

BENIGN

A SCREENPLAY

A Senior Honors Thesis

by

JACOB LEE HUVAL

Submitted to the Office of Honors Programs
& Academic Scholarships
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE
RESEARCH FELLOWS

April 2002

Group: English

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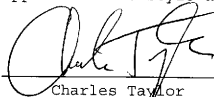
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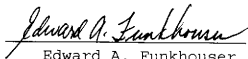
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ABSTRACT

Benign

A Screenplay (April 2002)

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Benign is a story set in the microscopic world of cellular respiration and reproduction. The plot is concerned with the epiphanies and adventures of Pro, a microorganism who stumbles upon a shocking conspiracy being sustained by the ruling aristocracy of the cellular world. This script utilizes the backdrop of microbiology as a means to address issues of identity in society, the struggles associated with social classification and stratification and themes of inferiority in an urban setting. The discourse also addresses philosophical concerns such as predetermination, free will and the pursuit of individuality.

To those who believe in me.

And especially to those who do not.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Aside from thanking the Academy...

My family for their unwavering support, love and understanding, especially my mother: for giving me the writer's bug and never bothering to find a cure for it.

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My cousin Caleb for his inspiring renderings and visualizations. For drawing pictures that would become words that would become worlds.

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able to wade through their own mire in order to get to class. For doing an important task and being largely courteous.

Migratory birds for skimming a little off the top of the undergraduate applications for admission every year.

You, the reader, for understanding that this is an early draft. For rushing to the theaters when the movie is released. For buying several tickets. For consuming and enjoying *Junior Mints*. For your attention, your soul, and most importantly, your body.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v-vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
TEXT.....	1-173
VITA.....	174

BLACK

Vague shapes rest in the darkness.

It seems that we are looking down a long, arched hallway. Strangely curved walls dissolve and flatten to form a ceiling. A bulging and porous floor lines the length of the hall.

The silence is broken:

VOICE

Dr. Winston to
recovery. Dr. Winston
to recovery.

The darkness suddenly cracks. Shafts of light beam through small slits at the end of the hallway, quickly expanding to form a gaping, oblong hole.

Light floods into the hallway, illuminating the glistening walls and spongy floor.

The alien landscape is revealed to be:

INT. HUMAN MOUTH - DAY

Teeth line the top and bottom of the illumined mouth. Through the gaping hole, we barely catch glimpse of a doctor's office.

Charts and anatomy posters. Shelves and a door. And then, without warning:

A peppermint CANDY flies into the opening. It RATTLES across the floor as the mouth CHOMPS shut. In a fraction of a second, everything goes black.

Suddenly the floor heaves up! The tongue curls and thrashes side to side as it assaults the candy, tossing it up and down.

Flesh folds over itself as the room becomes a wet midnight rollercoaster.

And just as suddenly as it started, the tongue stops. We can faintly hear the voice again. Only now it's more distant, hard to understand.

Slowly fading...fading...

CRUNCH! The teeth POUND AND PULVERIZE the candy. The tongue violently rolls and flicks broken shards of peppermint further back into the dark. Molars GRIND together, emitting a spine-twitching metal-on-metal SCREECH.

The floor rises up and back like a giant, bloated caterpillar walking in place. It pushes the mutilated candy toward us.

The fragments lie before us, slowly edging out of sight, sliding under us, taking us with them...

D	D	D
O	O	O
W	W	W
N	N	N

We follow a particularly small fragment of candy as it plummets down the tightly-packed, rippled columns that line the throat.

The candy swirls and flips as it is pushed along the esophagus, leading us into:

INT. THE STOMACH - DAY

The candy slides down a slippery, curved wall and lands PLOP! into a murky gray pool.

The walls themselves suddenly ripple and convulse, sending us under a wave of liquid, tumbling end over end through murky waters.

The candy spins and flips, tosses and turns. It grows smaller, more thin, more opaque. Soon it is practically a liquid, swirling like milk in a glass of water.

A gently floating pale mist remains. We slowly come closer to the mist, approaching until we have finally delved into the very heart of it, a Milky Way spiral slowly vanishing.

As we near it, the mist gradually changes from being a thick, impenetrable cloud to a translucent cluster of infinitesimal particles.

The particles slowly rotate, pushed by an invisible current. A few bits rotate and reflect small dots of light.

Then they all do. We now see that the illuminated particles' movements are not erratic, but are as organized as highway traffic.

We approach one particle and rest behind it. It idles softly as surrounding particles sway and disappear.

As if driven from within, the particle suddenly rockets away and up! The particle is a blur as it soars past innumerable tubes, all lined with bristled branches. It veers left and right to avoid collision.

The walls begin to contract, forming a narrow tunnel, a...

INT. VEIN - CONTINUOUS

The particle bolts down the vein. It is soon joined by a horde of other particles, all rapidly approaching...

INT. LIVER - CONTINUOUS

Like a hopelessly tangled jungle of tubing, the liver's interior looks like a collapsed house of toothpicks. Innumerable veins twist and turn every which way, all leading into slightly larger veins.

A golden-yellow liquid seeps from vein to vein, too fast to see for long. Like tongues of lightning darting from pole to pole.

The particle soars deeper into the liver, passing from smaller veins into larger ones, merging with similar particles, rushing into larger, more congested tunnels.

The smooth walls of the tunnel gradually change into scaly tiles. The tunnel becomes a kaleidoscopic passage of liver cells, spanning around the tunnel.

ZAP!

A CRACKLING wave of golden-yellow liquid suddenly crashes through the vein. The particle is instantly changed from an oblong piece of gray matter into a sleek, bullet-shaped ship.

Windows line the particle's sides. Behind the passenger window we see a small face pressed against the glass. Like the driver, it is an opaque and ethereal creature with bulging eyes, staring out the window like a tourist on parade.

The van flows with traffic as it veers down a gaping hole.

INT. HEPATIC ARTERY - CONTINUOUS

The van blends into a tossing sea of other cellular vehicles. Traffic is like highway rush hour at breakneck speed.

The particle weaves in and out of heavy congestion. It ZOOMS dangerously close between two similar particles. A head-spinning left cuts-off a chunky carbohydrate rig. It speeds into loops and spirals, out-maneuvering slower vehicles.

SWOOSH!

As if an explosion detonates from its core, the traffic suddenly disappears. It disperses in every direction, vanishing behind violet clouds and pink swells.

The van makes a hard turn and slows as it nears a blurry, purple mass.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

DRIVER

This is our exit
right up here. Just
past the bend.

The van dips down into the thick nebula. The purple mist clears, revealing cells in every direction, stretching out into infinity.

The cells are like self-contained cities, emitting brilliant light through chance openings in their bubbly blue membranes.

The van slowly curves around the spaces between cells, dwarfed by the immense size of the spheres.

The van navigates around identical vans parked at TRANSPORT PROTEINS, the large, bulbous, brown blocks embedded within cells' membranes.

The van approaches one such port on one such cell. It stops just shy of touching the brown mass.

DRIVER

This is GlucGo beta
one. Requesting
membrane access to
Antiport nine.

EXT. CELL MEMBRANE - CONTINUOUS

The van floats serenely. The dimly lit aqueous atmosphere drones like an alien launchpad, HUMMING with incredible energy. The cell's membrane softly ripples in small waves, allowing thin beams of light to wash over the van.

VOICE(OS)

You are cleared for
membrane access,
GlucGo beta one.

The tip of the protein opens, just large enough for the van to squeeze in. The van proceeds inside; as it does the protein's

opening stays just ahead of the van and closes immediately behind it, as if to shun any unwanted visitors.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

DRIVER

Mind you get permission before trying to get in. Otherwise you'll come across as a threat.

KID

And?

DRIVER

They'll take precautions. Mean ones. And we can't afford to lose many shipments.

KID

No? Why not? We must've passed at least a dozen other transports just like this one. Is it really that important?

DRIVER

Kid, everything is important.

The van slips through the protein and into the cell.

INT. CELL MEMBRANE - CONTINUOUS

Radiance like an aquatic New York by night. Throughout the cell, organelles stretch up and around like bulbous architectural masterpieces of an urban hub.

Traffic flows between luminescent buildings. Opaque creatures similar to Driver and Kid thrive throughout.

The van stops just outside the protein and rests on the vast, blue and bubbly membrane shelf. An opaque creature approaches the van.

DRIVER
Hello, Quince!

QUINCE
(all business)
Your orders?

DRIVER
Glucogen shipment to
Mitochondrion three.
Left-aft.

DRIVER hands some papers to QUINCE. He scrutinizes them.

DRIVER
Running a tight shift
now?

QUINCE
(hardly
acknowledging)
Yes. Trying to keep
routine up to par
since the coupling.
These are proper.

Quince hands the papers back to Driver.

QUINCE
Carry on to your
predetermined
destination.

Driver starts the van, which slowly levitates away from the membrane shelf.

DRIVER
I love your work.

QUINCE
I love your work.

The van skims across the shelf and drops off the end, plummeting into a flow of cellular traffic.

The cellulopolis is dazzling. A beautiful array of structures and causeways, an atmosphere filled with structural supports and particles. Signs of brilliant microscopic life bustle in all directions.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - DAY

Kid points to an oblong, pill-shaped structure resting low beneath the shelf and under the tide of cell traffic. The structure is one in dozens of similar structures, all of which occasionally tremble and emit small transports.

KID

That's a mitochondrion, right?
The one we're going to?

DRIVER

That's us.

KID

So why are we going the other way?

DRIVER

You have to keep with the flow.

Driver indicates the ocean of particles surrounding them.

Transports and cargo ships of various sizes and shapes flow in one smooth direction around the inside of the cell. Vehicles occasionally branch out, going to their destinations.

DRIVER

You can't just make a line to where you need to go. It's more efficient to move as one, to keep everything in one direction.

KID

That doesn't make
much sense.

DRIVER

It will. Besides, on
our way you can get
better acquainted
with the way things
work here.

The van merges with traffic and flows through the cell on a slow, circular course. It passes near a towering stack of gigantic flattened, pale blue disks.

EXT. GOLGI COMPLEX - DAY

At one end of the structure, sections of the disks swell out, form into bubbles and snap off. The bubbles float into the traffic. At the opposite end, bubbles veer out of traffic and fuse back into the structure.

DRIVER

That there is the
Golgi. Inner
transport. You can
use that to get from
place to place after
you've dumped cache.

EXT. ENDOPLASMIC RETICULUM - DAY

As the van edges around the Golgi, the horizon is obscured by what seems to be FLESH-COLORED AURORA BOREALIS. In some places it spans from the top of the cell to bottom, creating a maze around which much of the cellular traffic parks.

DRIVER

And here, the
Endoplasmic
Reticulum. Synthesis
and the like. Where a
lot of the locals
work. You know,
there's an old joke
that-

ZOOM!

Driver is cut short by a sporty, red molecule as it cuts across the path of the van, splitting the traffic.

Driver YELPS as the van swerves to the side, violently rolling in place. A bulky nutrient ship idles only inches from collision.

Driver fiddles with the numerous controls on the dash. The van slowly rights itself. In the distance, the molecule whips around transports, causing several small tangles in traffic.

DRIVER

The fool must be late
for his work. I don't
want to find out
about you driving
that fast.
understand?

Kid, just now peeking back over the dash, breaths heavy and shakes his head.

DRIVER

It's ridiculous to
have to hurry. Just
stick to routine and,
well...

Driver points at a nearby billboard floating in the middle of traffic. The billboard shows a group of workers assembled in front of what looks like stacks of glowing barrels. The workers are all smiling and waving, bordered by the words:

"Routine is the essence of security."

DRIVER

Routine is the
essence of security.
You'll want to
remember that.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - DAY

The traffic flow slowly curves away from the ER. The van separates from the bulk of traffic and ascends to a gap in a fold of the ER. It slowly approaches a small gap between the fleshy-fold and the dark blue of the cell membrane.

Brilliant light floods through the opening. The ER glistens where light touches it. The light illuminates otherwise unseen clouds of particles drifting in the atmosphere.

The van moves through the opening and plunges into a perpetual light emanating from:

KID

That's the --!

DRIVER

Right.

EXT. NUCLEUS - DAY

The Nucleus HUMS with an audible energy. As if the capital building were solely made of megawatt lightbulbs, the structure is a blinding sphere, divided into several hemispheres by the surrounding ER.

Bioluminescent particles pass to and from it, streaming dots of light. The structure's surface is permeated with small holes, porous openings that reveal only chance glimpses at the crystalline interior.

DRIVER

Administration,
routine and
maintenance of
sequencing, phase
control, security,
and sustenance. The
Nucleus.

Driver slows the van as it passes. Kid stares, enchanted by the sight. Here, the bustle and congestion of cellular traffic is gone. Everything flows with a smooth predetermination.

Golden transports softly sway nearby.
 Glittering portals give way to the passage
 of celestial bodies into the heart of the
 Nucleus. The sight is like a telescopic view
 of a microscopic corner of paradise.

DRIVER

That's where you'll
 find the Council.
 That is, if they want
 you to find them. If
 they call on you.

KID

How'd you get
 promoted to there?

DRIVER

Well, I still don't
 really know what my
 promotion is. But I
 can tell you this
 much: I had to work
 for it!

KID

So you like to remind
 me.

EXT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

The van continues out of the glowing orb of
 the Nucleus. Traffic, thickening once again,
 is moving less uniformly.

KID

What's going on?

Some distance ahead is a cellular collision.
 The hotrod molecule floats, mangled around a
 larger polypeptide tanker. Most of the
 traffic slowly parts and flows around the
 wreck. Driver slows the van, Looking for a
 chance to merge around.

KID

What a mess!
 Somebody's going to
 take care of that,
 right?

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Driver stops the van short of the wreck, unable to merge with the hastening flow on either side. Looking out over the traffic, he merely adjusts his grip on the controls.

Kid looks out the window at the damage. The driver of the molecule is still trapped inside the demolished vessel, pressing against his confines, looking more confused than panicked.

KID
What about him?

DRIVER
Him who?

WHUMP! Several dull THUMPS shake the van, causing it to bob slightly. Eyes wide, Kid watches the van's ceiling.

KID
What's going on?

DRIVER
You really ought to just have faith in the system. You'd be surprised how well things can go when you simply let them happen.

Now a barrage of THUMPS press down on the van. Kid edges forward in his seat and chances a peek up and through the windshield.

EXT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Kid peers up into the swirling flow above him. Particles of innumerable size, shape and speed sail in a uniform direction. Far above, the sky blue lipid membrane gently sways. A thin trail of external light dances across Kid's face.

WHUMP! A tremendous foot mashes down onto the windshield. Kid recoils, falling into

his seat. A group of workers trudge across the van, slightly jostling it. A balloon-like vesicle transport floats behind them, its lipid shell sealing shut.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - WRECKAGE - CONTINUOUS

The workers take positions on top of the wrecked particle and the idling polypeptide tanker. Bent double, they scrutinize the surface of both transports, squinting their bulging eyes thin.

Two workers straddle the mangled junction between the particle and the tanker, hands on hips. One, the burlier of the two, scratches his head and then runs a hand over the ragged seam of the wreck. He turns to PRO, his partner.

BURLY

Pro, look here. This looks like a covalent junction. The impact may have fused the tanker with the particle.

PRO

Would that were so. Then we wouldn't have to worry about salvaging anything.

Pro scans the flow, watching the sea of particles ease by. He crouches low and edges to the particle's window. He knocks on the window and signals to the pilot within. The pilot tries to open the door, but its pinned shut.

PRO

Your orders?

The pilot shuffles through his cluttered cockpit. He slaps a handful of papers onto the cracked windshield. Pro looks over the orders briefly and then turns to the rest of his crew.

PRO

Let's split!

The crew set about the wreckage. They crawl over and under the transports, trying to wedge between the two. As he passes, Burly hands Pro a glovelike device.

BURLY

And then?

PRO

And then we split.

Pro puts on the device, which begins to faintly glow. With the glove on, he reaches through the windshield, which indents like a windblown bubble, and snatches up the pilot's work orders. The windshield snaps back into place.

PRO

I don't want to spend
any more time here
than necessary.

INT. WRECKED PARTICLE - CONTINUOUS

The pilot hangs in his seat, watching after Pro's departing feet. He slumps back, closes his eyes and sighs. The particle vibrates now and again. The VOICES of the crew outside are muffled and distorted. The pilot's eyes peek open, alerted.

He cautiously sits up, stretching to see over the bent dash. Ahead, deep in the illumined flow, something massive and dark approaches. The pilot squints against the light, trying to make out the shape.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - WRECKAGE - CONTINUOUS

The crew strain in unison, pulling and pushing at the wreckage. The particle is all but wrapped around the base of the tanker. Burly bends a sliver of the particle away.

PRO

(supervising)
Let's get some more
leverage under the

base there. Careful
not to damage the
tanker.

BURLY
I'm more concerned
about damaging
myself.

PRO
Huh, this might as
well be fused
together! Perhaps if
we can rotate...

Pro trails away, his attention suddenly elsewhere. He searches the flow in front of the wreck, squinting against the various points of light. Something sinister is approaching.

In the distance, a deep, resonating HUM fades into existence, faint but menacing. A tremendous shadow looms between the flittering transports, slowly creeping toward the wreckage. Pro's eyes widen. He spins to face his crew.

PRO
Let's move! Now! Get
this heap apart on
the double!

The crew furiously lash at the wreckage, GRUNTING as they strain to pull the particle free from the undamaged tanker. Pro hops down into the junction with the crew and pushes against the tanker. The menacing HUM grows louder.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Kid is a ball of nervous energy. Unable to keep still, he swivels in his seat, now watching the crew struggle with the wreckage, now gaping behind the van at the dark shape looming nearer. The deep HUMMING steadily grows louder, more glottal.

KID

Okay, no joking now.
 No vague answers.
 What is this?

Driver takes an eternity to answer. He fiddles with a few controls, adjusts his seat, watches the flow pass by. Finally, he looks at Kid hard. The booming HUM is growing all but deafening.

DRIVER
 Maintenance.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - CONTINUOUS

A horde of particles travelling in the flow scatters away from the immense shape. Like a Leviathan awakening from the depths, the HUMMING terror pushes beyond the smaller transports as they veer far out of its trajectory.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - WRECKAGE - CONTINUOUS

The crew HUFF in unison, still desperately trying to separate the wreckage. Burly GROANS loudly and snaps another small section of the particle loose. Wide-eyed, Pro peeks back at the flow from around the tanker.

Surging out from the abyss of the flow, the LYSOSOME edges dangerously near to the wreckage. A solid nightmare somehow misplaced in an aqueous dream, the lysosome looks like a floating block of hellish granite.

PRO
 Keep on this! Someone
 take my spot! If it
 gets too close, we
 ditch. Keep with
 procedure and
 rendezvous at our
 transport.

Pro wedges himself free from the wreckage. The bellowing HUM resounds off of every nearby surface. Pro crawls over to the cockpit of the tanker and taps hard on the

windshield. The pilot glances up and
flinches, just now aware of Pro.

PRO
Your orders?

EXT. CYTOPLASM - CONTINUOUS

PRO
Go, go! Move it!

Pro crouches on the tanker's storage bin,
now connected to Driver's van. With some
difficulty, the van gradually lugs forward.
It noisily heaves by the demolished particle
and the abandoned tanker cockpit. Both
pilots stare from within.

The van swoops down into the flow,
disappearing among countless transports. The
tanker pilot leans out of his window,
watching the van, and his cache, vanish. He
doesn't notice the shadow slowly stretching
over him.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Pro acrobatically swings into an open window
while keeping an eye on the trailer behind
the van. Kid fidgets in his seat.

PRO
Well this was a
fortunate
coincidence. I
suppose. Would have
been a setback to
lose all of that.

DRIVER
Coincidence? Pro, I
don't recall ever
having heard you say
that before.

PRO
Enough close calls
will expand anybody's
vocabulary.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - WRECKAGE - CONTINUOUS

The tanker pilot slumps into his seat, resigned. The lysosome sits ominously still for a moment, gradually growing silent. Disturbingly silent. The edges of the lysosome begin to expand, stretching outward and curving down toward the wreck.

The driver of the particle struggles to wrench himself from the wreckage. Limbs flail, the dashboard is smashed, the windshield, warped and shattered. His efforts grow more frantic as the lysosome lurks closer.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Still wearing the glove-device, Pro folds the two work orders under his arm.

PRO
We ought to have gotten that done. I hate it when it's my shift to train new citizens after a coupling. Can hardly get a routine scrap job done, what with all the hands you have to hold.

Driver glances sideward at Pro and then indicates Kid.

PRO
So what do you make of all of this?

KID
Me?

PRO
You. Like what you've seen so far?

KID
I guess...yeah?

PRO

Not exciting enough
for you, is it? Well,
give it a few
couplings and you'll
be as old as the sore
sitting next to you.

KID

Actually, it's been a
bit much so far. I
still don't
understand a lot of
what's going on.

DRIVER

Two things, guys.
One, Pro, liking has
nothing to do with
routine. Like it or
not, there's
something greater
than what we want,
and that's--

PRO

The good of the
whole. It's just
smalltalk, Driver.

DRIVER

And two, Kid,
knowledge isn't a
requisite for obeying
routine.

PRO

(nudging Driver's
seat)
You can vouch for
that, I suppose.

Driver winces, but can only chuckle. The van
hauls through the flow, nearing an area
packed with the giant, pill-shaped
Mitochondria reactors.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - WRECKAGE - CONTINUOUS

The sides of the lysosome stretch and bend
until they nearly form a cage around the
wreckage. Then, with blinding speed, the

lysosome's sides SNAP shut, completely encasing the wreckage within its innards.

A series of HISSES and GROANS emanate from within. Nerve-rendering CACOPHONY. Then silence. The terror sluggishly HUMS back to life and elevates. The wreckage is vanished. The lysosome rotates and chugs deep into the cell depths.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - MITOCHONDRION - CONTINUOUS

The van emerges from traffic and descends. The floating structures are abuzz with activity. Similar transport vans dock, unload, and WHIZ around the array of bustling buildings. Several structures occasionally shudder, shaking like jelly.

The cytoplasm around them distorts, bends like a reflection in water. Shortly, flatbed transports carrying a gel-like, glowing substance zip away from the structures and into the flow, carrying heaps of a barrel-shaped, glowing substance.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

DRIVER

Mitochondria. Energy receptacle and conversion. We want left-aft, right up here.

EXT. MITOCHONDRION - CONTINUOUS

The mitochondrion is crawling with as much activity as a nuclear reactor combined with an auto plant. Workers push crates full of glowing barrels across docks. Cranes arch across the transport-dotted interior.

The van backs up to a docking bay, where an opaque worker directs his approach. The van secures a seal with the mitochondria and stops.

Immediately, the back of the van swings open. Several workers approach and unload

the disk-shaped cargo. A rotund worker approaches the van.

TILDE
GlucGo beta one, I
thought you'd gotten
lost for sure.

DRIVER
Not quite, Tilde.
Working well?

Kid leans forward, gawking at the squat Tilde. He looks out at the bustling loading deck. All of the mitochondrion workers are quite portly, a far cry from the emaciated workers throughout the rest of the cell.

TILDE
Well enough! I see
you got some extra
cargo with you this
time. That's unusual.

DRIVER
Not my idea. Tell it
to ace back there.

Pro comes out of the back, helping a worker with a heavy load away from the van.

PRO
It was a split
decision. Do or
don't. And you just
don't "don't."

DRIVER
So long as you can
justify what you do
"do."

PRO
And I can. A close
call for sure. Nearly
lost this rig. But
don't go pestering me
about it, Driver.
It's not glycogen,
but Tilde here can
still process this

stuff. Right, big
guy?

TILDE

Well... yes, I suppose
I can get around to
that. But I was
actually--

PRO

You'd have loved it.
Tilde. There we were,
piled under the aft
bend of the flow, up
to our necks in
debris. And in the
middle of it all is
this speedster,
wrapped around a
polypeptide like it
was his chromosome
partner.

DRIVER

A dent in the flow,
that's all it was.

PRO

Yeah, it probably did
look like that from
inside a transport.
Amazing how
perspective changes
when one isn't
sitting down all the
time. You still
should've seen it.

DRIVER

That and the way his
crew scampered off
when the lysosome was
still far off.

PRO

So they know their
orders, even if they
were a little eager
to follow them. Can't
say the same of your
galley, though.

Pro reaches through the open window and hands Kid one of the disc-shaped bundles.

PRO

You want to be useful?

Kid, at a loss, takes the bundle and steps out of the van. Pro points to a line of mito. workers handing down the cargo between each other, leading into the mitochondrion.

TILDE

Well, that's actually what I was talking about. Who is this new face?

DRIVER

I'm just showing him around. That's why we're a little behind. He's to relieve me of the rounds soon.

TILDE

Well, son, you seem to be more than capable of doing as good a job as Driver, here.

Pro stifles a sarcastic snicker.

DRIVER

You have any idea how annoying you can be?

TILDE

And don't mind these two. For as long as I can remember, they've bickered at each other.

PRO

Yeah, that's us.

DRIVER

Real bicker-buddies.

A loud, echoing BOOM is heard from within the mitochondrion. Workers run back and forth, heaving over stacks of the cargo down into the structure's hollow interior. TILDE pays it little attention.

TILDE

And what's this about
being relieved?
You're not through,
are you, Driver?

DRIVER

No, not through. Just
promoted.

TILDE

(regarding Pro)
"Just" promoted?

DRIVER

I'll be answering my
summons to the
Nucleic Council after
this.

TILDE

Well, you've earned
it for sure. Kept
this place
(loudly)
Turning and churning.

The mitochondrion crew, still handling the cargo, don't miss a beat.

CREW

Turning and churning!

TILDE

And I'm sure Pro will
get his too soon.

Driver can only start a snide remark--

PRO

Nix it!

A second BOOM echoes. TILDE turns, agitated, and yells into the structure's opening.

TILDE
Slow down! Move it
back to position two!
(back to DRIVER)
What I wouldn't give
for older,
experienced hands.

PRO
I hear that.

A third BOOM, this time louder. TILDE throws down his hardhat and storms into the mitochondrion.

PRO
And that.

TILDE
What did I do to
deserve this? Your
parents would implode
if they saw you now!

Driver and Pro smile knowingly as workers finish unloading the van and close it. Kid flips his bundle to a worker and boards the van. A flagman approaches and coaxes the van up and away from the bustling dock.

INT. VAN CONTINUOUS

Driver guides the van into the flow of cellular traffic.

KID
Why does Tilde sound
and look differently
than everyone else?

DRIVER
Tilde? He's a mito
worker. All mito
workers are
foreigners, always
have been. They
receive citizenship

once they can get
work done.

KID

It doesn't bother the
elders that
they're...different?

PRO

We're all different,
Kid.

DRIVER

That's right. We are
all individuals here.

PRO

Mito workers are
useful. The elders
would approve of a
virus even, so long
as it was working
toward the same goals
we are.

KID

But they're not?

DRIVER

(chuckling)
No. No they are not.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - GOLGI APPARATUS -
CONTINUOUS

Like an airborne parking garage, the Golgi
is a ceaseless bustle of floating and
walking traffic. Workers and commuters dot
the area, all loading or unloading from the
vesicles as they meld into the structure or
pinch off from it.

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - CAUSEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Pro, Driver and Kid meander on a causeway
between the Golgi's giant, stacked
compartments. Citizens hustle in every
direction, like holiday travelers at an
airport. Pro finishes talking with a Golgi
worker and rejoins Driver and Kid.

PRO
I love your work.

WORKER
I love your work.

PRO
Can't believe this.
We've got a second or
two before our
transport gets here.
This is beyond
inefficient. This
is...

KID
Unefficient?

DRIVER
It's nothing new.
You're just not used
to it is all.

PRO
What I wouldn't give
for a vesicle and my
crew to pilot it. Get
me around all of this
nonsense.

KID
Nonefficient?

PRO
Knock it off.

DRIVER
Welcome to
transportation for
the masses. Pro.
Enjoy it while you
can.

PRO
(eyeing an attractive
female)
I just might.

Pro wades through the sea of faces toward
the female citizen, ANA, who reads an
overhead display of vesicle arriving and

departing times. We can't deny that she's attractive, not so gaunt as she is slender, something in her eyes sparkling.

ANA

Don't even bother.

PRO

I didn't say anything yet.

ANA

Oh, good. Keep it up, then.

Ana smirks at Pro for a fraction of a second before returning her gaze to the display. She doesn't seem quite prepared to see him so close to her.

PRO

Hello, Ana. How did you even know I was here?

ANA

I have this perimeter. Whenever you get anywhere near it, I get chills down my neck.

PRO

That could be good. I mean, it could mean either one of two things, right?

ANA

Pro, I can't think of anyone who hasn't explained it to you before so I'll just clarify things for you one last time.

PRO

Very kind of you.

ANA

Unless we're coded to be together for the coupling, which we are not, we have no business in pursuing these trivialities.

PRO

We?

ANA

You. It would be a breach in routine.

PRO

I know that.

ANA

And you're still wasting energy on it? There. Vesicle nine, exo site gamma.

Ana turns and starts to walk away. Pro cuts her off.

PRO

Not to breach routine, no. Ana, have you ever heard of simply enjoying a challenge?

Ana ducks around Pro, trying hard to conceal the smile creeping onto her face.

ANA

Sure. How about a rejection?

PRO

Not familiar with it, sorry.

Pro watches Ana disappear in the crowd. He shuffles back to Driver and Kid. Driver is shaking in place, silently chortling.

KID

Was that your coupling partner?

PRO
Don't talk to me,
Kid.

KID
It's just a question.

PRO
Well it's a dumb
question, then. And
just ask Driver, I
don't answer dumb
questions. They waste
time and energy and
yield no increase to
anything useful.

KID
(to Driver)
Then why did you tell
me to ask him that?

Pro stares daggers at Driver, who only bobs
in place, holding his sides and rocking with
silent laughter.

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - PORT - CONTINUOUS

Pro, Driver and Kid wait in a long line.
This section of the Golgi is packed like an
aquatic Ellis Island. Ambient MUSIC drones
through the area, lulling the shifting
masses.

KID
So when am I going to
be assigned a
coupling partner?

PRO
Eager little guy.

DRIVER
You already have
been, Kid. The
Nucleic Council makes
sure every registered
citizen is assigned a
coupling partner.

KID

Well when do we meet?

PRO

You won't know who it is until the coupling, when the centrioles migrate apart.

Pro points up. Through the translucent blue of the Golgi, the choked traffic of the flow is still visible.

One of the centrioles rests just above. It looks something like a dense pack of limbless tree trunks hanging in mid-air.

KID

When's that?

DRIVER

Don't worry about it. When the time comes, trust me, you'll know. The Council aligns you with a coupling partner, residence space, security rating, work details and tools to get that work done.

KID

(pointing at Pro's glove)
You mean like this thing?

PRO

Watch it! You don't have the security clearance to mess with "this thing."

KID

Can't I just see it?

PRO

No. Permeability is not a right, it's a privilege.

CLEANER

(o/s)

Sure enough!

CLEANER, a bulbous and stout worker, strolls by, towing with him a hefty rack of various bottles, mops and bags.

CLEANER

I could use me some of that permeable stuff. A guy's going to mess his back up goods, having to reach around things. Now going through, that's the ways.

DRIVER

Kid, this is Cleaner. Cleaner takes care of... That is, he... What exactly is it that you do around here, Cleaner?

CLEANER

What am I not doings? All them messes you makes, I'm two steps behinds.

KID

You mean maintenance? Like that lysosome?

CLEANER

No, no. That's a no, no. See, lysosomes eats the mess up till it's good and gone. Me, I just scrubs till it don't bother nobody for a while.

PRO

Then scrub off,
you're starting to
bother me.

CLEANER

So you sounds more
jerky than usual.
Pro. And now I'm
asking why that is.

PRO

Forget it. Not worth
talking about it to
you.

CLEANER

Oh, I sees. Ana
problems.

DRIVER

That obvious, huh?

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - PORT - CONTINUOUS

Lines are moving. Travelers hoist up their
baggage and shove them onto a conveyor belt.

The bags slug forward, pressing into a
translucent bubble. As they do, the luggage
is stripped away and left outside the
bubble. This is microscopic airport luggage
security.

Contents pass before the watchful eye of a
grizzled Golgi worker. He leans forward,
staring into the bubble, drowsing.

As the contents pass out the other side,
sections of the bubble pinch off and float
down a causeway to the transports.

Pro, Driver and Kid are among a throng of
citizens at the head of a line.

The line leads to a dead end, stopping just
short of the rippling wall, where a worker
is removing a barrier. The worker goes to
her desk and gets on the intercom.

WORKER

Attention, citizens.
Exo site epsilon is
now boarding for
vesicles four through
seven. Please board
with caution and
compliance with
routine.

Pro is pushing his way forward, in mid-
argument with Driver.

PRO

Then why go and blab
it to somebody like
Cleaner? Why even
talk to him?
Everybody knows
cleaners' security
ratings are as low as
they get.

DRIVER

You're just
misplacing some
tension, I bet. The
sooner you give her
up, the better you'll
feel.

PRO

Not a chance. I'm
bound for a promotion
soon enough.

DRIVER

That's what it'll
take.

The crowd is plowing ever closer to the
wall.

PRO

What, you think I
couldn't make it
without a promotion?

DRIVER

I'm not saying that.
You are.

PRO
 Because if that's
 what you think I--

SLOOP! Pro passes through the wall of the Golgi. The wall curves and bounces, ripples glide down the wall.

SLORP! Driver follows. Kid, unnerved, slows down. The crowd presses around him, rushing in.

Then...BLORP! Kid is jostled through the wall.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - GOLGI TRANSPORT -
 CONTINUOUS

Several bulbs of wall stretch out from one side of the Golgi, forming concave ovals. Inside are the jammed bodies of dozens of travelers, as confined and crammed as any subway car.

INT. GOLGI TRANSPORT - CONTINUOUS

DRIVER
 I don't know what
 makes her so alluring
 to you anyway.

PRO
 I can't explain it either. It's just a chemistry we have.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - GOLGI TRANSPORT -
 CONTINUOUS

The transport pilot mashes a few controls and the vesicle drifts away from the Golgi, popping out from its side. The vesicle bobs in place for a moment, then slowly drifts out into the flow.

INT. GOLGI TRANSPORT - CONTINUOUS

As the passengers settle the Golgi vesicle pilot turns on the cab intercom.

PILOT

Okay, folks. Thank you for choosing vesicle fleet epsilon for your travelling needs. I trust you all know the routine, so sit back and relax and we'll get you back to work in no time.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - CONTINUOUS

The vesicle putters between a mass of smaller particles. The flow bends up and around the folds of the ER.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

Several bubbles of luggage emit from the top of the parked vesicle, which pulls away from a glowing port of the porous nucleus.

A number of passengers gather their luggage and walk down the landing pad, Pro, Driver and Kid among them.

COUNCILMAN 1

Understand then, citizen Pro, that no one has made any implicating statements at the moment. This is not an accusatory committee.

INT. NUCLEUS - COUNCIL BRANCH - CONTINUOUS

A panel of Elders tower over Pro, seated on gilded pedestals. The room looks like King Midas gave the Supreme Court a rubdown.

Pro stands on a small platform. Driver and Kid sit nearby. A stenographer feverishly types away.

Seating on the floor is occupied by members of Pro's crew, Quince and pilots of particles that were nearby the tanker.

COUNCILMAN 1

Rather we simply wanted a firsthand description of the events that took place.

PRO

Councilman, I understand that the salvage operation was a breach in routine but--

COUNCILMAN 2

Good citizen Pro, if I may lend you a word of caution. The more you give justification for the incidents yet to be reviewed by this subcommittee, the more likely your statements may be used against you should this case go before an accusatory committee.

COUNCILMAN 3

Simply answer what is asked. Anything more is excess.

COUNCILMAN 1

And excess, as I'm sure you know...

COUNCILMAN 1.2.3/PRO

...is a diluted form of waste.

PRO

I understand, Councilman. Thank you.

Councilman 1 motions to an orderly standing across the room.

The orderly stands in front of a series of pneumatic tubes. The tubes twist and turn up the wall, extending above the ceiling.

The orderly presses a key and a file slides down one of the tubes. He takes up the file and runs it through a section of the wall, encasing it file in a bubble. The wall slowly closes back up.

The orderly sails the bubble through the air.

COUNCILMAN 2

Now again. Your statements coincide with those of good citizen Driver and other witnesses of the incident.

COUNCILMAN 1

But what we want to know is whether or not you put your own judgement before the prerogatives of routine.

Pro looks hurt. Driver and Kid react. Councilman 1 gently plucks the file bubble from the air.

COUNCILMAN 1

(while reading)
From your file we know that you've been with us through numerous couplings. Always on task. Efficient. Promoted to crew head some time ago.

COUNCILMAN 3

And according to your crew, your appreciation of routine has been exemplary.

Pro glances at Burly and the crew. Burly scratches his head and shrugs. Pro smiles at the joke.

COUNCILMAN 1

Which is what makes this incident so peculiar. Judging your file, the council had no reason to suspect such behavior from you.

COUNCILMAN 2

Nor would we come to expect it again, good citizen Pro. Should we? We know that you've been due a promotion for some time now.

COUNCILMAN 1

And you've been making extra efforts in order to attain this promotion, yes?

PRO

Yes, councilman. That's why I made every effort I could to deliver that shipment to the nearest possible dump site.

COUNCILMAN 2

I see.

PRO

We all know that lysosomes have no use for materials of any sort. Their main purpose is to transport stranded citizens.

The councilmen stir in their seats, secretly glancing at one another.

PRO

I left the pilots for
lysositic transport.
Leaving the tanker
would have been a
waste. And after all,
isn't excess waste?
And isn't waste
destruction?

COUNCILMAN 2

Do not quote criteria
to a board of elders,
citizen! We wrote the
law and we are the
law. Authority rests
on this council, not
on your credo!

The whole of the courtroom flinches at the rebuke. Pro looks over to Burly. Again, a scratch and a shrug. No joke this time.

COUNCILMAN 1

I believe what my
colleague means to
express, good citizen
Pro, is that in
pursuing a promotion,
one stands to lose
perspective.

COUNCILMAN 3

We're concerned that
you may have breached
routine for your own
gains.

A MURMUR sets across the court. This is next to high treason. Kid watches the elders brood, then looks at Pro. He's obviously pinned in.

Hushed words escalate, echoing around the court. A councilman frowns, seems ready to speak, when--

KID

(rising)

Councilman! I saw the whole incident!

Murmurs swell into HUBBUBS.

KID

Pro didn't act for his own benefit. I know he didn't.

COUNCILMAN 1

(motioning for the orderly)
Ah, and this is?

DRIVER

This is my pupil, councilman. My replacement upon promotion.

COUNCILMAN 2

Do not presume, good citizen Driver. Interruptions in a board of elders' ruling is not only a breach in routine, but rude!

Driver promptly shuts his mouth. Pro looks at Kid and shakes his head.

COUNCILMAN 1

(retrieving Kid's file, a single sheet)
Hmm. Newly acquired glucogen pilot. Top of his class. Originally wanted to work in nerve reception.

Burly snickers loudly. Kid reacts.

COUNCILMAN 1

Do you know any reason why this board should not advance this case to an accusatory committee?

Can you lend any more clarity to this case, Kid?

KID

Councilman, I saw the whole thing. I saw Pro order his crew to get the tanker free from the wreck. I saw them ripping that nutrient apart trying to get it free.

COUNCILMAN 2

Yes, and so you saw him decide to practically hijack it as well?

KID

No. I saw him risk his life trying to do his work.

The court settles back in. Pro eases, watching Kid with a glimmer of appreciation. Burly leans forward, gaping like he's watching a film.

KID

Once he saw the lysosome, Pro himself started ripping at the wreck. He didn't decide to hitch the tanker's cargo to our van until the lysosome was right on top of him. So if he did act in his own interests, it seems peculiar for him to wait until the last moment to get selfish.

The councilmen are taken by this. They confer, leaving the courtroom to hold its breath.

Burly and the crew fidget uncontrollably. All eyes are on the whispering judges, except Pro, whose gaze follows Kid as he sits back down.

DRIVER
(under his breath)
Kid's got moxie.

INT. NUCLEUS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The hallway seems like a museum wing, a stretch of elegant space between the inner and outer walls of the Nucleus. The outer wall is a fortified barrier from the cytoplasm.

The inner wall is a curved, porous sheet leading to the various courts of the Elders. An arched ceiling echoes the slightest whisper.

Kid and Driver walk together. The hallway is rustling with foot traffic as citizens let out of similar hearings. We see proceedings through opened doors.

DRIVER
You just stick with
Pro until you get
your work orders. And
stay out of trouble.
Kid.

KID
What do you mean?

DRIVER
No one likes an
advocate. Getting
involved with things
that don't concern
you is a bad idea.

KID
You mean with Pro?

DRIVER
You shouldn't have
said anything. The
Elders can come to a

just decision without
any help from us.

They stop at an opening in the Nuclear Membrane, a guarded gateway leading to platforms outside the Nucleus. Citizens pour into and out of the opening.

Driver puts a hand on Kid's shoulder.

DRIVER

Well, you remember
the route?

KID

I think so.

DRIVER

Because I don't want
to see a report about
how a newbie pilot
ended up in a lymph
node or anything like
that.

KID

Don't worry, Driver.
You taught me enough
to get by. And
besides, if anything
does go wrong, I can
just blame you!

Driver laughs. A detached voice buzzes through the air, giving periodic announcements.

ANNOUNCER

Shift change theta.
Rotation and
commencement shortly.
Proceed to
predetermined
destinations.

The floor slightly wavers. The interior wall ripples and begins to creep up and clockwise. The porous openings along the inner wall begin to align with different courtrooms.

DRIVER
And you're not going
to drive too fast?

KID
Get out of here! Go.
go get promoted.

DRIVER
Tell Pro I said
congratulations on
the trial. And tell
him he'll have to
work double to catch
up with me now!

Driver steps into a nearby courtroom.

KID
I'll see you again.
won't I?

DRIVER
Sooner or later, Kid.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

Kid walks out onto a platform. Several large
clusters of citizens pack around idling
Golgi transports.

Kid spots Pro and his crew and goes to them.
Burly sights Kid as he approaches.

BURLY
L'il squirt! Hey,
Kid!

Burly and the crew surround Kid, all talking
at once, commending him quite loudly. Kid
can't smile for all his flinching.

BURLY
Oh hey, ease up boys.
I forgot we've got a
nerve reception guy
here! They're all so
sensitive!

PRO
Split, guys.

The crowd disperses, giving Pro room to approach Kid.

PRO
Kid, I love your
work.

Kid finally smiles.

EXT. VESICLE - CONTINUOUS

Anchored in cytosol by microfibers, like a giant kite on a multitude of strings, the vesicle is formed of the same bubbly blue material as the cell's surface.

A golgi transport speeds away from the vesicle. Pro, Kid and the crew walk into an opening, near one of the many microfiber anchor ports.

The entrance is flanked by two guards. The guards pick up as Pro, Kid and the crew approach.

GUARD 1
You're all here for
the ceremony?

Pro flashes some papers at the guard.

PRO
Affirm that. This is
the finishing
ceremony for Citizen
Hal?

They start in. One of the guards heads them off.

GUARD 1
(picking up Pro's
papers)
That's right, but it
says here that one of
you is a transport
class. Which of ya?

KID
It's me. I'm--

GUARD 1
Yeah, you're. You're
looking for that
entrance down there.

The guard points out an anchor/entrance port
further down on the vesicle.

PRO
Can we bypass the
seating arrangements
this time?

The guards regard one another.

GUARD 1
I don't know...

GUARD 2
You're only supposed
to observe the
ceremonies with your
own caste. You know
that.

GUARD 1
Yeah, no caste
mixing.

PRO
Well, the kid's new,
see. We want to show
him around a bit more
before we turn him
loose on everybody.

GUARD 1
It's not a good idea.

KID
Look, if it's any
trouble, I'll be fine
going down there.

PRO
It's not trouble,
Kid. This isn't a
breach in routine
we're after here,
just a faux pas.

Burly steps close to the guard, menace on his huge face.

BURLY

Yeah, a fawpah. And you're not the fashion police...are you?

The guards back down.

GUARD 2

Well, we...

GUARD 1

Let me see that again.

The guard takes up Pro's papers.

GUARD 1

(nervous)
Oh yeah! Says right here, the kid's got a temp security clearance to sit up here.

GUARD 2

Sorry about that, guys.

GUARD 1

Yeah. Go on in, fellahs. Enjoy the show.

Pro, Kid and the crew enter. The guards take a silent moment to regain their composure and pride.

GUARD 1

You really turned into a wimp there, man. Completely bucked under pressure. You are still an amateur at this stuff.

The second guard isn't phased. He's too busy with--

GUARD 2
Foe poh? Fah...fah
pas?

INT. VESICLE - CONTINUOUS

The vesicle auditorium looks like a golfball turned inside out. Seats line in every direction, spanning the entire space within save for a stage at the very bottom.

Seat aisles and lanes are labeled with bright yellow numbers indicating security clearances. Citizens file into their seats according to their security ranking. The hierarchy is exposed:

The lower seats are taken by citizens with priority jobs, security, nucleic workers.

Further up, seats are occupied by energy handlers, transport drivers and data processors.

The nosebleeds are taken by routine janitorial workers.

The hollow vesicle hums with COMMOTION AND CHATTER as hundreds of citizens take their seats, visit with equals and sneer at lower ranking neighbors.

As Pro, Kid and the crew sit, the luminescence within the vesicle slowly fades. Within moments the crowd is swallowed in an awed hush. A spotlight illuminates the stage.

An extremely tall citizen approaches the stage from a side entrance. His movements are deliberate and drawn out. Ceremonious.

Pro nudges Kid.

PRO
(whispering)
Here. You'll want one
of these pretty soon.

Pro takes out a docket from a pouch on the seatback in front of him and hands it to Kid. The docket is labeled with what looks like responsive reading.

KID
(whispering)
They say the same
thing every time?

PRO
(whispering)
It's a tradition.

Kid frowns.

PRO
(whispering)
It's just something
that we do. I know it
seems foolish, but
when it comes my
time, I'll want the
same done for me.
I'll have earned it.

The tall citizen raises his hands, turning round while speaking loudly through the vesicle.

TALL
Welcome, loyal
citizens. Your
attendance at this
special ceremony is
appreciated.

Then, some reading from their docket, others reciting from memory, the whole of the vesicle responds. Pro and Kid read from the same docket.

CITIZENS
(simultaneously)
It is our pleasure
and honor to show our
allegiance at this
and all other
opportunities.

TALL

Your presence here is
routine, an
obligation to the
grand cycle of
citizenship.

CITIZENS

(simultaneously)
And it is a cycle
which we come here to
celebrate.

TALL

So another cycle ends
and begins anew.
Obedience to routine,
to the benefit of the
whole reaps the
ultimate reward
of...being finished.

The citizens put down their docket and turn
their attention to the stage.

A side entrance to the stage peeps open. Two
guards escort an elderly and decrepit
citizen into the spotlight.

The old citizen smiles, his cherubic face
wrinkles all over. He waves a limp hand to
several familiar faces in the dark crowd.

TALL

Citizens, we are here
to honor the efforts
and contributions of
Silas.

Silas bows his head, shielding his squinting
eyes from the light. He seems to anticipate
what is to come and couldn't be happier.

CITIZENS

(simultaneously)
Silas.

The tall citizen signals to unseen workers
overhead. A single, bulbous lipid is
squeezed out from the top of the vesicle and
is quickly replaced by another.

The displaced lipid sphere floats down, easing into the center of the vesicle. The spotlight cuts off.

The vesicle is thrown into darkness. Outside light seeping through the shifting, membranous vesicle wall makes silhouettes of the sea of audience faces.

Slowly, a soft blue light warms the vesicle back to life. The floating lipid lights up like a tube television set. It flickers and spits light and sound as static runs across its spherical screen.

TALL

(over-dramatic)
And now,
Silas... "This Was
Your Work!"

The lipid screen crackles with color as the title key appears: "This Was Your Work!" An accompanying track of tacky VARIETY-SHOW MUSIC blares up.

The convex image on the lipid broadcasts to all sides of the vesicle.

INT. VESICLE - LIPID BROADCAST - CONTINUOUS

The title key dissolves into an image of a workshop production floor. Swarms of conveyor belts speed in every direction. The belts carry along various shapes and objects, some of them amorphous blobs, others intricate wheels of spokes.

It looks like something out of "Modern Times." Dozens of workers hunch over the conveyor belts. They expertly assemble crude objects from the various shapes.

ANNOUNCER

Deep inside ribosome
eighty-two B,
sublevel four, sector
triple-C,
constructing third-
wave components for

the production of
polypeptide elements
for use in the
fabrication of
acceleration codes
for certain carrier
proteins. worked
Silas.

A tiny figure, far in the background, looks up from a speeding conveyor belt. It is Silas, looking somewhat younger. He waves to the camera.

A production floor foreman walks past. He sees Silas waving. Too far away for any audio to come through, the foreman silently barks Silas back to work. Silas hunches back over the conveyor belt.

A small indicator appears over Silas' head.

ANNOUNCER

And for his
unwavering commitment
to his work, Silas
was eventually
promoted to the
production levels of
apprentice...

The image of the production floor dissolves to a later time.

The indicator pops back up over a worker's head, this time next to a conveyor belt that is a little closer to the camera.

Silas' face is easier to recognize. He looks older.

ANNOUNCER

Craftsman...

The image dissolves again. The indicator inches closer. Silas is older.

ANNOUNCER

Master craftsman...

Again.

ANNOUNCER

Chief craftsman...

And again.

ANNOUNCER

And finally, alpha-
producer.

Silas is now almost next to the camera. He looks very old.

His worn hands race around the objects, snapping them into place. He pauses long enough to glance up at the camera and smile.

A passing foreman barks him back to work.

The image dissolves to a close-up documentary shot of Silas. He's beaming.

SILAS

There's really no
greater honor than to
know that you've been
of some use to the
whole, that you've
helped make it
happen.

The image cuts to a longer shot of Silas at the conveyor belt. He leans against the belt's support rack, satisfied with another day's work.

SILAS

How do I feel about
being finished? Well,
I love my work.

His hands fidget and twitch uncontrollably.

Far in the background, almost impossible to see, a worker hustles across the floor with an armful of boxes. He loses his balance and falls into an open end of machinery, out of sight.

FWOOMP! The speed of the conveyors and the machinery immediately launch the worker back

out another end of the line. He flops down onto the floor amid a hail of scattering assembly line parts.

SILAS

I almost regret
getting to retire.

Fellow workers rush to his side. They set about repairing the machines. Silas turns to look behind him, disturbed by the hullabaloo.

Before he can see anything, however, an offscreen direction grabs back his attention. The edge of a hand is barely seen in the corner of the screen, waving Silas' attention back to the camera.

SILAS

Almost.

INT. VESICLE - CONTINUOUS

The broadcast ends and the lights come back on.

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - HALLWAY - LATER

A highly secure and isolated wing of the Golgi. A worker walks with Silas down a long hallway lined with doors on one side.

TALL

And so we hereby
congratulate Silas,
for his is no small
achievement. Faith
and devotion to
routine do indeed
reap great rewards.

The worker opens a door and ushers Silas inside.

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - ROOM - LATER

The room looks an awful lot like a doctor's office: charts and anatomy posters. Shelves and a door. Only the far wall is bare.

CITIZENS

(simultaneously)
 We hope to follow his
 example and to
 contribute to the
 whole however as is
 seen fit.

The worker rushes through a series of procedures with Silas. It seems more like a physical examination. He silently asks Silas questions, marking his answers on a clipboard.

Silas breathes into one contraption, gazes through another and presses his shaking hands onto yet another.

The worker gives Silas several small pills, a pat on the back and then leaves Silas alone in the room. Silas waits peacefully. Everything is still.

CITIZENS

(simultaneously)
 We love your work.

Something plays across Silas' face. He turns his head to the far wall. He hears something. Something slowly drawing near.

INT. VESICLE - PRESENT

The ceremony is over, the stage is bare. Citizens file into lines and exit.

Pro, Kid and the crew wait in line. Burly stretches his massive arms.

BURLY

Oh boy! Back to work
 for us, huh?

PRO

Back to work.

BURLY

I can't take too much
 of this downtime.
 Need to get to prying
 at things.

PRO

I'm just glad that I'm not stuck on some fabrication line detail like old Silas was.

BURLY

Heard that.

KID

Huh? But didn't you just say that--

PRO

I love his work, Kid.
Doesn't mean I have to like it.

KID

Oh, I get it. Like Driver said, liking has nothing to do with routine, right? So long as you get the job done until it's done.

BURLY

(flexing)
Or until a bigger, stronger guy takes your place, huh?

Pro laughs and swats at Burly. He stops short, looking up and ahead, near the exit.

Two gilded workers from the Nucleus are at the portal. They stop several citizens on their way out.

GILDED 1

Citizen Pro?

Hands point down into the emptying seats. The Nucleic workers start down the stairway toward Pro, slowed by the opposing flow of the crowd.

BURLY

Huh. That don't look
too good. does it?

PRO

No it doesn't. But
that does.

Pro points to another exit across the
vesicle where Ana is waiting in line.

PRO

(to Burly)
You charm these guys
for a while. I'm
going to win Ana
over.

BURLY

Business as usual.
then?

PRO

Strict routine.
Burly. Nothing less.

Pro bounds away.

KID

Why's he always after
her?

BURLY

He drives her as
crazy as she does
him. Seems only fair.
Used to be coupling
partners till she got
promoted or
something.

The Nucleic workers block the line next to
Burly and the crew.

GILDED 1

Citizen Pro?

BURLY

(whispering to Kid)
Watch this!
(to Nucleic workers)

Yes, that would be
me.

A gilded citizen hands a series of documents
to Burly and turns to leave.

BURLY
Woah. woah. Time is
energy and I don't
have a lot of either
one right now. What's
this all about?

GILDED 1
Supplemental ruling
of the Elders' Board
of Incidents.

BURLY
Yeah. so?

GILDED 1
You've been
temporarily
reassigned, effective
immediately.

Burly stares at the papers in his hand. The
Nucleic workers retreat back up the stairs.
Burly looks across the vesicle at Pro.

Ana is turning her shoulder to Pro. Pro
shrugs and turns back to Burly and Kid,
looking for a response. Upon seeing them,
however, his playful smile fades.

Painfully slow, Burly and the crew leave.
Kid lingers for a moment but turns to catch
up with Burly. The papers lie in an aisle
seat.

Pro is left alone in the vast and void
auditorium.

EXT. CELL MEMBRANE - LATER

A sleek transport idles just outside of a
transport protein. The lipid membrane
ripples with energy. Shafts of light seep
out from between the flowing lipids, washing
the transport in light.

VOICE
 Cleared for access.
 GlucAse forty-niner.

The protein tip opens.

INT. CYTOPLASM - MEMBRANE SHELF - CONTINUOUS

The bubbly blue lipid ground rolls gently,
 swaying with the cytosolic flow of the
 particle-filled sky above.

Sporadic proteins jut out from the lipid
 shelf like islands in a solid ocean.
 Particles and ships harbor next to the
 proteins before launching up and into the
 flow.

Cranes twist across the horizon, carrying
 flats of glowing material to and from large
 transports. It looks something like rush
 hour at an industrial ship yard.

A nearby protein tip opens. The sleek
 transport ascends through the membrane and
 settles onto the shelf.

The pilot rolls down his window as a port
 worker approaches, marking his clipboard.

PORT WORKER
 Your orders?

The pilot hands over a stack of papers. The
 port worker scratches his head.

PORT WORKER
 (calling out)
 Shelf manager,
 please!

A small, ground-level portal on the protein
 opens. Quince emerges, carrying a slightly
 more decorative clipboard. He takes his time
 approaching the transport.

QUINCE
 Your request?

PORT WORKER

A priority shipment,
sir. It needs your
approval.

Quince glances over the last few pages,
stamping a seal here and there. He marks his
clipboard.

QUINCE
Your arrival time is
slightly early.

PILOT
There was some
turbulence via
adrenal glands.

QUINCE
Not my concern. You
will delay your
departure into the
flow until such time
as specified in your
work orders. You will
also receive the
standard demerit for
divergence from
routine.

PILOT
Hey, hold it there. I
can't help it if I'm
accelerated during
approach.

Quince scribbles on his clipboard.

PILOT
What? What are you
writing there?

QUINCE
I'm noting your
disposition. Rather
unsatisfactory.

PILOT
Oh come on! This is
ridiculous!

QUINCE

Ridiculous or not,
 pilot, should you
 choose to contest it,
 you will need to do
 so through the
 appropriate channels.
 File a complaint with
 an Elder review
 counsel. Until you do
 so any difficulty
 offered here and now
 will go reported as
 per routine.
 Understood?

The pilot clenches his jaw. He manages a
 silent nod.

QUINCE

Good, then.
 (looking back over
 the papers)
 Your stated arrival
 time has now
 transpired. Any
 further delay will
 result in additional
 demerits.

Quince stamps papers here and there.

QUINCE

Now these are proper.
 Carry on to your
 predetermined
 destination.

The pilot reaches for his work orders but
 Quince hands them back to the port worker.
 The port worker then hands them to the
 pilot.

QUINCE

I love your work.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

Like some high-tech dream of synergy between
 a highway tollbooth and an air traffic
 control tower, the port is a self-contained
 network of terminals and cubicles.

Monitors line every wall. Surfaces are covered with arrival and departure schedules. Route assignments. Confirmation codes. Motivational posters.

In a cubicle, one poster, hung slightly off-center, reads: "Mind Your Own!" A pictured troupe of citizens pose, segregated into clear subdivisions. Uniforms and equipment denote them as either port, mitochondrion or security workers.

Quince walks by the cubicle, scanning a handful of documents. He stops long enough to reach into the cubicle and straighten the poster.

Turning on his heel, Quince peers into another cubicle. The worker within spins around in his chair to face him. The two exchange small stacks of papers, stamping and signing like clockwork.

QUINCE

Report.

PORT WORKER

We've got a level
blue content spill
from a beta-class
tanker, just outside
the flow.

QUINCE

Its cargo?

PORT WORKER

Numerous substrates,
phospho-components, a
few destination codes
for actin filaments.

QUINCE

Structure components,
then. Shame.

PORT WORKER

It's almost cleared
up, sir.

QUINCE
What's that?

PORT WORKER
(regarding a
wallbound display)
The spill is nearly
cleared. Readout
shows that content
lost is currently
negligible.

Quince looks through his papers.

QUINCE
I don't see that. I
haven't approved of a
salvage detail yet.

PORT WORKER
Yes, sir. I know.

The port worker turns back to the monitor
above his desk and presses a few keys. It
flickers from a spreadsheet of data to a
view of the flow.

The tanker idles just outside the blur of
traffic, parked near a column-like actin
filament. Its bay doors are open, revealing
the cargo within. Most of it is strewn about
the hold, hastily thrown back inside.

QUINCE
(still looking at his
papers)
I see. And the
benefactor is?

EXT. CYTOPLASM - CONTINUOUS

Pro edges his way up the filament. He clings
to the actin filament with one hand and
hoists up a bundle of sprockets with the
other. The tanker idles just above.

The flow rages just beyond the tanker.
Engines, motors and exhausts ROAR past at
dizzying speeds.

FWOOM! A carbohydrate rig cuts a sharp left across the curve of the flow. The atmosphere ripples with turbulence, causing the massive filament cable to sway slightly.

Pro wraps his legs around the cable and presses himself against it. Shortly, his eyes pry back open and he continues up. Slowly.

PRO
(to the tanker pilot)
This looks to be
about all of it.

TANKER PILOT
Great! That's some
climb, eh?

PRO
(bravado)
Are you kidding me? I
do this all the time!

TANKER PILOT
Nothing like an
adventure, right?

PRO
Sure, know where I
can find one? I can't
stand these desk
jobs.

The tanker pilot laughs as he watches Pro in the tanker's side mirror.

Pro reaches the tanker and steps from the filament into the cargo hold. He tosses the armful of sprockets into a tangled pile.

Out of view, his expression immediately changes. He's exhausted and miserable. His wrings his aching hands.

QUINCE
The citizen Pro?

TANKER PILOT
In the back. Why?

Pro looks out and around the tanker. Quince leans out of the window of a transport idling nearby. He's holding his clipboard as if it were a weapon.

QUINCE

Citizen Pro.

PRO

Yes, Quince?

QUINCE

You really ought to address your superiors by their rank and title, citizen. Especially when they are in the middle of noting how many demerits you've accrued.

PRO

Demerits? What, for this?

QUINCE

You don't have work orders for spill maintenance, do you?

PRO

Well, they weren't required of us on routine salvage details.

QUINCE

Spill maintenance? Anything?

PRO

No, Sir.

QUINCE

You'll do well to recall that you are no longer part of some rag-tag scrap crew. You now operate under my watch and

when you do so, you
answer to only two
things: routine and
my orders.

Quince signals to the transport driver. The driver presses a series of buttons on the dash, opening the transport's side cargo door. Pro carefully steps from the tanker to the transport.

TANKER PILOT

You know, Quince, he
really helped out. We
would have lost most
of this stuff if not
for--

QUINCE

(looking over his
papers)
I believe that your
stated delivery time
is quite soon,
citizen. Carry on.

The tanker pilot nods to Pro and drives away. Pro sits in the back of the transport, smiling mysteriously.

QUINCE

What's so funny?

PRO

I was just thinking,
Quince, that if you
get promoted any more
your head will
explode.

BURLY

(laughing)
You said that to him?
To "rigid-britches"
Quince?

INT. ENDOPLASMIC RETICULUM - CONTINUOUS

Pro sits at a table with Burly and most of the crew. They are in what appears to be a

large cafeteria. Various workers fill
hundreds of other tables.

PRO

Not exactly that, no.
I kept quiet most of
the ride back to the
port.

BURLY

Never pegged you as
being afraid of
Quince, you know.

PRO

The only thing I'm
afraid of is catching
a fistful of
demerits. This
reassignment is
pretty lousy.

BURLY

Well, you're not
missing too much.
Things have been
quiet for the most
part.

CREW MEMBER

Hey, what about that
wild lipid chase?
Remember that one,
Burles?

BURLY

Yeah, oh yeah! Hey
get this: There we
are pulling around
the flow, scanning
for screwups, when
here comes this lipid
out of the blue.
Nearly smashes into
us! A vesicle
ruptured and the
containment crew
missed a stray lipid.
So off it goes,
bouncing around all
of everything. So we

start after it,
but...

Burly continues. Pro slouches in his seat slightly. He loves hearing this, but hates missing it. His eyes droop, perhaps from being tired, perhaps from feeling ashamed of his work. Then he notices Driver entering the cafeteria.

BURLY

And finally we
cornered the thing
where else but in the
middle of a convoy of
enzymes! Took forever
to haul it out of
there too.

PRO

Hey, Driver! Come on
over here!

Driver doesn't seem surprised to see Pro. He sits down among them.

DRIVER

Well! How are things
in the wonderful
world of salvaging?
Did I just miss one
of Pro's thrilling
exaggerations about
the dangers of being
a Johnny-come-lately?

The crew all react as if Driver's words were insults to Pro. They watch him for a reaction.

DRIVER

What? Did I take the
last dessert or
something? What is
this?

BURLY

You mean you don't
know?

DRIVER

Know what?

PRO

Burly, it's okay. I can speak for myself. I'll be back to the detail soon enough.

DRIVER

Back to it? What are you talking about?

BURLY

He was reassigned, Driver. Salvage freelance on the lipid shelf.

DRIVER

Wow. I didn't know that. It's still exciting, I bet! Out there on the fringes, nothing but a bilayer between you and who knows what. What a rush!

BURLY

Not the way he tells it.

DRIVER

How's that?

CREW MEMBER

He's working under old rigid-britches.

DRIVER

Quince? But that can't be. He and Pro are neck and neck when it comes to rank.

PRO

We were. In light of all the quasi-breaches we were involved in, Quince

was looking real good
to the review board.
He got promoted.

BURLY
He's port authority
now.

Driver can see how miserable Pro really is.

DRIVER
I'm sorry to hear
that.

BURLY
Well, our down time's
up. Come on, boys.
We'll walk back to
the vesicle. I hate
going back into the
void on a full
stomach.

Burly and the crew leave.

DRIVER
It's rotten what
happened to you. Pro.

PRO
Well, routine wins
over justice every
time. Don't forget
that. Oh, hey! Tell
me all about it!

DRIVER
About what?

PRO
The big promotion, of
course! Here.

Pro gestures to a passing cafeteria worker.

PRO
Requisition two more
cold ones for us,
will you?

The worker punches a few keys on her order board and walks away. Two small globs swell out from the table itself. They pinch off and float in place. Pro and Driver retrieve them.

DRIVER
(hardly enthusiastic)
It's great. Really.

PRO
No, come on. Let's hear it. What did you get?

DRIVER
Information acquisition, they call it.

PRO
Sounds tough. You're not too advanced to be seen with a lowlife rung on the ladder like me, are you?

DRIVER
Don't be ridiculous. I can associate as I see fit. But it is tough; you have no idea how tough. I thought I was through with sitting down all the time. No, to be honest with you, at first I was disappointed. I thought that I was ready for something more involving, something like what you do. But the more I actually learn about it, the better it seems.

PRO

So you're filing and
making manuscripts?
Things like that?

DRIVER

Yeah. A little bit of
everything, really.
But being so close to
the next coupling,
operations are
slowing down. I've
got a lot of down
time on my hands.

PRO

Sounds like you're
complaining! What I
wouldn't give for a
little down time once
in a while!

DRIVER

Oh, you're busy?

PRO

Are you kidding?
We're talking about
salvage patrol of the
lipid shelf! The edge
of civilization, the
first and final line
of defense from the
outside. Oh, Driver,
the things I've seen!
And it's just me out
there! Me against
every possible
setback, every
potential invader,
every mishap that
poses a threat to the
collective. Do I want
this responsibility?
Do I want this
pressure? Of course
not. But it's my
duty, my work. And
I'm honored to do it.
Oh, what I wouldn't
give for some down
time!

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap. Pro is sitting in front of a monitor within one of the many cubicles of the port complex. He is bored beyond recognition.

The label outside his cubicle reads: "Inventory Re-Queue." Pro listlessly scans through endless files and inventory reports.

A port worker leads a small group of proteges down the aisle of cubicles.

PORT WORKER

Okay, recruits. This is the inventory wing of floor double C. The cubicles to your left compare previous inventory reports with more current ones. To your right are cubicles in which these comparisons are compared to previous comparisons. As we move one, I want you to remind yourselves of our port motto: "Safety in Repetition."

The recruit tour group moves on. Pro taps in a slow and steady rhythm, all alone.

Another port worker happens by.

PORT WORKER

Pro? You working late again?

PRO

(drowsy)
Hmm?

PORT WORKER

Shift's almost up.
Down time. big time!

PRO
Yeah, I'll just be a
little while.

EXT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

At one end of the port, workers stream in for their shift. At the other end, Pro exits. Although outside and away from the cubicle, he doesn't seem any less miserable.

He slowly shuffles away from the port. A noise catches his attention. He snaps to.

BURLY
Did you twist it?

CREW MEMBER
Yeah, of course.
They're still stuck.

BURLY
Twist it really hard.
then. Both ways.

Pro peeks around a platform-loading crane. On the other side, Burly and the crew are battling with a jumble of collided particles.

Pro watches for a moment, somewhere between reminiscing and pining. He finally turns and walks away in the other direction, careful to stay out of sight.

INT. VESICLE - LATER

Throngs of workers file into the vesicle for another ceremony. Workers align with entrances according to their security ranking and job titles.

Pro shuffles along with other port workers, not at all enthusiastic. Their group is finally seated. Quince sits first, outranking the rest.

Again, the vesicle is alive with MURMURS as workers share gossip and posture. This is social brutality at its worst. Every row of seats is criticizing the row behind it.

PORT WORKER 1
Did you get a look at
the Golgi crew?

PORT WORKER 2
Yeah. I wish I
didn't.

PORT WORKER 1
Who are they kidding?
Thinking they're so
big.

PORT WORKER 2
Ridiculous.

Gossip rages throughout the vesicle as before. Pro keeps silent and glances around timidly. The vesicle lights begin to dim.

Pro sees Burly and the crew nearby, several rows down and to the side. Below, the tall speaker is coming onto the stage.

PRO
(whispering)
Burly! Hey!

Burly doesn't seem to notice. One of the crew members turns, but doesn't see Pro.

PRO
(whispering)
Burles! Yo, lipid-
lip!

Quince and a few other port workers turn to scowl at Pro. A crew member leans over to Burly.

CREW MEMBER
(whispering)
Hear that? Somebody
behind us is calling
you. Kinda sounds
like Pro!

BURLY
(whispering)

Can't be. We don't
know anybody behind
us.

A balled-up docket bounces off the back of
Burly's head. He whirls, glaring behind him.

Several rows up, Pro is waving in the
darkness. Burly only frowns and turns back.

QUINCE

Ahem.

Pro looks to Quince, who is shaking his head
and making a brief note on his trusty
clipboard. Pro stops waving. He watches as
one crew member leans toward another and
whispers. The two silently chuckle at his
expense.

TALL

Welcome, loyal
citizens. Your
attendance at this
special ceremony is
appreciated.

Two guards escort a decrepit citizen onto
the stage.

EXT. CELL MEMBRANE - LATER

Pro and Driver walk down an endless stretch
of blue membrane. Above, the lights of the
cellulopolis throb and blur with constant
activity. A sort of bioluminescent biorhythm
suspended in the atmosphere.

DRIVER

I never thought Burly
would be one to give
you the shoulder.

PRO

I guess I can't blame
him. He did what he
was supposed to do,
you know? Strict
routine. Nothing
less. Good for him.

DRIVER
He didn't have to,
though.

PRO
Don't worry about it.
Driver.

DRIVER
No, really. Since
when did ceremony
cancel out courtesy?
There's nothing
routine about being a
jerk.

Pro manages to laugh.

PRO
Well. I don't know.
Maybe he learned it
from me.

DRIVER
Probably.

Pro laughs again.

DRIVER
I spoke to Ana not
long ago.

PRO
I'm not sure if I
want to hear this.
I'm not exactly in
her league any more,
you know?

DRIVER
Pro, she misses you.

PRO
She does?

DRIVER
Well, she didn't say
that in those words
exactly. But trust
me, she does.

PRO

How can you be so
sure?

DRIVER

Since my promotion,
I've learned that
what we mean isn't
always what we say.
The trick is to get
someone to say what
you want them to
mean. But don't worry
about that. You just
keep up the good work
and keep clear of
trouble. You'll be
back on top before
you know it.

Pro and Driver smile at each other. The
atmosphere overhead glitters like clouds of
Christmas lights.

DRIVER

Ya doofus.

PRO

Ya dink.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - LATER

Quince paces down the aisles of cubicles,
making notes on his board as he observes his
workers. He passes by Pro's cubicle, finds
him slumped to one side but still awake.
Quince nods approvingly and walks on.

Pro stares into his monitor. Numerous
windows are open on the monitor. Some show
complex lists of items in inventory, some
show simple queue forms, some show moving
images, live feeds of activities around the
cell.

In one window there are bulky transports
departing from a mitochondrion. In another
is a convoy of bizarre enzymes flying in
formation from place to place.

Pro looks over his shoulder. He sees nothing but the back of the port worker behind him, sitting upright and absorbed in his own monitor. Pro punches a few keys and a new window springs open.

Pro gazes into the new window at the face of Ana. She is waiting among a crowd of citizens for a transport at the Golgi Apparatus. She silently talks with citizens around her.

Pro activates the audio.

ANA

(via feed)
...then I could reroute the substrate data to its secondary location. It's really not a complicated procedure.

CITIZEN

(via feed)
I'm surprised at you, Ana.

ANA

(via feed)
Oh?

CITIZEN

(via feed)
You haven't even given me any gossip as to who your coupling partner might be. This close to the coupling and you're as calm and collected as ever.

Pro leans forward. His face is inches away from the screen.

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - PORT - CONTINUOUS

Ana and her friend are shoulder to shoulder with dozens of other citizens waiting for the arrival of a transport.

ANA

So?

CITIZEN

So it used to be that whenever the coupling came around, you'd be almost too distracted to keep up with your lists. And here we are now, you're almost past your quota. It's enough to make me think that you didn't care as much about the coupling any more.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

ANA

(via feed)
Of course I care.
It's routine. It's just not going to be the same for me for a while, I suppose.

Pro smiles and tries to lean back in his chair, but the seat is incredibly rigid. So he tilts the chair itself, propping his feet up beside the monitor.

Pro looks to his left. Dozens of workers sit perfectly upright, backs flat against their chairs.

PORT WORKER

(via feed)
Look out!

Pro turns back to his monitor. On the display, the crowd of citizens gather near the translucent wall. They are all looking and pointing at something just outside the Golgi. Ana and her friend hurry to join them.

Pro lightly punches a few keys with his heel. A new window pops up. The window

offers a view from above the Golgi. A large tanker passes in front of the camera, obscuring its view for a moment.

The tanker passes. Most of the Golgi is in view. Transports meld into and pinch off from the structure at various points. Except one.

Approaching the Golgi, two transports are slowly converging. A small area within the Golgi is dark with the packed bodies of onlookers.

PRO

Too close. They're coming in too close.

EXT. GOLGI COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

The two jiggly transports edge nearer to the Golgi. As they do, they creep dangerously close together.

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - PORT - CONTINUOUS

The crowd of onlookers watch. Some worriedly glance at their transport documents.

A Golgi worker at the terminal desk snatches up a palm-shaped communicator in one hand and the microphone for the PA system in the other.

GOLGI WORKER

(into communicator)
Site beta, sector B.
We've got a possible
code yellow.
(into PA system)
Now arriving at site
beta, sector B,
transports five and
three. Er...maybe.

EXT. GOLGI COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

The packed transports waver ever closer to the Golgi and each other.

INT. GOLGI TRANSPORT THREE - CONTINUOUS

A light blinks on the transport's control panel. The pilot presses the light and puts a hand to his headset.

GOLGI PILOT

Transport three,
here.

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - PORT - CONTINUOUS

The onlookers are becoming more fascinated and alarmed. The terminal worker hops from foot to foot.

GOLGI WORKER

(into communicator)
Uh, sir? The
procedures for a
possible code yellow?
(into PA system)
Move along, please.
Nothing to see at
site beta, sector B.
(into communicator)
Sir? I didn't copy
that.

An agitated traveler taps on the terminal desk.

AGITATED TRAVELER

Excuse me? Yeah, I've
been waiting a while
here and I need to
know how late the
idiots within
transport fourteen
are going to be...
Hey! Transport
fourteen, how late
are they going to be?

GOLGI WORKER

(into communicator)
Sector two-B? What?
(to traveler)
Sir, please!
(into PA system)
I'm very busy right
now!

AGITATED TRAVELER

Hey! You answer me!

GOLGI WORKER

(into communicator)
No, sir! No, this is
site B. I mean,
sector B!
(to traveler)
I mean, site beta,
sector B!

AGITATED TRAVELER

Hey, this doesn't
seem all too routine
to me! I'm going to
report you!

GOLGI WORKER

(into communicator)
Will you shut up? I
don't have time for
you now!
(into PA system)
Sir! Code yellow!
Code yellow!
(to traveler)
Thank you for
choosing fleet beta
for your traveling
needs.

The Agitated Traveler's eyes go wide. The terminal worker stops. Thinks.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

SMACK! Pro covers his face with his hand.

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - MAIN TOWER - CONTINUOUS

SMACK! A Golgi superior, holding a communicator, does the same.

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - PORT - CONTINUOUS

SMACK! The Agitated Traveler does the same.

THUNK! The terminal worker knocks his head against his desk.

Suddenly... PANDEMONIUM throughout the Golgi! Citizens sprint in every direction. Baggage spills across causeways. Worker collides with worker. It's the Odessa Steps all over again!

INT. GOLGI TRANSPORT THREE - CONTINUOUS

Serene. The pilot is still touching his hand to his headset.

GOLGI PILOT

Uh-huh. Okay.

The pilot tries to look out the side of the transport, but a large passenger blocks his view.

GOLGI PILOT

Uh, sir. Excuse me?
Yes, can you perhaps
lean back for a
moment, please? Thank
youuuuuAAHH!

The second transport bears down on them. The pilot throws a series of levers to the left. Passengers WAIL as everything begins to tilt sideways. The transport goes into a tight barrel roll.

TTHHHHHHHHUUCK! Portions of the floor sink downward. Other portions of the floor swell out into the cab area.

Several passengers are sucked into the concave pits within the floor. They SCREAM and claw at the floor as they drop through.

INT. GOLGI TRANSPORT FIVE - CONTINUOUS

TTHHHHHHHHUUCK! Portions of the floor sag down while other portions of the floor protrude into the cab area.

Several passengers are sucked into the folds within the floor. They HOLLER and wave their arms in the air.

POP! The legs of passengers from transport three squeeze up through the floor. Slender legs wriggle in midair.

INT. GOLGI TRANSPORT THREE - CONTINUOUS

POP! The terrified legs of passengers from transport five wedge through the floor.

EXT. GOLGI COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

The two transports waver just outside the Golgi, their momentum lost to the merging implosion. The transports are stuck together, base-to-base.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

Pro watches the entire spectacle. The look on his face is somewhere between being amused and disgusted. His mouth moves silently as he counts off seconds with his fingers, almost as if he is timing the arrival of...

A vesicle floats into view on one of the windows on Pro's monitor. It slows and hovers over the wrecked Golgi transports. Pro leans his chair back again.

PRO

Not a bad time.

EXT. GOLGI COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

The vesicle idles nearby. Burly and his crew crawl over the figure-eight shape of the wreckage.

Burly stands on the cockpit of one of the transports. He pulls the glove-like device off of his hand and reads the pilot's work orders.

BURLY

I hate mergers.

CREW MEMBER

Yeah. And this one's a partial implosion to boot.

BURLY

And this close to the
Golgi, we can't move
the transports much.
We don't want to risk
them melding with the
structure itself.

The Golgi pilot leans out of his window.

GOLGI PILOT

Excuse me? When are
you going to get
started? Some of the
passengers are
getting a little
restless.

INT. GOLGI TRANSPORT THREE - CONTINUOUS

Salvador Dali has been here. Luggage bubbles
are strewn around the cab. The bottom of the
walls have distorted and curved down and
inward. Seats have twisted into odd shapes.

Several passengers are up to their waist in
the floor, partially sucked through to the
other transport. Likewise, several pairs of
legs protrude out of the floor and kick in
the air.

EXT. GOLGI COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Burly only scans the work orders and
scratches his head.

BURLY

Yeah, we're getting
to it in a little
while. Just wait till
I can figure this one
out for a little
while.

Burly plops down, sitting heavily on the
windshield of the transport.

INT. GOLGI TRANSPORT THREE - CONTINUOUS

Burly's tremendous posterior mashes itself against the portal. An unfortunate passenger catches sight of it and faints in the aisle.

INT. GOLGI COMPLEX - PORT - CONTINUOUS

The crowd of onlookers has dispersed. Most lounge on nearby chairs, waiting for their transports to be repaired. Ana and her friend share a seat next to the transparent wall, still keeping an eye on the action.

CITIZEN

Burly. Now there's a viable coupling partner for you.

ANA

Burly? Mr. "Macro-Microcosm?" Come on, his ideal coupling partner would be himself.

CITIZEN

Just look at him, though. Sitting out there, working on the task at hand. There's somebody that's stable, somebody that's secure.

Ana watches him. Sitting on the transport, hand under his chin and frowning at papers, he looks like something Rodin would sculpt.

ANA

Somebody that's not going places...

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

Pro still leans back in his chair. He looks like he's going to be sick.

ANA

(via feed)
Maybe you're right.
He is pretty stable looking.

CITIZEN

(via feed)
Yeah!

Pro looks to his side. Quince is approaching down the corridor of cubicles. Fast.

Pro nearly falls out of his chair. He hastily straightens his workspace. He pulls up another live feed window to cover the rest that he had been watching.

The new window displays the calm exterior of a protein port.

Quince slowly stalks by, doubtfully eyeing the unusually orderly Pro. He makes note on his board and continues down the corridor.

Pro sits dutifully erect. The audio from the windows on his monitor overlap. The only video available is that of the window displaying the outer end of a protein port.

ANA

(via feed)
Maybe I've been
trying to hold onto
the past too much.

CITIZEN

(via feed)
You've got to take
what you can get.
Ana. Take what you
can get and get what
you can take.

BURLY

(via feed)
Anybody seen my
pliers?

On the display on Pro's monitor, a speck of light slowly comes into being. It maneuvers out from a purple mist far in the distance. It approaches the port.

CITIZEN

(via feed)

Things happen. things
change. We move on.
It's only routine.

BURLY

(via feed)
This is new to me.
Can't figure it out
just yet.

The speck of light nears the port. As it
nears, Pro can see that is in fact a sleek,
bullet-shaped ship.

KID

(via feed)
GlucGo beta one,
here. Requesting
access. antiport
nine.

Pro smiles at hearing Kid's voice.

ANA

(via feed)
I suppose you're
right. It's routine.

KID

(via feed)
Glucgo beta one,
reporting. This is a
request for access to
anitport nine.

A display on Pro's monitor shows a schematic
roadmap of the port system for a portion of
the cell membrane. Each blinking port
representation is bordered by schedules and
identification sequences.

Pro's smile fades. The display shows Kid's
ship outside of a port labeled "SYMPORT #1."

PRO

Oh no.

EXT. CELL MEMBRANE - CONTINUOUS

Kid's ship hovers outside the protein port.
The bubbly lipid membrane slowly stirs,
washing shafts of light over the ship.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Kid frowns at the lack of response. He
checks a few gauges on the ship's control
panel. He holds down a button while speaking
again.

KID

Anitport nine, do you
copy? This is GlucGo
beta one requesting
membrane access.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

Pro rummages through his cubicle, tossing
drawers open, rifling through organized
stacks of papers.

CITIZEN

(via feed)
I know you're sore
about Pro.

Pro slows down his search, but doesn't stop.
He glances at the screen. On the screen,
Kid's ship floats silently.

ANA

(via feed)
I just don't
understand him
sometimes. He seems
just as stable as the
next guy, right?

CITIZEN

(via feed)
He used to.

Pro pulls a document out from the bottom of
a tremendous stack of papers. The document
reads: "Requisition Form for Work Order
Petition Form." He sets about filling out
the form.

ANA

(via feed)
 That's just it. He
 really is stable. I
 know him. At least I
 thought I did. I
 don't know, maybe he
 just tries so hard to
 net a promotion that
 he's misunderstood.

BURLY

(via feed)
 All right. I've tried
 to read enough. Hey,
 guys!

Pro fills out the numerous blanks on the
 page. He marks boxes. Circles numbers.
 Stamps margins. He turns the page only to
 find that the document is somewhere around
 forty pages long.

Pro rubs his head, trying to determine what
 to do.

PORT WORKER

Hey, Pro!

Pro looks to the monitor, amazed.

PORT WORKER

Pro? Back here,
 buddy.

Pro spins. A port worker is standing outside
 his cubicle.

PORT WORKER

You don't have a
 problem with us port
 folk, do you?

PRO

What?

PORT WORKER

You're working late
 all the time. Seems
 to me that you're
 trying to get a

promotion out of here
as soon as possible.

PRO
Working late?

PORT WORKER
Yeah. Pushing
yourself like that is
what got you in
trouble in the first
place, remember? Our
shift's up, so let's
go. Down time, big
time!

The port worker continues down the corridor.
Pro frowns, still trying to decide what he
should do.

CITIZEN
(via feed)
Well, don't think of
it as a tragedy, Ana.
Sometimes bad things
just happen to good
citizens.

Pro looks at the monitor. Kid's ship begins
to waver impatiently.

PRO
Not this time.

Pro crams all the documents, stamps and
styluses back into his desk. He bolts from
his chair and sprints down the corridor.

Back on Pro's monitor, shafts of light are
washing over Kid's ship. These lights seem
to be less intense, almost as if the
membrane isn't flowing as freely as before.

BURLY
(via feed)
Alright, ladies!
Let's split!

EXT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

Pro runs out of the port. The cellular traffic above is constant. The flow is full of various ships.

A port worker approaches a tanker idling nearby.

PORT WORKER 1
Your destination?

TANKER PILOT
Golgi number four,
upper sector.

Pro overhears the pilot and creeps toward the tanker. The port worker stamps his work orders and hands them back.

PORT WORKER 1
These are proper.
Carry on. I love your
work.

TANKER PILOT
I love your work.

The port worker walks away. Pro emerges from around the tanker and approaches the pilot.

PRO
Say, Golgi four.
That's over by
Symport One, isn't
it?

TANKER PILOT
Yeah, unless they
moved it since the
last time I was here.
Why?

The tanker pilot reaches for papers on the seat next to him.

TANKER PILOT
You need to see my
work orders or
something?

The tanker pilot turns back to the window. Pro is gone. The pilot frowns, confused. He

shrugs and starts the tanker, which levitates away from the membrane shelf.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - CONTINUOUS

The tanker ascends into the flow, merging with the clustered traffic.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

Workers file into their respective cubicles, picking up the queue lists where the previous shift had left off. A worker enters Pro's empty cubicle.

The worker abruptly stops when he sees the monitor, still displaying the live feed of the Symport.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - CONTINUOUS

The flow is full of traffic, all rushing in one direction. A particle piloted by two citizens whizzes around the traffic.

INT. PARTICLE - CONTINUOUS

The two citizens listen to their ship's radio while maneuvering through traffic. On the radio is the cellular equivalent of talk radio.

PILOT

Turn that up, will you?

The co-pilot increases the volume of the "Gush Limbo Show."

GUSH

(via radio)
The problem with increasing energy distribution to certain parts of the Endoplasmic Reticulum, or the ER, dear listeners, is that when that energy will be needed elsewhere, and it most certainly will.

it won't be available
or even in an easily
convertible form. So
I can understand our
caller's concern in
the matter.

CALLER

(via radio)
Uh-huh.

GUSH

(via radio)
But the only
practical response to
this and other
concerns of this
nature or otherwise,
you see, is to go to
the inquisition
station nearest to
you. There a
certified clerk will
record, notarize and
send away your
inquiry which will be
pored over, perused
and expediently
answered by your
appointed
representative in the
Nucleic Council.
Thank you for your
call. Now, on to
further speculation
over the approaching
coupling which --

The co-pilot turns the volume back down.

CO-PILOT

I don't see how you
can listen to that
guy. He's so biased I
can feel the pH level
around here changing.

PILOT

He's not biased. He
said so himself. He's
as authoritative as

they come and well
worth paying
attention to.

As they argue, their ship edges ever closer to the particle in front of them: a tanker. Pro dangles from the back of the tanker, arms wrapped around the base of an access hatch. The pilot and co-pilot do not notice the tanker.

CO-PILOT

Authoritative? Hard-working citizens are more authoritative than he is. We've got experience and he's just got speculation. So in that sense even I'm more authoritative than Gush Limbo.

PILOT

But you're an idiot.

CO-PILOT

Right, exactly. You can't be right until you admit that you can be wrong. You're better off listening to someone that'll admit to being an idiot. Try me, or yourself, or the boss, or that guy--

The co-pilot points to the tanker, now extremely close. Pro HOLLERS as the ship nudges at his flailing feet.

PILOT

What the--?

EXT. CYTOPLASM - CONTINUOUS

SCREEECH! The ship's nose dips down as it suddenly decelerates. Some of the traffic behind the ship tangles and twirls in an invisible undercurrent.

The tanker cruises around a bend in the flow. Pro peeks around the tanker. A Golgi structure is just ahead. Pro looks over his shoulder, toward the membrane shelf. The Symport protein is nearby.

Pro begins climbing the tanker, fighting the rush of the atmosphere against him. The tanker suddenly cuts right, away from the membrane shelf.

PRO

No!

The tanker dips deeper into the flow, heading for the Golgi. Pro watches as the membrane shelf, and the Symport, flee from his reach.

Pro looks over his shoulder, holds his breath, and pushes off of the tanker. SWOOSH! He leaps from the tanker and glides through the air.

THUNK! Pro crashes down onto another transport. The rushing atmosphere ROARS in his ears. It pushes him into a roll across the ship's roof. He skids across the top of the ship and falls into open space.

PLOP! Pro lands within the broadcast netting of a large signal enzyme. He gets to his feet and sprints across the ship. The ship's wing passes close to the membrane shelf. Pro reaches the edge. GRUNTS, and lunges! Make way, Bruce Willis!

INT. CELL MEMBRANE - CONTINUOUS

Pro lands and stumbles to the ground. He rolls and comes to a stop, looking directly at the protein jutting out of the membrane.

The dark Symport protein is surrounded by signs that read: "One Way Traffic," and "Exit Only." Not as big as the Antiport, the Symport is an unmanned exit. Above, the clatter of the combustion engines from the flow are in contrast to the desolate quietness surrounding the port.

EXT. PROTEIN SYMPORT - CONTINUOUS

Pro reaches the port. The lipid ground occasionally pitches and sways in small ripples stirred by the cytosolic current. Pro bends down and looks beneath the swells in the ground.

He sees Kid's ship, hovering in thick darkness.

KID

(via ship's speakers)
GlucGo beta one,
requesting membrane
access. Is anybody
there?

PRO

Kid! Hey!

Pro waves his arm through the opening, but pulls it back as the ground CHOMPS shut again.

Pro gets closer to the port and kneels on the ground, waiting for the next ripple. The lights above him cast his shadow onto the bubbly ground.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Kid activates an onboard monitor and a maze of maps and wire-frame images springs to life. He scratches his head while looking at the maps, then activates the ship's external lights.

EXT. PROTEIN SYMPORT - CONTINUOUS

FWOOSH! Blinding lights glare through the chance openings in the ground. Pro shields his eyes.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Kid sees something between the lipids. It's hard to discern as it is illuminated fore and aft. It almost seems like a head, and an arm, waving to one side.

Kid leans forward, squinting past the light. As he does, he does not notice the panel of lights on the dashboard flashing red. His onboard radar indicates something large incoming.

KID

Pro?

EXT. PROTEIN SYMPORT - CONTINUOUS

Pro shields his eyes with one hand and waves with the other.

PRO

Kid! Move down! Down,
that way!

The ship hovers silently.

PRO

Kid! Move! You're at
the wrong...

Pro trails off. As his eyes adjust to the light, they grow wide with terror.

Kid's ship idles in the dark. Gradually, the dark itself seems to swell out. Somehow, the darkness is growing closer.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

The lights that were red are now flashing white. A small siren PEEPS warning. Kid flinches at the new sound.

EXT. PROTEIN SYMPORT - CONTINUOUS

Through the opening in the ground, Pro watches as the darkness of space itself seems to reach closer to Kid's ship. Four oblong, black tendrils creep over the front of the ship.

GLOOMP! The ground slaps shut. Pro frantically crawls across the ground, head down.

FWOOP! The ground again hoists up. Pro flattens himself against it and stares outside.

Nothing.

Pro stares, occasionally risking a breath.

PRO

Kid?

CRASH! Pro yelps and recoils as the nose of the ship bounces off of the lipid membrane. Cables and torn fragments trail behind the remnants of the ship as it plunges away, into the darkness.

Pro can only lie against the ground and stare outside. A large shadow stretches across the membrane shelf around him.

PRO

Kid? Where did...

QUINCE

Yes, that's him.
That's the one.

Pro looks up at Quince and several smartly dressed security workers. A port-issued transport idles just above the membrane shelf.

SECURITY GUARD #1

If you'll come with
us, citizen.

The security workers slowly advance on Pro. He spins and clings to the ground, wailing madly. The security workers struggle to pry him from the ground.

PRO

Kid? No! Kid!

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

The monitor in Pro's cubicle still displays the Symport. A new window has been opened, showing the area inside the membrane border, next to the Symport. Pro is being carried

into the transport. Quince walks close by, holding a communicator.

A port worker sits at the desk. A second worker, unseen for the most part, looms behind him.

QUINCE

(via feed)
We've got him. He's safe, although I can't say as much for his career. I suppose you'd like credit for locating him.

VOICE

I wouldn't be averse to it, no.

QUINCE

Well, this whole incident really was more of a coincidence if nothing else. Don't expect too much.

VOICE

(chuckling)
Coincidence? Whatever you say.

EXT. NUCLEUS - LATER

The nucleus is majestic as ever. There are more billboards, posters and advertisements than before, most of which tout the impending "Coupling."

INT. NUCLEUS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The hallway is unusually sparse. Two gilded workers converse near a closed doorway. One carries a briefcase.

GILDED 1

He still won't talk?

GILDED 2

He still can't talk.
He just repeats the
same things over and
over. Whatever
happened to him made
something pop up top,
you know? I still
don't why he was even
at a symport to begin
with.

GILDED 1
Wasn't he on down
time?

GILDED 2
Yes, but he wasn't
coded for access to
that sector. I don't
know why he was
there. I don't know
how he got there. I
don't know what he
saw, what he didn't
see, or what made him
freeze up like this.

The doorway SWISHES open. The second of the
two workers starts in.

GILDED 1
Well, what do you
know?

GILDED 2
I know that for him,
whatever did happen
is the good news. The
bad news is just
coming up.

INT. NUCLEUS - CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door SWOOSHES shut behind the gilded
worker. The conference room is a small,
Spartan setup. Single chair behind a plain
table. No windows. No decorations.

Pro is sitting in the chair. He doesn't
acknowledge the gilded worker's entrance.

His face is contorted in perplexed thought.
Panic might be a better word.

GILDED 2

Well then, citizen
Pro. Now do you have
anything to say? Any
progress in
remembering why you
were at Symport One
earlier? Or how you
got there? Or what
you saw? Anything at
all.

Pro thinks hard. He softly drums his fingers
on the table, sending small ripples across
its gelatin surface.

The gilded worker sighs and places his
briefcase on the table.

GILDED 2

Now listen, Pro. If
you don't tell me
anything, I can't
represent you before
the incident review
board. I can't go in
there with nothing.
I'll look
incompetent. That's
not what you want, is
it? To make me look
bad? To drag someone
down with you?

Pro's eyes betray a reaction.

GILDED 2

That's right. What
you just did? What
you can't seem to
remember any more?
That was a violation
of protocol, pure and
simple. You're going
to be demoted one way
or the other, there's
nothing you can do
about that. But you

can make it easier on yourself. Tell me why you were there and what it is that you saw and there's a good chance you won't be bumped down to the bottom rung. How about it?

Pro stares at the gilded worker, but doesn't really seem to see him. The gilded worker sighs, takes up his briefcase and turns to leave.

PRO

He was there...and then he wasn't.

The gilded worker stops.

PRO

I had to help him...but he wasn't there.

GILDED 2

What am I going to do with that, Pro? That's all you've been saying. I can't go to the review board that! What, you want me to sound incompetent and insane? Because that's the way you sound right now.

SWISH! The doorway opens and the gilded worker steps through.

GILDED 2

And you know what? If you're coming across as incompetent and insane, there's really only one place left for you.

EXT. ENDOPLASMIC RETICULUM - LATER

SWOOSH! Pro scoops up a heap of garbage with an oblong tool. He empties the scoop into a large bin labeled "Waste."

Pro is suited in a sanitation uniform. Together with half a dozen other cleaners, he sweeps an empty but messy cafeteria.

Pro goes about the work halfheartedly. His vitality is gone, but he remains somewhere in deep thought. The cleanup crew talk and joke with each other as they work. Pro remains silent.

Cleaner approaches Pro, holding a clipboard by his side.

CLEANER

How's you doing?

Pro only nods to a patch of floor that is free from garbage. Cleaner looks at Pro's work, then at that of the others. There really isn't much comparison.

CLEANER

Maybe if you's try
holding it like this?

Cleaner sets his clipboard down on a table and reaches out for Pro's sweeper. Pro watches very closely as Cleaner sets his clipboard down. He starts sweeping with the device.

PRO

You, uh, dropped your
board. Don't you want
that?

CLEANER

Nah. I'm gonna shows
you how to do this
the easy ways. Just
like this, see? You's
does it this way and
you's done it a whole
lot more quicker.
That's really not
bad, eh?

Cleaner smiles at the spotless cafeteria.
Pro watches as the crew laugh together and
help one another.

PRO

No...I guess it's not
after all. Thanks.

EXT. CELL MEMBRANE - LATER

Pro and Driver stroll across the membrane.
The flow courses by their side, a galaxy of
neon light blur by. Pro keeps a pace behind
Driver.

PRO

I've never seen
anything like it,
though. His crew
isn't trying to
compete with itself.
There's no real
pecking order, no
rivalries, no
bitterness.

DRIVER

None at all?

PRO

No, not anymore. I'm
getting along a lot
better than before.
Did I tell you about
how they don't seem
to care about
promotion?

DRIVER

Several times. You
certainly seem to
have come around.
Pro. Not too long ago
you couldn't speak at
all. Here you can't
help but repeat
yourself.

PRO

Well, now I've finally got something to talk about.

DRIVER

What about the incident at the symport? You know the incident review board will still hear your account if you just come forward with it. Why can't you talk about that?

PRO

Because I don't have anything to talk about. Driver. I told you this. If I knew what happened, if I could make sense of it, I would tell someone. I'd tell everyone I could, believe me. I don't like carrying this around.

Driver stops walking. Pro makes sure to stop a pace behind.

DRIVER

The board isn't asking for a public speech. Pro. They just want the facts brought to them in a quiet, controlled manner. A routine report, nothing could be simpler.

PRO

That's what makes this so hard to report on. The only thing I do know about it is that it wasn't routine.

EXT. VESICLE - LATER

Crowds of citizens pack into the floating vesicle auditorium.

INT. VESICLE - CONTINUOUS

Most of the auditorium is already filled. The social strata of the seating is same as before. Quince sits in a somewhat fancier box than before. Burlly has a somewhat better view. Everyone is prattling and posturing to great effect.

High up, near the roof of the vesicle, Pro sits among the sanitation crew. From here the stage seems tiny, faces are hard to recognize.

Pro squints and scans the sea of faces below. Cleaner notices and leans over to him.

CLEANER

Hey, Pro. You's looking for Ana, rights?

PRO

Yeah. I just hope that she can't see me from down there.

CLEANER

I knows how you two was once coupling partners. And I'll bet that she still sends the creepers through you's peepers, eh?

PRO

Something like that, yes.

CLEANER

Listen, Pro. Ana, she's down there somewheres.

Pro waits for further comment, but nothing comes.

PRO

Okay.

CLEANER

She's down there.
You're up here.
That's the ways this
system works, see? Me
and you and the boys,
we gotta looks down
there and see how
much there is
between here and
there. Ana's got her
work, Pro. And you's
got yours.

PRO

But there's nothing
wrong with this work.
It's perfectly
routine. Perfectly
normal.

Pro seems to have caught himself off guard.

CLEANER

Well, I knows that
and you knows that.
But does she?

Pro thinks. The lights begin to dim. The noise begins to fade. Down below, the tall citizen takes the stage.

TALL

Welcome, loyal
citizens. Your
attendance at this
special ceremony is
appreciated.

CITIZENS

(simultaneously)
It is our pleasure
and honor to show our
allegiance at this

and all other
opportunities.

The combined voices within the vesicle clash against the acoustics of the membrane walls. The words are chaotic and distorted by the time they reach the sanitation crew's level. Pro leans over to Cleaner as the cacophony continues.

PRO
I can't tell where we
are. What are they
saying now?

CLEANER
Couldn't tell you.
Maybe you should try
a singamaring.

Pro looks for a docket, but all of the slots are empty.

CLEANER
Oh yeah. We don't
gets those any more.

PRO
What, you mean they
just stopped
providing them?

CLEANER
Yeah. They just up
and disappears all of
a sudden. It's just
as well, too. We
don't gets spoken to,
so we don't speak. We
don't need them so
they aren't around
any mores. Out of
sight, out of sound,
yeah?

Pro reacts to this. His gaze alternates between the empty docket slots and the stage far below.

PRO
(deep in thought)

Yeah... Just up and
disappeared... Out of
sight... They're just
not here any more...

He watches as the ceremony continues. The
words of the ceremony are barely
discernable.

TALL
...of being finished.

A side entrance to the stage peeps open. Two
guards escort an elderly citizen into the
spotlight. His face is always just out of
view, but he looks peculiar next to the
other citizens. He looks different.

High above, Pro is still studying the empty
docket slot.

PRO
{to himself}
They're just gone...
We don't need them...
Out of sight... He
was gone...

A single lipid squeezes out of the roof just
above Pro and is immediately replaced by
another. The tall announcer backs off the
stage, leaving the honored citizen in the
spotlight.

PRO
{to himself}
That's it... They're
gone... Oh no!

TALL
(over-dramatic)
And now,
Tilde... "This Was
Your Work!"

The spotlight cuts off. The auditorium is
thrown into dark.

PRO
No... No!

Pro jumps to his feet, the only one standing in a sea of sitting faces. He begins making his way out of the aisle. A guard at a nearby exit turns to him.

GUARD 1
Sit down, scrubber.
Show's not over.

PRO
We have to stop them!
We have to stop this!

GUARD 1
(into communicator)
Right-aft, exit
omega. I've got a
hostile imbecile,
here.

PRO
Do you know what's
going to happen to
him? You can't let
them do this!

GUARD 1
You're not giving me
orders, are you? That
sure ain't routine.

Something catches Pro's eyes. He can make out several figures moving in the dark, coming closer up the stairway. More guards.

Beneath, the floating vesicle glows to radiant life, warming the vesicle with dim light.

GUARD 2
What we got?

GUARD 1
Looks like one of the
neat-freaks up and
frizzed-out on us.

A hand grabs at Pro. He spins wildly. Cleaner has him by the arm.

CLEANER

Pro, please! Come on.
 Sit down. There's no
 troubles, no troubles
 at all. Just be nice
 for nows, yeah?

VOICE

(via lipid broadcast)
 Spending his entirety
 of citizenship within
 the infrastructure of
 mitochondrion three,
 left-aft, worked
 Tilde.

Tilde's rotund, smiling face stretches
 across the floating lipid.

PRO

(to guards)
 You get back! I know
 what this is! I won't
 let you do it to him!

Citizens seated several rows beneath Pro
 begin to take notice of the hubbub. They
 groan like moviegoers overhearing a
 conversation in the theater.

GUARD 1

Alright. I've heard
 enough. Let's make
 things quiet again.

The guards move in, brandishing slender
 batons. Pro dashes away. He climbs over the
 backs of seats, clumsily making his way
 down. Two guards remain in the aisle and run
 downstairs, ahead of him. Another two wade
 to the middle of an aisle and descend after
 him.

PRO

I know what it means!
 I know what you do to
 them!

More citizens are becoming distracted. A
 small MURMUR of protest issues from the
 higher seats. Cleaner and his crew remain
 silent and still, eyes wide with terror.

PRO

Why don't we see them
any more? Why aren't
they there any more?
Why was he gone?

Pro leaps over a row of seats and lands on the wider platform of a balcony midway down the vesicle. Four guards run onto the balcony, two to the left, two to the right.

Another two guards step down from the seats onto the balcony.

Pro paces and spins like a caged animal.

Below, the tall announcer and several guards have come back onto the stage. The announcer motions for the lights while a guard escorts Tilde off the stage.

PRO

Ask yourselves this!
It only makes sense!
I know what I saw! I
saw him and then I
didn't! He's here and
he isn't!

Faces around the vesicle frown at Pro. Some are quite familiar. Burly sneers. Ana cringes. Quince rolls his eyes.

Pro sees the guard leading Tilde off the stage. The guards on the balcony rush forward. Pro spins, plants his foot on the railing, jumps!

DOOMF! Pro lands on the floating vesicle. It bobs violently, then plummets! Citizens in the seats below climb over each other as the lipid smooches onto center stage.

The image of Tilde at work scrambles and cuts out. For an instant, the vesicle is completely dark and completely quiet. And then is isn't.

Citizens in the dark shout and protest. A body of angry viewers surges in the shadows.

The noise reverberating is deafening. Exits open, permitting some light as citizens are corralled out of the vesicle.

The house lights come back on. The guards on the balcony rush to the edge and look over.

The lipid is smashed across the stage, bits of it rolling into smaller balls like spilt mercury.

Pro tangles with the guard next to Tilde. The two wrestle with each other, rolling down a ramp that leads to a door labeled "B9." Tilde stands by, somewhere between confused and amused.

PRO

I won't let you do
this! Not to him! Not
to anyone anymore!

TILDE

Hey now! Woah! I want
it done to me!

SMACK! Pro deals a heavy one to the guard.

TILDE

Not that, though.

The guard falls back next to the door, smashing against the door's control panel. The door slides open.

A troupe of guards explode onto the stage and converge on Pro.

PRO

Get away, Tilde!
They're going to make
you gone!

TILDE

"Gone?" I think
they're still calling
it "finished." Pro.
You really don't have
to do this, although
I will admit it's the

most lively thing
I've seen since--

SLAM! A volley of guards smother Pro, Tilde and even the guard next to the door. Bodies writhe and struggle. Legs kick.

The guards hoist Pro and Tilde out of the jumbled mass.

GUARD 1

Get that scrub-job
out of here! And you.
get on with the
ceremony already!
We've still got
routine to keep up
with.

The guards drag Pro away. Tilde dusts himself off and walks through the doorway.

PRO

Tilde! Don't go in
there! It's not what
they're telling us!
You'll be gone!

Tilde steps into the small room. It is relatively familiar, it looks something like a doctor's office. The far wall is bare.

TILDE

Oh, I'll be right
back. Seems alright
to me. I'll be fine.
After all, I'm
finished!

The door CLAMPS shut. Tilde's face is visible through the door's small viewport. He's still smiling, tickled at the entertainment and the prospect of retirement.

PRO

No, don't you get
it?! It's out of
sight! You'll be
gone!

Next to the door, the control panel SPURTS and sparks. A slight, low RUMBLE resounds for a moment. Tilde's face, and in fact the entire room itself, is no longer visible through the door's viewport.

EXT. VESICLE - CONTINUOUS

Light shines through the open exits of the empty vesicle. Traffic flows far below, glittering.

PRO

It's out of sight
now! It makes you go
away! Tilde!

A deep HUM resounds from outside the vesicle, where a lysosome idles just outside of a network of closed chutes. Mere inches away from the lysosome is a closed hatch labeled "B9."

INT. NUCLEUS - COUNCIL BRANCH - LATER

A closed-circuit trial is underway. Pro is manacled and watched by guards. He stands on a small platform in the center of a tall, cylindrical room. Seats line the curved walls, reaching almost to the roof.

Elders fill all of the seats, glaring down at Pro.

A wall-bound screen displays footage of Pro at the finishing ceremony.

COUNCILMAN 1

Citizen Pro, you have
been charged with
unroutine, disorderly
conduct.

COUNCILMAN 2

And from what we can
see, these charges
seem more than sound.
Have you nothing to
claim in your
defense?

Pro raises his shackled hands.

PRO

I acted in the
interest of the
whole, sir.

COUNCILMAN 2

I see. Granted your
actions were indeed
for the benefit of
the whole, wouldn't
it still appear that
they were somewhat
unorthodox?

COUNCILMAN 1

Yes. Unorthodox to
the point of being
destructive.

The image on the screen changes to that of
Pro scrambling across the Symport.

COUNCILMAN 1

Abusive.

The image changes again, this time
displaying Pro as he hitches the tanker
cargo to Driver's van.

COUNCILMAN 1

And without any
regard to protocol.

PRO

Councilmen, I never
once intended to
jeopardize routine. I
simply saw a problem
and acted to correct
it.

COUNCILMAN 2

Commendable, citizen.
But what eludes us is
the impetus for your
unsavory behavior.

PRO

I did what I thought
was right!

COUNCILMAN 3

Ah! And there is your
crime, citizen. You
rely upon your own
judgement and not
upon that of your
superiors.

PRO

But, councilman, I--

COUNCILMAN 3

This society does not
benefit from "what
you think." Every
other citizen knows
"what they think."
Every other citizen
makes observations,
sees inconsistencies
in their
surroundings. They
all have their
opinions. They all
have their beliefs
and ambitions. In
this, you are no less
a threat to the whole
than any other law-
abiding citizen. Yet
while every other
citizen has an idea
of "what they think
is right," they
display a faith in
the system and a
compliance to routine
by denying themselves
the capacity to act
out their impulses.

COUNCILMAN 2

And you, citizen Pro,
as of late, have made
yourself out to be a
creature of impulse.
Whatever strikes you
as beneficial you

execute without
forethought. without
permission. without
clearance from
superiors.

Pro hangs his head, almost convinced that he
is a criminal.

COUNCILMAN 1

Citizen Pro, this
gathering of Elders
is about to determine
a sentence and
punishment fit for
your actions. If you
have anything to say
for yourself, any
defense or reason for
your behavior, do
what is right and
speak now.

COUNCILMAN 2

What led you to
behave as such,
citizen Pro? Where
you angry?

PRO

No.

COUNCILMAN 3

Aiming for promotion?

PRO

No.

COUNCILMAN 1

Aspiring for a
certain coupling
partner?

PRO

No!

COUNCILMAN 1

Then what? How do you
justify yourself?

Pro covers his face with shaking hands.

PRO

I saw... At the
symport I saw
something happen. I
saw Kid become not
alive any more. And
what did it looked
like a lysosome.

The elders murmur together, affected by
this.

PRO

It took Kid away. It
made him...gone. I
can't explain it, I
don't understand it.
But it caused him to
stop...being. And I
didn't want that to
happen to anyone
else. I had to let
everyone know, I had
to inform all of you
that we can stop
being. We aren't
infinite. I have to
let everyone know.
And if it means that
I'll have to
disregard my duties,
if it means that I'll
have to forget about
punching out at the
end of a shift, if it
means I'll need to
care less about a
promotion than a
fellow citizen, then
yes, I'm going to
break routine. Yes,
I'm going to start
trouble. Yes, I'm
going to keep going
at it until the whole
realizes what's at
stake here. We have a
right to understand
what we really are.

The elders seem satisfied by this. A council member motions to the guards, who approach Pro.

COUNCILMAN 1

That is all we needed to hear, citizen. We see now. Thank you. (to the gathering) For disregard to routine, for unseemly and disruptive behavior, for endangering the sovereign policies of the Nucleic Council and threatening the collectivism of the whole, a sentence of expulsion is ordered.

Pro steps forward, hands up. The guards restrain him.

PRO

Councilman, please!

COUNCILMAN 1

Expulsion by exocytosis, to be carried out presently. That is all.

PRO

But I'm doing what's right! We have a right to know the truth about ourselves!

The Elders rise and turn their backs to Pro. Not a single face will hear his protests. The guards lead him away, out of the chambers.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

A worker frowns at her monitor. She fills out a short form and activates an intercom.

PORT WORKER
Supervisor, please.

The worker pulls up several windows on her monitor. Shortly, a worker carrying a clipboard appears.

SUPERVISOR
Your request form?

The port worker hands the form to him. He reviews, signs and stamps it.

SUPERVISOR
Yes?

PORT WORKER
Anomaly just outside
the port, sir.
Approaching rapidly.
Something big.

SUPERVISOR
(unconcerned)
Are we expecting any
carbohydrate
brigades?

PORT WORKER
Not until after the
coupling, sir.

The communicator on the supervisor's belt suddenly BLARES to life. Dozens of corridors of cubicles instantly light up, monitors filled with windows. Port workers speed along filling out forms and requesting the supervisor.

PORT WORKERS
Supervisor!
Supervisor, please!
Sir!

INT. NUCLEUS - EXO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Exo Room looks something like an operating room and a telephone switchboard smashed together. One half of the room is a heap of machinery covered in dials, lights

and levers. The other half is comprised of what looks like an MRI machine.

Two dozing operators sit at the large control panel.

The door slides open and the guards carry Pro in. Pro struggles against their grip.

PRO

Just listen! It makes sense! How many citizens have you seen coming out of a lysosome? Can you tell me?

OPERATOR 1

What have we here?

GUARD 1

Direct orders from the Council.

The guard hands his work orders to the operator. The operator looks them over and motions for Pro to be taken to the long tube-shaped machine.

OPERATOR 1

Immediate departure, eh? Okay. Let's get him prepped.

EXT. NUCLEUS - EXO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

From outside, Pro and the guards can be seen through the translucent wall. They carry him, still kicking, to the machine.

Citizens walk by the Exo Room, unaffected. Further out, vesicles float by smoothly. Higher above, the flow rages onward. The metropolis lives on.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

The supervisor's knees buckle under the mountain of forms in his arms. He peeks around the papers at the monitor's various window displays.

PORT WORKER

Anomaly still
approaching, sir. No
response from initial
hailings.

SUPERVISOR

Get me a line to the
port authority.

The port worker activates a wall-bound
communicator and hands it to the supervisor.

INT. NUCLEUS - EXO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The machine consists of a flat surface
leading into a large cylinder. The cylinder
itself takes up an entire wall and extends
up and out of the room. The operator helps
the guards strap Pro into the machine. It's
quite a struggle.

PRO

It makes sense! We
don't go on forever!
I saw it take Kid
away!

OPERATOR 1

(over his shoulder)
Subject is secure.
How are pneumatics?

OPERATOR 2

At ninety-two
percent.

Pro strains against the straps holding him
in.

PRO

You can't do this!
Don't send me out!
There's something out
there!

OPERATOR 1

Is there anything you
can do about him?

GUARD 1
We'd have done it by
now. He won't shut
up.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

The supervisor has the communicator in one hand and a carefully balanced pile of forms in the other.

SUPERVISOR
(into communicator)
Alright. Yes, sir.
(to port worker)
Can you give me an
external view,
perhaps?

The port worker pulls up another window onto her monitor. The display shows the exterior of the membrane. The dark brown tip of the protein port juts into the corner of the screen.

A speck of color floats in the dark, slowly and steadily growing larger.

SUPERVISOR
Center on the
anomaly. Magnify
twenty, citizen.

The port worker complies. The display zooms in on the spot of color. The port worker looks at the display and shudders audibly. A chill runs down the supervisor's back.

On the display, a bizarre craft speeds toward the port. Its green, diamond-shaped body terminates in a series of dark, needle-sharp slivers. The shape of the craft is at once harrowing and undeniable:

SUPERVISOR
(into communicator)
Sir! Viral attack!

The droning monitors within the cubicles throughout the port are suddenly overthrown by the PANICKED SCREAMS of workers.

INT. NUCLEUS - EXO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pro is fastened into the machine. He can hardly move against his constraints.

PRO

Who do you know has
walked out of a
lysosome? How many
finished citizens
have you seen lately?

OPERATOR 1

Pretty sure I'm
looking at one now.

OPERATOR 2

Pneumatics are full.
Set for launch. Watch
your step, fellahs.

The guards step back. The operator at the panel activates a variety of switches and dials. The operator at the machine presses a sequence of buttons.

A gel substance stretches over Pro. It solidifies, forming a spacious shell around him. The constraints dissolve, leaving Pro free to press against the clear casing.

OPERATOR 1

(to Pro)
You know, say what
you want about
exocytosis, say what
you want about
expulsion, even. But
the one good thing
about it?

OPERATOR 2

Exocytic launch in
five...four...

OPERATOR 1

(to Pro)
It's guaranteed
first-class travel
all the way.

OPERATOR 2

Three...two...one...

BLARE! Screens across the control panel suddenly flicker and change to a bright yellow. A series of numbers and letters scroll across the monitors as the speaker in the roof of the room CRACKLES.

VOICE

This is not a test.
This is not a test.
Viral detection in
sector gamma. All
citizens are
instructed to report
to the nearest
emergency response
center immediately.
Repeat: Viral
detection in sector
gamma. This is not a
test.

The announcement continues in an automated loop. A guard looks through the wall at the crowds gathering outside.

Citizens of all shapes and sizes gather in various formations. Rank is of no concern as sanitation worker stands attention next to port worker, subordinate next to superior.

The door suddenly slides open and a tall, grizzled guard steps into the Exo Room.

DUKE

Ya'll boys aren't
particularly busy.
now are ya?

GUARDS

(simultaneously)
No, sir!

DUKE

Well, seein' as how
your not up to much
inside, how about you

come and give us a
hand outside?

The guards and operators run out of the Exo Room, leaving Pro alone, trapped inside of the machine.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

Guards run from every direction, dodging between assembled groups of citizens.

Throughout the cell, workers quickly erect tall towers of microtubules, like scaffolding. Thin membranes are stretched across the towers' peaks and rolled down to create long, billowing screens.

Small vesicles float opposite the screens. Then, simultaneously, the vesicles begin projecting images onto the screens. Crowds of citizens gather under the screens, migrating toward them as if in a trance.

The projection broadcast begins like a Cold War newsreel. Text appears onscreen as an narrator speaks.

NARRATOR

"Surviving Viral
Attack!" In order to
survive a viral
attack, one must
never fail to observe
routine.

EXT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

Hordes of guards, security personnel and military-grade citizens gather around the port. A decorated general addresses his men.

GENERAL

The situation is
critical, people.
We've got a class CC
virus. That's a
Common Cold, for you
green necks. Now it
is imperative that we
prevent this virus

from getting through
the membrane. Once
inside, there's
nothing we can do to
stop it. Now I want a
full garrison
surrounding this
port. The rest of you
will be assigned to
various antiports,
where you will board
transports, exit
through the membrane,
and then counter the
viral attacker from
outside. Is that
clear? Then move!

A thousand bodies scatter, moving in
coordination like machinery.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

The broadcast continues. Thousands of
citizens throughout the cell are rapt,
mimicking the positions they see portrayed
onscreen.

NARRATOR

So remember, in case
of viral invasion
there are three vital
things to do. Do you
remember them.
Mitochondria Mel?

A caricature of a mitochondrion worker
bumbles onscreen. His features that differ
from those of the majority of the cell are
emphasized to comedic, and insulting,
effect. A cutesy musical score begins.

MEL

Why indeedy I do!
First you duck, then
you cover, and if'n
you ain't safe, don't
go and shudder. It's
all very simple, it's
all cut and clean. If
you wants ta stay

safe just follow the
 routine. First you
 duck, then you cover,
 and if'n you ain't
 safe--

BOOM! The atmosphere ripples as the virus attacks from the outside. BOOM! The broadcast towers tremble and collapse.

Citizens everywhere panic. Full scale pandemonium. The few citizens that follow the duck and cover routine are trampled underfoot.

BOOM!

INT. NUCLEUS - EXO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BOOM!

All the gadgetry in room RATTLES as the world RUMBLES on its foundation.

Pro pounds against his casing. His screams cannot be heard. He presses his face against the vessel and looks around the room.

BOOM! Completely empty. BOOM! The door is still open. BOOM!

The impacts outside shake the entire room. A bubbly tool rolls into view from on top of the control panel. BOOM! It is directly above a switch labeled "Vessel Hatch Release."

BOOM! It rolls ever closer to the edge. Pro holds his breath. This could be escape!

EXT. NUCLEUS - EXO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BOOM! The vibrations of the onslaught nudge the pneumatic cannon protruding from the Exo Room. BOOM! The cannon gradually slides to the right, out of alignment with the protein port high above.

EXT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

BOOM!

A breathless soldier sprints to the general. He hands him a form.

GENERAL

What? What is it?

The general reads the form, signs and stamps it. Then his jaw drops. He looks up from the form.

BOOM!

Far away from the port, a number of blue lipids begin to quiver and rub. The ground begins to swell out and upward.

GENERAL

It's over there!
Move, move! Viral
attack is over there!

EXT. GOLGI COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Stranded passengers outside the Golgi SHRIEK in terror. The membrane high above them begins to stretch and fold inward, as if the blue sky were threatening to burst open.

High above, the swelling blue membrane strains outward like a rolling thunderhead.

BOOM!

INT. NUCLEUS - EXO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BOOM!

The tool rolls to the edge of the top of the control panel. Pro's breath fogs the vessel hatch. He wipes it and watches as the tool creeps ever closer.

BOOM!

The tool plummets down onto the control panel, bouncing and twirling off the protruding levers and buttons. On the way

down, the vessel undergoes a variety of functions.

First spins onto its side. Then it changes color. Then it spins back to its original position. Then a series of lights across the front turn on.

The tool balances on a heavy lever. Below are two buttons. One is labeled "Vessel Hatch Release." The other "Vessel Launch." The tool tips to one side then the other.

Pro's breath again fogs the hatch.

BOOM!

PLUNK! The tool lands on the "Launch" button. Pro wipes the mist away but can't see the tool anymore. Beneath his feet, the vessel begins to vibrate violently. The launch begins.

Pro looks up. Through the length of the pneumatic cannon, he can see the blue membrane. It is swelling outward.

PRO
I don't want to be
here.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

PFOOM!

The misaligned cannon fires the vessel directly into the heart of the viral onslaught. The flimsy oval rockets toward the bulging membrane.

INT. CELL MEMBRANE - CONTINUOUS

Hundreds of soldiers rush toward the peak of the swelling mountain of lipids. A few look skyward and dive away.

The vessel CRASHES and RATTLES against the uneven membrane protrusion. It bounces and tumbles across the bumpy landscape.

The soldiers stop in midstep, holding their breath. Waiting to see if the bouncing vessel ruptures the membrane. It rolls and slows to a stop.

INT. VESSEL - CONTINUOUS

Pro is frozen. He comes to a rigid rest on his stomach, not moving an inch.

Everything is quiet. Nothing is moving.

Pro risks opening an eye. Through the opaque vessel hatch he can see the lipid membrane. The individual lipids gently waver and ripple.

Two lipids part, allowing just a sliver of an opening. Pro doesn't breath. He looks between.

Jagged fangs.

BOOM! POW!

A tremendous, needle-point talon stabs through the opening. It slices through the membrane, reaching through to the vessel.

FISS! The murderous prong rips an opening in the vessel. It stops just short of Pro's squinting face and retracts.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - CONTINUOUS

The vessel is propelled away from the membrane, whirling back down into the heart of the cell.

INT. VESSEL - CONTINUOUS

The world topples end over end as the vessel crashes back into the emptied metropolis.

EXT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

The general runs ahead of his troops, sieging the growing mountain of lipids.

GENERAL

Charge!

Thousands of soldiers converge on the apex of the hill, all shouting and throwing their weight against the swell.

EXT. CYTOPLASM - LATER

A small vesicle, swollen like a blimp, eases through the middle of the flow. A marquee scrolls across its side, reading: "Viral Attack Repelled! Back to Work! Safety in Normalcy!"

Two mitochondrion workers look over a newspaper headline. It reads: "Awesome Antibody Aviator Achieves Amazing Attack!" A headline elsewhere on the page reads: "Citizens Prepare For Coupling."

The flow is again full of traffic. Transports merge with and pinch off of the Golgi. Citizens file into and out of the ER and vesicles. Mitochondria tremble and eject raw energy.

A flatbed particle zooms away from a mitochondrion. It nears the flow, cuts left too hard, and spills its glowing cargo.

The cargo plummets down between two mitochondria, into a dark alleyway.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - LATER

The glowing cargo litters an already dingy alleyway between the mitochondria. Several containers are broken open, their contents smeared across the ground.

Cleaner and his crew go about sanitizing the area. They are all suited in protective gear.

CLEANER

Let's us sweep this up, eh? Hadn't been called down here in a while, us.

CREW MEMBER

It's dirty, boss!

CLEANER

Yeah? Well, let's us
do something about
it. You's guys get
started on this
business. Me, I'm
scouting for other
contamination sites
and whatnot.

Cleaner ventures further into the dark alleyway. He climbs over discarded waste and rubble.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - WRECKAGE - CONTINUOUS

Cleaner looks under faded billboards and demolished construction material. He halts.

Soft light glows from just around the corner. Cleaner peeks around the corner.

The light is coming from the fixtures on a wrecked vessel. The craft is half-buried in a pile of crumpled work orders. The vessel's hatch is ripped open from top to bottom.

Cleaner cautiously approaches, gripping his sweeping vacuum like a weapon. He eases onto the pile of work orders, nerves on edge.

COUGH! COUGH! Cleaner drops the vacuum and falls onto his side. He looks up to find Pro sitting above him, on top of the pile.

CLEANER

Pro?

Pro doesn't acknowledge him. He rests his head in his hands, shoulders slumped. He kicks an errant piece of paper down the pile.

CLEANER

Pro! It's is you!
Hey!

Cleaner laughs and starts up the hill. His heavy feet sink into the papers and he slides back down.

CLEANER

Me. I thought you
was expelled. How'd
you get here?

PRO

Dumb luck. What do
you want, Cleaner?

CLEANER

Want? I want to
clean up this mess.
But first I want to
let the boys know I
found you! They'll be
happy as--

PRO

No! You can't tell
anyone about me. I'm
nothing but trouble.

CLEANER

Oh, Pro. You don't
mean that.

PRO

All I've done is mess
things up. I was this
close to a promotion.
Cleaner. Ana would
have talked to me,
then. I would have
had a new route, new
orders. Now all I've
got are these.

Pro kicks at the pile of faded papers.

PRO

Orders nobody wants
anymore. And here I
thought: "Oh. I can
serve the whole! I'll
just enlighten
everyone about some
half-baked conspiracy
about the Elders and
lysosomes and
finishing ceremonies

and..." I'm wrong.
It's my fault that
Kid disappeared. It's
my fault that you're
down here with me in
this dump. It's my
fault that the virus
got as far as it did.

CLEANER

Pro, we beat the
virus! Surge from the
inside and big
shootout on the
outside. We won!

PRO

That's good.

CLEANER

Sure it is! There's
always some goods in
there somewhere. Just
looks around here.
You've got plenty to
read, you.

PRO

Wonderful.

CLEANER

It's good that I'm
seeing you again.
That vessel, it looks
like it's close to
implosion. But here
you lands on a nice,
soft stack of work
orders? That's good.
I mean, come on, Pro!
You're alive!

Pro sits up.

PRO

What did you say?

CLEANER

Me, I said that
you're okay.

PRO

No. what exactly did you say?

CLEANER

I said that you's alive. You's alive.

Pro stands. Something comes over him. He seems taller than before.

PRO

That's it! I'm alive! Cleaner. I'm...I'm alive! You're alive too?

CLEANER

Yeah. seems like that.

PRO

How do you know this? Did you see it take Kid away too? You understand, don't you? About lysosomes and everything else? Tell me you do!

CREW MEMBER

We all do, Pro.

Pro and Cleaner turn to see the cleanup crew at the base of the trash heap. They have their protective masks off and are smiling up at them.

PRO

Guys! How do you know? How did you find it out?

CLEANER

Pro, we're sanitation, small-scale maintenance. Lysosomes is major leaguer maintenance. We works next to the things all the time.

CREW MEMBER

We've always known about it. That they don't transport much at all besides substrates. You put in a chunk of a building, the lysosome takes it, chews it up and spits out little pieces of it. No big deal.

PRO

But you know that it can stop making citizens alive? You know that we aren't infinite?

CREW MEMBER

Why do think we've got these things?

One crew member tugs another's protective mask down over his face. The two swat at each other.

Pro slides downhill. His eyes seem alive again.

PRO

Why don't you let everyone know about it? You should be telling every citizen you can about this! They have a right to know!

CLEANER

Hey, Pro. Not like we haven't thought about it. But us, we ain't exactly in a speech position, you know?

PRO

Cleaner, why is it so hard to understand

you? What do you mean?

CLEANER

Before you's came to works with us, how much did you pay us a mind, eh? Did you's so much as listen to a scrubber? Let alone look at him? Us, we're the bottom rung. We steps out of line and it's "poof" no more annoying, you know?

PRO

You're right. But I understand now. And you understand too. Everyone needs to understand it also. It affects everyone! How can we let everyone know right now?

DRIVER

You can't. Or at least you shouldn't.

They all jump at the voice. Driver leans against the dark alleyway corner.

DRIVER

It's too dangerous.

PRO

Driver? What are you doing here?

CLEANER

Oh, I gets it now! See, Driver, he says to me earlier: "Hey, you's, you see Pro somewhere's? You let me know about it." Then he gives me this little box dealy.

Couldn't figure out
where to talk into
it.

Cleaner throws a small microphone/homing
device to Pro. It has an odd assortment of
antennae bristling from its top.

DRIVER

Never thought I'd
actually look forward
to seeing you. I
couldn't believe it
when the Elders
sentenced you to
exocytosis, but I saw
your vessel during
the invasion. I knew
the exocytic process
didn't work so I knew
you were somewhere.
But I didn't really
expect to find you.

PRO

Well, if anybody
could find me, it'd
be this sweeper
creeper, here.
Thanks, Cleaner.

DRIVER

It'd have been smart
to stay down. But I
guess I should have
know better from an
ace-jerk like you.

Pro and Driver laugh.

PRO

How long have you
been there? Did you
hear anything?

DRIVER

I heard everything.

CLEANER

(tosses the device to
Driver)

Oh that's how this thing works.

PRO

Then you understand too! You know why we have to let everyone know about it!

DRIVER

I don't think it's a good idea, Pro. The Elders have had it with you. They think you're gone, expelled. You poke your head around like before, they'll know better and give you trouble that you can't even imagine. I suggest that you just stay here and keep your head down. You can do that, can't you? A big ace-jerk like you?

Pro smiles.

EXT. NUCLEUS - LATER

The cleanup crew's transport sidles over the nucleus. The ship is a motley construct of various scrap parts welded together. Dense exhaust spews out from behind it.

A gelatin hemisphere hangs under it, tied secure by microfibers. It's like a fuel-guzzling, beat up hot air balloon.

Pro, Driver and the cleanup crew ride within the hemisphere.

DRIVER

You should have stayed put. This is a bad idea, Pro!

PRO

It's the least I can
do, Driver. I'd
rather risk my own
neck than let
everyone go on
without living,
without knowing that
they're living.

Cleaner pulls on a rope. The transport slows down, passing over the glittering nucleus. A resonating HUM of energy surrounds the area. Something big is happening.

Below, the nuclear membrane's pores are all open. Citizens file into and out of the structure. Those going in carry documents, those coming out do so in pairs.

CLEANER

This isn't going to
be any kinds of easy.
Them down there,
they're getting ready
for the coupling.

The nucleus is surrounded by what appears to be a street party. Citizens of every imaginable shape, size and stature gather together. It's as if Carnivale was held in Times Square on New Year's Eve.

Pro looks above. The traffic of the flow is almost nonexistent. Transports descend and dock. Operations slow down.

Higher up, the Centrioles, looking like two densely packed tufts of bulbs, begin to stir.

PRO

Then we don't have
much time. Can you
get us any closer?

CLEANER

I'm trying.

DRIVER

Wait, what's the plan here? What are you trying to do?

PRO

Weren't you listening earlier?

DRIVER

No. I tend to block out schemes that sound insane.

PRO

Cleaner is going to get us over the pneumatic cannon of the Exo Room. The coupling festivities should draw most of the attention away from that side of the nucleus. We get inside, find the DNA chamber, and insert this.

Pro holds up a small, billiard-ball sized sphere.

DRIVER

An amino acid? You're going to alter the genetic sequence? That's crazy! This close to the coupling, you could cause a transcription error. Who knows what will happen to this place?

PRO

We're not altering anything. We're only providing an informational supplement. This way, everyone knows the truth right away. It gets coded into

general knowledge
during the coupling.

The transport eases over the pneumatic cannon. A crew member lowers several microfiber ropes from the side of the hemisphere basket. They fall and dangle just above the cannon.

CLEANER

We're here. Time to go, guys. This ship don't idle so pretty, you know.

The ship begins to shake and sputter, coughing out exhaust.

DRIVER

You do realize the risk involved here? If you screw around with the sequence, you could destroy everything and everyone in the collective.

PRO

It's not like anyone would notice.

Pro grabs a rope and lowers himself toward the cannon. Driver follows close behind.

DRIVER

Why do you always have to be a big shot? Can't you just have faith in the system? Wait!

Below, revelers and parade floats fill the streets and causeways between structures. Confetti streams choke the air. Bizarre MUSIC washes over the area. Vendors sell products. Citizens celebrate the coming coupling.

EXT. NUCLEUS - EXO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pro and Driver dangle above the opening of the pneumatic cannon. Pro lowers himself to the end of the rope. His feet don't quite reach the lip of the cannon.

DRIVER

Oh, what a time for
you to be short!
Let's turn back!

PRO

Will you shut--Wuh!

Pro's hands slip from the rope. He drops down into the cannon, disappearing into the dark. THCOMP! Driver lowers himself to the end of the rope, but cannot reach the cannon either. The lip of the cannon eases away from his outstretched feet.

DRIVER

What's going on up
there?

Above, the cleanup crew look down at him and shrug helplessly. Several of the ropes dangling from the ship are being pulled by paraders, mistaking the ship for a dingy, noisy float. The paraders' security badges are barely noticeable.

Driver kicks over to the cannon, but cannot reach it. He hangs on the rope, watching the only entrance leave his reach.

In the distance, the centrioles shake in midair. They begin creeping apart. The streets HOOT and cheer wildly as the countdown begins.

INT. NUCLEUS - EXO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pro slides down the length of the pneumatic cannon. He slows to a stop at the head of the machine and rolls out of the opening.

The Exo Room is empty. Through the translucent walls, Pro can see the occasional security guard walking down the hallway.

Pro looks back up the cannon.

PRO
Are you coming or
not? Driver?

Then he sees him. Outside the far wall of the room, Pro sees the cleanup transport slowly being led down the length of the parade route. Driver still swings from the rope beneath the ship. Crowds cheer and wave.

PRO
I'll do it on my own,
then.

INT. NUCLEUS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A guard walks past the Exo Room. Silent as a shadow, Pro sneaks behind him and pads down the hallway.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

The parade rages on. A gigantic mock-up float resembling a virus passes down the street. Close behind it are several dozen smaller floats representing antibody fighter jets.

The streetside crowd cheers, all smiles. Except for one. Ana slouches against the guard rail, not looking too enthusiastic. Her friend pounces on her, wearing a bizarre hat.

CITIZEN
Isn't this great?
What's wrong with
you?

ANA
Does it matter?

CITIZEN
Oh, get over it!
Look, look over
there!

Her friend point across the street where
Burly and his crew watch the festivities.

CITIZEN

It's Burly!

ANA

Wonderful.

CITIZEN

Fine. If you're not
going after him, I
will!

ANA

Repeat announcement:
Wonderful.

Ana's friend hops over the railing and jogs
across the street. She weaves through the
handlers of another float, isn't careful,
and runs SMACK! into a pair of dangling
feet.

DRIVER

Hey, watch it!

The handlers carry the float further down
the street. They reach a turn in the route,
but instead of following the parade
procession, they turn away from it.

INT. VESICLE STOREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The handlers pull the cleanup crew's ship
into a large, empty warehouse. The doors
seal shut behind it, throwing the warehouse
into darkness and reducing the festival
outside to a muted roar.

VOICE

Okay, boys. Hit it.

SHOOM! The lights come on. The parade
handlers throw off their disguises.

The warehouse is filled with every type of
security measure available. Guards crouch
behind riot gear. Urban defense vehicles
hover in place. A SWAT team practices
maneuvers on a balcony.

CLEANER

Oh dag.

A commanding officer steps forward.

GENERAL

You're all under
arrest! Take 'em
down!

Dozens of guards rush forward as the
handlers slowly pull the ship down.

Once his feet touch the floor, Driver walks
away from the ship, passing between the
guards who pay him little notice. He
approaches the general.

CLEANER

Driver? A snitch?
Driver! A snitch! Let
me at him! I'll
scrubs him good!

Cleaner tries to climb out of the ship,
furious. His terrified crew restrains him.

GENERAL

Your orders?

Driver pulls out a document and hands it to
him.

GENERAL

Your mission isn't
complete, citizen.
One of your marks is
missing. Where is he?

DRIVER

I...I'm not sure. He
got away before your
team moved in.

The general scowls at Driver and looks up at
a balcony high overhead where a grim figure
leans over the handrail to speak.

COUNCILMAN 1

Well, perhaps you
should find him,
citizen. Quickly.

DRIVER

Don't worry,
councilman. I may
have an idea as to
his location.

INT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

The antennae of the homing device quiver on
Pro's belt as he runs down the hallway.

He ducks into a dark doorway just as a guard
rounds the corner ahead. The guard passes
near the door, but stops. Hiding under a
desk. Pro brings his knees to his chest and
holds his breath.

Another guard joins the first outside the
room. Pro can see only their feet, merely
inches away.

LOU

Hey, Tip. How's it
going?

TIP

Lou.

Pro grits his teeth. His eyes spin around
the room, looking for some means of escape.
They come to a stop at the edge of the
desktop, where the edge of a clipboard hangs
over the side.

LOU

Heard you got caught
asleep on the job.

TIP

Uhhhh, you did? Well,
you're the first.

LOU

Tell you what, I'll
be the last too, so
long as you never

heard about me
snoozing. Deal?

TIP

Deal.

PRO

Ahem!

The surprised guards bump against the wall. Lou reaches into the room and turns on the lights, ready to pounce.

Pro is standing front and center. His perfect posture and Patton-esque manner denotes an air of superiority, as does the clipboard tucked under his arm.

PRO

I know I didn't just
hear what I heard,
citizen.

LOU

Uh...sir! No, sir!

TIP

No, sir!

PRO

Good, good. Do you
boys perhaps wish
that you were
somewhere else? Hmm?
Somewhere, say,
outside? In the
middle of all this
merriment?

TIP

No, sir!

PRO

Don't lie to me,
citizen. I don't
deserve it.

The guards flinch, slowly cowering against the wall.

PRO

I wish I were
outside, at the
parade, having the
best down-time I've
ever had. Don't you?
Sounds like fun,
doesn't it?

LOU

Yes, sir!

PRO

I like hearing fun
things. I like
hearing good things.
But I'll tell you
what I don't like
hearing. I don't like
hearing about
slackers, especially
at a time like this.
Because if I heard
about something like,
say, two commissioned
guardsmen who were
too lax in their
duties to stay awake
while on the job...
That would just be an
insult to me, to my
time and to this
establishment. Let
alone it would be
grounds for demotion.

LOU

Sir! There's no talk
like that around
here, sir!

TIP

We'll turn in anyone
we hear talking like
that, sir!

PRO

I trust you will,
boys. Now get back to
your posts and try to
stay awake, hm?

The guards run into each other trying to sprint down the hallway. Pro stops one of them.

PRO
And citizen?

TIP
Sir!

PRO
Prove to me that
you're on your toes,
will you? Which way
to the DNA chamber?

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

The parade of floats has gathered in a sizable square. All music, confetti and cheering is at full sway. The atmosphere itself seems to be growing brighter and more frenetic with every passing moment.

FWOOM! High above, the centrioles, now with some distance between them, illuminated in a dazzling array of colored lights. Like two twin New Year's Eve balls gradually migrating to opposite sides of the membrane high above.

INT. NUCLEUS - DNA CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Pro approaches the fortified barrier of the DNA chamber. The dark blue walls are somewhat transparent but thick.

As Pro walks down the door-lined hallway, a guard steps up and scrutinizes his own clipboard.

GUARD 1
Do you have work
orders to be here,
citizen?

Pro puffs his chest out and waves his own clipboard in the guard's face.

PRO

What? You dare to
talk to me like that?
I ought to report
you! I■

The clipboard slips from his hand and
CLATTERS to the floor. Several papers spill
out of it, along with an identification
badge. Namely, that of the clipboard's
owner...who looks nothing like Pro.

GUARD 1
Alright, hold it!

WHOMP!

A door swings open into the hallway and
smashes the guard across the head. He
crumples to the ground.

Tilde steps out of the doorway.

TILDE
(to the unconscious
guard)
Where's the
management? Hey, I'm
talking to you!

PRO
Tilde!

TILDE
Pro, I don't have
time for stories
right now. You
wouldn't believe what
I've been putting up
with.

PRO
You're alive!

TILDE
I'm what? I'm lost,
that's what! I'm just
waiting in a room for
my finishing to wrap
up and nothing

happens. Ever! I make my way out of that vesicle booby-hatch and come down here to the capital to complain and who is the only stooge I run into? A snoozer!

Tilde kicks at the guard.

TILDE
Wake up, you! I've got a finishing coming and I want it pronto!

PRO
Tilde, Tilde. Maybe you shouldn't kick him like that. Why don't you check outside? I think I saw a few elders outside, at the parade.

TILDE
(walking away and mumbling)
Place is falling apart. Can't find anyone when you need them... What I don't put up with...

INT. NUCLEUS - DNA CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Pro walks through the arched opening to the DNA chamber. He steps onto a ledge overlooking the chamber.

The chamber is massive, five times the size of any football stadium. Small ledges poke out into the chamber at various points, entrances and exits to the heart of the nucleus.

The entirety of the room is filled with towering girders and twisting pillars. Helical poles run the amazing length of the

chamber. Rung-like bars connect the poles, each rung containing three billiard-ball sized spaces. Every space on every rung on every pole is filled with balls of various colors, labeled with various numbers.

Pro checks on the amino acid code hanging from his belt. He then steps out onto the nearest pillar and climbs it like a giant ladder.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

The crowd's antics and revelry only intensify. Old acquaintance is forgotten as inferiors sing arm-in-arm with superiors.

The glowing centrioles travel further apart, now nearing opposite sides of the membrane.

INT. NUCLEUS - DNA CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Pro climbs up a pillar. He looks above him at the pillar next over. A rung above is labeled "G6, B3, A-A2." Pro looks at his matching amino code and takes it from his belt.

DRIVER

You really shouldn't
do that.

Pro looks behind up. Driver is standing on a ledge not far from him, arms crossed.

PRO

Driver! How'd you get
here?

DRIVER

(pointing)
Armed escort, of
course.

Pro looks around the chamber. Guards stand attention at various entrances.

PRO

You...you brought
them? Why? What is
this?

DRIVER

Information
acquisition. Pro. I
had to spy on you.
It's nothing
personal, you
understand. Just all
in a day's work.

Driver kicks the amino code out of Pro's hand. It falls and bounces amid the helical pillars. It finally RATTLES to a stop between two rungs on a lower pillar.

DRIVER

Now just come along
quietly. Pro. Real
routine-like.

Pro makes eye contact with Driver. Not a chance. He releases his grip on the rungs and slides down the twisting pillar.

DRIVER

After him! Go!

The guards climb out onto the pillars, deftly swinging from rung to rung like assassins on God's jungle gym.

Pro kicks off of one pillar and swings across to another. Guards descend on all sides, disappearing among the forest of helical poles.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

The centrioles reach opposite ends of the membrane and sparkle in brilliant white light. The light courses through the atmosphere, riding on currents. It sweeps over structures and transports, leaving them shimmering.

Slowly, the surfaces of objects and structures begin to grow transparent.

INT. NUCLEUS - DNA CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Pro kicks his legs out, bracing himself between two pillars. He skids to an abrupt stop. The amino ball is within arm's reach. He reaches down for it.

SNATCH! A blur of a hand rips it away. The guard grins as he turns and scales the pillar.

PRO

No! You don't know
what this is going to
do for us!

Pro climbs up after him, keeping an eye on the guard, who is now several pillars over.

WHUMP! WHOOMP!

Two other guards drop down on either side of Pro. They lunge forward, arms open. Pro ducks. A pillar slides between the guards as they descend on him.

KLUNK! The guards' heads smash into opposite ends of the pillar.

The forest of pillars and helical poles slowly begins to stir. A deafening SCREECH emanates from the belly of the chamber as the DNA strands untangle, moving on their own like reeds caught in a stream.

Pro reaches up, braces himself against a rung, and throws himself upward. Almost imperceptible, his hand comes away from the rung, swapping one amino ball with another.

The dark, thick chamber membrane begins to lighten. The pillars' spinning and churning speeds up.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

Outside, the crowd ROARS in chants and laughter. The very air is possessed by an electric life. Visibility lessens as confetti streams down and murky lines, like jetstreams, form across the horizon.

INT. NUCLEUS - DNA CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The entire chamber spins like a giant blender filled with palm trees. Pro clings to a pillar. He presses his body against it, fighting against the forces trying to hurl him away.

He peeks an eye open. A guard is barely hanging onto an approaching pillar. His feet SWOOP through the air. One limp hand flaps at side, still holding the amino code.

As the pillar zips by, Pro extends his arm. SNATCH! He comes away with the amino code. The guard loses his grip and plummets between the furiously spinning pillars.

Pro grinds his teeth together, fighting the pull. The rung with an empty slot is merely feet above him. He holds his breath as the chamber THUNDERS with pressure.

Another guard stands by on a ledge. He waits for Pro's pillar to circulate near, and jumps!

CLANG! He flails through the air, deflected by a pole blurring past.

Pro inches upward, sliding one arm up against the pillar. Then the other. He presses himself flat against the whipping column. The forces lick and tear all around him.

Something dark moves from another pillar. Above. Close.

CRASH!

Driver smashes into Pro, using his weight to ram him from the pillar. Pro loses his grip, regains it! He swings around to the other side of the pillar, holding on for dear life.

Driver and Pro glare at each other through the rungs of the DNA strand. The chamber is a BOOMING blur of lights and colors.

DRIVER

You just couldn't
mind your own, could
you?

Far below, still in the dark, wrapped around the base of the strands, bulky transcription proteins activate. WHIRRING like a horde of wasps, they begin to glow. They disengage from their docks and begin sliding up the DNA strands.

As they pass over, the strands separate. Double-helical poles split into separate shafts, twisting apart and thrashing in the air.

DRIVER

Follow the orders, do
as you're told,
everything works out.
Simple as that.

PRO

No. It's never that
simple.

Pro reaches up, thrusting the amino code toward the empty slot in the rung. Driver reaches between rungs and grabs his arm. He pulls it against the pillar.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

The centrioles are at extreme opposite sides of the membrane. They continue floating, pressing against the lipid wall.

Down below, the crowds cheer as the sky itself begins to stretch and distort.

CITIZENS

(simultaneously)
Ten! Nine! Eight!

INT. NUCLEUS - DNA CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Pro tries to pull his arm free from Driver's grip. The force of the spinning pillar only press him further into his grasp.

DRIVER

Some things we're
better off not
knowing. But you
wouldn't give up.
You had to have your
way, had to leave
your mark. Even if it
destroys us all!

PRO

This has nothing to
do with me! It's not
about me or you or
anyone by themselves.
Driver! This is about
the whole. This is
for everyone that
doesn't know, that
never knew.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

The lipid sky stretches thin. The blue
horizon tints and begins glowing orange,
like an extraordinary worldwide sunset.

CITIZENS

(simultaneously)
Five! Four!

INT. NUCLEUS - DNA CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Helical poles split apart like open zippers.
The transcription proteins speed up along
the twisting pillars. They are not far below
and are not slowing down.

DRIVER

You think I didn't
want to help you?
That I wanted it to
come to this? You
pushed it, Pro! You
brought this on
yourself! You don't
like the way things
turn out, so you have
to change them, is
that it?

PRO

It's what I do! And
liking isn't part of
the job, remember?

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

The atmosphere burns white. The sky seems ready to split open. The heavens shine just beyond. Structures and surfaces all but vanish, growing more thin and transparent.

CITIZENS
(simultaneously)
Three! Two!

INT. NUCLEUS - DNA CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The chamber BELLOWS as DNA strands waver and whirl. It's a kaleidoscope of structures and color, full speed.

Driver wrenches Pro's arm to the side.

DRIVER
How convenient for
you, then! It saves a
lot of time when
you're the savior and
the destroyer all at
once, doesn't it?
Another one of your
coincidences?

Pro blinks. The rung is just out of reach. He can't move. The air in the chamber is thin. The BOOMING proteins are at his feet. Blinding light every direction.

PRO
Coincidence? There's
no such thing.

Pro opens his hand and lets the amino ball slip away.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

CITIZENS
(simultaneously)
One!

With a resounding POP! the sky ripples and begins to part. The crowds ERUPT with cheers. Static CRACKLES across the horizon.

INT. NUCLEUS - DNA CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Shocked, Driver lets go of Pro's arm. He watches the amino ball float upward and around, caught in the currents stirred in the chamber.

Pro lunges backward, kicking free from the pillar. He watches as Driver, the pillar and the amino ball float away, ascending over him as he plummets.

DRIVER

Pro!

Driver reaches for him, but it's no use. He throws himself from the pillar, onto a ledge, as the proteins zip by.

He leans over and watches Pro fall away, never noticing the amino ball in front of him as it is tossed by the force of the spinning chamber.

The ball levitates, wavers, and nestles snugly into the rung just as the proteins unravel the pillar. Driver stares, motionless from horror...or hope.

Falling into the belly of the chamber, Pro closes his eyes. His face seems almost peaceful, content. Pious.

The unraveled strands twist around him, writhing like severed power lines.

Pro plummets down, down, down. Then...

POP!

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

Pro plummets out of the side of the nucleus. He BLASTS through the thinning membrane and flails through the confetti-strewn air.

The ROAR of the crowd surrounds him. An army of floats whiz by. A million faces streak past.

THUD! Pro tumbles across the street, rolling by the dancing feet of festive citizens. He spins to a dizzying stop, slumped over in front of the only pair of still feet.

Ana hurdles the barricade and runs to him.

ANA

Pro?!

PRO

I'm...I'm okay.
I...Ana?

ANA

What happened to you?

She helps Pro to his feet. He shades his eyes from the radiant yellow sky. Millions of citizens gaze skyward, joining hands two-by-two. Coupling partners.

PRO

Nothing new.

Pro takes Ana's hand in his own.

ANA

What are you doing?
We aren't supposed
to...

PRO

Yes we are. I looked
into it.

INT. NUCLEUS - DNA CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The chamber is a hurricane of grinding pillars and shifting colors. Two rungs stream a color brighter than the rest, holding newly inserted amino acid codes.

EXT. NUCLEUS - CONTINUOUS

The sky bursts open in a shower of sparks. Neon clouds swirl across the horizon as the

lipid membrane splits in half. The nuclear membrane vanishes and the separated strands of DNA twirl out into the open.

A thin membrane materializes down the middle of the cell. It stretches through structures, across causeways. The membrane begins to thicken and pull apart.

The ground begins to tremble and disintegrate. Coupling partners embrace, steadying each other. Pro and Ana hold onto each other as the world burns white.

Reality smears sideways as the membrane trembles and separates into halves. For an instant, the world is split in two.

EXT. CELL MEMBRANE - CONTINUOUS

PLINK!

The cell membrane cleaves apart, then cleaves shut. Two oblong, identical cells float next to each other, soft and serene as clouds.

INT. CYTOPLASM - LATER

The flow is again full of traffic. Glittering transports sail across the sky. Structures bounce with activity, walls bulging, exhausts purring, doors opening.

Citizens thrive throughout, hurrying along their way. Their steps seem to contain a little more spring. Their faces seem to bear a little more smile.

A small, blimp-like vesicle passes over the flow. It's scrolling marquee reads: "Have a nice day! General energy output at all time high! Have a nice day!"

A stately transport, more like an open-deck cruise ship, glides out of the flow and gently approaches a Golgi Apparatus.

Several dozen citizens pack onto one side of the deck. Two elders occupy another side.

smiling and indicating the Golgi beneath them.

COUNCILMAN 1

And as you can see,
we'll be expanding
Golgi operations into
the epsilon sector.
We hope to have this
area swept clean and
in pristine condition
in no time.
(looking up)
Right, boys?

Cleaner and his crew wave from a passing transport, this one sleek and modern-looking.

CLEANER

Righto, sir! Consider
it scrubbed!

COUNCILMAN 1

Excellent, then! I
love your work!

CLEANER

Me too!

The ship chugs onward.

COUNCILMAN 2

And now to address
your concerns about
energy conservation.
You see, citizens,
energy isn't so much
a concern as before
when we...

FROOM! Another sleek transport zooms overhead. It is hauling a small load of materials on a trailer. It glides through the atmosphere and slows to a stop just outside a protein port embedded in the lipid membrane.

INT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

A port worker fills out a form. He signs and stamps it. Stamps it again.

PORT WORKER
Supervisor, please!

Pro walks down the corridor, clipboard under his arm.

PRO
Yes?

PORT WORKER
I think my stamp's
broken, sir.

Pro sets down his clipboard and inspects the stamp. It seems beyond repair.

PRO
I wouldn't worry
about it, citizen.
Just send along the
work order without
it. It's faster that
way. Keep up the good
work.

PORT WORKER
Thank you, sir.

EXT. PROTEIN PORT - CONTINUOUS

The sleek transport idles outside the port.

PORT WORKER
Cleared for
transmission. Proceed
with caution and have
a good one.

PILOT
Copy that. Same to
you.

The protein tip opens and the transport eases through.

EXT. CELL MEMBRANE - CONTINUOUS

The transport exits the cell and increases velocity. Its engines BURST with energy, rocketing through the darkness of space.

INT. TRANSPORT - CONTINUOUS

The pilot activates an autopilot program and leans back. He smiles at the young passenger next to him.

PILOT

So, this is your first time to fly a transmission?

PASSENGER

That's right.

PILOT

You're not nervous, are you?

PASSENGER

Not any more. It doesn't seem that tough, really.

A dense blue object swells out of the darkness and into view.

PILOT

Got that right. It's easy sailing here on out.

EXT. CELL MEMBRANE - CONTINUOUS

The transport approaches the protein port in another cell's membrane.

It idles for a moment, then proceeds into the opening port. This cell membrane quivers with as much activity as the other. It seems to be thriving as heartily as any of the other thousands of cells in every direction of it.

Each spherical, blue cell bobs in place as they function at tremendous speed. From far away the cells seem to blend together.

obscuring in numbers. They vanish behind purple nebulae and pink clouds.

The masses of colors shrink and vanish into tightly coiled tubes coursing with a dark, thick fluid.

The tubes run together and withdraw into a chalk-colored necropolis. The bizarre architecture of the necropolis is offset by the foamy pink streams flowing throughout the city.

The necropolis and bone marrow diminish and fade away under a thick, sooty forest floor. Thick tree trunks sprout out of the ground as far as the eye can see. The limbless trees taper off into sharp points. Six-legged monsters from the Cretaceous dangle from the trees.

The nightmarish forest squeezes out of sight, shrinking away as a gigantic, pink arm swoops down and scratches at its elbow.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Charts and anatomy posters. Shelves and a door.

A patient sits on an examination bed. She is wearing a hospital gown and paper booties. She slumps, having been waiting for some time.

She reaches over and tosses her peppermint candy wrapper into the wastebasket.

The door opens and a tall doctor steps inside. He shuts the door behind him, sighs, and puts his clipboard under one arm. His face reveals the struggles within him as he searches for the words.

DOCTOR

Well, as always,
there's good news and
bad news.

PATIENT

Let me hear the good
first.

DOCTOR

There are other
treatments available.
Something else might
work. We can try
chemotherapy, gene
therapy. Maybe some
herbal remedies,
although I wouldn't
recommend it.

PATIENT

And the bad?

The doctor sighs. He hates this part of the
job.

DOCTOR

It's spreading.

FADE OUT: BLACK

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 Major, Film ■ Minor, Texas A&M
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Work Experience (1999-2001) The Battalion, Campus
 Newspaper, Texas A&M
 University, College Station, TX
Feature Writer/Columnist
 Wrote feature articles for
 publication in a daily
 newspaper. Wrote weekly columns
 for publication. Edited and
 proofread copy for publication.
 Generated feature and column
 ideas. Interviewed artistic and
 entertainment personalities.

Academic Activities Independent and Student Films ■
 Director, Actor, Producer
 Aggie SWAMP (Screenwriters,
 Actors, Movie Producers)
 Sigma Tau Delta
 ACADEC Team Captain, 1997-98
 7th Annual National Science Bowl
 Competition, 1998
 Media Tech Club, 1996-98

Honors WorldFest Film Festival
 Scholarship recipient, 2000-02
 Best Jacob Huval Award ■ *The
 Battalion*, 1999
 Distinguished Student of
 Liberal Arts ■ Texas A&M
 University, Fall of 1998 ■
 Spring of 2002
 Gold Medal Essayist-ACADEC
 Honors Essay Competition, 1998
 3rd Place Team, Regional Ocean
 Sciences Bowl, 1998
 Honors Biology Student of the
 Year, 1994-95