She squints and her crooked face does a performative smile.

BARBARA

Good morning, Hume! Thomas is just getting ready.

Hume takes a seat. Roman stares at him.

ROMAN

Where's Nancy?

Barbara notices Hume looking uncomfortable there.

BARBARA

You mind getting Roman's chair out of the closet for me?

HUME

Sure.

Hume exits.

**HALLWAY**

Hume opens the closet and everything crashes out again.  
Starzl comes over and helps pick it all up.

HUME

Sorry.

STARZL

No, it does this all the time.  
Really need to re-organize.

Hume picks up what looks like an old milk pail.

HUME

What is this?

Starzl lifts his head and laughs at the sight of it.

STARZL

That's a "blood oxygenator."

HUME

A what?

STARZL

I uh - in medical school, I toyed  
around with the idea of creating a  
device that would provide a patient  
oxygen and remove carbon dioxide  
during heart surgery and my dad  
tried to make one.

HUME

Does it work?

STARZL

He was a journal editor, not an  
engineer. Seemed beyond the pale to  
even try it.

Starzl puts away the last couple of things.

HUME

Right.

Hume focus stays stuck on the milk-pail device.

**EXT./INT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL/JALOPY - LATER**

Barbara waits in the car while the men trickle out, solemn,  
but still patting each other on the back.

STARZL  
I'll see you later, Cooke.

Starzl comes up to her window.

BARBARA  
Look at you, having fun.

STARZL  
They're good guys.

BARBARA  
You should invite them out for drinks.

STARZL  
I don't...

Starzl looks at the guys and then shakes his nervous head "no" to Barbara.

BARBARA  
Okay.

Starzl nods and comes around the front of the car, but --

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Hey, fellas. Do you want to grab beers? First round is on me.

Cooke and Hume look at one another and then shrug.

HUME  
Sure.

Starzl looks at Barbara and submits a pleased shrug too.

#### **INT. TAVERN - NIGHT**

Noisy pub. Four beer mugs cheers! Starzl, Hume, Barbara, and Cooke all settle.

BARBARA  
Thank you all for coming out.

HUME  
Thank you for sharing your husband.  
Now I can finally ask, how did you two meet?

BARBARA  
We met in college.

Hume gives Starzl a confused look.

STARZL  
Undergraduate.

HUME  
Right. And what the hell is it that  
you see in him?

Starzl watches as the joke doesn't land for Barbara.

HUME (CONT'D)  
No offense.

STARZL  
Barbara was actually the one who --

BARBARA  
He may be constantly confused. And  
he definitely always says the wrong  
thing at the absolute worst time.

Hume and Cooke nod yes to that one.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
I love him because he sees the  
world differently.

Starzl looks touched.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
And even though I am not remarkably  
bright woman.

STARZL  
Barbara...

BARBARA  
He doesn't use that against me. He  
respects me and we're partners,  
real partners.

Barbara looks around at the table wearing her performative  
smile and picking at her wrist. Her eyes go wide with  
surprise when Starzl gives her a kiss.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Plus he has the best stories. Has  
he ever told you the one about the  
magpie?

HUME  
No, he hasn't.

STARZL

Come on, Barbara, they don't want to hear that.

BARBARA

Oh please, Tom. Please tell them.

COOKE

Come on, Tom. Tell us.

STARZL

No, no.

HUME

You couldn't transplant a dog liver, the least you could do is tell us a story.

Starzl hangs his head and Cooke glares at Hume.

HUME (CONT'D)

(backtracking)

Hey, it's not - we all failed, Starzl, as a group. And just cause we couldn't do it doesn't mean it can't be done.

COOKE

That's right.

Starzl raises his head.

STARZL

When I was a child, I found a magpie with a broken wing. I had taken it out of its nest and so its mother wouldn't take it back. Then I showed my sister and she was ecstatic. She told me that she always wanted a magpie because she had heard that if you split its tongue in twain it can speak real human English.

Cooke and Hume look disturbed.

STARZL (CONT'D)

So after a considerable amount of struggle, I managed to do so. And of course in the end it did not speak real human English. However, what my sister did not know is that Magpies have remarkable memories.

(MORE)

STARZL (CONT'D)

They can remember a person's face for years after they have seen them. As such, this particular magpie attacked me on my way home from school every day. Until my sister shot it dead with a pellet gun that is.

Barbara wears a big hilarious smile. Cooke and Hume wear uncomfortable ones.

COOKE

I didn't know you had a sister?

STARZL

Oh, yeah... Nancy.

Starzl takes a timid sip of his beer.

**INT. STARZL'S HOME - DAY**

Barbara drinks an Alka Seltzer and pinches her hungover brow before watching out the window as Starzl runs up the grassy driveway to meet the carpool.

**INT./EXT. COOKE'S CAR - DAY**

Starzl enters.

STARZL

Where's Hume?

COOKE

Wasn't home.

STARZL

Weird.

Starzl buckles in.

**INT. ABANDONED STRIP MALL - DAY**

Starzl enters with Cooke and the place looks inside out. Drawers are all open and empty.

COOKE

What the hell happened?

Cooke searches for something, anything.

Starzl finds a note on the desk, it reads "I had to fly the nest." Signed Dr. Hume. Starzl frowns at the sight.

STARZL

Hume's gone.

He hands the letter over for Cooke to read and just stares forward in shock.

HUME

He didn't have to trash the place.

A dog barks and Starzl looks at the cages in pure surprise. He rushes over.

It's Chimera, the dog that received radium and a low dose of Imuran and Cortisone.

STARZL

Chimera?

She barks and barks, alive and well.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Hume was right.

COOKE

How the hell is she still alive?

STARZL

She had all of it. Radium, Imuran, and Cortisone. All at the lowest doses...

Starzl's rushes over to the cabinets and pulls out the ALG.

COOKE

We don't even know if the ALG will work. It could kill her.

STARZL

This is the only chance we have.

Starzl hooks the ALG injection up to Chimera's wrist.

#### **INT. ASA CONFERENCE - DAY**

Hume presents in front of a packed audience. On stage with him - the stolen blood oxygenator from Roman's closet.

HUME

It operates using two forms of blood oxygenation. The first is membrane oxygenation.

Starzl watches from his seat in the crowd.

HUME (O.C.) (CONT'D)

The second uses bundles of hollow fibers facilitate gas exchange. It is my hope that with this new technology, advancements on heart operations can be forthwith.

Applause begins. Starzl joins in as to not stick out.

**INT. ASA CONFERENCE - DRESSING ROOM - DAY**

Starzl stands there waiting. He notices Hume's billfold sitting on the desk there. He checks his surroundings and opens it, finding a business card for one Leo Goldman of the Markle Foundation. He flips to read the other side, but the door opens and he must quickly pocket it.

HUME

Starzl, I was surprised to see you in the crowd earlier. Have a seat.

Starzl remains standing.

STARZL

That's quite the device you have discovered.

HUME

Better the public have it than for it to waste away in some warehouse, or can you truly not separate your pride from your ethics?

Starzl grits his teeth. Then takes a breath.

STARZL

I heard you are going to make a try at the liver next.

HUME

One success begets the next.

STARZL

And how do you mean to battle organ rejection?

HUME

Simple. Radium and Imuran.

STARZL

You know the patient won't survive.

HUME

No, but they will survive longer than any previous attempt.

STARZL

A person will die. We just reached sixty-eight days and --

HUME

And science will advance. These patients want a few more weeks. Are begging for additional life, and I can give it to them.

Starzl shakes his head in disappointment.

HUME (CONT'D)

I wish that the this cocktail worked for more than a week or that ALG weren't witchcraft, I really do, but that's just not the case.

STARZL

There's something I came here to tell you.

Starzl opens his mouth like he's gonna speak, but the blood oxygenator in the corner of the room catches his eye first.

STARZL (CONT'D)

We did a good job. That's all, Hume. I just wanted to come here to tell you we did a good job.

HUME

Just being good at your job isn't enough sometimes, Starzl.

STARZL

Right. Better luck next time.

HUME

Sure, starzl. Sure.

Hume walks him out.

**EXT. STARZL'S HOME - DAY**

Starzl jumps out of the car and runs up the porch.

**DINING ROOM**

Starzl runs past all the packed moving boxes, to the kitchen.

**KITCHEN**

Starzl gets to the phone and reads the number from the business card to dial it. His listens to the ringing.

MARKLE FOUNDATION  
Markle Foundation.

STARZL  
Hello, my name is Dr. Thomas  
Starzl. I would like to be  
considered for research funding.

MARKLE FOUNDATION  
One moment please.

Starzl listens to the call being directed.

LEO  
Hello, Dr. Starzl. What research  
are you hoping to have funded?

STARZL  
Liver transplantation.

LEO  
So you read the article on Dr.  
Hume?

STARZL  
I am a former colleague of his. We  
worked together on the  
immunosuppression problem.

LEO  
And what exactly makes your  
research different?

STARZL  
My treatment involves a total of  
four immunosuppressants. Double  
what Hume will attempt.

Starzl holds himself stern while he waits for a response.

LEO

The Markle Board is meeting this weekend in Philadelphia. We can meet beforehand and if that goes well, maybe you can present to them.

STARZL

You need me to come out to Philadelphia?

LEO

That would be necessary, yes.

Starzl is stalled by a crashing sound at the front door.

### **DINING ROOM**

Barbara forces the rest of the moving boxes inside.

BARBARA

Tom, you home? I could use a hand in here.

### **KITCHEN**

Starzl holds the phone.

STARZL

Let me call you right back.

Starzl hangs up and starts to exit but the phone rings.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Hello?

FARRELL (V.O.)

You think you're better than me, is that it?

STARZL

Farrell?

FARRELL (V.O.)

I got your official resignation letter, Starzl.

BARBARA (O.S.)

Tom...

Starzl looks at the doorway that his wife is beckoning him from the other side of.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
What are you doing in there?

STARZL  
I can't talk right now, Farrell,  
but the answer is no.

FARRELL (V.O.)  
We can't hire anyone else!

STARZL  
Not my problem!

Starzl hangs up the phone and heads out of the kitchen.

### DINING ROOM

Starzl approaches Barbara who huffs and puffs as she sets down the cardboard boxes and cellophane and other moving materials from the car.

BARBARA  
The guy at the moving store would  
not stop trying to sell me on  
plastic bins. As if! What am I - a  
chemist?

STARZL  
(somber)  
Huh, crazy.

Barbara puts her arms around him and speaks. Her sores have healed and the makeup is almost working.

BARBARA  
Hey - you in there. I know this is  
hard.

Starzl picks his head up and returns her eye contact.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
You tried, really tried to do  
something. Not everyone can say  
that. You should be proud of  
yourself, the way I'm proud of you.

STARZL  
Thanks, honey.

He molds a smile and she releases from him to turn back and assemble a box.

BARBARA  
And just think about it.

The warmth of his sympathetic smile remains as he watches Barbara work on the box.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
We'll finally get our big farm  
house and live our simple life.

Starzl's expression sours at the sound of "simple."

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
And I can sell real estate and you  
can see one maybe two patients a  
day. We can live out our nice,  
pleasant, uneventful lives.

Starzl's eyes search as though the words she's saying are burning the ground at his feet.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Growing old and fat together. Like  
regular people.

Barbara hugs the tape against her chest as she imagines.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
I honestly can't believe it. After  
all this time, private practice -  
our future - is just a board  
examination away.

STARZL  
(perking up)  
The board examination.

BARBARA  
What's that?

She finally turns around.

STARZL  
The - um. I forgot to tell you, but  
the board examination has actually  
been moved.

BARBARA  
Oh?

STARZL  
Yes, it's - uh, it's in  
Philadelphia now. This weekend.

BARBARA  
 Why would the Iowa board  
 examination be in Philadelphia?

Starzl wipes the bead of sweat from his temple.

STARZL  
 I guess that's where they're head  
 quartered, maybe?

BARBARA  
 Huh, okay, well good, I guess,  
 right? The sooner the better.

STARZL  
 Right.

BARBARA  
 I am so proud of you.

She pecks him on the cheek and turns back to her boxes.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
 My husband, the board certified  
 surgeon.

Starzl wears a hollow smile as he watches her.

#### **KITCHEN**

Starzl picks up the phone, but notices the receiver hasn't  
 hung up properly. He picks it up and listens.

FARRELL (V.O.)  
 -- Sure it's a bad job, but I have  
 a higher post at the same bad job.  
 Imagine how much harder it is for  
 me.

STARZL  
 Farrell?

FARRELL (V.O.)  
 Ah! I see you've changed your mind.

STARZL  
 Absolutely not.

Starzl presses the receiver down and hears the dial tone.  
 Then he dials KL5-818-2245. It rings a few times.

MARKLE FOUNDATION  
 Markle foundation.

STARZL

Hello, this is Dr. Starzl. Please tell Leo that I would like to confirm our meeting in Philadelphia this weekend.

**INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DAY**

Beautiful restaurant with chandeliers and white tablecloths.

Starzl fixes his tie and scratches his neck. A waiter approaches and fills his water.

STARZL

Thank you.

He checks his watch. Then looks up and puts on a polite smile at ROBERT and LEO, two distinguished older men. Leo tips the host while Robert approaches Starzl.

LEO

Dr. Starzl, hope you weren't waiting long.

STARZL

No, no, not at all.

They all shake hands.

ROBERT

Have you ordered yet?

STARZL

Not yet. I just arrived actually.

They all take a seat.

**LATER**

Starzl sits across from the two. Emptied plates.

ROBERT

I think we can all agree that procedural research has potential.

STARZL

And I would like to continue that research and expand into the necessary field of suppressant serums.

ROBERT

Oh yes, perfect, what can you tell us about this anti lymphocyte globulin from your proposal.

Starzl leaves through his packet with haste.

STARZL

The French have been experimenting with it. Uh - imagine this pepper shaker is you.

Starzl unscrews the salt shaker.

STARZL (CONT'D)

And this salt shaker is a rabbit for instance. We take some of your lymph cells.

Starzl takes a pinch of pepper and adds it to the salt.

STARZL (CONT'D)

And we add them to the rabbit.

Starzl seals and shakes the salt shaker.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Since your lymphs are foreign to the rabbit, its immune system will react by trying to reject them. In doing so, it will create antibodies.

Starzl dumps the salt and pepper mixture onto the table. Robert and Leo check their surroundings. Starzl is too focused to care.

STARZL (CONT'D)

We then -

Starzl rubs his spoon on the wool of his jacket, charging it with electrons.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Extract these anti-human antibodies.

Starzl hovers the spoon over the salt and pepper mix and the pepper lifts to attach to the spoon.

STARZL (CONT'D)

And inject them back into the patient, reducing their immune system's ability to reject the transplant.

Starzl looks up from the spoon at the two enthralled men.

ROBERT

I've got to tell you, Thomas, this is all very impressive.

STARZL

Thank you.

LEO

However, this is a significant amount of money. The board is as interested in who you are as they are in what your work is.

Starzl looks stunned.

ROBERT

So, please, tell us, who is Dr. Thomas Starzl?

STARZL

I am a surgeon?

ROBERT

We're talking about your life outside of your work.

STARZL

I'm a man. I uh... I have a wife.

Robert and Leo side-eye each other with concern.

LEO

You'll have plenty of time to prepare before tomorrow, I wouldn't worry about it.

Starzl gives a desperate nod. Waiter brings the check.

**EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DAY**

They all exit the restaurant. The sun is beginning to set.

ROBERT

Where are you staying in Philadelphia, Thomas?

STARZL

Just up the street. I forget the name of it.

Leo hails a cab.

ROBERT

Good for you, this is an excellent area.

Leo waits at the cab door.

LEO

Have a good evening, Thomas. We'll see you in the morning!

Starzl waves goodbye and watches the cab drive off. Digging into his pocket, he counts the meager change revealed.

**EXT. PHILLY - PARK - DAY**

Starzl wakes up on the park bench, pulling his coat tight.

**INT. HOTEL - LOW CEILING CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Six board members, including the DIRECTOR, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, Robert, and Leo sit in a row, taking notes.

Starzl sits before them, looking like he spent the night on a park bench, tapping his toe in the palpable silence as they look over documents.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Two livers?

STARZL

That is one of the avenues that my colleague initially pursued, yes.

Assistant director scowls and goes back to reading.

STARZL (CONT'D)

My focus is more on a cocktail of Imuran, radium, and Cortisone with the added help of an antilymphocyte serum. Which of course comes from injecting an animal with human lymphocytes in order to obtain a serum that can fight T cells.

ROBERT

They're having great success using this for skin grafts in Britain.

STARZL

That's right, they are. It's no more macabre than making anti-venom.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

I'm sorry, but in what world does giving a patient Imuran, radium, and Cortisone not kill them?

STARZL

We would use very low doses of each. They all would have a small, but different attack on the immune system. Weakening it, but with precision. By working together.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Hmph.

The assistant director resolves to taking notes.

DIRECTOR

Why the liver?

STARZL

Sir?

DIRECTOR

Why not the kidney or the heart?  
Why the liver.

Starzl stares forward for an uncomfortable amount of time.

LEO

Starzl?

STARZL

(snapping out of it)

Have you ever seen someone dying of cirrhosis, sir?

DIRECTOR

No, I have not.

STARZL

The medical term is bleeding esophageal varices, and a message from an emergency room containing these words implies dire emergency.

(MORE)

STARZL (CONT'D)

You see, the liver's portal vein only brings in about twenty five percent of its blood flow. However, when the liver is clogged with cirrhosis, that blood has no where to go, but around the liver and into the collaterals, which --

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Thank you, Dr. Starzl. We will let you know by the end of the month.

Starzl panics as the board all start to pack up.

STARZL

My sister Nancy was not a person to give her heart freely.

The packing stalls.

STARZL (CONT'D)

She was a lonely girl after our mother died, but she still met a man - Larry Kohlker, who worked for my father, and they fell in love. However, their union was severed by the fact that he already had a family. A fact my sister did not know. My father fired Larry and my sister returned to university, empty and alone. She filled that gap with alcohol, and died of such cirrhosis the year before last.

A stillness falls about the room.

DIRECTOR

Thank you for sharing that, Thomas. We're gonna have a short break, but take your time.

**INT. HOTEL - BATHROOM - DAY**

Tears run down Starzl's blank face in this cramped stall.

Robert and Leo enter and Starzl pulls his feet up so they can't be seen from underneath.

Robert uses the urinal while Leo washes up.

ROBERT

His work is impressive. I just wish he were more... like-able.

Starzl, listening from inside the cramped stall, has a discouraged look on his face.

LEO  
You'd think living in Minneapolis  
would do something for his  
personality.

ROBERT  
(accent heavy)  
Oh yeah, don't ya know.

LEO  
(accent heavy)  
Get down to the Piggly Wiggly and  
get me a loaf of wonder bread.

They chuckle and both wash their hands.

ROBERT  
Do they really talk like that?

LEO  
I guess we'll find out when we're  
down there next week.

Starzl's eyes widen to the feeling of epiphany.

**INT. HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY**

Starzl chases after them.

STARZL  
Leo! Robert! Hang on a second.

The men turn back around.

LEO  
Starzl, what's the matter?

STARZL  
I just wanted to thank you again  
for lunch yesterday.

ROBERT  
Of course. You're welcome.

They turn to leave again.

STARZL  
Uh - but, I would love to repay the  
favor. How would you two like to  
come to my house in Minnesota?

The two men look to each other.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
It-it's an excellent vacation area,  
with lots of beautiful lakeshores.

ROBERT  
Eh...

STARZL  
Plus my wife is a spectacular cook.

Leo give a shrug.

LEO  
We're actually visiting Minnesota  
next week. How does Friday work for  
you?

They all shake hands.

STARZL  
Perfect! I'll let my wife know.

Starzl watches them leave, biting his thumb nail in angst.

**INT. STARZL HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Starzl watches Barbara take a steaming dish from the oven.

BARBARA  
Do the board exam proctors usually  
meet with doctors before deciding  
whether to certify them or not?

STARZL  
No, not usually.

He startles when Barbara embraces him.

BARBARA  
You're gonna do so good! So so  
good!

She looks up at him.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Even if it is unusual.

Starzl looks down at her innocent face and all the packed boxes and the hot dinner and he can't keep his composure. He pries her off.

STARZL

It's not that unusual a situation.

Starzl squeezes behind her to exit to the dining room.

**DINING ROOM**

Starzl fixes his tie at the vanity. The phone rings and he answers.

STARZL

Hello?

FARRELL (V.O.)

The nurses have all lost faith in me. If you came back maybe you could restore their sense of belief.

STARZL

The answer is still no, John.

FARRELL (V.O.)

Good riddance! You're the worst disease I've ever faced in my seven years as a --

Starzl hangs up. Barbara enters and sets the table.

BARBARA

I don't mean to say it's unusual. It's just that I thought you would take the test and either pass or fail.

STARZL

Well, it was an oral examination. So perhaps they need to iron out some of the colloquial terms I use.

Barbara stares at the floor like a deer in the headlights.

STARZL (CONT'D)

(clearing his throat)

What are we having?

Barbara exits back to the kitchen

BARBARA

Scalloped potatoes.

STARZL

What about a main dish?

Barbara steps back in, now with a bottle of wine.

BARBARA

It was either buy a chicken or a bottle of wine, I went with the wine.

Starzl stares back at her with nervous disappointment.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Did I make the wrong choice?

Starzl snaps out of it and accepts the bottle. Barbara goes back into the kitchen.

STARZL

No, no you made exactly the right choice.

Starzl paces around.

BARBARA (O.S.)

Good. You know, I had quite a time deciding at the market, but then I thought what my father would say.

STARZL

Your father?

Starzl stares into the middle distance with epiphany.

BARBARA (O.S.)

Yes, my father. He would say "better to drink from a vine than suckle from a butcher."

Barbara re-enters to the empty room.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Tom?

The inner garage door swinging shut punctuates his exit.

## **GARAGE**

Light's off. With a desperate look on his face, Starzl takes the rabbit out of its cage.

**INT. STARZL HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

A gorgeously cooked rabbit sits on the fully set table with scalloped potatoes and wine. Starzl watches with wide eyes as Robert serves himself some of it. Leo next.

LEO

Everything alright there, Starzl?

Starzl keeps focusing on Robert enjoying his first bite of the lab meat.

Barbara kicks Starzl and clears her throat, taking his hand under the table and holding it.

STARZL

Oh, uh, yes. Everything is fine.  
What are your plans while you're  
here in Minnesota?

LEO

Well, the lake, obviously, and then  
we were hoping to get out to a  
night club called - uh...

ROBERT

(Midwest accent)  
Club Copa.

LEO

Right, Club Copa. Do you two get  
out to much of the night scene  
here?

STARZL

No, no - we stay in mostly.

BARBARA

Do most doctors go to night clubs?

ROBERT

Some do, sure.

LEO

I'll be sure to take you two out to  
some if we end up in Colorado.

Starzl's eyes bug.

BARBARA

What's in Colorado?

ROBERT

Cooke couldn't make it to dinner?

STARZL  
No, he was predisposed.

ROBERT  
That's a shame. He did an excellent  
job showing us your lab.

STARZL  
That's great.

Completely betrayed, Barbara stares at Starzl.

LEO  
It's amazing what you two were able  
to accomplish in a place like that.

Starzl squeezes Barbara's hand under the table.

STARZL  
Thank, fellas. It took a lot, but  
we're happy with what we got out.

She stares at the dying cherry blossom still in the corner of  
the room and pulls her hand away.

BARBARA  
Is my husband like most doctors  
that you meet?

STARZL  
Barbara?

BARBARA  
No, I want to know. They're here to  
learn more, I'd like to find out.  
Is my husband like most doctors you  
meet?

Robert swallows.

ROBERT  
Not exactly... Is he like most  
doctors you know?

BARBARA  
No.

Starzl glares at Barbara. The doctors look at each other.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
He's much better.

Starzl relaxes. The doctors smile.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
 He actually cares about his patients. Really cares. He'd stand in one spot for an entire night, peeing his pants, if it meant he could help people.

Starzl gives Robert and Leo an embarrassed grin.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
 How many doctors you know who would do that?

LEO  
 Not many, Mrs. Starzl. Not many.

**EXT. STARZL HOME - NIGHT**

The night is cool. Robert and Leo stand opposite Starzl.

STARZL  
 I hope you two enjoy the rest of your time in Minnesota and, uh, have a safe trip back up to Philadelphia.

ROBERT  
 Listen, Thomas, the Markle Foundation is very prestigious, and, well...

Robert looks to Leo.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
 There's no need to keep this from you anymore, you've been selected as a grant recipient.

STARZL  
 (shocked)  
 What?

LEO  
 It's half the amount of Hume's grant, but --

STARZL  
 (beaming)  
 You can't be serious.

ROBERT

The way they see it, having a second liver team is a strong insurance policy, but they don't want to pay full price just to hedge their bets.

Starzl aggressively shakes their hands.

STARZL

I'll take it!

LEO

Good. I'll be expecting you in Colorado first thing Monday morning.

ROBERT

Congratulations, Dr. Starzl.

Starzl watches, still in disbelief, as they walk up the hill to the street. He turns around with a huge smile on his face and sees Barbara dropping off her suitcase on the porch.

BARBARA

(hollow)

Congratulations, Thomas.

STARZL

I was going to tell you, Barbara.

Starzl looks to his left, through the screen door as he opens it and - from the darkness of the porch - emerges John Farrell wearing an ill-fitting suit and drunk in the face.

STARZL (CONT'D)

(squinting)

John? What are you doing at my home?

Farrell stumbles forward.

FARRELL

I've come to ask you to reconsider your resignation.

Starzl reels back from just a whiff of him.

STARZL

Whoa, you reek like booze.

FARRELL

Please come back, Tom. The hospital  
can't survive without you and no  
one else will come work here.

STARZL

Can't we discuss this later?  
Possibly over the phone?

FARRELL

I assumed that you would appreciate  
the benefit of a face-to-face  
conversation.

STARZL

Another time, John.

FARRELL

Wait.

Farrell gets Starzl to look him in the eye and in a moment of  
true sobriety.

FARRELL (CONT'D)

I apologize. I know that I have  
been unprofessional and dishonest  
and that there is absolutely no  
reason why you should come back.  
But I am asking you as a desperate  
man - please help me.

Starzl searches Farrell's earnest eyes.

STARZL

I'm sorry, John. Maybe we can talk  
another time, but I'm having a -- I  
just can't right now.

FARRELL

Fine.  
(laughing)  
Throw me away!  
(crying)  
I don't need you. I never did!

Farrell digs for his keys.

FARRELL (CONT'D)

I run a hospital with no doctors.

He starts up the hill, raising his car keys to the sky.

FARRELL (CONT'D)

I drive a car with no driver in it!

Starzl rushes into the house.

**INT. STARZL'S HOME - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Starzl rushes upstairs.

**UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

Starzl watches, from just outside the bedroom, as Barbara packs the empty suitcase on their bed.

STARZL

What are you doing?

BARBARA

You lied to me, Tom. To me. Of all the people - I gave you seven years - seven years of my life! And you can't even tell me the truth?

FARRELL (O.S.)

Rye whiskey, rye whiskey, rye whiskey I cry...

Starzl looks out the hall window and sees Farrell slipping up the grassy hill of the driveway.

STARZL

Please just wait here, I have to drive Farrell home, but I'll be right back.

BARBARA

Choose your work over me again!

FARRELL (O.S.)

If the ocean was whiskey and I was a duck I'd dive to the bottom and never come up.

STARZL

I can't let him drive, he's gonna kill himself.

She slams the bedroom door shut.

Starzl huffs and huffs and looks out the window at Farrell getting further and further up the drive. He thinks fast and breaks the bedroom door down.

STARZL (CONT'D)

(hot)

I'm sorry that I'm not going into private practice.

(cooling)

I'm - I just can't do it. I've been touched by failure too many times to go back, and if you can't accept that, then maybe you should leave.

BARBARA

You think that's why I'm mad? Because you aren't going into private practice? Cause I think you're a failure? That's not it, Tom. I'm mad because you lied to my face. I'm mad because I gave you everything that I had and you had no idea. You think I like helping you put down dogs day after day? You think I like living in a house and never a home? You think I like that the only intimacy I've had in months was when I accidentally gave your father an erection while wiping his ass?

STARZL

I told you not to name the dogs.

BARBARA

I am not the one in the wrong here!

Barbara packs her bag.

STARZL

I'm sorry, Barbara.

He tries to hold her face, but she reels away.

BARBARA

It's too late for that.

She sets down on the foot of the bed.

STARZL

Please don't say that. Please...

He gets down on his knees and grabs her hands.

STARZL (CONT'D)

It's not too late, I still love you. I have always loved you. We can fix this.

Barbara's soft eyes join his.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
We'll just go to Colorado.

And she slumps into despair.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
And we'll start our final home.  
It'll be different this time.

Starzl is drawn to the sound of Farrell starting his car.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
I just have to take Farrell home  
first. Okay?

BARBARA  
(depressed)  
Sure.

STARZL  
You'll be here when I get back?

BARBARA  
No, Thomas. I won't.

Starzl tries to read her.

The sound of Farrell hitting the gas while in neutral draws Starzl's gaze.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Go. You have to go, so go.

He clenches. She's deadpan - serious. He goes.

**INT. FARRELL'S CAR - NIGHT**

Starzl drives down the dark highway. He looks to his right at Farrell asleep in the passenger seat. Starzl just stares forward through his frustration.

**EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

The lone car follows its headlights into the darkness.

**INT. STARZL COLORADO APARTMENT - NIGHT**

A modest one bedroom apartment. Starzl fumbles in with luggage. Then he walks Roman in, sits him down, and "plates" some Chinese food.

ROMAN  
Where's Barbara?

Starzl lifts the spoonful of fried rice to Roman's mouth.

STARZL  
She didn't come with us, dad.

ROMAN  
Why?

STARZL  
You said you were hungry. Now eat.

Roman takes a wary bite.

**INT. COLORADO HOSPITAL - MEETING ROOM - DAY**

Twenty four doctors in lab coats stand around sipping coffee. Starzl enters and walks through the crowd to Cooke and Leo at the front. He shakes Cooke's hand.

STARZL  
Have you had enough time to get  
your bearings?

Cooke gives a nod of determination. Starzl looks out at the murmuring crowd. Then to Leo.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
There are more than I thought there  
would be.

Leo gestures to the crowd for Starzl.

LEO  
And they're all yours.

Starzl gives him a nod.

STARZL  
(projecting)  
Alright, everyone.

The room gives him their attention.

STARZL (CONT'D)

What we are doing should be years away from being possible. And it is. Yet a thousand miles away in a hospital just like this, a doctor

**FLASHBACK:**

Cooke, Starzl, Barbara, and HUME all laugh at the bar.

**END FLASHBACK:**

Starzl blinks back into the speech.

STARZL

A man - a man with the same flaws of all men and twice the funding we have will try and he will fail and when he does, no one will be able to attempt this again.

Starzl looks out at the crowd whose attention he commands.

STARZL (CONT'D)

We may have half the money and twice the number of eyes on us, but we also have something they don't.

Starzl looks out at the many different faces.

STARZL (CONT'D)

A diversity of thought and an openness to the strange naturalisms that sometimes precede success. We will attack this from every angle and we will succeed. Now make haste.

The room settles and exits, but ROY CALNE remains.

ROY CALNE

(British)

That was an excellent speech, Dr. Starzl.

Calne offers his hand.

STARZL

Roy Calne?

ROY CALNE  
That's right. Do you have a moment?  
I'd like to show you what I've been  
working on.

Starzl nods.

**LYMPHOCYTES LAB**

A centrifuge spins. Roy presents the vial, revealing the caged baboons in the background, to Starzl, Cooke, and Leo.

ROY CALNE  
Pure, anti-lymphocyte globulin.  
Your theory on Baboons seems to  
carry some merit.

STARZL  
How much of it do you need?

ROY CALNE  
Roughly two liters.

Leo looks disturbed.

ROY CALNE (CONT'D)  
It's significantly less than  
before.

Roy gestures to Starzl for confirmation.

ROY CALNE (CONT'D)  
Because the baboons are so  
genetically similar.

STARZL  
How long will it take?

ROY  
Twelve hours.

STARZL  
See what you can do in eight.

Roy nods. Starzl turns to Cooke.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
Show me the patients.

**HALLWAY**

They stop outside a hospital room, separated by glass. Inside are two children, Abigail and Bennie, 10 years old, in separate beds. Both on ventilators.

COOKE

Abigail and Bennie Briston - twins.

STARZL

Jesus, which one is the donor?

COOKE

Abigail. She's got a congenital heart disease, they're surprised she's made it this far.

Starzl looks in with pity on his face.

COOKE (CONT'D)

She can give him part of her liver, but he can't give her his heart. Of course, her chances of surviving an operation like this are slim.

STARZL

What are our other options?

COOKE

There's a pair of cousins and a boy and his uncle, but nobody is as good a match as these two.

STARZL

Alright. Be prepped for surgery, five AM sharp.

**INT. STARZL COLORADO APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Starzl stares as he eats. Roman drops his spoon and snaps Starzl out of it, looking over he finds Roman's mess.

STARZL

Come on, dad.

Roman just stares back at him. Starzl cleans him up.

ROMAN

Where's Barbara?

STARZL

Not here.

Starzl takes the dishes.

                  ROMAN  
Where?

                  STARZL  
I don't know.

And the flatware.

                  ROMAN  
Why?

                  STARZL  
She's just not here.

                  ROMAN  
Why?

Starzl throws the dishes at the wall!

                  STARZL  
I don't know!

Starzl huffs and puffs. Then he looks down at his terrified father and breathes a sympathetic sigh before cleaning up.

Roman stumbles over to help too.

                  STARZL (CONT'D)  
No, dad. Stay back. I got it.

Roman holds his bloody finger.

                  ROMAN  
Ow!

Starzl rushes Roman over to the sink.

### **KITCHEN**

Starzl runs Roman's wound under the water.

                  ROMAN  
Ow! It's hot. It's hot.

                  STARZL  
Shit.

Starzl turns it cold and finishes washing him.

                  ROMAN  
Where's Barbara?

Starzl focuses on compressing the washcloth on Roman's wound.

**INT. STARZL COLORADO APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Starzl sits on the side of his bed and rehearses.

STARZL

Barbara, I'm sorry. No. Barbara, I should have never taken you for granted. Barbara -

He just does it already, dialing the phone.

BARBARA (V.O.)

Hello?

STARZL

Barbara?

BARBARA (V.O.)

What do you want, Tom?

STARZL

I wanted to say I'm sorry, and --

BARBARA (V.O.)

No, Tom. What do you want? Do you want me? Do you want your career? Do you want to raise Maltese puppies? What do you want?

STARZL

I...

(grasping at straws)

I want to help people... I want to help you!

BARBARA (V.O.)

That's just not the right answer, Tom.

CLICK - the call ends. Starzl hangs there in defeat.

The phone suddenly rings!

STARZL

Barbara?

COOKE

Starzl, we got a problem down here.

STARZL  
 (steely)  
 What - what is it?

COOKE  
 The parents pulled out. We can't  
 use Abigail's liver.

STARZL  
 I'll be there in five minutes.  
 Don't let them leave!

Starzl grabs his jacket as he rushes out.

**INT. COLORADO HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Outside Abigail and Bennie's room, the MOTHER and FATHER stand opposite Starzl, flanked by Cooke.

FATHER  
 We just don't think that we should  
 sacrifice our daughter in order to  
 save our son.

STARZL  
 It is a difficult decision.

MOTHER  
 She's made it this long, who's to  
 say she won't make it longer?

STARZL  
 I can't say with one hundred  
 percent certainty that your  
 daughter will not make it another  
 month, year, or even ten years, but  
 I can guarantee you that your son  
 will die within the month if he  
 does not get a new liver.

Father pleads mother with his eyes. She shakes her head "no."

FATHER  
 We're gonna leave that up for god  
 to decide.

STARZL  
 That's your right.

We see Cooke glaring at Starzl as he leaves. Cooke follows.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
 Who's our next best donor?

COOKE

You're not even gonna try to  
convince them?

Starzl gets in his face.

STARZL

They wanna let their son die,  
that's their problem. Now who's the  
next best donor?

Cooke rips at his files.

COOKE

Uh - Gerald Quip, but his donor is  
in Minneapolis, there's no way she  
could make it here by morning.

STARZL

What about the hepatoma patient,  
the short one?

COOKE

Donor died in a car crash  
yesterday. Liver was severed. Act  
of god.

#### **STARZL'S OFFICE**

Starzl enters and drops his jacket on the chair.

STARZL

So we have no options?

Cooke enters right behind him.

COOKE

Not in this hospital.

Starzl stops in his tracks.

STARZL

There is one.

Cooke sets down his things. Starzl turns around.

STARZL (CONT'D)

We use a baboon.

COOKE

(chuckle)  
You're kidding.

STARZL

Think about it. The anti-lymphocyte serum Roy made is from a baboon. It should work even better against rejection for the animal organ.

A lightbulb goes off for Cooke and Starzl watches him fight through his books and files.

STARZL (CONT'D)

What are you looking for?

COOKE

I had read something about a doctor putting chimpanzee kidneys into six different women. Here, right here.

Cooke opens the article. Starzl reads it.

STARZL

No survivors?

COOKE

But this is different. Combined with the steroid cocktail and the Imuran, we got a real chance of this working. Plus the ALG - hell, it's better than a chance, in all likelihood, this will work. And if it doesn't...

STARZL

Perhaps they can get to die of old age...

Starzl let's the feeling of Hume's words coming out of his mouth hollow him out. Cooke stares deep into Starzl's conflicted expression.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Let's do it.

COOKE

Okay.

Cooke takes his huge stack of documents over to the desk.

COOKE (CONT'D)

We can't use Bennie. He's too young and his parents are keeping too close an eye on him.

Cooke flips through documents.

COOKE (CONT'D)

How about... Warren Graves? Age  
fifty seven, no next of kin.

STARZL

What's his condition?

COOKE

He has no other options.

STARZL

Yes, but what is his condition?

COOKE

He wants to live, Tom. His  
condition is that he wants to live.

Starzl accepts the eye contact and nods.

STARZL

Alright. Get the donor organ. I'll  
prep him for surgery.

COOKE

Copy that.

STARZL

Hey.

Cooke stops in his tracks.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Nobody knows about it until we're  
done.

Cooke nods and jumps out of there. Starzl sits and stares.

**INT. COLORADO HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Roman starts the shower.

**INT. COLORADO HOSPITAL - LYMPHOCYTES LAB - NIGHT**

Cooke enters the room and approaches the caged baboons with a  
syringe and horror on his face.

**WASHROOM**

Half-dressed in surgical gear, Starzl bites his nails at the  
sink. Cooke enters with a cart, startling Starzl. He settles.

STARZL

Right.

Starzl follows Cooke into the operating room.

**INT. COLORADO HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Roman's hand with bandage finger starts the shower.

**INT. COLORADO HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM - NIGHT**

WARREN lays on the table unconscious. Starzl looks to Cooke.

STARZL

Are you ready?

Cooke nods.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Beginning the midline incision.

**INTERCUT APARTMENT WITH OPERATING ROOM**

Roman steps out of the shower and falls hard. Screaming, he looks down at the huge bruise on his hip area.

Cooke wipes sweat from Starzl's brow as he works.

STARZL

Dividing the hepatic artery.

Roman looks through the doorway to the kitchen phone.

Starzl tosses the bloody clamps on the stand.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Cystic duct is divided. Dividing the portal vein now.

Roman crawls for it, making slow progress, in pain.

STARZL (CONT'D)

That's the venna cava...

Roman crawls, but snags on the bathroom door frame. Terror filling his trapped eyes.

Starzl finishes placing in the new liver off camera.

STARZL (CONT'D)

We did it.

Starzl and Cooke step away from the patient with caution. Starzl looks up and the two make uncertain eye contact.

Roman lays there, huffing and puffing, eyes getting heavier.

**INT. COLORADO HOSPITAL - POST-OP - NIGHT**

Starzl stands before the unconscious patient while Cooke administers fluids to the IV line.

STARZL

Go ahead and give him the steroid  
at full dose. Let's wake him up.

Cooke shakes patient awake.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Hi there, Warren. How are you  
feeling?

WARREN

That's it? I didn't feel a thing.

Starzl and Cooke share a victorious nod.

STARZL

That's right, it's all over.

WARREN

Jesus, what is this sore spot?

Starzl and Cooke share a knowing look, almost a giggle.

STARZL

That's the ALG injection. Nothing  
to worry about, just a big needle  
and a lot of fluid.

COOKE

You'll have several more over the  
next few weeks.

WARREN

I guess it beats the hell out of  
cancer.

Starzl and Cooke laugh.

STARZL

We'll let you get some rest,  
Warren. See you in the morning.

Starzl and Cooke turn to leave, happy as clams.

WARREN

I do have a sorta numbness in my back.

Both doctors stop, cold sweat consuming their expressions.

STARZL

What?

WARREN

Well it's more of a throbbing now.

Both doctors rush back. Cooke checks Warren's back while Starzl uses his stethoscope.

WARREN (CONT'D)

(worried)

What? Is that not supposed to happen?

STARZL

Is it a warm throbbing?

WARREN

Yes?

STARZL

Get him 10 milligrams of Warfarin --

Cooke digs through the draws.

WARREN

Is everything gonna be alright?

STARZL

Everything is gonna be fine, Warren. You have what's called a blood clot, it's very important that you remain calm.

WARREN

Remain calm! How am I supposed to --

Warren's eyes bug as he starts coughing. Starzl covers Warren's coughs with a towel while massaging him on the back.

STARZL

Just remain calm, Warren.

Pulling back the towel, reveals blood.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Where is that Warfarin!

COOKE  
Here - here I have it.

Cooke unwraps the syringe and puts it in the IV, but Warren starts convulsing.

                  STARZL  
What did you give him?

                  COOKE  
Warfarin, 10 milligrams.

Starzl holds Warren's body down.

                  STARZL  
Get the paddles.

Warren stops moving. Starzl grabs the paddles from Cooke.

                  STARZL (CONT'D)  
Clear!

Starzl zaps him. Heart monitor doesn't budge.

                  STARZL (CONT'D)  
Clear!

Starzl zaps him again, no change. Tears form in his tense face. Cooke watches with a doubtful expression.

                  STARZL (CONT'D)  
Clear!

Heart monitor mocks him by giving a louder tone. Starzl drops the paddles and sinks to the floor. Cooke can only watch. Starzl wipes his tears, gets up, and marks the chart.

                  STARZL (CONT'D)  
Time of death, 3:08 AM.

Starzl faces Cooke.

                  STARZL (CONT'D)  
You weren't here, you understand?

                  COOKE  
But, Tom.

                  STARZL  
This is my procedure. My research.  
My department. My failure. Go home.  
Get some sleep. Go on with the rest  
of your life.

COOKE  
What are you gonna do?

**INT. STARZL'S JALOPY - NIGHT**

Starzl stares straight forward, numb, as he drives down the dark highway.

**INT. STARZL COLORADO APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Starzl enters, throws his keys in the dish.

ROMAN (O.S.)  
Ahhrhhh.

STARZL  
Dad?

Starzl rushes to the bathroom and finds Roman. He turns him over, revealing large bruising and bleeding.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
Oh, god.

Starzl gets him up and pulls him out of the bathroom.

**INT. COLORADO HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY BOOTH - NIGHT**

Starzl bites his nails and rocks back and forth as the nurse hooks up Roman's IV.

NURSE  
You took quite the fall, didn't you, Mr. Starzl?

Roman just looks back at her. She turns to Starzl.

NURSE (CONT'D)  
He should be fine for the night, but, well there's no easy way to say this. He had another stroke.

Starzl looks up at her.

NURSE (CONT'D)  
He's here now, but due to the significant amount of swelling, damage to the brain is going to continue.

STARZL  
How much of him is going to be  
left?

NURSE  
It's impossible to say.

Starzl looks over at Roman sitting there cow-eyed.

STARZL  
Can I just have a minute alone with  
him?

Nurse nods and exits. Starzl steps up to Roman's bed.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, dad.

Roman just stares back at him.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
I should have never left you alone  
like that. I just - I don't know  
what to do other than work. There's  
just this emptiness that it fills,  
and - and... Listen, some things  
are going to happen in the next few  
hours and... And you might hear  
some things about me. Things -

Roman just stares back.

STARZL (CONT'D)  
Things I'm not sure if you will be  
able to fully understand, but just  
know that - just know that I'm  
sorry for whatever is going to  
happen to you. And I'll be here  
with you for as long as I can.

ROMAN  
Where's Barbara?

Starzl squeezes Roman's hand and kisses it before exiting.

**INT. COLORADO HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT**

Starzl stands with the payphone at his ear. It rings.

BARBARA  
Hello?

STARZL

I want our life, Barbara. The way it used to be. That's what I want.

BARBARA

Tom? It's five o'clock in the morning.

STARZL

I know. Dad had a fall. We're in the emergency room.

BARBARA

Oh my god, is he okay?

STARZL

He's fine for the night. I called to tell you that I understand why you left.

BARBARA

Tom...

STARZL

I just want you to know that I know what I want. You're the only person who has ever accepted me, Barbara, and I'm nothing without you. No matter what happens to me -

BARBARA

(worried)

Tom?

STARZL

I just...

He smiles a painfully nostalgic smile.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Do you remember when we first started dating and you would let me drive that Jaguar your dad bought you for college?

BARBARA

Yes?

STARZL

And we'd take it out and just drive on long stretches of road for hours.

(MORE)

STARZL (CONT'D)

And you always would yell at me for driving too fast and we would joke about how if you weren't there I would've killed myself, flying off some old country road.

BARBARA

Tom, you're scaring me.

STARZL

I think that was the last time I was happy... I'm gonna make everything alright, again. Just - just please take care of dad while I'm gone.

BARBARA

Don't do anything drastic, Tom. I'll be there as soon as I can. Just don't do anything without me!

Starzl hangs up, examines his keys, and dials another number.

VOICEMAIL

You have reached the office of Leo Goldman. At the beep, please record your message.

STARZL

It was me, Leo. I did it. Warren Graves. The baboon liver. Time of death 3:08 AM. Consider this my resignation.

Starzl hangs up the phone.

LEO (O.S.)

Tom?

Leo approaches, loose clothes and a tired face.

STARZL

Leo, what are you doing here?

LEO

The donor Abigail died. I've been trying to get a hold of you for the last hour. We need to operate.

STARZL

Where's Cooke?

LEO

I can't reach him either. Jesus, you'd think you two would be a little more accessible on the day of the surgery.

STARZL

I'm sorry, my father had a fall.

LEO

No apologies in a fox hole. Come on.

Leo walks away. Starzl looks back at the phone.

STARZL

Wait, Leo. There's something I need to tell you.

LEO

Whatever it is, Starzl, this is more important. Now, let's go.

Starzl looks back at his father's booth and then decides to follow Leo.

**INT. COLORADO HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM - DAY**

Starzl has a look of disbelief as he stands above a PATIENT in the same room he just killed Warren in. He looks across the patient at Leo.

LEO

Everything alright, Tom?

STARZL

Yep.  
Beginning the upper midline incision...

Starzl's hands work fast as focus fills his expression. Leo assists, with equally hardened focus.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Alright, I've got pressure on the bile duct.

Starzl looks up at the monitor as a nurse dabs his brow.

LEO

Placing in the new liver.

Leo finishes placing in the new liver.

STARZL

Get that Venna cava clamped.

Starzl looks up to Leo whose sweaty brow nods at him. Starzl's hands go fast, suturing. He feels someone looking over his shoulder and when he glances that way, he sees Cooke standing there watching.

Leo snaps his fingers and Starzl snaps out of it, the Cooke figure in reality just being an OR nurse.

Starzl looks down at his hands at work, does a few more stitches and pulls out of the patient.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Finished.

Nurses staple the abdomen shut.

**INT. COLORADO HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY**

Starzl and Leo exit to a crowd of applause.

Starzl stares blankly like his father would as the crowd cheers him on. Finally, he cracks a smile.

He looks down the hall and sees Barbara standing there, shaking her head at him in disbelief and his smile falters. He goes to chase as she storms out.

**EXT. COLORADO HOSPITAL - DAY**

Starzl catches up with her.

STARZL

Barbara wait!

BARBARA

Why, so you can pretend to love me some more?

STARZL

I was - it was a success, Barbara we did it.

BARBARA

I thought you were going to kill yourself.

STARZL

What?

BARBARA

Nothing, you know what - nothing.  
Have a nice life, Thomas.

STARZL

Wait, I can make this right!

News vans pull up and start taking pictures of Starzl, blinding him. Barbara watches him put on a smile. He looks back and she is gone.

CAMERA FLASH:

**INT. AMERICAN SURGEON'S ASSOCIATION - DAY**

Starzl stands at the podium of the main conference room to a crowd of at least two hundred people. He sorts his notes and the crowd dies down.

STARZL

Sometimes in science, mistakes are made.

A cool silence falls on the crowd.

STARZL (CONT'D)

Often what we refer to as human error. I - I have something to admit to all of you.

Starzl looks upon the crowd of worried people whispering into each other's ears.

STARZL (CONT'D)

I am not the hero you think I am.

Starzl sees Cooke in the crowd, looking up at him with pure fear. Starzl stands up straight and fakes pride.

STARZL (CONT'D)

I am but a mere piece of the puzzle that accomplished this feat of medicine. The only thing that the collective body of doctors, nurses, and patients were capable of rejecting, was failure.

Huge applause.

**INT. AMERICAN SURGEON'S ASSOCIATION - RECEPTION - DAY**

Starzl holds a drink across from Leo and his wife ALICE.

LEO  
Are you staying for the after  
party?

Starzl searches around the room.

STARZL  
Huh? Oh, no. I've got an early  
appointment to get my father into a  
specialist.

LEO  
Sorry to hear that.

STARZL  
Have you seen Cooke? I saw him in  
the audience, but can't spot him.

LEO  
Cooke's in California, Tom.

STARZL  
That's impossible. I just saw him  
during my speech.

LEO  
No, I'm quite certain he's in  
California. I got a message from  
him this morning requesting a  
letter of recommendation.

STARZL  
I swear I saw him.

Leo pats him on the back.

LEO  
We were all under a lot of stress.  
Try to take it easy for a while.

Starzl takes a big sip.

LEO (CONT'D)  
Speaking of phone messages, what  
was with that crazy one you left me  
the morning of the operation?

Starzl's eyes hold heavy.

LEO (CONT'D)  
Warren Graves. Baboon liver. Time  
of Death 3:08. Sound familiar?

STARZL

Leo, I...

Leo gives him a paternal smack on the shoulder.

LEO

That was some prank call.

Starzl's regret-filled eyes return Leo's knowing nod.

STARZL

Right. Just a prank.

LEO

(laughing)

Just so long as you're not actually resigning.

Starzl muffles into his drink.

STARZL

No, sir.

Starzl's distracted eyes search the room for Cooke. Leo again pats him on the shoulder.

LEO

Try to enjoy yourself, Tom.

STARZL

Thanks, Leo.

Leo and his wife leave. Starzl sips his drink, soaking in his lone spot at the "top."

**A FEW SLIDES OF INFORMATION:**

Slide I: Dr. Thomas Starzl went on to perfect not only liver transplantation, but organ transplantation generally, making it the respected science that it is today.

Slide II: Many in his field refer to him as the godfather of modern transplantation.

Slide III: He died of natural causes at the certain age of ninety.

Slide VI: Barbara and Thomas did get a divorce.

Slide V: Nearly 48,000 lives were saved by organ transplantation in 2024 alone.