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Evil, Inc.

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Publication Date

2012

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Evil, Inc.

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

Julia M. Watson

June 2012

Thesis Committee:

Professor Joshua Malkin, Co-Chairperson
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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I want to thank Joshua Malkin, the Mr. Miagi to my Daniel-san, the Giles to my Buffy, and at times, the Senator Palpatine to my Anakin, without whose continued encouragement, guidance and scary brilliance this project may have been fed in its infancy to my secret (aw, crap!) army of zombie kittens. Joshua, you've spent the last two years putting so much energy and smarts and heart into teaching me how to do what I've always dreamed of doing, and for that you have my undying (and therefore, possibly evil) love and gratitude. Truly, I couldn't have asked for a better teacher, friend and co-conspirator.

Heartfelt thanks also go out to: Stu Krieger, for laying a solid foundation and introducing me to Uncle Morris; John Schimmel, who laughed (even when he was supposed to) at Ninja Pirate Moneys from Space and gave me courage; Bill Rabkin, whose geek genius will continue to shed light into the nerdiest corners of my brain; and to Bob Thurston, Drill Sgt. Lowe, Barbara Tomlinson, Mel Freilicher, Andrea, Rob, Chuck, Mary Otis, M.G. and Betsy, for each imparting a piece of your writerly wisdom. And especially, thank you to Tod Goldberg, who saw something worth teaching in me (it might

have just been lesbian pirates) and without whom there would be no island of misfit toys.

A lifetime of thank yous, mad love, and forever workshop club service hours to all my nerd campers, especially Yennie, Max, Dani, Megan, Carol, Maggie, big Jeff, little Jeff, Holmes, Hells Angel Bobby, Anna and Chad.

To the wife of my life, Anjali Bal, thank you for speaking the same sub-dialect of artistnerd-ese as me, for all your love and loyalty, and for being my person for the past 15 years--I never would have made it this far without you. And to my friends--Kimberly, Michael, Robin, Jamie, and all the rest, thank you for putting up with my excitable, hermitic self.

Thank you to my family for spicing my corner of the punkin patch with just the right mix of crazy, joyful and nerdy, from my great-grandmothers, who each imparted a little piece of their magic to me, to my Dad, who made me watch Pink Floyd's *The Wall* at a very young age, scarring me for life and making me the weirdo I'm proud to call myself today. Thank you and all my love to Ron, Anita, Mark, Carol, Darlene, Wes and Tristin. To Anthony, I miss your smile every day, Boog. And to my sister, Lisa, in whom all things

are mischievous and silly and soulful, love you big.

And finally, thank you to Tamara Foster for her endless wellspring of strength, fierce love, and mutual dorkiness. Honey, there's no one else I'd rather nexus with as long as we both shall live. (Don't tell Chewbacca.)

Dedication

To my grandmother, Elaine Watson, who taught me how grand life can be even (and especially) if you, yourself, are quite the character. And to my grandfather, Kenneth Watson, the best mad scientist I know.

FADE IN

EXT. CITY STREETS, DOWNTOWN - MORNING

Video ad billboards obscure a dull sky. They promise power, sex, bliss, for just \$99.95. Below, the morning commute--

In this dog eat dog city, CORPORATE CITIZENS travel in packs. Like rival sports fans, their logo-branded business attire declares color-coded corporate allegiance.

They each keep to their own: OmniBank. Valmark. MetroWest.

Two BANKERS in GenMutual red rough up a LAB GEEK in ChemWell blue. Until they see they stand in the cold shadow of...

EXT. AVARIS CORP BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

With its pale brick facade and leering gothic statuary, AvarisCorp squats next to its taller, sleeker neighbors.

From its very foundation, the building radiates infinite timeworn patience. Ancient malevolence.

Banker #1 stares up at a marble lion that appears to STARE BACK. WATCHING HIM. He backs away, pulls at his friend.

BANKER #1
(to Banker #2)
C'mon, man. We're gonna be late.

The Geek's smug skepticism turns to terror as the lion LICKS its lips at him, bares its teeth in an audible SNARL.

The Geek YELPS, flees after Bankers.

ON THE LION'S MARBLE FACE - BEGIN MONTAGE

As it opens its mouth, ROARS, swallows us up.

We tunnel through layers of BRICK, drywall, electrical wiring, carpeting, ceiling tiles...

The lion's ROAR becomes a human SCREAM.

A flash of GOLD-GREEN REPTILIAN SCALES. A HISSING SHRIEK.

FRESH BLOOD splatters across a grey cubicle wall and the Avaris corporate issue calendar pinned to it.

There, under dripping gore: "AvarisCorp -- Trusted market research straight from the source."

Oblivious, the MATRONLY DESK OCCUPANT here types on.

ROLL TITLE AND OPENING CREDITS - CONTINUE MONTAGE

1) LOBBY - 7:55 A.M.

Behind the front desk, a sultry RECEPTIONIST files her nails.

RECEPTIONIST
Avaris Corp, please hold. Avaris
Corp, please hold. Avaris Corp,...

...as Avaris WORKERS in white and grey jostle one another aggressively on their way to the-

AVARIS WORKER #1
Hey, hold the-

2) ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

But the doors close in front of Worker #1's sullen face. Those inside exchange predatory smiles, check their wrists-

3) WALL CLOCK FACE - 9:34 A.M.

Here in the MAILROOM, the RHYTHMIC THUMPETY THUMP of letters, parcels landing in a huge wall of MAIL SLOTS.

Above each section, digital scoreboards tally up the SCORE as MAIL CLERKS compete against each other.

Like basketball players, some play defensively, shielding their space with one arm. Others use their free hand to BLOCK their neighbors' throws.

Until a MIDDLE MANAGER with a clipboard BLOWS a WHISTLE.

Clerks stop, catch their breath. Except ROBINSON (a real shark) who WHOOPS with joy as his display flashes: "WINNER!"

ROBINSON
YEA, That's right son! I WILL take
another half cent per hour raise.

MAIL CLERK #2
Again? I swear this shit be rigged.

MIDDLE MANAGER
(to Robinson)
Not this time. Report to HR at
noon. Back to work, ladies and
gents. And remember...

ALL TOGETHER
The mail waits for none of
our asses.

MIDDLE MANAGER
The mail waits for none of
your asses.

6) FILE ROOM - 10:22 A.M.

The SOFT RASP OF PAPER as the FILE CLERKS compete.

With dogged precision, they negotiate TOWERING SHELVES, an
impossibly complex organizational system.

MIDDLE MANAGER #2 supervises, rolls his eyes as BETHANY
(manic, late 20s) finishes her stack of filing first.

FILE CLERK (BETHANY)
Done! I WIN. I win! YES.

Her eyes shine with zealous TRIUMPH, heedless of her badly
paper-cut fingers. Behind her, the competition grumbles.

BETHANY
Well, don't keep me in suspense.
What's my prize?

Manager #2 smirks, hands her a slip of paper, walks away.

MIDDLE MANAGER #2
Enjoy.

BETHANY
(reading, excited)
Report to HR at noon? Wait! What
does that mean? Hello?

But he's long gone. Off Bethany's look of ANXIETY.

7) LUNCH ROOM - 11:42 A.M.

Demoralized WORKERS wait with empty Avaris mugs in line for
COFFEE like penitents awaiting Eucharist.

Eerie CANDYSTRIPERS, never seen without their trademark
HORRIBLE GRIN, dole out fresh-brewed salvation by the cupful.

In the background, the frantic CLACKETY-CLACK of TYPING.

Here lies, if not the beating heart, the ulcer-ridden gut of Avaris Corp--

END MONTAGE

INT. THE PIT - CONTINUOUS

An endless tangle of two-person CUBICLES.

Competing here? The lowest rung in the white collar corporate pecking order, the online survey wrangling DESK JOCKEYS.

Candystripers move among their cubicles, pouring coffee.

At each desk, perfectly manicured, colorless nails at the keyboard, typing as if lives depend on WPM.

Down the aisle, poised on each plastic chairmat: pair after pair of uniform, dark biz caszh shoes. Heels for the women.

The Desk Jockey men wear slacks, button downs, ties, but no jackets. The women, conservative skirts and blouses.

Their faces taut with concentration, sweat beads every brow.

On every screen, TWO DOCUMENTS: a report and versions of the same spreadsheet, which everyone races to complete.

Everyone except AIMEE IVERSON (30, a goofy snarkster with heart). Alone in her cube, she lounges in slacks and a v-neck polo tee, her PURPLE KICKS propped up on the desk.

Her matching purple fingernails look habitually gnawed on.

Ignoring the blank form on her computer monitor, Aimee quickly, intricately FOLDS a torn-off day calendar page.

RAISED BALCONY OVERLOOKING PIT FLOOR

Above, in an open control booth balcony, two executives:

The laser-like focused, stiletto-heeled Vice President of Operations, ELECTRA WEST (30s, smoking hot for an ice queen).

And an on edge, rumpled middle-aged man, Avaris's CEO, FRANKLIN MAMMON (Texas accent, friendly, nervous fidgeter).

As they watch the action below, one POOR SCHLUB's screen emits a loud BEEP, goes all BLUE SCREEN OF DEATH. He groans as "INCORRECT VALUE" flashes on-screen. Then: "DISQUALIFIED!"

Electra smirks as Schlubby bangs his head against his desk. A BEEP from nearby signals another competitor out. And another.

FRANKLIN

Oh my, my. Oh dear.

ELECTRA

Nevermind them. We only need the strongest.

FRANKLIN

'Course. It's just, yanno. The suspense. Gets to me every time.

He shudders, rubs his LUCKY COIN--old, Roman. From below--

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Yo! Dexter. Little man!

Electra looks down at handsome identical twins who share a cubicle, still banging away at their keyboards at top speed.

BRAD FORRESTER (late 20s, golden, driven, arrogant) and DANNY FORRESTER (a cheesier version). Danny snickers.

BRAD

How you doin', Dex? You hangin' in?

Danny pauses just long enough to FLICK a tiny, folded paper football over his cube partition. Back to TYPING--

The football thwacks dweeby cube neighbor DEXTER in the face.

Dexter STARTLES, presses the wrong key. "INCORRECT VALUE." "DISQUALIFIED!" He slams his hands into his keyboard.

DANNY

Uh oh. Widdle Dexie make a boo-boo?

Danny and Brad titter like schoolboys, but don't miss a beat.

DEXTER

DAMMIT, Forrester. Forresters. Both of you! What the hell?

Dexter stands, appeals up to the balcony.

DEXTER (CONT'D)
C'mon. That's not fair!

FRANKLIN
You'll get 'em next time, champ.

AIMEE'S DESK

As the Forrester twins break into renewed laughter off-screen, Aimee rolls her eyes, makes an obscene gesture.

The sound of a throat clearing behind her. Aimee turns. A CANDYSTRIPER reaches for Aimee's empty mug.

Aimee tries grab it first. The Candystriper SNATCHES it.

AIMEE
Oh. No, I've been trying to cut dow-
Um. Okay. Thanks.

Candystriper hands her the full mug. They stare at each. Aimee realizes the Candystriper is WAITING. She takes a sip.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Mmmmm!

The Candystriper moves off, her gait jerky, like a puppet with wooden joints.

The moment she's gone, Aimee spits the coffee back into the mug, pours it into the potted plant on the desk. Hides mug.

She picks up the paper she was folding. We see it's an origami GODZILLA. Nearby, a whole army of origami MONSTERS.

Carelessly, she crumples one up, tosses it in a perfect arc into her waste basket.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
(quietly)
She shoots. She SCORES.

She makes a muffled crowd-cheering sound. JUMPS as a HAND lands on her shoulder. Aimee whirls to confront--

Her cubemate, CURTIS (54), a stocky curmudgeon with a bum leg. He drops his briefcase, heaves himself into his chair.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

You're late. Missing out on all the usual end of quarter festivities.

He grunts, eyes her monstrous handiwork, the untouched spreadsheet on her screen.

CURTIS

You really ARE trying to get yourself fired.

AIMEE

I should be so lucky. At least I'd be free of the shebeast.

She glares up at Electra in the balcony.

Aimee JUMPS as Curtis whips out a NEWSPAPER, slams it down.

Headline: "UNEMPLOYMENT DROPS TO 32.4%." Below: "UNEMPLOYABLE PROTESTORS ARRESTED ON STEPS OF CORPORATE CONGRESS."

CURTIS

Careful what you wish for, kiddo.

CONTROL BOOTH BALCONY

Electra WATCHES Aimee like a snake that longs to strike.

From below, Aimee looks up, stubbornly holds Electra's gaze.

Then, a RINGING CHIME sound. A triumphant WHOOP.

BRAD AND DANNY'S DESK

Brad leaps to his feet. On his screen: "WINNER!"

BRAD

Yes. YES. Suck on that, fools!

Another CHIME. On Danny's screen: "WINNER. 2nd Place."

Surprised, Danny leaps up, CHEST BUMPS his brother.

DANNY

That's right, bitches. The brothers Forrester. UNSTOPPABLE.

All typing CEASES. Surprised/angry murmurs: "Two winners?" "Figures."

A rising wave of grumbling. Multiple disqualified beeps sound as folks take out their frustration on their keyboards.

CONTROL BOOTH BALCONY

FRANKLIN

Ahem. Don't stop now, folks. It ain't over yet!

The typing restarts with renewed zeal. A few BEEPS.

Then another CHIME. A dour woman, HEIDI (late 30s), has come in third.

Heidi's blank surprise is mirrored on Electra's face. Franklin laughs, high pitched and nervous.

AIMEE'S DESK

AIMEE

(to Curtis)

Holy shit. THREE?

The sound of the typing hits a fever pitch. All for naught.

CONTROL BOOTH BALCONY

FRANKLIN

Alright, gang. That's it for this quarter. Better luck at the end of the year.

(quietly, to Electra)

I trust we won't have to go through this again come December?

Electra nods curtly, follows Franklin down to the Pit floor.

ELECTRA

Winners report to HR for your new assignments. The rest of you, enjoy your lunch.

AIMEE AND CURTIS'S DESK

Aimee watches the twins' victory march. A bitter pill.

CURTIS

That coulda been you, yanno.

Aimee sniffs near her armpit.

AIMEE

Oh god. Do I smell like ruthless
douchebag today? How embarrassing.

CURTIS

Ha. Ha. Just sayin'. Smart kid like
you? You could get ahead. If you
started applying yourself again.

AIMEE

Right. The perfect job, the perfect
guy, the perfect LIFE. What a
crock.

CURTIS

You're impossible.

AIMEE

Besides, if I won one of their
bogus promotions, they might
actually separate us. My man. My
brother in snarkitude. Pow! Show me
the love. You know you wanna.

She holds her fist up for a bump. Fond of her, he gives in.

Aimee's good pal and office crush, boy-next-door handsome
THOMAS FLETCHER (32, earnestly good-natured) pops over.

Seeing him, Aimee's face LIGHTS UP.

THOM

Hey, Aimee. Lunch?

AIMEE

Yep. Right behind ya.

THOM

Okay.

He flashes a muted but still mega-watt smile, leaves.

CURTIS

The perfect guy, huh?

AIMEE

Shut up.

She stuffs a crumpled monster into his collar. He laughs.

INT. DARK SMALL SPACE - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens, letting in a swath of light. Aimee hesitates in the doorway. It's awfully DARK in here.

Shelved items throw creepy shadows. Something CREAKS.

AIMEE

Thom?

THOM (O.S.)

I'm here.

Aimee steps inside, flicks on the light.

REVEAL: It's a supply closet. Thom leans back against an old file cabinet, his untouched lunch in front of him.

AIMEE

Hi Emo version of Thom. Why're you sitting in the dark?

THOM

Ugh. Turn that off.

He clicks a switch. Strings of blue Christmas lights come on, woven up through the metal rails of the shelves.

Aimee turns off the overhead light. The twinkly lights give this space a comfy, homey feel. A private little oasis.

AIMEE

Much better.

She sits, leans back on cabinet opposite his, snags a WATER BOTTLE from one of several CASES OF WATER stored in here.

She takes a pull on the water bottle, eyes Thom's long face.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

THOM

Huh? Nothing.

He picks up his sandwich, can't bring himself to take a bite.

AIMEE

Hey. Talk to me.

(a beat)

Is it the Wonderdouche twins?
I get it. Even if it's all
bullshit, it's not easy to watch
guys like that get rewarded.

THOM

Yeah. That's the thing...

AIMEE

Just trying to pit us all against
each other. As usual. And for what?
A bogus job title, a license for
epic dickery?

THOM

...I was trying to win.

AIMEE

"You want the rotten, worm-infested
banana? Dance, monkey, d--!" Wait,
what?

THOM

I was trying to win. Really trying.
Three promotions this time. THREE.
And I don't even make third place?
It's humiliating.

Aimee is floored.

THOM (CONT'D)

I know. I know. Forget it. I'm just
going to shut up and enjoy the one
thing I look forward to every day.
This. Here. With you.

He salutes her with his sandwich, takes a bite. In the dim
lighting, a telltale blush creeps up Aimee's neck.

AIMEE

So... why the sudden case of giving
a crap?

THOM

How long have we been working here?

AIMEE

Ugh. I dunno. Three years?

THOM

Exactly! Three years this month for both of us.

AIMEE

So...?

THOM

So haven't you noticed that people who don't win in their first three years NEVER leave the Pit? Look at Curtis. Poor guy's worked down here forever.

AIMEE

C'mon. He's just one person.

THOM

Oh yeah? Anna, Joshua, Jess, Chad, big Jeff, little Jeff--

AIMEE

Okay, I get it. Maybe you're right. But still... so what?

THOM

Don't you ever want... I dunno, something more?

AIMEE

What? A job that actually matters? Used to. Sure. I just don't see the point anymore. We're trapped. Like vermin. And the secret is out: there is no cheese at the end of the rat race.

THOM

I figure as long as we're stuck running on the hamster wheel, why not make the most of it?

AIMEE

Maybe they can make me run. But they can't make me care. Although, the job does have its perks.

She gestures around at this space they've made their own, smiles shyly at him. He grins back. A sweet, longing beat.

The door OPENS. They blink against the glare.

IN THE DOORWAY

Her figure silhouetted, Electra glares down at them.

ELECTRA

There you are, Aimee. Get up. I have a little project for you.

AIMEE

Uh. It's lunchtime?

ELECTRA

I guess someone should have thought about that when they decided not to participate today.

Aimee sighs, rises.

THOM

C'mon. That's not-

ELECTRA

Nice effort today, Mr. Fletcher. Shame you didn't make the cut.

Thom shuts his mouth. Aimee mouths "Later," follows Electra.

The door closes behind them. Thom shoves his lunch away.

EXT. SUPPLY CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Aimee JUMPS at the BANGING RATTLE from inside, casts a worried look back.

As they walk-

ELECTRA

Their egos are so fragile. Aren't they?

AIMEE

Thom's not like that.

ELECTRA

Of course.

They reach-

INT. COPYROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tight. Cramped. A huge copier in one corner.

Near the door, a worktable heaped with HUNDREDS of hole-punched LOOSE DOCUMENTS. Electra gestures at the mess.

ELECTRA

The quarterly IGP report. Someone dropped it after it printed. Very unfortunate.

AIMEE

Very.

ELECTRA

To start, it'll need to be put back in order.

AIMEE

This is all one report? Jesus, there must be 600 pages.

ELECTRA

600 and 67. To be exact.

AIMEE

Is that all? No sweat.

She picks up two pages, looks.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Where are the page numbers?

ELECTRA

Oops. Did they leave those off?

Aimee blinks, steels herself, squares off against Electra.

AIMEE

Not a problem.

ELECTRA

I'll need ten copies for the Merrillman meeting this afternoon. You'll find binders in those cabinets. I'll be back at 1:30 to collect them.

Aimee looks at the clock. It's 12:31 p.m.

ELECTRA (CONT'D)

Don't disappoint me. I'd hate to have to take that out on someone else.

The wall facing the Pit is all one big window. Electra glances over at Curtis, who's limping into the lunchroom.

AIMEE

Don't worry. It'll get done.

ELECTRA

I knew I could count on you.

Electra turns, exits. Aimee flips her off behind her back, waits until she's out of sight to dive in.

AIMEE

You can do this. This is easy.

She picks up more sheets. Tries and fails to make sense of them. Picks up an entire armful, pulls up a chair. Sighs.

SMASH CUT

INT. CREEPY OFFICE HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Somewhere ELSE in the building, a faceless MAN in torn, dirtied Desk Jockey attire, RUNNING. PANTING. Fleeing.

INT. COPYROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

Aimee's got the hang of this now. On the floor, she sorts papers into stacks at top speed, working against THE CLOCK.

It's 1:00. Aimee hurries. Hisses. Looks at her finger.

Blood wells from a nasty PAPER CUT. She doesn't notice as TWO DROPS OF BLOOD hit the carpet and promptly DISAPPEAR.

The overhead LIGHTS flicker once. Twice. Aimee notices, looks up. The lights seem to burn BRIGHTER. She shrugs it off.

SMASH CUT

INT. CREEPY OFFICE HALLWAY - SAME TIME

The faceless Desk Jockey HIDES behind a corner, tries to catch his breath. The sound of SOMETHING COMING. Big. Fast.

INT. COPYROOM - TIME CUT

Triumphant, Aimee stands at the copier. Presses COPY.

Nothing happens.

AIMEE

No. Not today. Please? See? I'm saying nice, supportive things to you in a soothing, encouraging tone, and you're going to WORK, DAMMIT.

Still nothing. Paper drawer's ajar. She SLAMS it.

Her pages print. S-L-O-W-L-Y. It's 1:16 p.m.

TIME CUT

Aimee grabs copies out of the paper tray. She FREEZES.

The WORDS on the top sheet have begun to RUN TOGETHER. Toner swirls, FLOWS across the page.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Aw, crap. Wait. What the--

She flips to the next page. Same thing. Off her disbelief-

INT. CREEPY OFFICE HALLWAY - SAME TIME

On THE MONSTER hunting the Desk Jockey. It UNDULATES through twisting, shadowy corridors. It's hard to see, but it's HUGE.

ON FACELESS DESK JOCKEY: Cowering in his corner. He can HEAR the Monster coming, the raspy breaths, the SCRAPE of SCALES.

The way ahead is clear, but he's frozen with fear.

THE MONSTER'S POV, TUNNELVISION, DISTORTED: it passes a polished steel door, a distorted reflection bounces back:

CLOSE ON: Long, weight-bearing forearms with a row of spiky protrusions, natural armor, from shoulder to elbow.

Its splayed hands on the floor end in long, bladelike TALONS.

A human torso. Definitively FEMALE breast-plate armor, pitted, blood-spattered. In the Monster's wake, a 15 foot long, thick green-gold SERPENT'S TAIL.

INT. COPYROOM - SAME TIME

Aimee looks at the top page again. A FUZZY PICTURE forms. A FACE. It TURNS, looks behind itself, TERRIFIED.

The picture resolves. We know this face. So does Aimee.

AIMEE

Danny?

A phantom WIND kicks up, turns the pages in her hand like an animated flip book.

AIMEE'S POV: The clawed hand of the MONSTER as it REACHES for Danny. He's looking the wrong way, doesn't see it coming.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Danny!

INT. CREEPY OFFICE HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Something GRABS Danny from behind.

He SHRIEKS, bats at arm that has grabbed him. It's BRAD

Brad shoves a makeshift TORCH in the Monster's FACE. It ROARS, rears back, blocks with its talons. Embers fly.

BRAD

(to Danny)

Move. NOW.

The Monster SWIPES blindly. Danny CRIES OUT. The TORCH falls.

INT. COPYROOM - SAME TIME

THE FLIPBOOK PAGES: Brad and Danny, RUNNING. Danny presses his hand to twin GASHES on his face.

Drops of Danny's INKY BLACK BLOOD spatter in his wake.

Unnoticed by Aimee, the overhead lights FLICKER BRIGHTER.

On the page, Danny RUNS. CLAWS reach out for him again.

AIMEE

Look out!

But she's out of pages. Aimee gasps. Looks at the top page. It's just words, numbers. Nothing amiss.

She flips through the pages. All the same. All normal.

Aimee grabs more pages from the copier. They're normal too.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

What the--?

Aimee puts her hand to her forehead, her throat.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Not feverish. Okay. Asleep maybe?

She pinches herself. HARD.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

OW. Right. Awake. Which leaves...
Hallucinating. At work. So. Losing
my fucking mind. AWESOME.

Her hands tremble as she shoves report pages into a binder.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Not good, Iverson. NOT GOOD.

TIME CUT

At 1:29 p.m. Electra swoops in, sees--

A visibly exhausted Aimee, leaning heavily on the worktable.

ELECTRA
Giving up? And with seconds still
to spare. How predictable.

Aimee moves to the side. Behind her, stacked in a tall pile:
all 10 reports in their huge binders.

AIMEE
Will there be anything else?

Electra fumes.

ELECTRA
Get out.

AIMEE
'Kay.

Aimee can't leave fast enough--

INT. PIT FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

--nearly colliding with Franklin. Aimee STARTLES. Franklin
reaches out, places a steadying hand on her arm.

AIMEE'S POV: Franklin's hand on her arm, the skin withered
and torn--the flesh living but ROTTING. She recoils.

FRANKLIN
Whoa. Easy there, champ.
Competition day jitters got the
best of ya?

Silence. Aimee LOOKS. Those nearest stop, stare at HER over
their coffee cups. She looks at his hand. Still rotting.

Aimee forces herself to look at his FACE. It looks normal.
She focuses there, a shit-eating grin fixed on her face.

From the copyroom doorway, Electra watches. Thom walks over.

THOM
Aims? You okay?

AIMEE
Uh huh. Super. I am. Super. A
little dizzy. Worked through lunch.

Franklin waggles one mostly bare bone finger at her.

FRANKLIN

Now see? There's the initiative
I've been hoping to see from you,
Iverson. Keep up the good work now.

AIMEE

Uh huh. Sure.

AIMEE'S POV: Now his FACE is DECAYING. Whole patches of flesh
are missing, exposing the curve of one baleful EYEBALL.

FRANKLIN

I've had my EYE on you, you know.

She chuckles nervously. Nearby, coworkers SLURP coffee.

AIMEE

Thank you, Mr. Mammon. Sir.

She leaps away, Thom right on her heels.

THOM

Aims? Yo. Aims.

She cries out in surprise as he yanks her into-

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

THOM

Jesus, what happened? You look like
you've seen a--

Aimee claps her hand over his mouth.

AIMEE

Don't. Don't say it.

THOM

What? "Gh--"

AIMEE

Ah, ah, ah!

THOM

What on earth has gotten into you?

AIMEE

Nothing. What's gotten into you?
I'm fine. I'm--totally. Fine.

THOM

Have you been drinking too much coffee again? You get jittery when-

AIMEE

As a matter of fact, I took your advice. Been caffeine-free for three days.

THOM

(impressed)

Hey. That's great! Cold turkey, too. You're so hardcore.

She grins. Sighs with relief.

AIMEE

Of course! Caffeine withdrawal! I even have a headache. Okay! This is good.

THOM

Yay if you say so. Hey, wish me luck.

AIMEE

Why?

THOM

I'm going for it.

AIMEE

For what?

THOM

For the invisible cheese. I'm gonna go talk to Franklin. I mean, why not? I was just about to, before-- well, whatever that was. Are you sure you're okay?

AIMEE

Yes! Fine! Forget it. Why would you go talk to Franklin?

THOM

Oh. Um. I just have something I want to run by him.

AIMEE

Ah, I don't think that's a good idea...

THOM

Gee. Thanks.

AIMEE

No, no! I just mean--you know how things work around here.

THOM

Right. Look, I gotta go run with all the other rats. See ya later.

He yanks open the door.

AIMEE

Thom. Thom!

But he's already gone.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Nice going, jackass. But at least you're not crazy. Everything's cool. Everything's--

INT. ELEVATOR - NEXT MORNING

The doors open. Dexter and several others file out.

Looking like she hasn't slept at all, coffee chain to-go cup in hand, Aimee starts out. STOPS. Does coffee spit-take.

INT. THE PIT - CONTINUOUS

Only a filthy, decaying, ruined version of it. Gaping HOLES in the walls and ceiling. Jagged CRACKS in the floor.

AIMEE

Shit. Oh shit.

And worse? Half of the workers here appear, like Franklin, in various states of decay. Living corpses: ZOMBIES.

Even the alive ones look half-dead, as though the life is literally being sucked out of them somehow. And then there's-

CURTIS

Hey kiddo.

She JUMPS. Afraid to look at him. Opens one eye to peek. Aimee gasps. Curtis looks tired, but lovably, gruffly normal.

But he barely looks at her on his way to the elevator.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I'm gonna be up in accounting all morning. Some bullshit mailing project. Lucky me. Hold down the fort!

She turns to get him back, but the doors are already closing.

He's gone. Aimee forces herself to turn and look again. But the office is back to normal now.

AIMEE

Okay. Not the coffee then. Puts us square back to... batshit crazy.

She tosses her half-full coffee in the trash, heads for--

THOM'S DESK

He's not there. His cubemate, HECTOR, is.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Hector, have you seen Thom yet?

Absently, she reaches for a combination PENLIGHT/BALLPOINT PEN on top of a pile of stuff in a cardboard box.

Belatedly, she realizes what Hector is doing. PANICS.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Whoa. Why are you boxing up Thom's stuff?

HECTOR

(wincing)

Oh. I thought you'd have heard. Electra left me a voice mail. Ah... Thom quit. Last night I guess. She asked me to--well, yanno.

AIMEE

What are you talking about? Thom
wouldn't quit. Not without telling
me first. I mean, NOBODY QUILTS.

A beat. Yeah. Awkward.

HECTOR

Uh. I was gonna ask you if you
could take him his stuff, but um,
if you'd rather I--?

AIMEE

No, I got it. Thanks.

She takes the box.

AIMEE AND CURTIS'S DESK

She picks up her phone. Dials a number by heart. It rings.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

I'm sorry, the number you dialed is
out of service. Please try again
later.

She hangs up. Stares at the phone, at her filthy cube walls.

Overhead, rats, or worse, skitter at the edges of gaping
HOLES in the ceiling.

She shudders at a raspy mutter from across the way around the
WATER COOLER. Forces herself to LOOK.

Her vision SHIFTS. Changes. The office looks normal again.

Clustered around the water cooler, the LIFERS, old folks
who've worked here forever.

They SLURP their coffee greedily, with the hollow-eyed look
and stiff-legged gait of zombies. But they're alive.

AIMEE

Get a grip, Iverson.

INT. HUMAN RESOURCES - SHORT WHILE LATER

Behind the front desk, a malicious little TOADY of a guy.

TOADY

I'm sorry. And why would I do that
for you?

She hands him some wadded up bills. Suddenly more helpful-

TOADY (CONT'D)

What'd you say the name was?

AIMEE

Fletcher. Thom Fletcher. He works
with me in the Data Pool. I'm just
concerned about him. If I could
just make sure he's alright-

TOADY

It's cool, stalker chick. I don't
judge. Listen, I'm not showing
anyone here under that name.

AIMEE

Is there a different listing for
former employees?

TOADY

No, I'm not showing him working
here EVER.

AIMEE

That's impossible. Lemme see that.

He sighs, flips his computer monitor around to face her.

TOADY

See?

AIMEE

But that's impossible.

TOADY

Tough luck. See ya.

He flips the screen back around, goes back to work.

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET - LUNCH TIME

Miserable, Aimee eats her lunch. Alone.

Without Thom the darkness and closeness here ENCROACHES.

Aimee hears a faint noise. Like a sigh. Or a whimper. She whirls, LOOKS. Nothing but shadows.

Then--something JUMPS out at her. She YELPS, leaps up. Switches on the overhead light. It's just a BROOM. Still-

INT. PIT, OUTSIDE SUPPLY CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Aimee dumps her half eaten lunch in a trash can.

OUTSIDE ELECTRA'S LARGE CORNER OFFICE

It's the only office here with BLINDS. They're closed.

Aimee steels herself, KNOCKS. A beat.

ELECTRA (O.S.)

Come in.

Aimee opens the door, but hangs back in the doorway.

AIMEE

Sorry to bother you. I-

She sees who's sitting opposite Electra, SHUDDERS.

Every visible inch of Franklin's skin (what's left of it) is rotting. Gaping holes reveal decomposing flesh, bare bone.

As Aimee watches, A WRITHING MAGGOT falls out of a HOLE in his loose-hanging jaw, wriggles on the carpet.

Aimee forces herself to breathe normally.

ELECTRA

Yes? What is it?

AIMEE

Sorry. About Thom-

ELECTRA

Who?

AIMEE

Thom! Thom Fletcher? Tall, dark hair, goofy looking, in a dorkily handsome sorta way. You know. THOM. He works for you?

ELECTRA
Sorry. Doesn't ring a bell.

AIMEE
Are you shitting me?!

ELECTRA
Don't you take that tone with me,
you miserable little-

FRANKLIN
Now, now. Can't you see the poor
girl is under tremendous strain?

Both women stare at him.

AIMEE
(to Franklin)
You.

FRANKLIN
Yes?

AIMEE
He was going to talk to you. Last
night. Before he quit. Or whatever.

Franklin's frown is a lipless GRIMACE. Aimee gulps.

FRANKLIN
I'm awfully sorry, champ. But I
think you're mistaken.

AIMEE
I see. Yes. Well, thank you for
your time.

Aimee turns to go, Franklin follows.

FRANKLIN
See you in 20 for our meeting?

ELECTRA
Wouldn't miss it for the world, Mr.
Mammon.

INT. PIT, OUTSIDE ELECTRA'S OFFICE

Franklin chuckles, closes the door, turns to Aimee.

FRANKLIN

Sure hope you feel better soon,
champ. I have such high hopes for
your future here.

Part of his jaw falls off. He looks down at it. Looks back at
her. She SMILES INSANELY. Everything's SWELL. Swearsies.

AIMEE

Gotta run. Have a great day.

She flees down the hallway towards the elevators.

AIMEE'S POV: The office has gone wonky again: a NIGHTMARISH
GAUNTLET of the leering undead faces of her coworkers.

Others work on, oblivious, alive and normal-looking. All of
these folks, alive and dead, SLURP AWAY at their COFFEE.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Not real. It's not real.

She starts forward, slow at first, then faster.

The walls of nearby cubicles are covered in dusty cobwebs.
She jerks back as a HUGE MILLIPEDE crawls across one.

Aimee's field of vision CRACKLES, SHIFTS. Normal office.

The elevator is 20 feet away. She runs for it. Knocks into: a
leering Candystriper offering COFFEE.

The office SHIFTS again. The Candystriper is a WIGHT--
hairless, pale, black veins, but that same HORRIBLE GRIN.

The undead-looking coworkers STARE at Aimee.

The SLURPING of the living workers echoes in Aimee's ears.
She sees them with new eyes, UNSEEING. SLURPING the COFFEE.

Everything SHIFTS. Normal again. The Candystriper GRINS.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Uh, my mug. It's at my desk.

She jogs five steps, dives sideways into-

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Hair messy, sweating, Aimee sighs as the DOORS CLOSE.

Only now the ELEVATOR goes nightmarish too. Through the holes in its walls, live wires SPARK. She leaps back away.

Through cracks and holes, Aimee sees she's descending through some sort of office space HELL PLACE. She shuts her eyes.

AIMEE

It's not real. It's not real. The office coffee is drugged. Only I haven't been DRINKING the coffee. So that means...

DING!

She shivers, opens her eyes just a crack. The doors open onto-

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

It looks totally, blessedly normal. Aimee sighs with relief, makes a beeline for the revolving front doors.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Avaris Corp, please hold.

And then, from farther back. Somewhere behind closed doors. A GUY'S HOARSE CRY. Raw. PAINED. And worse? All too familiar.

AIMEE

Thom?

She spins around. Is she hearing things now too?

The lobby still looks normal. She shakes it off.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

It's not real. He's not-

She takes two more steps. Reaches the front doors.

The cry comes again. A soft croak, weak. Lost.

THOM (O.S.)

Dammit. No! Somebody-

The world outside beckons, promising an end to this madness.

But she can't. She can't leave him.

Aimee turns. The door to HR is past the front desk--the only other way out of the lobby besides the revolving front doors and the elevators.

As Aimee passes the front desk, a long FINGER pokes her.

AIMEE

OW. Oh God.

It's not a finger. It's a CLAW, monstrous.

The room is still normal. The Receptionist? Not so much. Huge fangs, like curved ice picks, jut at odd angles from her jaw.

RECEPTIONIST

(amused)

And just where do you think you're going?

AIMEE

Me? I was just-

Receptionist files her "nail." The same long, sharp CLAW.

Aimee shoves the woman's arm away and BOLTS for the door.

RECEPTIONIST

Hey! SECURITY! Oh wait. That's me.

She LEAPS over the desk. Aimee's already through the door-

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Aimee sees a security lock on the door, engages it.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Get back here, meat puppet!

POUNING, SCRATCHING comes from the other side of the door.

But it holds. Aimee turns to face-

Nothing. The hall ahead is empty. But no doors. Up ahead?

Nope. A dead end. And she can't go back the way she came.

AIMEE

Thom? THOM?

The sound of cheesy MUZAK behind her. She spins around.

An office door has appeared. From inside, the muzak. And-

FRANKLIN (O.S.)

Ah, there she is. Come on in,
champ.

Aimee steels herself. Pushes open the door, enters-

INT. FRANKLIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The penthouse. Wall to wall windows. The whole city spread out below. Aimee stares. Is it real? Is ANY of this real?

FRANKLIN

I'd so hoped to see you in here
sooner. But you, Ms. Aimee Iverson.
You're a stubborn one.

He's seated at a large desk. He looks alive, healthy. This puts Aimee on her guard.

AIMEE

Where is here exactly?

FRANKLIN

Ah! Neither here nor there, I'm
afraid. But still in the office.
Please. Sit.

AIMEE

I'll stand, thanks.

She goes to the window, scowls down at the lively profusion of video ad billboards. He joins her.

FRANKLIN

Human ingenuity. Gotta hand it to
you crazy kids. You come up with
some real ringdingers. A'course, I
like to give y'all a little PUSH
now and then. To get things going.

Aimee looks up at him, perplexed.

AIMEE

Who ARE you?

He smiles. The world outside SHIFTS. Larger than life before them stands THOM. Torn, bloodied, weak.

Exhausted, bloodied, Thom creeps through a maze of decaying cubicles, weakly clutches a metal chair leg as a weapon.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Thom!

She REACHES for him, hands stopped at the invisible window. At her voice, Thom TURNS, searches. He can HEAR her.

THOM

Aimee? Aimee?! No! Where are you?

An inhuman SNARL. LOTS of 'em, close by. Thom's head whips around to face some unseen threat. He stands his ground.

But he has the look of a man facing his imminent doom.

AIMEE

THOM!

Franklin SNAPS his fingers. Thom disappears. It's the billboards again below. And Franklin, here, watching her.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

No! Go back. Where is he? What have you done with him?

FRANKLIN

There, there. Don't count him out just yet. The boy's proven far more resourceful'n I would have given him credit for. I quite begin to understand what you see in him.

AIMEE

If you hurt him...

FRANKLIN

Me? On, no. You misunderstand me, darlin'. We're on the same side, Thom and I. You too, I hope.

AIMEE

I don't understand.

FRANKLIN

Maybe we'd better sit after all.

Since Aimee's legs are on the verge of buckling, they do.

The wall behind him is full of SHELVES. Each displays a small priceless container: a gem-encrusted box, a Egyptian funerary urn, an ivory bowl, a Fabergé egg.

Dead center, one spotlit shelf is conspicuously EMPTY.

AIMEE

Okay. Then why don't you show me your real face. And tell me why I'm here.

FRANKLIN

Fair enough.

Aaaand... he's rotting again. Looks worse than ever.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

You see, Aimee. I find myself in a bit of a pickle. There's something I want. Something I can't get myself. And I need YOU to go fetch it for me.

AIMEE

Me? And Thom too?

FRANKLIN

Yes. There are others seeking it right now too. But my money? Hooey! It's on you, darlin'.

AIMEE

I see. Yay?

FRANKLIN

Which is why I appropriated your good friend, Thom. What I propose is a simple business transaction, ya follow me?

AIMEE

Your--whatever it is, for Thom?

FRANKLIN

Smart girl. Though you'll have to find him, look out for him. Dangerous place, this office. Dangerous critters runnin' all around, trying to keep me from what's MINE. They'll kill you if they catch you. Any number a'things.

Aimee shivers convulsively.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

My champs are all fighters, see. You've all got gumption. But I got to thinking maybe it was time try to something a little different here. And YOU. You got somethin' the others have all lacked.

AIMEE

What's that?

FRANKLIN

Heart. And a certain, dogged stick-to-it-ed-ness. When I hired you, Electra bet on this place crushing a spirit like yours in no time flat. I took that bet. And LOOK at ya. Still a lil' spitfire. You make me proud to be a capitalist, Aimee Iverson.

AIMEE

I think you have the wrong girl.

FRANKLIN

Nonsense. You're not gonna let that nice boy down. Poor Thom? Not for any damn thing. Are you?

AIMEE

No. I suppose not.

FRANKLIN

Tee-riffic! That settles it then.

He gets up, guides her back towards the door.

AIMEE

Wait! This thing that I'm supposed to find--what is it? WHERE is it?

She looks back to the empty spot on the wall.

FRANKLIN

You'll know it when you see it. I'm afraid that's all I can tell you.

AIMEE

Seriously?

FRANKLIN

Rules are rules.

AIMEE

Fine. I'll find it for you. But you better hold up your end of the deal. When it's all said and done, Thom and I walk free.

FRANKLIN

Oh yes. I long for that day, darlin'.

He holds out a putrid hand to shake on it. She blanches.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Aww, I'm just kiddin'.

He laughs. There's a THUNKING sound.

The wood office door has been replaced with a stone one bearing a stylized device with the Avaris logo.

She hesitates. He makes a shooing gesture.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Off you go then. Good luck, champ. Don't you quit on me now.

She opens the door. Steps through. Into-

INT. CREEPY OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The NIGHTMARISH DECAY holds sway here.

Aimee takes two steps, turns to ask one final question.

The door is gone. Franklin too. Behind her? More hallway. A dead end. There's only one way to go: forward.

Aimee creeps slowly along, scared, wary for danger.

Just ahead, the path SPLITS. Left or right? Aimee stops, listens. To the right: a faint wind? Or something BREATHING?

Aimee hurries LEFT. Ten feet later, another FORK. Left again. Far behind her, a faint, SCRAPING sound.

She hurries on. Left. Then right. Something BIG is coming.

INT. ELSEWHERE IN OFFICE MAZE, NEARBY - SAME TIME

THE MONSTER'S POV: Tunnelvision, like before. It RACES ahead.

BACK TO AIMEE, RUNNING

She can hear that awful SLITHERING, SCRAPING noise.

It's dark here. But up ahead: BRIGHT YELLOW LIGHT. She RUNS for it.

THE MONSTER'S POV: Closer now, Aimee RUNS towards the LIGHT.

The Monster slows to a STOP. Her wicked LAUGHTER echoes through down the corridor towards-

ON AIMEE

Racing towards an open doorway, the source of all that LIGHT.

INT. BRIGHT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She ducks inside, slams the door behind her. No lock this time. She backs away from the door.

From the other side, the sound of the MONSTER'S CRUEL LAUGHTER--RETREATING into the distance. Then, silence.

Aimee listens, confused. Is it really gone? Behind her, a slight, RUSTLING sound. She turns, sees-

She's in the FILE ROOM. It's BRIGHT. Every square inch of every surface is completely covered in yellow POST-IT NOTES.

Those nearest flutter in her wake; this motion ROLLS through the room, wavelike. Stunned, she looks around. Takes it in.

Another time and place? It'd be funny, but she's still listening for the MONSTER, TERRIFIED. Outside, SILENCE.

Aimee looks for another way out. Across the room, a door.

She heads for it. The RUSTLING sound in here grows LOUDER.

AIMEE

Ouch!

Her bandaid is gone, the papercut from yesterday OPEN again, freshly bleeding from a NEW slice. She looks at it, confused.

With nothing else to staunch the seeping blood, she snags a post-it, holds it to her finger, continues towards the door.

The LIGHT of the post-its grows BRIGHTER, their rustling sound INTENSIFIES. Aimee looks down at her finger.

The blood staining her post-it DISAPPEARS. The post-it WRAPS ITSELF around her finger, leechlike. SUCKING.

Horror-struck, she shakes it off. It flutters to the ground. Pristinely yellow. Shivering. GLOWING BRIGHTER.

A horrible RUSTLING strikes up. In a rolling wave, every post-it note within five feet LEAPS FOR HER. They GLOW.

With a yelp, Aimee PELTS for the door. In her wake, ALL the post-its FLY from the walls at her in a never-ending WAVE.

They FLY TOGETHER, form waist-high PAPER GOLEMS that CHASE HER with arms that SPIN, WHIR like little paper saw blades.

Aimee stops, SURROUNDED by paper golems. They back her up against a worktable.

She fumbles at the dusty table, hands searching for a weapon, anything. A ha! She has something, looks.

A three-hole punch. The golems chitter nervously, back away.

A big golem steps up. She SNAPS the hinged punch shut on its reaching arm. The old spring CREAKS. Rust flakes off.

Tiny yellow PUNCHED HOLES flutter down. It looks down at its hole-punched arm, KNOCKS the hole punch from Aimee's hands.

Aimee looks at the DOOR.

They all POUNCE. Aimee DIVES under the table. One golem EXPLODES into a shower of post-its as it hits a table leg.

Another SWIPES, SLURPS, leaves tiny slashes all up her arm.

She scrambles back. Something CLATTERS under her hand. It's an old, rusty pair of SCISSORS. She GRABS THEM, SLASHES at the closest golem, cuts off its swiping arm.

It SHRIEKS, leaps away. The others hold back, unsure now.

Aimee leaps out from under the table, points the scissors around in a circle.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Stay back!

She inches towards the door. A golem LUNGES for her, and she slashes at its FACE. It wheels away, shrieking.

ANOTHER LEAPS. She decapitates it. Like a house of cards, the whole golem collapses, explodes in harmless flutter.

She's almost to the door. A golem swipes at her cheek, leaves three parallel cuts even as she spins away, SLASHING at it.

Aimee YANKS open the door, pelts back out into...

INT. ANOTHER CREEPY HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

But before she can close the door behind her, the golems are THROUGH, coming after her. They light up this dark hallway.

With no time to think, she rushes right at the first fork, then left, then right again. They're GAINING.

One POUNCES, TACKLES Aimee around the waist. She goes down, hacking and slashing with the scissors.

Aimee regains her feet. Her clothes are torn, new cuts showing through. She's PISSED, pushed to her breaking point.

She charges the nearest golem, beheads it. Faces the others.

AIMEE

C'mon!

They tremble before her, their multilayers of tiny post-its SHIVERING together.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
That's right. Who's next?

She takes an aggressive step towards them. Emboldened for some reason, they HOLD THEIR GROUND. One of them SNICKERS.

Instinctively, Aimee TURNS. Comes FACE TO FACE with
THE MONSTER

In the light of the golems, we see its FACE for the first time.

A twisted, monstrous parody of a human female face--haglike. Old, powerful, *deadly*.

The MONSTER bares sharp teeth, REARS UP on her snake tail.

MONSTER
(hissing whisper)
DIE.

The Monster SLASHES down with those terrible claws.

Aimee blocks with the SCISSORS. SPARKS FLY.

More swiping blows rain down. Somehow Aimee blocks each one.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
(to the golems)
Scatter.

Obedient, the post-its FLY APART, adhere to the walls. One by one, their lights WINK OUT. It's getting dark. FAST.

Aimee backs away down the corridor, towards TOTAL DARKNESS.

In the rapidly fading light, the Monster, LEERS, wily-like.

With a WHOOSH and a SCRAPE as darkness descends, the Monster DISAPPEARS.

ON AIMEE: alone in dark. She feints with the scissors, expecting an attack. She remembers, reaches into her pocket.

CLICK. A tiny beam of light pierces the gloom. Thom's penlight. She spins in a circle, shines it everywhere.

The filthy corridor is littered with debris--greying crumpled paper, gravel, dirt. But no Monster.

A dim, PULSING LIGHT from below. A stray POST-IT clings to her leg, SUCKING her BLOOD. Aimee kicks it away.

A WHOOSHING noise nearby. The Monster, but where?

She shines the light around again. It could be anywhere. Aimee takes off into the darkness.

A SKITTERING, SCRAPING sound ahead. Aimee skids to a halt. Ahead: a three-way split. She looks left, looks right.

BEHIND HER, UNSEEN, FROM ABOVE

THE MONSTER, uncoiling from the ceiling, POISED TO STRIKE.

A tiny piece of ceiling tile PATTERS to the floor.

Aimee freezes, AWARE now that it's ABOVE her.

The Monster REACHES down silently with its curved claws.

THUNK. Aimee stabs up into the Monster's hand. The Monster HOWLS, rips her arm away, takes the scissors with her.

Unarmed now except for the penlight, Aimee PELTS down the middle fork in the corridor.

Behind her, Aimee hears the Monster FALL with a BONE-JARRING THUD, its SNARLS OF RAGE as it rises, COMING for her.

Aimee takes turns at random, fleeing for her life as the penlight's thin beam bounces ahead of her.

The MONSTER crashes somewhere far behind. Can she lose it?

Aimee clicks the penlight OFF. It's dark here, but not pitch black. She hurries forward in near darkness.

She stumbles on, bumps into a wall. She's in a corner. A dead end. She's TRAPPED.

Closing fast, the MONSTER, its breathing labored.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
No where left to run, little fool?

It's true. Aimee turns to face her, clicks the BALLPOINT PEN part of the penlight out. At least its got a pointy end.

AIMEE

Fine. You want me? Come get me. But I won't go down without a fight.

MONSTER

Oh ho ho! A BRAVE little fool.

Aimee can see its HULKING, SLITHERING SHADOW coming around the bend now, slow but sure. It knows it's got her trapped.

A NOISE over Aimee's head catches her attention. ARMS reach down for her, YANK her UP and out of the way--

--just as the Monster SPRINGS, SWIPES, just misses Aimee.

INT. METAL CHUTE - CONTINUOUS

A HEAVY METAL PANEL of some kind is SLAMMED back into place as Aimee is pulled up into this dark, cramped space.

Aimee STRUGGLES, clicks the penlight ON, swings the pointy pen end right at-

BRAD

Hey! Watch it!

AIMEE

Brad?! How--

BRAD

Shhh.

They both JUMP at a growling, RENDING sound. RAISED CLAW MARKS appear in the metal beneath them.

BRAD (CONT'D)

We'd better move. I don't think it can get in here, but better safe than sorry.

Aimee crawls after him, down the long, straight chute.

AIMEE

How did you--?

BRAD

Found Bethany from the file room
the same way in another section.
'Course I didn't realize how close
that thing was until I had already
committed to saving your sorry ass.

He grins back at her to take the sting out, teasing. She's
too stunned to reply. As they continue crawling forward--

BRAD (CONT'D)

Was trying to find a vending
machine. You seen any? Or water
sources? Pipes? We're short on
supplies.

AIMEE

Nuh uh. Wait, "we"?

BRAD

Yep. You make six. Well, five now.
We lost Robinson a ways back. Poor
bastard never made it out of the
mailroom.

AIMEE

Is Thom-

A sharp whisper from a vent below.

BETHANY (O.S.)

Brad, please tell me that's you and
not another one of those THINGS.

BRAD

Bethy? Is everybody with you?

DANNY (O.S.)

Yo bro, you find anything?

BRAD

Sure did, buddy.

Through the vent slats, relieved faces smile up at them.

AIMEE

Thom? Where's-

Brad hauls back the vent grate. Helping hands reach to help
Aimee as she drops down into-

INT. I.T. DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Thick, ropy cables and wires. TOWERING computer servers with tiny blinking lights illuminate this vast space.

Aimee searches each face, looking for Thom.

Danny, Bethany from the file room, Heidi from the Pit.

HEIDI

Great. More competition.

DANNY

Hey, at least she's prettier to look at than your cat's ass of a face, cat's assface. 'Sup, Aimee.

AIMEE

Uh. Hi.

Brad drops down. Aimee notices they all look to him. Even nervous wreck Bethany breathes a sigh of relief to see Brad.

BRAD

C'mon now. Let's stay positive. Stay focused.

Heidi hmmpfs. Brad turns to Danny and Bethany.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I got nothin'. You guys find anything?

They shake their heads, grim.

AIMEE

Wait. Wait! Where the fuck are we? What's going on?

BETHANY

I think we're in I.T. Sort of. I've never been up there but--see?

She points to the nearby servers.

AIM

Is Thom out looking? I mean. He's with too you, right?

The others look at each other. Then back to Aimee.

AIMEE

Oh god. No. He isn't--he can't be--

She can't say it.

DANNY

Loverboy's too good for the likes of us. But not too good to steal from us.

AIMEE

Wh-what? You've seen him? Is he okay?

BRAD

Last we saw of him, yeah, he was just fine. Better than us, since he took off with the food we found, and most of our water.

AIMEE

No. He would never-

BETHANY

Are you calling Brad a LIAR?

Aimee sees Heidi SHIFT uncomfortably.

BRAD

Yeah. Remember me? The guy who just saved your life? 'Cause I saw him do it.

AIMEE

No, of course not. And thank you. I just--look, if he took your stuff, I--I dunno, he must have had his reasons.

DANNY

Yeah. His own survival. Screwing our asses over. Take your pick.

She searches Heidi's face, but it's closed off now. Bethany? The way she hangs on Brad's every word, she's no help.

And Danny? He's staring at Aimee's chest.

Aimee looks down. Her v-neck shirt is SLASHED open at the top, displaying way more cleavage than usual.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Nice.

BRAD

Classy, bro. Real classy.

He rummages around in his pockets. Offers Aimee a paper clip to fix it. She shrugs it off. Bigger problems at hand.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Alright then. Everybody armed?

They pick up their stuff: a few half-rotted briefcases, an old thermos.

Bethany and Heidi brandish homemade pikes: heavy YARD STICKS with SHARPENED PENCILS duct-taped to the far end.

Danny has a CLUB-LIKE hunk of wood, and Brad, the torn off wood and metal ARM BLADE from an old school paper-cutter.

Brad approaches Aimee, flips a MELTED PLASTIC SHANK in his hand. He locks eyes with her, making a show of TRUSTING her.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Here. It's not much, but its sharp.
Better than that thing.

He points it at the penlight, grins. Hands it to her.

AIMEE

Thanks.

BRAD

Sure. Just make sure the pointy end doesn't end up in my back, huh?

AIMEE

Right.

(a beat)

So to recap: we have no food. Not much water. And we're being hunted by things trying to kill us in a horror show version of our office.

HEIDI

Nicely summed up, Captain Obviessa.

BETHANY

Are you sure we can trust her?

HEIDI

Yeah. After what her boyfriend did?

Aimee glares back at them. Danny looks to Brad.

BRAD

Look, if we're going to survive this, we gotta work together. Trust each other. Help each other.

Aimee eyes him, one eyebrow arched in surprise.

BRAD (CONT'D)

What?

AIMEE

Nothing. Just wondering who you are and what you did with Brad Forrester? Although I can't say I mind the change of tune.

BRAD

Touché, pretty lady. Adversity brings out the best in us, right?

HEIDI

Or the worst.

Brad ignores her, turns to lead them on.

BRAD

Keep your eyes out for anything useful. Or wet!

DANNY

Especially something wet.

HEIDI

Fucking pig.

Aimee trails after the others, her face clouded with WORRY and SUSPICION.

On the group of them, disappearing around a corner-

INT. WAR ROOM - SAME TIME

A bird's eye view of Aimee and the others, but here the image plays on a giant TV wall in a lavish conference room.

The picture goes SNOWY around the edges, snows out entirely.

FRANKLIN (O.S.)

Oh no. Not again.

A huge, heavy conference table dominates here. One long wall is all windows, overlooking the city.

At the table, Franklin and Electra eat dinner together. Or rather she eats. He watches longingly. Pushes a button.

RECEPTIONIST VOICE (O.S.)

Yes, sir? What can I do for you?

FRANKLIN

Get someone from I.T. up here right away to fix this scrying wall doohicky.

He glares over at the its snowy surface. It RIPPLES like snowy WATER flowing across the wall.

RECEPTIONIST VOICE (O.S.)

Yes, sir.

Franklin taps his rotting fingers against the table.

FRANKLIN

Oh, and have them bring up some strawberries and cream.

RECEPTIONIST VOICE (O.S.)

Right away, sir.

She clicks off. Franklin watches almost LUSTFULLY as Electra's TEETH sink into a bite of BLOODY RARE STEAK.

A GEEK SQUAD WIZARD enters, in nerdy office attire, with a WAND stashed in his pocket protector. He lingers in the doorway, afraid to intrude. Ahems.

FRANKLIN

Come on in, champ. See if you can do something about that?

He waves at the snowy screen, eyes still on Electra.

The Geek gets right to work. Fiddles with a control panel.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

It's funny what you miss when it's
gone, but hot damn. TASTE BUDS.
Digestive juices. Juices in
general.

His back to them, the Geek SHUDDERS. Franklin sees, sighs.

Electra puts her fork down. Pats his cold, dead hand.

ELECTRA

Soon, lover. You'll taste all
life's pleasures again soon.
Tomorrow!

He runs one rotting finger across her palm. She visibly
stifles the urge to pull away. Holds his gaze.

He sighs. Releases her.

GEEK SQUAD WIZARD (O.S.)

A ha! Got it.

ON THE SCRYING SCREEN - SOMETHING STIRRING IN THE MAILROOM

It's the mail clerk, Robinson. Dead. Re-animated as a zombie.

FRANKLIN

The ones still in the game, please.

GEEK SQUAD WIZARD

Oops. Sorry.

He waves his wand.

The image on-screen CHANGES. A wrecked office area in a
cavernous room, 60s style decor in tatters. It has the look
of RUINS, slowly crumbling away over time.

Franklin sighs, his patience waning.

GEEK SQUAD WIZARD (CONT'D)

One more time. Almost... got it!

ON-SCREEN: Aimee, Brad and the gang, back in the I.T. maze.
The Geek breathes a sigh of relief.

FRANKLIN

Rats.

Geek Wizard looks up in surprise.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

And here I was thinking I might get
to turn you into somethin' red and
SQUISHY.

Franklin laughs. Geek Wizard laughs with him, like he's in on
the joke. Franklin stops laughing. GLARES.

Thus dismissed, Geek Wizard flees.

A CANDYSTRIPER enters with a platter of strawberries and
cream on a cart. Electra waves them over.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Oh goodie. Now tell me about every
bite. Every little detail. I want
it ALL.

Electra reaches for a strawberry. He watches, voyeuristic.
Off his HUNGER, ancient and BOUNDLESS.

And the BLACK FLAMES dancing in his eyes. Ready and waiting
to consume the entire world.

We pull back towards the images of the survivors on-screen
until we're back in-

INT. DEEPER INTO I.T. - TIME CUT

Sweating profusely, Aimee and the others pick their way
through a JUNGLE of vine-like black wires and cables.

Occasionally, FLASHES OF BRIGHT LIGHT crackle along the
surface of the wires, appearing to shoot INTO the servers.

HEIDI

Ugh. Isn't it supposed to be cold
in here?

BRAD

We need to find a way out of here.
We're losing too much water
sweating like this.

BETHANY

Oh no! If we split up, maybe we'd
find an exit faster?

BRAD

No. We should stick together.

DANNY

Yeah. Remember? That's how we lost
Robinson. That snakelady thing
waited until he went to take a leak
and-BAM. Tasty mailclerk for
breakfast.

AIMEE

She ATE him?

DANNY

Well, no. But she killed his ass
alright. One down. Four to go.

He makes pieu-pieu noises and laughs as he pretends to blow
the rest of their group away, except for his brother.

DANNY (CONT'D)

The brothers Forrester. A-WINNUHZ.

The girls glare back at him. Heidi in particular.

BRAD

Knock it off, Danny. Let's keep
moving. Keep your eyes open for an
exit sign.

Brad smiles, offers his hand to Bethany to help her over a
fallen log-like cable cluster. She smiles wanly up at him.

Aimee hangs back to walk near Heidi.

HEIDI

Look. I'll save you the effort. You
don't have to pretend to be a good
team player with me. Danny's got it
right.

(MORE)

HEIDI (CONT'D)

Only one of us can win this thing.
If anyone even lives that long.

AIMEE

Look, I don't care about that crap.
I just want to find Thom.

HEIDI

Ha! Brad's hero act is better.

AIMEE

I mean it. That's the deal I made
with Franklin. I find his fucking
trinket or whatever, and Thom and I
walk out of here alive. ALL of us
can walk out of here. Together.

Heidi stops short, laughs. A tension-releasingly peal.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Why. What'd he promise you?

HEIDI

Same thing he promised everyone
else. Wealth. Prestige. Power. Is
Thom really all you asked for?

AIMEE

Yeah.

HEIDI

Huh. I wouldn't have figured you
for the pathetic, moon-eyed type.

She chuckles scornfully. Aimee swallows her anger down.

AIMEE

Right. Listen. Back there it looked
like you disagreed with what Brad
said, about Thom stealing.

HEIDI

I dunno what you're talking about.

AIMEE

Heidi, please. I have to find him.
I have to know he's okay. If you
know something, anything...

HEIDI

Either you're for real or you really are better at this than Brad. Fine. I heard them arguing. Brad and Thom. While I was guarding camp last night.

AIMEE

Arguing? About what?

HEIDI

The food. Thom accused Brad of getting rid of it. Brad threw the accusation right back in his face.

AIMEE

But you think Brad was lying?

HEIDI

Thom was too much of a threat. Brad got rid of him.

AIMEE

Oh god. You mean--

HEIDI

I don't mean he killed him. Maybe. I dunno. I didn't want Brad to catch me spying, so I doubled back, missed the rest. Ten minutes later, Brad came and woke us up. Told us Thom had run off. We tried to follow him but he just vani-eeugh!

Heidi stumbles, the heel has broken from her shoe.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

Stupid fucking heels. Great. Just great. That's what I get for--

She leans against the nearest server, but as soon as her hand TOUCHES the tower, a BRILLIANT FLASH.

BRIGHT LIGHT like electricity crackles along Heidi's arm.

AIMEE

Oh shit. Heidi!

The group stops. Comes running. But they keep their distance.

But instead of getting electrocuted, Heidi is WHOOPING with exhilaration, grinning like a loon.

HEIDI

Holy shit is right! You guys gotta try this. This stuff is AMAZING.

The nearest cables TWITCH. Writhe. Aimee sees them.

AIMEE

Whoa. Heidi? I don't think you should-

HEIDI

Seriously. Touch it. I'm not hungry or thirsty anymore. Or tired. Or scared! This is incredible!

Cables begins to SNAKE their way.

AIMEE

Uh. Guys?

But they're all looking at Heidi. Bethany and Danny reach for the server, eager to try, but Brad slaps their hands away.

BRAD

Don't. It might not be-

Thick braids of CABLES erupt towards HEIDI like snakes.

Instinctively, the others rear back. Scramble away.

Heidi's head is thrown back in ecstasy, totally unaware as the cables SNAKE towards her. They STRIKE OUT-

AIMEE

Heidi! Look out!

Aimee LEAPS in front of her, to push Heidi out of the way.

Inexplicably, the cables STOP right in front of Aimee's face. They act like they're SNIFFING her, examining her.

Uninterested in Aimee, the cables turn back to HEIDI.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Heidi, let go. Heidi!

She reaches back, pulls Heidi's HAND off the server.

Heidi's HEAD snaps around, her eyes DILATED, inky black. She glares at Aimee, ENRAGED, crazed.

HEIDI

YOU. Trying to TAKE it from me? You can't have it. It's MINE.

She SNARLS, LUNGES at Aimee, hands around her THROAT.

BEHIND THEM, the cables strike unerringly for HEIDI, knocking Aimee back away. She HITS the ground in a sprawl.

The cables wrap AROUND Heidi. LIFT HER. She hardly notices, REACHING back towards the server, longing to touch it again.

The cables begin to TIGHTEN, strangling Heidi. Aimee lurches upright. Looks for something to FIGHT them with.

Then Brad's there, grabs Aimee. Tugs her back away.

AIMEE

We have to help her!

BRAD

Against those things? Are you kidding?

Brad forcibly drags Aimee 10 feet away. She pushes him off.

Aimee TURNS, sees HEIDI--face purple, distorted, eyes still fixed on the SERVER.

She's still reaching back towards it right up until the cables begin to RIP HER LIMB FROM LIMB.

An EXPLOSION OF LIGHT crackles through the room, more of that weird current. EVERYWHERE. All at once. A BRILLIANT display.

The servers WHINE as they visibly SUCK UP THE ENERGY SURGE.

Aimee whimpers, dodges away from slithering cables. Keeps running. She's lost sight of the others. Up ahead-

BETHANY (O.S.)

Over there. An exit sign!

AIMEE

Bethany! Brad?

BRAD
Aimee, this way. Hurry!

Aimee dodges around a server. A loop of cable TRIPS her.
Aimee falls to the side. Keeps falling. SCREAMS.

INT. SOME SORT OF TUNNEL IN THE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Aimee SHOOTs down at a steep angle, screams the whole way down until she lands hard, hits-

INT. UNDERGROUND CAVE - CONTINUOUS

A rubble pile.

AIMEE
Oof! Ow.

She grabs at something poking her in the back. Looks.

It's a human jaw bone. She looks down.

She's on a huge pile of disembodied human skeletal remains.

Still wrapped around her leg, broken off by the force of her fall, a length of THIN BLACK CABLE wriggles against her.

SMASH CUT:

PITCH BLACK

In darkness, Aimee's SCREAM echoes cruelly.

STILL IN DARKNESS - TIME CUT

A GRUNT. A SLIDING sound.

CLICK! Aimee holds Thom's penlight in her teeth. Tilts her head to shine it UP at-

INT. ANOTHER TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

The tunnel runs straight up through an HVAC shaft.

Something TWITCHES in her hands. The black coil of cable that came down with her. She tightens her grip on it. SHAKES it.

AIMEE

Ah, ah, ah! Behave. You help me,
maybe I'll find you a nice place to
live out the rest of your unnatural
life in peace.

The cable GROWLS. Its loose end is tied in a NOOSE. The other end is tied off around her waist.

Up near the HVAC shaft, a metal STRUT juts down. Aimee THROWS the noose end of the cable UP at the strut.

It hits nearby, falls back down. Lays limp at her feet.

She sighs. Tries again. It CATCHES. Aimee beams, YANKS to close the noose.

The cable GRUMBLES, wriggles in her hands. To her horror, her noose UNKNOTS ITSELF. The loose end fall back down.

She glares at it, reaches for it. It rears back, SLAPS her hand. HISSES.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

LOOK. I'm not thrilled about your
company either. But I can't stay
here. I have to get back to the
others. Have to find my friend. Get
us all the hell out of here safe,
before anyone else-

She stops. Scared. The reality of Heidi's death all too near.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

I just--I have to find Thom. Make
sure he's safe. And I'm talking to
a fucking wire.

She leans her head against the tunnel wall, upset.

So she doesn't see the cable end knotting itself back into a NOOSE as it RISES UP BEHIND HER. REACHING...

She TURNS, recoils. But the noose snakes its way up PAST her. Right up to the metal strut. It ROPES it. Tightens. Waits.

Gingerly, Aimee tests the line. Seems okay.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Thank you.

She braces herself. Starts to CLIMB. The cable WINDS itself around the strut. HAULS her up. FAST.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
WHOA. Easy!

INT. HVAC CRAWLSPACE -

Aimee heaves herself up through the hole, collapses to rest. The cable falls in a loose coil next to her. She eyes it.

AIMEE
Yanno, you're not so bad for a
murderous animate object.

It hisses softly. But she smiles, loops it over her shoulder.

TIME CUT

Aimee peers through another HOLE in the floor of the chute.

BELOW: A familiar MAZE of cubicles. The nightmare version of THE PIT.

Again, half her coworkers look like ZOMBIES. Except-

AIMEE
Right. Actual zombies. That eat
people. Excellent.

But the other half of the workers are ALIVE. Like-

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Curtis. CURTIS! Up here!

He can't hear her. Walks right under her. He looks worried.

Aimee pokes her head down through the hole. Looks around.

One of the zombie workers (ZOMBIE #1) stares RIGHT AT HER. LURCHES to its feet. But it's laughably SLOW, awkward.

Something off to the zombie's right catches Aimee's eye: Her and Thom's SUPPLY CLOSET. Near the knob, a bloody HANDPRINT.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Oh god. Thom.

She DROPS to the floor. Straightens. LOOKS around.

Another zombie sees her. Tries to rise. Can't. Starts to half walk, half roll in its chair slowly towards her.

Aimee dashes towards the closet.

She passes a ZOMBIE slurping from a mug. It looks up at her, a BLOODY RED SMEAR across its lips.

She looks closer. The coffee is BLOOD. She looks at the nearest LIVE WORKER's cup. Blood. Aimee gags.

CHAIR ZOMBIE rolls closer.

Aimee sprints towards the supply closet. Sees the WATER COOLER. It's still full of CLEAR COLD WATER.

But surrounding it? The LIFERS. The old fogeys of the Pit.

They're ZOMBIES. All of them. As one, they turn and LOOK at her, shamble forward.

Aimee LEAPS. The closet's unlocked. She pushes the door open.

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Jumps inside. Slams the door. It's DARK in here.

Something MOANS, close by. She tries the LIGHT switch. No luck.

Aimee SHRIEKS as a HAND latches onto her ankle.

Another POWER SURGE hits the building, making the overhead light GLOW for a moment. Just long enough for her to see-

It's Thom who has her ankle. He's alive. Barely.

AIMEE

Thom!

She kneels, fumbles. CLICK. The blue twinkly lights come on.

She touches his face. His lips are cracked, dry. Skin, pale. His shirt is bloody. Under it, a shallow, long slice.

The sound of HANDS slapping dully against the door. MOANS.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Thom, can you hear me?

He groans, grabs her arm.

THOM
Water.

She looks to the crates of water kept here. Groans. The bottles are full of SAND.

AIMEE
Have I mentioned that this place
fucking blows?

She feels his forehead, smooths his hair. He stirs.

THOM
Water?

AIMEE
Okay. I'm gonna get you water.

He opens his eyes. Tries to focus on her face. Blinks.

THOM
Aims? Don't go. Don't-

He passes out. She panics. Makes sure he's breathing. He is.

AIMEE
I'll be back.

She kisses his forehead. Stands. Her eyes scan the shelves.

MINI-MONTAGE

Aimee SUITING UP. She straps on an old TOOL BELT.

Ties back her HAIR with ribbon hanging from a helium tank.

Pours SAND out of several water bottles. Sticks them in a leather satchel, puts that around one shoulder.

Holsters a STAPLE GUN, and an pair of IRON-HANDLED SCISSORS.

In the belt's narrow drill bit pouches, multiple sharpened PENCILS. And A LETTER OPENER.

She grabs the BROOM. BREAKS its head off against a file cabinet, leaving a jagged wooden point. A spear.

She stands at the ready. Takes a deep breath.

END MINI-MONTAGE

Aimee listens at the door. It's quieter now. She peeks out. The doorway is clear.

She opens the door wider. A ZOMBIE FACE SNARLS at her, it's mouth dripping BLOOD.

She whips out the letter opener, STABS it in the EYE. Its head implodes like a half-rotted melon. Its body falls.

Aimee grabs the letter opener. Holsters it. Kicks the zombie's arm out of the way, steps out into-

INT. THE PIT - CONTINUOUS

Closes the door softly behind her.

The LIFERS shamle around the water cooler. One lifts a bloody mug. It's EMPTY. Angry, he throws it down.

A GROWL from behind her. Aimee turns. It's-

CHAIR ZOMBIE

URRG.

She STABS her 'spear' into his face. SPLURSH. He goes still.

ZOMBIE #1 limps over. She yanks on her spear. It's STUCK.

She puts her foot on the chair. Pulls and SHOVES. The spear jerks free. Chair ROLLS AWAY with zombie slumped over.

She faces Zombie #1. He's too close for the spearpoint.

She SMACKS him in the face with it, length-wise. He shakes his head. Growls. REACHES for her.

She darts to the side, stabs up through the base of his skull. He falls over.

The LIFERS have almost reached her. No time to retrieve the spear, she draws her scissors in one hand.

In the other, she draws the CABLE from around her shoulder. It coils willingly into her hand.

AIMEE
(to Lifers)
Time to think about retirement.

The first of the LIFERS lurches forward; the MATRONLY DESK JOCKEY from the opening title sequence.

She opens her mouth. Snarls. Aimee WHIPS the cable at her. Eat your heart out Indiana Jones.

The cable chitters a maniacal, beastly little laugh as it wraps tightly around Matronly's neck. Aimee YANKS. SNAP!

Matronly's head pops right off her shoulders. Falls at Aimee's feet. BITES at her purple kicks.

Aimee kicks the head away. Spins to face another zombie. Stabs it through the cheek. It tries to bite her around them.

She shoves the scissors DEEPER into its skull. It falls away.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Ew. Good, but EW.

A PONY-TAIL GUY ZOMBIE's teeth SNAP, just missing her arm.

SLOSH! She gets him in the eye with the scissors. He falls, the scissors with him.

Aimee weaves out of the way of another zombie, stabs it in the ear with a fistful of PENCILS.

She's starting to tire. Four LIFERS left. They shambl towards her, in a tight group. But they've left the water cooler unguarded.

She WHIPS the cable at one, a burly, HELLS ANGEL gone corporate type.

On reflex, he CATCHES the cable in his hand. Looks at it, confused. Tries to BITE it.

The cable SHRIEKS, WHIPS itself out of Aimee's hands. It wraps around ALL of the Lifer zombies at the waist. Ropes 'em together. CINCHES TIGHT. They fall over.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Way to go, stringbean.

Aimee runs for the water cooler. Starts filling a bottle.

Confused, the roped zombies head in four different directions. But Hells Angel Bobby focuses on AIMEE.

He drags himself towards her, stronger than the others, pulling them along.

HELLS ANGEL BOBBY ZOMBIE
Nyargh.

Aimee LOOKS. Roped zombies are still 12 feet away. She screws the cap onto the full water bottle. Starts a second.

AIMEE
C'mon, c'mon...

The zombie pile is five feet away now. Four. She screws the cap on bottle number two. SHRIEKS.

Hells Angel Bobby's meaty PAW wraps around her ankle, PULLS.

Aimee GRABS for the water cooler, pulls it DOWN with her.

The GIANT GLASS CONTAINER smashes into Hell's Angel Bobby's head. His skull SQUELCHES on impact. The others are stunned.

Aimee hacks and stabs, makes short work of the other Lifers.

She pants. LOOKS. The coast is clear back to the supply room.

Only LIVE workers nearby. They show no awareness of her or that a battle with ZOMBIES has just taken place nearby.

But just to her right--THE LUNCH ROOM.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
What the hell?

She DASHES for-

INT. LUNCHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

It's empty except for a Candystriper wight and a DESK JOCKEY face down at a table, snoring softly.

Aimee pauses in the doorway, eyes the Candystriper. It looks up at her. GRINS. Then ignores her.

Aimee keeps her eye on Candystriper on the way to the vending machine. It brews another pot of bloody coffee.

Aimee reaches the machine.

AIMEE

Aw, c'mon!

It's all ROTTEN. Ancient moldy bags of pretzels, donuts and cookies, some covered with writhing maggots.

All except a row of PERFECTLY preserved TWINKIES in the bottom right corner.

She SMASHES the glass with a chair. Aimee spares a look at the Candystriper, but she's taken no notice of this.

Behind Aimee's back, SLEEPING GUY gets shakily to his feet. Takes a lurching step towards Aimee. Aimee bends, reaches--

Sleeping Guy gets close enough for us to see, yep. Zombie.

Aimee shoves Twinkie packages into her satchel. Turns just in time to see the zombie's bared teeth descending towards her.

She grabs his hair and chin. Holds his face back, just barely. They WRESTLE, him trying to sink his teeth in.

She tries to go for the letter opener, but she needs both arms to keep him at bay. He's stronger. Not good...

Then, SMACK. Someone COLD COCKS the zombie in the face with a heavy ceramic Avaris mug.

It's the CANDYSTRIPER. The zombie's forehead caves in.

The Candystriper LIFTS him like a DOLL and tosses him back to the table where he was sitting before.

Still GRINNING, she ignores Aimee, goes back to the coffee.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Ookay. Thanks.

INT. THE PIT - CONTINUOUS

Aimee dodges around another zombie. Pelts for the closet.

Zombies lumber after her, TOO CLOSE. One BOWLS HER OVER.

She brings the letter opener up just in time. The zombie's own weight drives its face down onto the thin blade.

The others are COMING. SNARLING.

Aimee wrestles with the zombie's dead weight, crawls out from under it towards closet door.

Four zombies closing fast, she pushes the door open, falls inwards. SLAMS the door. Won't close. ZOMBIE ARM in the way.

It grabs her by the neck. She SQUEAKS. SLAMS the door again the arm once. TWICE. It's CHOKING her. She can't get air--

A crazed HOWL of rage from behind her. She LOOKS, scared.

Thom is on his feet, waving, eyes unfocused. He SLAMS his weight against the door. There's a sickening crunch.

Aimee COUGHS, splutters. Thom rams the door once more.

CRACK. The zombie's arm comes off, still strangling Aimee. The door SLAMS shut. Thom helps her pry the hand off.

AIMEE
Th-thanks.

HANDS pound the door. It SHUDDERS. There's too many...

Thom grabs the nearest file cabinet, tries to push it in front of door. He's too weak.

Aimee helps him. Together, they slide the cabinet into place.

Thom's eyelids flutter. He drops to his knees. She catches him. Helps him lay back down.

THOM
Aims? Are you really here?

AIMEE

In the bruised flesh. Brought you something.

She pulls out a water bottle. He grabs wildly for it.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Easy. Not too much at first.

She helps him sip it. He sighs with relief. He's on the verge of passing out again.

THOM

Have to. Get you out of here.

AIMEE

Tomorrow. You rest now. Let's both rest.

She curls up with him. He wraps an arm around her. She sighs with relief, closes her eyes. Smiles.

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET - NEXT MORNING

Something's tickling Aimee's nose. She SLAPS at it. It stops. She sighs, rolls over to sleep longer.

There is it again. She opens her eyes. It's a yellow POST-IT.

She SQUEALS, sits bolt upright, SLAPS it away. Hits THOM in the chest. He winces. His wound.

AIMEE

Oh! Sorry. You ass. You scared the crap out of me.

He laughs. He looks so much better!

THOM

I'm sorry. I shouldn't--it's just, you should see your face.

He holds up the post-it. She recoils from it. Then she GRINS, hugs him so tight he gasps for breath, still laughing.

THOM (CONT'D)

Happy. To see you. Too.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PIT - SHORT WHILE LATER

The supply closet door opens a crack. They peek out. All clear. Not a zombie in sight. They creep out...

Thom is armed with another pair of scissors and the staple gun. Aimee, a long metal PIPE and the letter opener.

Aimee has the satchel from yesterday. She looks right. The dead Lifers are gone, all signs of them too. Except--

She creeps over that way.

THOM
(hissing)
Aims!

She grabs her trusty CABLE, coils it around her shoulder anyway. Returns to Thom's side.

Together, they LOOK. The Pit seems supernaturally STRETCHED, a truly endless maze of cubes.

THOM (CONT'D)
How do we get out of here?

AIMEE
Piggy back ride?

She points to his back. He grins.

We pull back, flying UP to a true bird's eye view of the MAZELIKE pit. Far, far at the other end, another tiny group--

INT. ELSEWHERE IN MAZE OF THE PIT - SAME TIME

Brad, and Bethany help Danny along. He's badly wounded. Can't bear weight on this left leg.

Bethany is weak, jumpy. Danny STUMBLES. Brad catches him.

BRAD
Easy there, buddy. I gotcha.

But on Brad's face: cold calculation. Danny's becoming a liability. Still, for now--

BRAD (CONT'D)
C'mon. We can't stop here.

They continue on.

INT. TUNNEL - LATER

Using the penlight to see, Aimee and Thom make their way through a long twisting passage.

Thom touches the stone walls. Smooth.

THOM
Are we still in the office?

AIMEE
Under it maybe? The other tunnel opened into a cave. Maybe we'll get lucky, and this one'll be a short cut to Franklin's Cracker Jack from hell prize. Or better yet, a real way out.

THOM
Don't you wanna find out what it is? Whatever it is we're supposed to be looking for?

AIMEE
No. I don't trust Franklin.

THOM
'Course not. I just mean--hey, what's that?

There's more light up ahead.

The sound of water nearby. LOTS of it. RUSHING. CASCADING.

Thom rushes ahead.

AIMEE
Thom. Thom wait up! Don't--

Thom's whoop of JOY cuts her off.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Thom?

She follows him around a bend, emerges into--

INT. IMMENSE CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

An underground cave of cathedral-like proportions. And in it, just ahead, a HUGE WATERFALL.

Stalactites hang down like jagged teeth. Luminescent white MOSS glows from the walls. Aimee takes it in, awed.

Thom leans over the edge of the underground river channel, dunks his head under. Comes up shaking water from his hair.

He grins, beckons her over.

THOM

I pronounce this the best tasting water I've ever had. Although if it tries to KILL us later, I reserve the right to take that back.

Aimee smirks. She's more cautious, but it seems safe. She kneels down. Drinks a cupped handful. Looks left. SCREAMS.

Thom whirls around. Sees--

THE SNAKEWOMAN, reared back, poised to strike. But she doesn't. She's just a painting, a mural on the wall.

THOM (CONT'D)

Holy crap. Who d'you think--

Aimee's already on her feet, looking closer.

It's really a painting of a woman's silhouette looking in a mirror, and the monster staring BACK.

Aimee shivers.

AIMEE

It's her. But not her.

THOM

No. That's her. Believe me. I remember.

AIMEE

Yeah, but she's YOUNGER here. See? Her face-

Aimee points. Thom walks the length of the long mural.

THOM

If you say so. I didn't exactly stop to count crow's feet when I ran into her the first day.

AIMEE

Ha ha. Hey, there's another one over there.

There's a whole circular WALL of them. Awed, they walk, LOOK:

- 1) A WHITE STONE TEMPLE on a hillside.
- 2) Inside the temple, a pillar of BLACK-GREEN FIRE trapped between two marble plinths.

A demonic face leers from within the flames: Franklin.

On the marble floor beneath him, a crude human figure, spread eagle in a ritual circle, mouth open in a SCREAM.

- 3) The same scene, but the FLAMES pour down into the figure's open MOUTH.
- 4) The human figure RISING. Now IT wears Franklin's face.

Aimee stops in front of this one. Almost back to where they started at the first mural.

THOM

Who do you think painted these? Not Franklin...

AIMEE

I'm not sure...

She gasps. She's reached the last panel:

Franklin standing still on the ritual circle, staring aghast down at his own chest.

Where FIVE long, wicked CLAWED FINGERS stab through his chest. Behind him, the snakewoman. Merciless. Pitiless.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

He said there were things down here. Enemies of his. Trying to keep him from what's "his."

THOM
That's more than he told me.

AIMEE
What DID he tell you?

THOM
He offered me that promotion I
asked for. If I would only run a
"small errand" for him.

They share a sardonic smile.

THOM (CONT'D)
I agreed, and the next thing I
knew, he was gone. And I was in the
office that time forgot. Being
chased by that.

He points to the first mural. Aimee looks at it, blank-faced.

AIMEE
I didn't ask for a promotion. Still
don't want one.

THOM
How'd you end up down here then? If
he didn't have anything that you
wanted?

AIMEE
No, he did have something I wanted.

THOM
A pet zombie?

She laughs, suddenly nervous. Bites the bullet.

AIMEE
No, dummy. You.

She musters her courage. Looks him in the eye.

He doesn't say anything. She looks back at the mural of the
monster.

He moves close to her. Wraps his arms around her from behind.

She leans back into him. Starts to turn in his arms.

Out of the corner of her eye, MOVEMENT, in the corner of the mural of the MONSTER. Its TAIL seems to TWITCH.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Thom-

THOM

C'mere. I dunno why I've waited
this long to-

AIMEE

No. THOM-

She pulls at him. The Monster's tail SWISHES, COILS.

The Monster slithers out from her hiding place against the stone face of the mural. Moves slowly towards them.

Thom steps in front of Aimee, raises the SCISSORS. Ready to defend her. Or die trying.

THOM

Stay back!

MONSTER

Foolisssh boy. You think to
threaten me?

She rises up over them. Rears back.

Aimee leaps between Thom and the Monster, as if to separate them.

AIMEE

Wait. WAIT. Please don't hurt him.
Us, I mean.

THOM

Aimee! What are you--

MONSTER

Don't hurt *him*, hmm? Who iss he to
you? A brother? A lover?

AIMEE

Someone I care for. Very much. He's
the reason I came down here. The
ONLY reason.

The Monster HISSES. But makes no further move. Yet.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

These pictures. Of you fighting Mr. Mammon. What do they mean? Why is he your enemy?

MONSTER

The Mammon is not my enemy. You are.

AIMEE

Come again?

The Monster backs Aimee and Thom up against the wall.

MONSTER

Humans. Greedy, grasping, never resting, endlessly CONSUMING. It was YOUR kind that gave rise to the Mammon. Born of your endless hunger for BETTER. NEWER. MORE.

AIMEE

So that would make him...

MONSTER

A demon, of course. You've come to free him. Like so many before you. Not so long as I draw breath.

She raises her clawed hand for a killing blow.

Thom raises the scissors again. Aimee yanks his hand down.

The CABLE wrapped around Aimee's shoulder, rears up CROONS at the Monster.

The Monster STARES in surprise from the CABLE to AIMEE. She LOWERS her hand. Thom stares too. He's not alone--

INT. WAR ROOM - SAME TIME

Franklin watches the Monster CIRCLE Aimee and Thom, without ATTACKING. He can't HEAR them, but he's STUNNED at what he sees. Consternated.

FRANKLIN

Huh.

Next to him, Electra looks WORRIED.

INT. WATERFALL CAVERN - SAME TIME

AIMEE

I just want to understand. If you hate us so much, mankind--why are you trying to save us from ourselves? From him. Whatever.

The Monster's face hardens.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

It's a fair question.

The creature's hand SHOOTS OUT, grabs the back of Aimee's neck. PULLS her closer.

Thom SLASHES, but she knocks the scissors out of his hand with her tail. She coils around him, pins down his arms.

THOM

No. Aimee!

Aimee struggles. The creature holds her firmly, forces Aimee to look into her eyes.

IN THE CREATURE'S EYES:

INT. THE TEMPLE - DAWN

The pillar of black FLAMES. In it, Franklin's demonic face, his eyes fixed on the world OUTSIDE. The picture CHANGES.

EXT. CITY STREETS, PRESENT DAY - MORNING

Franklin walks free. The EYES of people passing by DILATE like Heidi's did. Their expressions are feral, cruel.

The changed people turn on one another, fighting, robbing. Smashing store windows. Looting. Killing.

The city ON FIRE. Men and women cry out. Children WAIL.

MONSTER (O.S.)

The last time he walked the earth he brought an entire empire to ruin.

EXT. THE FALL OF ROME - 476 A.D.

An ancient Roman street. The same pandemonium rules here. BARBARIAN WARRIORS murder and pillage. Women SCREAM.

A rich Roman CITIZEN stabs, kills a PEASANT WOMAN under his cloak, grabs up her wailing CHILD in his arms.

He turns to the WARRIOR approaching, holds the child to him.

CITIZEN

(In archaic German, with
English subtitles)

Please. Please. I have a child. A
little daughter. Don't hurt me.

Warrior spits at Citizen's feet. Citizen comforts the child. Citizen's EYES are dilated BLACK. He smiles cruelly, walks.

A second WARRIOR with BLACK EYES buries an AXE in the Citizen's back. The child scrambles to her feet, FLEES.

We follow her as she pelts through the bloody city streets, watching over her shoulder as everything around her BURNS.

People SCREAM. Dying. Killing each other. GOODS and GOLD changing HANDS.

MONSTER (O.S.)

This time he will stop at nothing
less than your entire world. His to
toy with. All of it All of you.

The child turns to face forward again. Whimpers, as a SWORD swings right at her FACE.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND CAVERN - SAME TIME

Aimee sobs, struggles in the Monster's grip.

AIMEE

Enough!

MONSTER

YOU. Weak-minded, hungry fools. You
will LET him.

(MORE)

MONSTER (CONT'D)

You ask me why I kill your kind? To stop THISSS from coming to pass. To stop HIM.

Thom struggles to free himself. It's no use.

Aimee looks into the Monster's tired eyes. Sees the Monster isn't just old. She's ancient, her back BOWED.

She's strong, yes. But the Monster breathes heavily, her hand TREMBLES against Aimee's throat.

AIMEE

But why *you*?

MONSTER

Because someone must.

AIMEE

The temple. In the mural. That's where he means us to go. To free him. It's here somewhere.

The Monster nods.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

What if we go back the way we came? Find another way out.

MONSTER

You cannot. There is only one way. It leads to him.

AIMEE

I can't believe that. There's has to be a way. We'll MAKE a way. We'll find the others too, tell them the truth. Get them out too. And you won't have to-

MONSTER

They will not care. I'm sorry. But I can't take the risk.

The Monster raises her hand to strike.

AIMEE

I understand.

She bares her neck.

THOM
No. Aimee, NO.

Aimee turns, looks into Thom's eyes.

AIMEE
I'm sorry. I love you.

Frantic, Thom wrenches one arm free, pounds his fist, claws at the coils of tail holding him. It's no use.

CLOSE ON AIMEE: as she closes her eyes. Braces herself.

And slowly descends.

She opens her eyes. She's on the ground, unharmed. Free.

Thom too. He goes to Aimee, holds her protectively.

They both stare at the Monster as it moves away.

MONSTER
Forget the others. They are lost already. Go back the way you came. Find your way out if you can. If you venture further towards the temple...

THOM
We understand. We'll go.

AIMEE
Thank you. I--thank you.

The Monster disappears around the mural wall.

Aimee and Thom cling to each other. He kisses her face.

THOM
That was stupid. That was so stupid, Aimee. Why would you-

She shuts him up with a long, sweet kiss.

INT. WAR ROOM - SAME TIME

DEADLY SILENT, Franklin and Electra watch Aimee and Thom on-screen.

The couple breaks their kiss. He pulls her to him, holds her.

AIMEE (ON-SCRYING SCREEN)
C'mon. Let's go.

Franklin SLAMS his fist on the table. Rotted flesh SPLATTERS.

FRANKLIN
She couldn't--she can't be. DAMMIT.
It doesn't make any sense.
Unless...

He STARES at Aimee's FACE on the screen. His eyes NARROW.

ELECTRA
Why would it let them GO? I don't
understand. It never--

Franklin WHEEZES, having some sort of nervous ATTACK.

FRANKLIN
I was wrong about Iverson. Very
wrong.

ELECTRA
That I could have told you.

FRANKLIN
You must go in. NOW. While there's
still time. KILL HER.

ELECTRA
The beast? With pleasure. And about
time.

FRANKLIN
No, not her! IVERSON.

ELECTRA
Aimee? Surely she can't pose any
real threat. Not to you. Not in
THERE!

NAKED RAGE suffuses Franklin's face as he RISES, stalks
towards her. His eyes BLAZING with BLACK FLAMES.

Afraid of him, Electra trembles, COWERS.

FRANKLIN

That girl could ruin everything.
EVERYTHING. You will kill her
yourself. Or forfeit all that I
have promised you.

Electra regains herself. Smiles viciously.

ELECTRA

With pleasure.

His mood changes in an instant. His ruffled self again.

FRANKLIN

Alright then. Before you go? Give
us a kiss.

To his surprise, she reaches up, does so. Fervently. Ew.

BACK ON WALL-SCREEN: Aimee and Thom disappear back into--

INT. TUNNEL - LATER

Aimee and Thom help each other through a section of rubble
partially blocking the tunnel.

AIMEE

Okay, this was definitely not here
on the way down. Either the place
is falling apart or we took a
wrong turn back there.

THOM

Should we go back? What if we're
going ahead instead of back?

Aimee absently fingers the CABLE looped around her waist.

AIMEE

Honestly? We passed so many turns
back there, this way is as good as
any--

Far off VOICES echo down the tunnel towards them.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Holy crap, is that the others?

They listen.

BRAD (O.S.)
Okay, help me with this.

BETHANY (O.S.)
Like this?

A SCRAPING noise.

THOM
Yeah. Good.

AIMEE
C'mon. They might not listen, but
we have to tell them the truth.

THOM
We can't trust them, Aimee.

AIMEE
We have to try. They'll die. Or
worse, they'll find him.

Reluctantly, Thom follows her up.

TIME CUT

Aimee and Thom push through a loose screen of debris into-

INT. RUINED OFFICE SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The '60s decor space we saw earlier on Franklin's screen.

Gaping FISSURES run all through what's left of the floor,
leaving 2, 3 foot gaps in places.

On two sides, the floor simply gives way to NOTHING--the
office is slowly crumbling into an abyss.

An art deco floor lamp dangles by its cord over the edge.

Across an especially damaged section where the floor is
mostly missing, a DOOR.

Brad and Bethany lever a long COUCH out over the abyss,
trying to bridge one of the longer GAPS to the door.

Danny is nowhere to be seen.

Aimee and Thom exchange a LOOK. Grim-faced, he nods.

AIMEE

You guys need a hand?

Brad looks up sharply. He grunts, lowers the sofa into place. He jiggles it. Makes sure it's level, secure. Satisfied--

BRAD

Aimee. Wow. We thought you were a goner. And Thom too. Look at that.

Bethany takes a step halfway behind Brad.

AIMEE

Danny?

Brad's face registers PAIN. He shakes his head.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

BRAD

It's your friend there that oughtta be sorry. If Danny hadn't been weak from hunger and thirst, maybe he wouldn't have taken the wound that got him killed.

THOM

I'm sorry about your brother. But you know as well as I do I had nothing to do with it.

BETHANY

Brad, let's just go.

BRAD

It's okay, Bethy. They're no threat to us.

Thom stares from Bethany's cracked lips, dry skin, to Brad. He's dirty, scratched up, worn--but he still looks hydrated.

THOM

Huh. For someone accusing someone else of stealing resources, you're looking downright refreshed. You holding out on your companion there?

BETHANY

Shut up, Thom. Brad's not like you.
He's been keeping me safe. He would
never-

AIMEE

Oh god. Of course. We found water.
Here-

Aimee fumbles for her satchel. Draws out a FULL WATER BOTTLE.
She starts towards the others.

Bethany's eyes WIDEN. She licks her parched lips.

BRAD

STOP. Don't come any closer.

BETHANY

But Brad-

BRAD

I said WAIT. We can't trust them.
That water could be poison for all
we know.

Aimee unscrews the cap, takes a sip.

AIMEE

It's fine. See?

BETHANY

What do you want for it?

AIMEE

Nothing. Although a little basic
courtesy wouldn't hurt. And for
both of you to listen. We came to
warn you.

BRAD

Here we go.

THOM

(to Aimee)

I told you this was a bad idea.

AIMEE

Here. A gesture of good will.

Aimee walks five paces. Sets down the water bottle. Retreats.

Bethany rushes forward, grabs it. Drinks greedily.

Bethany goes back to Brad, offers him the bottle. He takes a long, slow sip. Swishes, swallows. Hands it back to her.

Bethany looks at Aimee. Clenches the bottle.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

It's okay. You can keep it.

BRAD

You must have more on you then.
What else you got in that bag?

AIMEE

If you come with us, we'll be happy
to share all of our resources.

BRAD

With you? We're the ones who found
the way ahead. Maybe you should be
asking to come with us.

AIMEE

No. We're going back. To the
beginning. To find a way out. Come
with us.

BRAD

And just why should we do that?

AIMEE

Because...

Even to her, it sounds ridiculous.

BETHANY

(to Brad)

You were right. They're trying to
trick us.

AIMEE

This isn't a trick! You don't
understand what we're dealing with
here. Franklin isn't a real person.
He's a DEMON. There is no "trinket"
to retrieve for him. If you keep
going, if you reach the place at
the end of this maze. You'll set
him loose on the world.

(MORE)

AIMEE (CONT'D)

He'll take everything. Even our humanity. THAT'S what he wants.

BRAD

As long as I get MINE in the deal, I don't care WHAT he is, or WHAT he's got planned. Honestly. I was expecting a better play from you, Iverson. Appealing to our better natures? Down HERE?

He laughs.

THOM

(to Aimee, miserably)

I told you so. Even the snakelady thing told you so.

BRAD

Bethy, let's go.

BETHANY

Wait. You TALKED to that thing? And walked away ALIVE?

BRAD

He's lying, Bethy. You saw that thing, what it's capable of.

AIMEE

I'm not saying I want to invite her over for tea and cookies. But yeah, she let us go. If she catches us here though--we're all in danger. Please. PLEASE, come with us.

Bethany looks into Aimee's eyes. A beat. She shakes her head.

BETHANY

No. You're just trying to throw us off. You'd sneak off. Try to get there first. You're just trying to WIN.

AIMEE

Bethany, no. Listen--

Brad's eyes flick from something BEHIND Aimee and Thom to Aimee's face.

Thom and Aimee turn, too late.

DANNY slams into THOM. Pulls the SCISSORS from his pocket, flings them away.

BRAD
Bethy, NOW.

They charge in. Brad grabs Aimee, pins her arms. Bethany rips out a hank of Aimee's HAIR in her zeal to get the satchel.

AIMEE
OW. Watch it. Thom! Danny. Stop!

Danny and Thom wrestle on the ground. Danny rolls on top, punches Thom in the face once. TWICE.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Stop it. STOP!

Thom digs his fingers into the WOUND in Danny's thigh.

Danny SCREAMS. Overbalances. Lunges for Thom, but Thom rolls away, grabs DANNY from behind. Locks his arms.

Danny pants, his meager strength spent. His face is pale, streaked with blood.

BRAD
Dammit Danny.

DANNY
I'm sorry! Not exactly in peak condition here.

THOM
Let Aimee go. We'll go back the way we came. You idiots can go on ahead. Get yourself killed by that THING for all I care.

MONSTER (O.S.)
You first, I think.

REVEAL: Right behind Thom, the Monster SLASHES at his back.

AIMEE
No!

Thom SPINS just in time, turns it to a glancing blow to his and Danny's arms. Danny stumbles, goes to one knee.

BRAD
Son of a bitch!

Brad shoves Aimee away. Comes up with the paper cutter blade.

The Monster looms over Danny, arm raised back.

THUNK. Brad buries his blade in the place where the monster's torso meets her TAIL, just below her armor.

Dark green ICHOR flows from the wound.

She ROARS. KNOCKS Brad backwards with a flick of her tail. She plucks the weapon from her flesh, tosses it aside.

Aimee runs to Thom, pulls him back from the fight.

AIMEE
I should have listened to you.

THOM
No, you were right. We had to try.

The Monster's TAIL thrashes towards them. They DIVE away.

Brad scrambles backwards under a coffee table, dodging downward STABS of the Monster's claws. They knick his EAR.

BRAD
Beth. Danny!

Danny picks up Brad's discarded blade. Charges.

Without even looking up, the Monster extends one arm. THUNK.

Danny looks down. He's impaled on her claws at the shoulder. He turns his HEAD, sees them sticking out the other side.

She rips them out, tearing his flesh. Blood GUSHES.

The Monster turns back to Brad. He's gone. Aimee and Thom are almost back to the TUNNEL.

She SWOOPS after them.

Bethany is at the SOFA bridge. She tests her weight.

It holds, but she hesitates. LOOKS. It's a LONG way down.

SOMEONE is behind her. Its just Brad. Reaching to steady her.

She doesn't see his other hand until the SCISSORS are buried in her chest up to where he grips the handle.

BETHANY

Brad?

BRAD

Sorry, sweetheart. Looked like you were leaving without me. Can't have you getting there first.

She whimpers, blood foaming on her lips.

AIMEE AND THOM

The Monster rears over them.

MONSTER

You were warned.

AIMEE

We came to tell them the truth. We're going back. We'll go now.

MONSTER

Too late.

Thom grabs a metal WASTE BASKET. Blocks her downward CLAW THRUST. The metal DENTS in four parallel rows.

She strikes again. He's slower this time, but still blocks.

AIMEE

Oh god. Bethany.

The Monster and Thom LOOK, see her body slide to the floor.

Brad steps up on the sofa. 10 feet away, crawling-

DANNY

Wait for me, bro. Don't leave me.

The Monster picks up a DESK, SHOVES it into the tunnel, blocking it.

MONSTER

Be right back.

The Monster hurtles across the room towards Brad.

He's HALFWAY OUT over NOTHING. Charging, the Monster LUNGES OUT, her tail keeping her anchored to the floor.

She KNOCKS Brad sideways. He tries to recover, but he's falling. The SCISSORS flash in his hand.

He STABS them into the back of the Monster's NECK, under he ARMOR. Ichor SPURTS. He CLINGS to her from behind.

She SCREAMS, SLASHES at him as she lurches back towards solid ground, bringing him back with her.

She rears back, THROWS him clear. Plucks the scissors out, tosses them over the edge. Ichor flows down her armor.

ON AIMEE AND THOM

They're halfway to the other DOOR, the one on THIS side of the room.

ON BRAD

Bleeding from half a dozen wounds, he crawls towards Danny.

BRAD

Get up. GET UP, Danny.

DANNY

I can't, man. You gotta help me.

BRAD

Okay. It's okay. I got you.

ON AIMEE AND THOM

As the Monster weaves slowly towards Brad and Danny behind them--

They reach the doorway just as SOMEONE ELSE appears there.

REVEAL: ELECTRA, a huge axe at the ready in her hands.

ELECTRA

Not leaving yet, are you? Party's just about to get started.

She steps inside. Closes the door behind her.

THOM

Oh thank god. You ARE here to help us, right?

Electra flashes him a smile, as she SWINGS the AXE at AIMEE.

Aimee WHEELS away just in time. Thom STARES, backs away.

ON THE MONSTER

Looming over the twins, she sees Electra enter.

MONSTER

YOU.

Then she sees Electra is going after AIMEE. Something CLICKS. The Monster's wicked LAUGH cuts off in a GURGLING cough.

ELECTRA

What's the matter, dear? Not as spry as you once were? I'll be with you in just a moment. Right after I part this one's head from her shoulders.

She indicates Aimee.

MONSTER

I think not. She's growing on me.

With a flick of her TAIL, the Monster KNOCKS the sofa from its precarious perch. It FALLS away into the abyss.

BRAD

Shit.

The Monster CHARGES Electra.

Thom PULLS Aimee back away from them.

Electra SWINGS. The blow glances off Monster's BREASTPLATE.

They trade blows, FAST. SPARKS fly as claws meet steel.

The Monster scores a SLICE on Electra's ARM.

Electra reels back, kicks an EGG SHAPED CHAIR at Monster.

The Monster bats this aside, but Electra ducks behind a desk.

The Monster LUNGES. Electra slides the axe under the desk, SLIDES under after it. Dashes RIGHT.

The Monster spins to see--

AIMEE AND THOM

Aimee watches Brad and Danny as they drag a LONG TABLE.

MONSTER

Poor ssstupid girl. I should have seen it before.

AIMEE

Huh? S--seen what?

Thom pushes himself in front of Aimee, expecting Monster to ATTACK. Aimee's eyes WIDEN.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Look OUT!

THWACK. Electra's AXE flashes. CUTS THROUGH the Monster's arm. One great CLAWED HAND falls to the ground.

Aimee STARES.

Monster SHRIEKS. Curls the stump under, like a broken wing.

She trembles, but her eyes flash as she HACKS with her remaining talons at ELECTRA'S FACE--leaving LONG GASHES.

MONSTER

Oh dear. That's going to leave a mark.

ELECTRA

You'll pay for that, bitch!

Forgetting Aimee, Electra goes after the Monster. Axe flying fast now. The Monster blocks once with her claws. Then she takes a jarring blow to her armored torso. She's visibly SLOWING, WEAKENING. Bleeding profusely.

AIMEE

Oh god. What have we done? Thom!

Aimee rushes forward. Looks for something. ANYTHING.

She picks up the metal trash, LOBS it at Electra's head.

THOM

Aimee! What are you doing?!

Electra sees it coming. Bats it away with the axe.

The Monster LUNGES, SLASHING, presses Electra BACK towards Brad and Danny.

AIMEE

We have to help her. The Monster.

THOM

Are you insane? She's trying to KILL US. Both of them. Let them kill each other!

AIMEE

Don't you get it? If she dies, Franklin WINS. Even if we can stop Brad and Danny, there'll be others. She has to LIVE. She has to keep FIGHTING.

Aimee looks around for a weapon. Something.

ON THE MONSTER

She STABS her claws into Electra's upper arm and RIPS down.

Electra SCREAMS. Her arm goes limp. She tries to raise the axe. It's harder with just the one arm.

She uses it to SCOOP UP a crystal ashtray, lobs it like a HOCKEY PUCK at the Monster's face. Ash flies into her eyes.

There's a THUD as Brad and Danny's table falls into place over the gap. Electra backs up towards the twins.

Danny is propped up against a desk that leans precariously towards the edge of the abyss.

ELECTRA

(to Brad)

Help me, you idiot. I'll take you straight to the temple. It can ALL still be YOURS.

The Monster is coming, a bloody green blur of SPEED. Brad takes the axe. Lunges, SWINGS it at the Monster's TAIL.

THUNK. It sinks inches deep. She ROARS, backs him up towards the table. Knocks Electra away with a swipe of her good arm.

Electra sees the PAPER CUTTER ARM. Scrambles towards it.

Shrieking her fury, the Monster CHARGES Brad. Wild-eyed, Brad GRABS DANNY, pulls him upright. They face one another.

DANNY

Bro?

BRAD

Sorry, little brother.

The Monster's CLAWS push through Danny's THROAT from the other side. Blood SPURTS. His neck SNAPS.

She tosses him aside like a crumpled doll.

Blood PUMPS from the gash in Danny's throat. His mouth works soundlessly. His eyes on BRAD'S FACE.

BRAD (CONT'D)

But one of us can still win.

The effort to THROW Danny's body has cost the Monster.

GREEN BLOOD spurts afresh from the wound in her neck. Seeps from her arm. She stumbles. Falls. Coughs up green SLIME.

A hoarse SNARL from the side. Electra advances on the Monster, the paper cutter blade held at the ready.

The Monster looks up. Knows she's beaten.

ELECTRA

Any last words, witch?

MONSTER

Just this. When you see your master again, tell him--

She laughs softly. Electra sneers, gloats.

MONSTER (CONT'D)

Tell him he was right about the girl.

This stops Electra short. But so does--

SPLURSH. She looks down. At the MONSTER'S CLAWS protruding from her chest.

She BLINKS, takes in the Monster laying at her feet, dying. So how? She turns. Sees-

Aimee standing behind her, the Monster's severed HAND in clutched in both of hers.

ELECTRA

You?

AIMEE

Yeah, remember? You can always count on me.

Aimee SHOVES the claws DEEPER into Electra's BACK.

Blood bubbles to Electra's lips. She sinks to her knees, disbelieving.

Aimee YANKS out the claws. Electra falls forward.

ON ELECTRA'S STUNNED FACE

As her last breath rattles in her chest.

The Monster LAUGHS, low and gurgling. She coughs, SPLUTTERS.

Aimee instinctively looks for--

Thom. Running this way. His eyes ALARMED. His arm stretched out towards her.

THOM

Aimee, look out. Get AWAY from her!

Aimee turns, right into BRAD'S ARMS. He grabs her wrist, TWISTS. Forces her to drop the Monster's severed hand.

Thom has Electra's AXE. He raises it over his head.

Brad backs Aimee up towards the edge of the PIT.

THOM (CONT'D)

Let her go. NOW.

Brad spares a glance backward into NOTHING.

BRAD

Don't come any closer. I go. She goes.

AIMEE

Brad. No one else has to get hurt.

He tightens his arm lock around her neck, choking her.

BRAD

NO. I'm in charge. I CALL THE SHOTS.

THOM

Right. It's your call. Your choice. Let Aimee go, and I will let you walk out of this room. I swear. But so help me God, if you hurt her--

Thom grits his teeth. Tightens his grip on the axe handle.

Brad glances to the TABLE still hanging over the abyss.

BRAD

Okay. You want her?

THOM

No. Don't.

BRAD

Save her.

Brad steps back from Aimee, SHOVES her towards the edge.

Thom DROPS the axe, lunges forward. Arm outstretched.

Brad PELTS towards the TABLE.

Aimee reaches out for Thom. She's FALLING.

THOM

AIMEE.

She catches hold of a narrow LEDGE four feet down. Barely enough to HOLD. Her fingers SCRABBLE for purchase.

Behind her, Brad LEAPS up onto the table. Runs across. It bounces, RATTLES under him, but it holds his weight.

In three bounds, he's across, pelting for the DOORWAY.

Aimee is SLIPPING.

AIMEE

Thom. I can't--

Thom leans over the edge. REACHES.

BRAD disappears through the far DOOR. His WHOOP of triumph echoes after him.

THOM

Take my hand!

She just has to reach up and grab hold of him. She tries, starts to FALL again. Grabs the ledge with BOTH hands.

He STRAINS. GROANS. Can't reach any closer.

Her feet SCRAPE vertical rock. No purchase there.

THOM (CONT'D)

Wait. Don't move.

He scrambles back for the axe. GRABS IT.

AIMEE

I'm slipping! THOM.

THOM

Aimee, no!

He turns back. Reaches down with the axe.

THOM (CONT'D)

Grab it.

She tries. Grabs hold of where it's joined at the handle.

But the handle is WET with GREEN BLOOD. Her hands SLIP.

She SCREAMS. FALLS.

THOM'S POV: Aimee PLUNGING DOWNWARD in SLOW MOTION. Reaching up for him. Her EYES locked on his. TERRIFIED.

Then she's gone. Thom's anguished cry ECHOES back at him.

TIME CUT - MOMENTS LATER

Thom comes back to himself, stumbles upright with the axe.

There's a green PUDDLE where the Monster was. She's GONE.

A telltale trail of DARK GREEN leads back to the TUNNEL entrance.

He wipes blood and tears with his sleeve.

Dragging the axe behind him, he heads for the table. Passes Electra's dead body. And Danny's. Bethany's. Ignores them.

TIME CUT

On the other side now, Thom kicks the table free.

It slides BACKWARDS, FALLS. Catches on the other side, swings precariously by ONE LEG.

He turns and heads for the FAR DOOR.

ON THOM'S BLANK, GRIM EXPRESSION

And the BLOODY MURDER written in his eyes. He hefts the AXE. Heads after Brad.

BACK ON THE TABLE

The rock crevice holding the leg CRUMBLES.

The table FALLS. CRASHES down the side of the CLIFF--

Just misses a SPUR OF ROCK, where a BLACK CABLE is tied off.

The cable SQUEALS as the table crashes past. Unties itself, and draws backwards along its own length, into--

INT. TUNNEL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

There in the shadows, the other side of the cable still tied around her waist, AIMEE, dead or unconscious.

She MOANS. The cable nuzzles her cheek. GROWLS.

Her eyes OPEN.

AIMEE'S POV - Everything FUZZY. Then, clearing. The cable, it's end cocked to the side, like its looking at her.

AIMEE

Huh?

Aimee starts, struggles to her hands and knees. Takes in the TUNNEL around her. The SHARP DROP OFF inches away.

She looks out, UP. Calls--

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Thom? THOM! Where are you?

Only her own voice echoes back to her.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
THOM. ANYBODY? Oh shit. Oh god.

With hasty fingers, she undoes the knot of cable from her waist, lets it fall.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
I'd say you've about earned your
keep, stringbean. Live long and...
connect stuff.

She starts down the tunnel.

The cable "looks" up after her, flops back down.

INT. FURTHER INTO TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Aimee comes to a new tunnel bisecting this one. One side leads UP into light, the other DOWN into darkness.

Aimee grabs the wall for balance, still a little woozy. There's a NASTY bruise on her forehead.

She pulls her hand away. It's sticky with GREEN BLOOD.

Her eyes grow round with HOPE.

She reaches into her pocket, half-expecting it not to be there.

But it is! Thom's penlight.

Unfortunately, the plastic over the light bulb is CRACKED.

It won't turn on.

She sighs, puts it back in her pocket.

Heads down into the DARKNESS. Alone.

INT. MAZE OF OFFICE CORRIDORS - SAME TIME

BRAD races along, taking only RIGHT turns. His eyes BURN with determination. He's got this thing by the balls now.

Somewhere back in the distance. But not THAT far--

THOM (O.S.)
I'm COMING for you, Forrester.

That wipes the smile from Brad's face. He hurries on. Quiet now.

ELSEWHERE IN THE MAZE, FURTHER BACK

Thom races on. Stops at a FORK. Sees a SMEAR OF FRESH BLOOD on the wall to the right. His smile is TERRIBLE to see.

He follows the blood.

TIME CUT

Thom hunts for more blood sign. Doubles back. Finds the trail again. His hands TWITCH on the axe's handle grip.

INT. TUNNEL - SHORT WHILE LATER

Aimee hears the WATERFALL. Hurries, rounds a bend into-

INT. UNDERGROUND CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

No sign of the creature.

Aimee rushes further in. There are the murals. The waterfall.

A telltale smudge of DARK GREEN stains the wall by the falls.

Aimee clammers up the rocks, examines the blood. It's fresh.

An echoing CLATTER somewhere nearby. She looks. Where?

Then--LIGHT from BEHIND the waterfall.

Without stopping to think, Aimee plunges under flow. Emerges into--

INT. SMALL CAVE - CONTINUOUS

The Monster's lair. A cave littered with broken white MARBLE.

And there in a crevice at the back, the Monster.

She turns at Aimee's approach. Can hardly hold up her head.

Next to her, part of a huge statue of VENUS. The goddess's BLANK EYES stare out unseeing.

The Monster coughs. There's a tattered rag wadded against her neck wound. Another tight around her bleeding wrist stump.

MONSTER

Ah, good. Come to finissh me off?

AIMEE

Yeah. That's why I came unarmed.
Alone. Wanna thumb wrestle? Winner
gets to live.

Aimee edges closer. The Monster HISSES, in anger? Pain?

Aimee stops, but doesn't back away.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Can I-- Can I come closer?

MONSTER

Couldn't hurt you. Right now. If I
tried.

AIMEE

Even like this? I don't believe
that for a second.

MONSTER

Smart little fool.

Aimee approaches her slowly, like a cornered, wounded animal.

Then she throws caution to the wind, kneels gingerly at the Monster's side, ties the wrist bandages more tightly.

The Monster HISSES. Aimee trembles, but holds her ground.
Ties off the bandage. A STARE OFF. Neither of them move.

AIMEE

(off the wrist bandage)
I, uh. I don't suppose that will...
grow back?

MONSTER

Sssure. Just like yours will. Put
'er here.

She raises her good hand, makes like to chop off Aimee's arm.

AIMEE

But you'll be okay. Right? You just
have to rest, heal up.

The Monster snorts, or grunts in pain. Or both.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

I'll find Thom. Stop Brad. And
you'll get better. You'll stop the
next group. And the one after that.
Right?

MONSTER

Why *did* you come?

AIMEE

I don't know. Because someone had
to.

The Monster winces. Another kind of PAIN on her face.

Aimee sits back on her heels, scowls up at the Monster. She's
TINY up this close to this creature, even while prone.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

I--I'm just sorry this happened is
all. Just tell me what to do and
I'll do it! How do we make you
better?

MONSTER

We don't.

AIMEE

There must be some way. You're a
magical beast or something, right?
I mean, you must have something. A
wand. A healing potion. A pet
freaking unicorn.

The Monster chuckles with genuine mirth. She's at peace.

MONSTER

I'm dying, child. It's too late.
For me.

She catches Aimee's eye, watches her.

MONSTER (CONT'D)

But for you. For you there is still
time.

AIMEE

Right. I'll just pop on over to the
temple of big hairy evil and smite
Franklin with my army of paper
monsters. That should go over well.

MONSTER

He has known only me as his
adversary. For millenia. He'll
never see you coming.

AIMEE

Are you not listening to me? I'm
just one woman. He's a DEMON.

MONSTER

What if you were something more?

The Monster looks past Aimee, to the wall behind. Aimee
follows her gaze. Another mural. The paint flaking with age.

But the picture still clear enough: the Monster's face,
without the lines, ridges or bumpies.

Young. *Human*. Wearing the robes of a priestess or an acolyte.

Aimee stares at the picture. Back at the Monster. The Monster
raises one eyebrow. Silently issuing her challenge.

AIMEE

No. No, that's impossible.

MONSTER

I can entrust to you the power to
stop the Mammon from walking free
once more? The same gift and burden
I took up so long ago. But only if
you will it.

AIMEE
I couldn't--I CAN'T.

MONSTER
You must. But the decisssion must
be your own. I will not force you,
as I was forssced.

AIMEE
Holy shit.

MONSTER
That about sssums it up, yes.

Aimee gets up. PACES.

AIMEE
This decision. Once I make it.
There's no taking it back.

MONSTER
Yesss.

AIMEE
Would I--would I look like you?
With the tail and the--

The Monster's forked TONGUE snakes out. Aimee gestures.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
That?

MONSTER
I don't know.

AIMEE
Will I live forever?

MONSTER
I don't know.

AIMEE
Not inspiring confidence here!

The Monster writhes in obvious agony.

MONSTER
Make your decision. And quickly. My
time is running out.
(MORE)

MONSTER (CONT'D)
And with it, any hope for your
people. *Our* people.

Aimee stops pacing. Turns to look at mural of the young
priestess. The girl in the picture's eyes are ANGRY, not sad.

AIMEE
Will it hurt?

MONSTER
Yesss.

AIMEE
But I'll be strong enough to keep
him trapped here. Forever.

MONSTER
Yesss.

AIMEE
Okay. How do we do it?

MONSTER
You're certain?

AIMEE
No, not really. But someone has to
do it. I don't see anyone else
volunteering. Lucky me.

MONSTER
Yes. But you'll do. The altar,
there. No, over there.

Aimee hurries over to another marble slab.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
There's a dagger on the table.
Bring it here.

Aimee does.

AIMEE
Is it magic?

MONSTER
No. Just sharp. I'm going to teach
you some words. You must remember
them. In case you ever have to do
this. Make another one of us.

AIMEE
Okay. Hit me.

MONSTER
Repeat after me. *Spiritus ut vita.*

AIMEE
Spiritus ut vita.

MONSTER
Totus vita custodio ut mei.

AIMEE
Totus vita custodio ut WHOA.

A glowing LIGHT has sprung up inside the Monster's THROAT.
She breathes it OUT. It SWIRLS in midair, hangs between them.

MONSTER
Custodio ut mei.

AIMEE
Custodio ut mei.

The light WAFTS towards Aimee. A TENDRIL flows into her mouth.

MONSTER
Again. Together.

Aimee haltingly at first, then stronger--

TOGETHER
*Spiritus ut vita totus vita
custodio ut mei. Spiritus ut vita
totus vita custodio ut mei.*

Anxiously, Aimee BREATHES IN the LIGHT. Let's it WASH over her, through her. Her face GLOWS with it, lit up from inside.

AIMEE
What does it mean?

The Monster watches Aimee grow STRONGER as the strength visibly ebbs from her own limbs.

MONSTER
Breath to life... all life to guard
as mine own. Help me with this.
(MORE)

MONSTER (CONT'D)

Quickly. We should have done this before. I wasn't thinking.

She struggles weakly with the straps of her breastplate.

Aimee fumbles with them, they come loose.

The ancient skin beneath is ASHEN, streaked GREEN. The Monster indicates a spot over her heart.

MONSTER (CONT'D)

Now the dagger. Strike true, girl. Use the power I give you with my death wisely.

AIMEE

Wait. WHAT?! I'm not going to stab you.

MONSTER

Your hand must not falter. You will kill without question. To protect life, you must TAKE it. Starting with mine. Or the spell remains unfinished. It needs a LIFE, just one, to work.

AIMEE

I can't.

MONSTER

You must.

AIMEE

I won't.

MONSTER

Please.

She puts her hand over Aimee's. Guides the dagger. Tries to press DOWN, but she's too weak. It barely breaks the skin.

The Monster's breath comes SHALLOW. But her ancient body clings to its ebbing life with a dull burning ferocity.

MONSTER (CONT'D)

Now. Before it's too late.

AIMEE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Aimee plunges the dagger into the Monster's heart.

A relieved SIGH escapes her as her head lolls on her chest.

Her large hand slips off of Aimee's small one.

Aimee SOBS. Then the LIGHT explodes out from all over the Monster's body. SO BRIGHT it blocks out everything else.

It FORCES ITSELF into Aimee's eyes, mouth, nose.

She throws her head back and SCREAMS. Her SCREAM becomes primal, ANIMAL. Her mouth STRETCHES, growing.

She waters as her hands grow in size. The skin THICKENS, toughens. Orangey-yellow. Giant bird's talons.

She falls to all fours. Her clothes BURST from her back and her legs as her body LENGTHENS, THICKENS.

Down breaks out on her upper body, bursting into FEATHERS.

On her increasingly feline hindquarters, tawny, short FUR. And a long TAIL. Like a lion's.

Her PURPLE SHOES burst at the seams. Her toes emerging, feet transforming into PAWS. Furred. With wicked long CLAWS.

Aimee rears back, still transforming. ROARS in pain.

Her nose ELONGATES into a snout the same color as her front talons. No, not a snout. An eagle's beak.

The LIGHT suffuses her body, as it twists, wracks with pain. A BRIGHT FLASH.

Then, just the sound of her breathing. Deep, panting breaths.

Aimee looks at her clawed, birdlike "hands." Flexes her thumb joint. Still opposable. That's good.

She touches her now humanoid face. Finds FEATHERS. She plucks one out, holds in front of her eyes to see for sure.

A phantom wind RUSHES through the room. The old Monster's voice whispers one last time on the wind--

MONSTER (O.S.)

Hurry.

But she's still changing. Spiky protrusions break the surface of her back. She BELLOWS in pain.

Aimee lurches forward. STUMBLES.

Instinctively she rears back. Spreads her HUGE WINGS for balance.

On Aimee's changed but still recognizable face: shocked AWE, unexpected DELIGHT.

She FLEXES her wings. Beats the air with them. Finds herself a foot off the ground.

MONSTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Go now. You know the way.

She does. Aimee gather herself to spring. LAUNCHES herself forward.

INT. CAVERN, IN FRONT OF WATERFALL - CONTINUOUS

Aimee, a human-griffin hybrid, BURSTS from under the waterfall, half runs, half flies for a tunnel to the left.

WHOOSH. She disappears into the tunnel.

INT. TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

A blur of speed, feathers and fur, Aimee rushes past in a GALLOP. Pure exhilaration on her face.

She takes a crazy turn, BOUNCES off the tunnel wall. Her claws REND the stone. It crunches, crumbles beneath her.

She sniffs the air as she runs, inhales deeply. Continues on.

INT. SHADOWY TUNNELS - CONTINUOUS

Aimee races onward. Takes twists, forks in the path with instinctive ease.

INT. OFFICE MAZE - SAME TIME

Thom runs, his chest heaving. He continues on, relentless.

THOM
(under his breath)
Where are you, you son of a bitch?

He enters an open space. A FANCY STONE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT DESK in the corner, buried under centuries' of debris.

Then, RUNNING footsteps behind him.

Thom steps behind a wall partition. Heft the axe. WAITS.

Brad enters, sees the DOOR to the left of the front desk.

Thom didn't notice it before. GREEN LIGHT glows now under the crack. A faint, RUSHING, GUTTERING sound.

Brad looks right, left, but not behind, where Thom lurks.

He moves towards the door. Thom steps out behind him.

Brad reaches for the doorknob. NAKED TRIUMPH on his face.

INT. THE BLACK TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

The door creaks open.

Brad stands in the doorway. AWE and SURPRISE on his face.

There in the back, between two marble plinths--

A COLUMN of GREEN-BLACK FLAMES with Franklin's FACE staring out. His eyes narrow, but his face splits with a WIDE GRIN.

FRANKLIN
Welcome, my son.

Brad whimpers. Franklin's face registers the first sign of ALARM. Well-placed.

Brad FALLS FORWARD, Thom's AXE BLADE buried in his BACK.

His cheek HITS THE BLACK MARBLE FLOOR with BONE-CRACKING force. His dead eyes stare at nothing.

Thom steps in after him. Bends to YANK out the axe.

THOM
(to Brad's body)
That was for Aimee, you asshole.

He glares up at the delighted smile on Franklin's face.

THOM (CONT'D)
Sorry to kill your rescuer and run.
But I'm getting the hell out of
here.

Thom turns only to find the door blocked by a CANDYSTRIPER WIGHT. GRINNING, it steps towards him.

Bats the AXE swinging towards its FACE aside like a reed. The axe CLATTERS to the floor.

FRANKLIN
Quite alright. You'll do just as
nicely.

Too late Thom realizes his mistake.

He tries to dodge, but multiple sets of STRONG ARMS grab him.

He struggles as they LIFT him. Five WIGHTS. GRINNING.

The axe clatters to the stone floor as they CARRY THOM, kicking and yelling, towards the flames, and--

The ritual circle pentagram carved into the floor.

THOM
No. NO!

INT. OFFICE MAZE - SAME TIME

Thom's SCREAMS OF PROTEST echo down the hall. RINGING in Aimee's long pointed ears.

AIMEE
Thom.

She runs FASTER, knocking stray articles of furniture out of her path, CRUSHING them under her MASSIVE PAWS.

INT. THE BLACK TEMPLE - SAME TIME-ISH - MONTAGE

The wights clap Thom's wrists and ankles into IRON MANACLES driven into the edges of the circle.

FRANKLIN (O.S.)
Iterum in viscus EGO sum prognatus.

Thom, spread eagle on the floor. Trying to wrench free.
Between their plinths, the green-black flames BURN BRIGHTER.
One of the WIGHTS approaches THOM with a small, SHARP blade.

FRANKLIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Iterum in ossus EGO sedeo.

He struggles, but the others hold him still.
The one with the KNIFE kneels. Thom SPITS in its face.
Thom GRUNTS, bites his lips against the pain as the blade
PIERCES his skin, CARVES the shallow lines of some symbol.

INT. OFFICE MAZE - SAME TIME

Aimee hears a CRY OF PAIN. It cuts off just as suddenly.
She GROWLS as she TEARS through the maze. Getting closer--

INT. THE BLACK TEMPLE - SAME TIME

The wight with the knife finishes her last long slice.

FRANKLIN (O.S.)
Iterum in orbis terrarum permisum
mihi flos vesco suum flamma.

He groans. Cranes his neck to SEE: the Avaris logo--a
stylized 'A' and a 'V' fused together, inscribed in a circle.

As Franklin finishes speaking, a long tendril of green-black
FLAME licks towards Thom from the top of the column.

It reaches for him. Forces its way into his mouth, down his
THROAT. He struggles mightily. But there's no escape.

Above him, Franklin's TRIUMPHANT LAUGHTER booms like THUNDER.

Thom SCREAMS as the flames pour down his throat.

Above him, the pillar of fire SHRINKS, flows into Thom.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
(still in the flames)
At last.

Just a man-sized gout of flame left on the bottom plinth now.
With a WRENCHING SOUND, the temple DOOR FLIES off its hinges.
Aimee's CLAWS gouge the stone as she skids to a stop.

AIMEE
Thom.

She springs towards him. Knocks the nearest wight sprawling.
Already beginning to FADE, the image of Franklin's face in
the flames stares at Aimee in shock. He stammers.

FRANKLIN
(already disappearing)
YOU! No, you can't-

Riding the FINAL TENDRIL of FLAME down, the expression on
Franklin's flaming FACE changes from FEAR to TRIUMPH.

Even as Aimee SCATTERS the caught-off-guard wights with one
sweep of her huge paw.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
You're too late.

He disappears down Thom's throat. Thom's mouth falls closed.
Aimee crouches over Thom. Takes gentle hold of his shoulders.

AIMEE
Thom. THOM. Wake up. Please wake
up.

His eyelids flutter. SNAP open.

For a second, he stares at her, uncomprehending but unafraid.

She smooths his hair from his face with one clawed finger.

A WILY, WICKED expression takes hold of his features--
Franklin's soul staring out at her from behind the face of
the man she loves. In his eyes, BURNING BLACK FLAMES.

Off the ANGUISH on Aimee's monstrous face--

THOM/FRANKLIN

Hiya, champ.

His arm comes up, SNAPS the iron manacle holding it.

He SHOVES against her chest. She dwarfs him, but even her SIZE offers little protection against his INSANE STRENGTH.

Aimee FLIES backwards, lands on her side with a CRASH. She shakes it off.

Three more sets of manacles SHATTER. He's on his feet.

She rises, prowls. Swallows the pain of what she must now do.

AIMEE

Die.

THOM/FRANKLIN

Ladies first.

His fist connects with her head, SLAMS her across the room.

Aimee CRASHES into a marble pillar. It CRACKS down the middle. Dust and rocks crumble from the high ceiling above.

Aimee shakes herself, rises. Looks into Thom's awful face.

They launch themselves at each other. Two titans brawling.

Aimee beats the air with her wings, sails over his head. DIVES at him, talons and claws SLASHING.

He leaps behind a column. The stone SHATTERS under Aimee's blow. An ominous RUMBLE from above. A cloud of falling DUST.

Aimee dives around what's left of the column, SLASHES again and again at Thom. He's hard-pressed to dodge the blows.

A GASH opens in his shoulder. But it doesn't BLEED. A tiny lick of FLAMES escapes.

Thom CONCENTRATES. The gash knits together.

Aimee BLINKS.

THOM/FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Neat trick, huh? Wanna see another one?

He snaps his fingers.

A WIGHT charges, impales itself on Aimee's outstretched TALONS. She struggles to pull free. But it CLUTCHES at her.

Thom lunges in, looses an uppercut to her JAW. The blow shakes the wight free.

Aimee stumbles. Falls. Rises halfway. Goes down again, dazed.

THOM/FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
Ho HO! You seein' little YOUS
flyin' in a circle around your head
yet?

Aimee rises. CROUCHES to spring.

THOM/FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
No? Alright then. C'mon, darlin'.

He LEAPS at her, but she's quicker. She SOARS over him in a tight arc, circling back towards him, talons bared.

He DODGES, rolls out of the way. Her WINGS fan out to break her momentum as she lands.

THOM/FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
On second thought. What'd'ya say we
take this show on the road? Have
ourselves a REAL rodeo?

He crouches, LEAPS ALOFT with fantastic velocity, CRASHES right up THROUGH THE CEILING. Almost too fast to follow.

Aimee launches herself after him. Dodges FALLING STONE, debris.

INT. INSIDE THE CEILING- CONTINUOUS

Drywall. Air ducts. HVAC crawlspace.

Aimee TEARS through all of it. CRUSHES, FORCES her way through the narrow hole punched through by Thom.

She claws her way up to the surface, into--

INT. THE PIT - CONTINUOUS

Cubicle panels, papers, BODIES go FLYING as Aimee explodes up onto the floor of her old office space.

Crawling on the ground next to her, a familiar face.

DEXTER

Oh my god oh my god oh my god.

He gets up, flees before her.

Aimee rises to her FULL HEIGHT. She TOWERS over the cubicles, her head nearly brushing the paneled CEILING.

Every LIVING DESK JOCKEY in the place STARES at her. They yell, SHRIEK in fear and disbelief.

The nightmarish cast to the Pit is gone. It looks like it used to. For now. Except for the giant hole in the floor.

And the occasional placid ZOMBIE desk jockey. They ignore Aimee, their eyes fixed on something off to her right.

The zombies lurch to their feet. Leave their desks in droves. All moving towards--

THOM, standing to the side at a COFFEE STATION, watching her.

THOM/FRANKLIN

There. Isn't everything better with an audience?

He raises a MUG to his lips. DRINKS DEEP. His LIPS are STAINED BLOODY. He wriggles, ENERGIZED.

THOM/FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

OOH. Caffeine buzz.

Aimee slinks towards him.

Thom sees Dexter crawling towards him on the floor.

DEXTER

Thom. Get outta here! That thing!
It's COMING.

THOM/FRANKLIN

Don't you worry yerself about her,
champ.

Dexter gets up, perplexed. Only now noticing the RED SMEAR of Thom's mouth. He backs away from Thom.

THOM/FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

'Twas Beauty, not the Beast that
did you in.

AIMEE

Dexter. MOVE. NOW!

She RUNS for him. She's too late.

Thom tosses the mug. Catches it. WHIPS it at Dexter's HEAD.

The force of the blow rocks Dexter back on his feet. His skull caves in. He falls to his knees. Falls over. Gone.

Aimee CRASHES into Thom, KNOCKS him through a glass wall into one of the fishbowl offices.

BROKEN GLASS crashes all around them. She ROARS-

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

MURDERER.

Behind them, PANDEMONIUM breaks loose. The LIVING workers FLEE towards the elevators and the nearby door to the stairs.

CURTIS limps towards the elevator, part of the crowd.

A pushy BLOWHARD shoves his way to the front. SHOVES the nearest Candystriper.

BLOWHARD

Outta the way, bitch.

The Candystriper reaches out. Casually SNAPS his neck.

There are MORE Candystripers. A LINE of them block the exits.

The crowd draws back, away--

The Candystripers stand their ground. GRINNING.

Curtis pulls at his nearest neighbors, urges them BACK. Off his FEAR, WORRY--

OUTSIDE THE FISHBOWL OFFICE NEXT TO THE SHATTERED ONE

Aimee and Thom BURST through the side wall connecting the two spaces. They KNOCK the heavy DESK aside like a paper weight.

THOM/FRANKLIN

Batter up!

He THROWS Aimee through the glass, back out into--

INT. THE PIT - CONTINUOUS

Aimee crashes into a cube partition. Knocks it over.

FRANKLIN

Foul ball! Heh. Get it? "FOWL"?

He points to her BEAK. Steps over the broken window frame.

BLACK FLAMES bleed through tiny cuts in his skin. He murmurs in Latin under his breath. The cuts CLOSE.

He stalks towards her. She gets UP. Hears GASPS. TURNS.

Every head in the place is turned towards the two of them.

FREAKED DESK JOCKEY

What IS it?

HECTOR

Hey, is that Thom? Thom, get away from that thing.

They're getting too close. Aimee PANICS.

AIMEE

STAY BACK. Stay away from him!

At the sound of her voice, someone pushes to the front of the crowd. CURTIS. He stares up at her.

CURTIS's POV: A MONSTER. Towering over him. Terrifying.

Aimee looks from Curtis to Thom. Thom LEERS. LEAPS for him.

Aimee throws herself between them. They CRASH to the ground.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
(to Curtis)
Run. HIDE.

He does a doubletake at her VOICE. Stares at her FACE.

CURTIS
Aim-Aimee? How?

AIMEE
GO.

Curtis backs off. Limpes away. Thom KICKS Aimee in the abdomen. Something CRUNCHES. She grunts. ROARS.

Thom turns to chase after Curtis. She digs her talons in to him, drags him back.

The two of them tumble towards the maze of CUBICLES, destroying everything in their path.

In a slow wave, the OFFICE ZOMBIES make their limping, shuffling way TOWARDS THOM.

Meanwhile, Thom LAYS into Aimee. His punches, lightning fast, RATTLE nearby windows as they land.

The entire floor seems TREMBLE.

Workers flee before them, leaping over chairs, debris.

Aimee's GREEN BLOOD splatters against a glass fishbowl office wall. The workers hiding inside SHRIEK.

TWO ANGRY GUYS bum rush the Candystriper guarding the stairs. Holding a console table like a BATTERING RAM.

The table catches the Candystriper in the FACE. CRUNCH!

But still she stands. Reaches. Adjusts the angle of her face with a sickening CRUNCH. The guys back off, one retching.

ON THOM

Aimee's curled on her side before him. Bedraggled. Bloodied. Half-conscious. He loses another vicious KICK in her side.

Stops. Watches. She's no longer moving.

A ZOMBIE reaches for him. He BREAKS it IN HALF, tosses the halves aside. More are coming. He laughs. They're no match for him. He tears into another one. And another.

AIMEE'S POV: Dazed, her head RINGING. She see the zombies trying FIGHT Franklin. A look of sudden UNDERSTANDING crosses her enraged face.

Aimee throws back her head and HOWLS, long and PIERCING.

The sound of it CUTS through the very BUILDING. Through the eerie fabric of the hidden world buried deep inside of it.

INT. EVIL FILE ROOM - SAME TIME

Aimee's HOWL rings through the room, ruffles the POST-ITs. Their wavelike movement AMPLIFIES.

INT. EVIL MAIL ROOM - SAME TIME

ZOMBIE ROBINSON listens, hears the HOWL. So do AN ARMY of FERAL MAIL CARTS and METAL GOLEMS made of those mail inbox sections and panels.

INT. EVIL I.T. DEPARTMENT - SAME TIME

The CABLES SLITHER back and forth, growing FRENZIED as they ear the HOWL.

INT. THE PIT - SAME TIME

Aimee's HOWL dies off. Thom mows down OFFICE ZOMBIES as fast as they mob him. Snapping one's head off, he TURNS to Aimee.

THOM/FRANKLIN

What's a'matter, champ? You got a cramp? Is it that time of the millenium?

AIMEE

I was just thinking about spending the next 3000 years with only YOU for company. But it could be worse. I could spend them working HERE.

THOM/FRANKLIN

Oh, I see. You gonna put me back in
my prison?

He advances towards her. Wading through zombie entrails.

AIMEE

That's right.

THOM/FRANKLIN

Oh really? You and what army?

At once, all the ELEVATORS DING!

As one, the Candystriper wights turn, confused, to see-

Doors open on--golems, cables, mail carts, and more ZOMBIES,
Robinson among them. Danny, Brad, Bethany and ELECTRA, too.

All the nether office's HORRORS spill out, ATTACK the WIGHTS.
One goes down, IMPALED through by multiple CABLES.

A gleeful MAIL CART MONSTER full of tittering POST IT GOLEMS
chases another, the wight's GRIN a twisted grimace of FEAR.

The living desk jockeys fall back from the monster vs. wight
melee.

Until a GIANT METAL GOLEM gently reaches to help a fallen
WOMAN to her feet. Before neatly BEHEADING the WIGHT charging
her from behind.

Curtis SEES this.

Sees AIMEE's NOD of encouragement in his direction as she
wards off a BLOW from THOM. She sweeps her arm towards the
other desk jockeys, gestures to the ELEVATORS.

Curtis gives her a THUMBS UP.

CURTIS

Alright, folks. I say it's QUITTIN'
TIME. Let's get the hell out this
shithole.

The way to the elevators and the stairs clear now, the DESK
JOCKEYS start towards them. People STOP, help their wounded
coworkers.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

That's right. Leave no one behind.

Thom LOOKS at the exodus. They're leaving? And worse, helping each other?!

It's enough to make him sick. He LEAPS into their midst.

THOM/FRANKLIN

Leavin' without thanking your host?
Now that's just bad manners.

He looks those nearest in the eye. Their eyes turn BLACK.

They begin to PUSH, SHOVE their way closer to the doors. Knocking others out of their way. TRAMPLING moving bodies.

Panic spreads through the edges of the crowd. At its center, Curtis, Hector and many others, work to CONTROL the POSSESSED, restore ORDER, help others ESCAPE.

Thom laughs, a sound of pure delight.

THOM/FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

NOW it's a party.

Behind him, green blood streaking her feathers and fur-

AIMEE

Sweet. Let's limbo. How low can you go?

She swings one of the MARBLE COLUMNS from the temple at him. Hits him full in the face. His head SNAPS back as he FALLS.

She brings it back around. SLAMS the end into his BELLY.

Thom rolls over, VOMITS up BLACK FLAMES.

His eyes BURN with rage. Aimee backs away from him.

THOM/FRANKLIN

You think you can RUN from me, bitch? Think again.

But before he can go after her. The ARMY OF MONSTERS reaches him. A post-it golem WHIRS its paper blades, gashes his arms.

He knocks it away. Only to have to dive left as a huge METAL GOLEM slashes down at him.

He grabs the golem in a mighty BEAR HUG. SQUEEZES. With a GROAN, the metal gives, RENDS apart. Collapses.

AIMEE (O.S.)

Hey! Mammon!

He turns, his eyes murderous. Just in time to see a SEA OF THICK, ROPY CABLES shoot towards him. Some are over a FOOT THICK, others no thicker than a computer cord.

A familiar length of THIN BLACK CABLE is among them. It wraps around Thom's NECK, pulls with its BIGGER, STRONGER cousins.

BOUND all over by cables three feet deep, Thom THRASHES, STRUGGLES.

Standing over the HOLE in the FLOOR, Aimee WHISTLES, beckons.

They begin to DRAG HIM towards her. He thrashes, SCREAMS--

THOM/FRANKLIN

No. NO. You BITCH. You worthless SLUT. You can't. I WON'T.

Keeping a wary eye on Thom, Aimee checks to make sure Curtis has the exodus under control.

The last of the FLAME-EYED possessed are snapping out of it, held down with gentle hands by their coworkers.

AIMEE

Get them out of here safe.

CURTIS

You can count on me. You alright?

She grins back, bloodied and bruised, Forever changed. But still her mischievous self.

AIMEE

Never better. Take care of yourself.

He holds up his hand. It's goodbye. She watches him help a WOUNDED DESK JOCKEY to the elevator. Smiles.

Back to THOM. Aimee nods to her little cable around his neck.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Let's clock him out for the day,
shall we?

THOM/FRANKLIN
BITCH. I'll kill you.

The cables YANK, dragging Thom back down through the hole. He SCREAMS the whole way down. Wings flipped back, she dives after him.

INT. THE BLACK TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

Thom FALLS from the ceiling. Hits the marble floor with a CRUNCH. The cables hold him fast.

Aimee lands lightly behind him.

AIMEE
So. About this warden gig. Does it
come with better health benefits
than my last job? 'Cause I think I
broke a nail.

She looks at her talons. Her FUR is caked with GREEN BLOOD.

He tries to crawl AWAY from her, but he's held fast. He coughs, vomits up BLACK FIRE. Can't stop. CHOKES on it.

Aimee turns him over on his back. He belches harmless FLAMES.

She places her WICKED TALONS over his heart. The cables MOVE ASIDE just enough for her claws to pierce him through.

THOM/FRANKLIN
Wait. WAIT. Aims--

She looks in his eyes. Thom's eyes.

THOM/FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
Aims, don't. You can't hurt me.
You'd never hurt me. It can be like
it was--like it always should have
been.

As she slides her claws into his flesh.

AIMEE

Don't pretend to be him. He's
already gone. YOU killed him.

He GURGLES. BLACK FLAMES erupt from his MOUTH. She shoves her
claws DEEPER.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Pushed him out of there to make
room for yourself.

The flames begin to SPOOL back up out of Thom's heaving body.
Escaping through wounds, his nose and ears, his mouth.

He CRIES OUT, anguished. His body BENDS upwards in the middle
towards the TOWER of FLAMES RISING from him.

The flames RUSH back between the marble plinths. Still
rising, RAGING.

The last of the flames RUSHES from Thom's body. Absent of
them, it collapses back down with a sort of sigh.

Franklin's FACE reappears in the pillar of flames. The pillar
STRUGGLES, tries to free itself. He's stuck. TRAPPED again.

FRANKLIN

You bitch! You stupid fucking
whore. I'll get you. I'll burn this
whole city to the ground. Everyone
you care about. Everyone you ever
loved.

Aimee looks down at Thom's broken, lifeless body.

She rises up on her hind legs, picks him up in her arms.

AIMEE

You already have. So I'll just stay
here waiting for you. Watching over
you. Enjoy your stay. It's gonna be
a long one.

She turns, heads for the door.

FRANKLIN

You won't last forever. Like the
one before you. You can't keep me
here forever.

She stops at the door, turns back towards him.

AIMEE

Maybe not forever. But at least as long as it takes for my replacement to show up.

She exits. He shrieks unintelligibly after her.

INT. OFFICE MAZE - CONTINUOUS

Aimee spreads her wings, LIFTS off the ground, carrying Thom.

She looks down at him. Large TEARS roll down her face.

She starts to SPEAK under her breath.

AIMEE

*Spiritus ut vita. Totus vita
custodio ut mei.*

She whispers the words over him as they fly over the maze.

The LIGHT in her GLOWS from her chest, from her throat. It BATHES Thom, but doesn't enter his mouth the way it did hers.

There's no breath in him to take it in, to quicken it.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Spiritus ut vita...

She whispers the words into his mouth. It's no use. She says them anyway.

INT. THE PIT - SAME TIME

Not silence. DEAFNESS. The place is deserted, DEMOLISHED.

AIMEE (O.S.)

Totus vita custodio ut mei.

A lone piece of paper floats to the floor--one of the pages from the report Aimee copied yesterday.

EXT. CITY STREET - SAME TIME

Another silent scene--images only.

CURTIS going from dazed worker to worker. They line the curb, sitting, laying down. EMTs move among them with GURNEYS.

Ambulances. Police squad cars. Lights FLASHING.

AIMEE (O.S.)
Spiritus ut vita...

A confused COP asks Curtis a question. He shrugs. Smiles. Answers. We can't hear him.

He turns his head, watches as FIREFIGHTERS RUSH OUT of the revolving front doors of Avaris Corp's LOBBY.

They carry survivors. They're outrunning a CLOUD of DUST.

The foreman follows his men out. Gives the ALL CLEAR sign.

Parts of the building can be seen to COLLAPSE from inside.

AIMEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Totus vita custodio ut mei.

Curtis sighs. Gazes at the building sadly, with HOPE.

INT. THE TEMPLE - SAME TIME

Trapped, the PILLAR of black flames struggles, WRITHES.

His face appears again in the flames. GNASHES its TEETH. SWALLOWS us whole.

AIMEE (O.S.)
Spiritus ut vita...

INT. WATERFALL CAVERN - SAME TIME

Aimee flies down into the cavern. Thom limp in her arms.

AIMEE (O.S.)
Totus vita custodio ut mei.

She BREATHES LIGHT into him. It SHINES briefly. Fizzles back out.

She LANDS. Wraps her wings around Thom's smaller, broken body. Her shoulders SHAKE as she sobs. WAILS. HOWLS.

DARKNESS

The other office creatures chitter, ROAR, MOURN WITH HER. As the sound dies, Franklin's DISEMBODIED LAUGH echoes.

EXT. SITE OF AVARIS BUILDING - MORNING

A bright, sunny day for once.

SUPER: EIGHT MONTHS LATER

The old building is GONE. In its place, CONSTRUCTION WORKERS and their NOISY equipment. Diggers. Back-hoes. Even a crane.

At a trestle table, a SMARMY DEVELOPER in a construction helmet goes over PLANS for the NEW BUILDING with his FOREMAN.

They're talking, but it's too far loud to hear them.

The Developer and the Foreman shake hands. GRIN BIG.

A FLASH, as a PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER takes their PICTURE.

The Developer whistles for his TOADY ENTOURAGE. They appear at his side, wielding an arsenal of mobile devices.

A NEWSPAPER SPINS across the screen.

Near the PICTURE just taken, the HEADLINE: "CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY FOR NEW BANKING PLAZA DOWNTOWN" By-line: "Scheduled to open for business next summer.

INT. OFFICE MAZE CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

This place still exists, even with the physical building gone. It WAITS, between here and there, for the NEW building.

For Franklin's NEXT CHANCE at freedom.

In her monstrous new form, Aimee RACES through the maze.

She LEAPS. Pushes OFF against a high stone wall. The stone CRUMBLES under her claws.

She turns around, races back the same way she came.

She stops. Pants. SMILES. This is FUN. It feels good to RUN.

A HUGE SHADOW sneaks up BEHIND her. She doesn't see it.

It LEAPS OUT, TACKLES HER. It's BIG as she is. BIGGER even. Another HUGE MONSTER. A 12-foot WOLFMAN. FAST. STRONG.

He PINS her to the ground. Smiles down at her. She laughs up at him.

It's THOM. As a MONSTER.

A FLASH.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WATERFALL CAVERN - EIGHT MONTHS AGO

Aimee wrapped around Thom's smaller broken body, her big monstrous one WRACKED with SOBS.

Whispered. Barely audible over the RUSH of the waterfall--

AIMEE

*Spiritus ut vita. Totus vita
custodio ut mei.*

She rocks him in her arms. Doesn't see it at first. The LIGHT that begins to suffuse his THROAT.

It grows BRIGHTER. Catches her attention.

She uncurls. Looks down at the BRILLIANT FLASH OF LIGHT.

Off her tentative, hopeful, then incredulous SMILE.

INT. THE TEMPLE - NOW, THEN, ALWAYS

The PILLAR OF BLACK FLAMES BURNS. Waiting. Still STRUGGLING to be free. He mutters to himself. Laughs maniacally.

INT. OFFICE MAZE CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Aimee SHOVES playfully at Thom. Rolls out from under him. Pulls a row of dusty CUBE PARTITIONS down on top of him.

He peeks out from under it. His eyes GLOWING. Literally.

He tosses it away. His wofly grin silly, loving.

But he bounds after her. They CHASE each other. Play ferociously. Love each other ferociously.

She LOPES after him, back out into--

INT. WATERFALL CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

The underground paradise they share together. They play. RUNNING. FLYING. POUNCING. Practicing their new skills.

Preparing for a day yet to come. Their first REAL day of the best job in the world.

Saving it. Together.

Off Aimee's face. Mischievous. Monstrous. HAPPY.

FADE OUT