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Faith:

Hi everyone, this is Faith, and I am so happy to say that Apollyon is back. This is episode two, so if you haven't listen to episode one yet, go do that first. This season, we'll have 10 episodes releasing every two weeks. If you like what you hear, please head on over to Podchaser and leave us a rating and review. If you're feeling a little more generous, we would love to have your support through our Patreon page, which you can find at patreon.com/observerpix. That's P-I-X. I really hope you enjoy this episode. Thank you for listening.

Speaker2:

This episode contains discussions of animal testing. Listener discretion advised.

DIPA:

Observer Pictures presents, Apollyon. Written and directed by Faith McQuinn. This is Episode Two: Fast Track.

Theo:

Everything's going to be fine. Everything's... She's in quarantine. They'll take care of everything. She'll be fine. It's fine. Just think. Just think. Just think. Please be all right. I need you to be all right, please.

DIPA:

Theo, your heart rate is elevated beyond normal parameters. Do you require assistance?

Theo:

DIPA, please call Savreen Khanna, audio only.

DIPA:

Calling Savreen Khanna.

Savreen:

Theo, you're not calling to reschedule our lunch tomorrow, are you?

Theo:

Are you already in Atlanta?

Savreen:

Uh, no, my flight is in the morning. Why?

Theo:

Are you friends with anyone in QF in Denver?

Savreen:

Hm, I've met the director a few times, but they're not what I would call friends. I try to avoid the quarantine as much as possible. What's going on? What aren't you telling me?

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Theo:

Mom is at QF?

Savreen:

When? I saw her three days ago.

Theo:

It's been maybe 10 minutes. Eh, she called me on her way there.

Savreen:

Did something go wrong with her Redivir?

Theo:

She said she missed a couple of doses.

Savreen:

How could she forget to take them?

Theo:

No. She, she said she ran out.

Savreen:

Good Lord, Jamilla.

Theo:

I need to find out if there's a gl- a glitch in the system as to why she didn't get her meds delivered or, God forbid, something else.

Savreen:

I'm sure there was no glitch.

Theo:

Savreen sh- she couldn't move her legs. I mean, why would she wait? Wh- why would she...

Savreen:

Oh sweetheart.

Theo:

She's managed it all these years.

Savreen:

Your mother's strong, and I'm sure she'll pull through. What do you need me to do?

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Theo:

I thought, uh, maybe you could pull a few strings and get in to see her.

Savreen:

Theodora, she's in full quarantine right now. No one can get in, and you have more access for string pulling than I do.

Theo:

Not in Denver.

Savreen:

And you think I do? I'm just a consultant now.

Theo:

(laughs) Sure. And I just work in a lab.

Savreen:

Exactly what I mean. I don't have the connections you have.

Theo:

You ran the chem department. That has to account for something.

Savreen:

That was six years ago.

Theo:

I'm sure there are still people you can call.

Savreen:

I can't simply do that.

Theo:

You mean you won't.

Savreen:

I mean I can't.

Theo:

(laughs)

Savreen:

You know I would if I could, but I cannot demand entrance into a facility that has protocols in place for a reason.

Theo:
(laughs)

Savreen:
QF will give you updates when they have updates to give.

Theo:
Uh, I know, but they'll give me stats. I don't want that.

Savreen:
What do you want?

Theo:
I need to know how she is. I need to know... her mental state is so important, Savreen. There's no question your state of mind can dictate how quickly you can return from a physical setback. I mean science, studies that I have conducted have shown a strong link between mind and body in people dealing with AVS, but they don't care about any of that in the quarantine facilities. I mean no matter how many studies we've done proving otherwise, they treat everyone there like a fucking number.

Savreen:
Theo, this anger's not helping you, and it's doing nothing for your mother right now.

Theo:
I know. I, I'm sorry.

Savreen:
I know a few people at the travel bureau. I can see about fast tracking that Visa of yours. Of course, you'll still need approval from Xavier.

Theo:
Uh, that should be interesting.

Savreen:
He is a lot of things, but cold hearted isn't one of them. I'm sure he'll understand. Do you want me to talk to my contacts at the travel bureau?

Theo:
Yes, please.

Savreen:
Is there anything else I can do?

Theo:

Why would she miss a dose? I mean let alone multiple doses, and why would she wait so long to call for quarantine?

Savreen:

You know as well as anyone that symptoms can present quickly when the Retafer treatments are disrupted.

Theo:

But multiple doses? It doesn't make any sense.

Savreen:

You don't think it was an accident, do you?

Theo:

I don't know.

Savreen:

She wouldn't do that.

Theo:

I don't know.

Savreen:

She wouldn't, Theo. I promise she wouldn't. Jamilla has a lot on her mind and this was an unfortunate accident.

Theo:

What does my retired mother have on her mind?

Savreen:

You should ask her when you see her.

Theo:

What's going on Savreen?

Savreen:

If you want me to get in touch with my people at the travel bureau, I, I need to go.

Theo:

Fine.

Savreen:

She's strong, Theo. It's where you get it from.

Theo:

You should go.

Savreen:

Of course. Goodnight.

Theo:

Goodnight.

Theo:

Ah, what the hell?

DIPA:

You did not wake with your regular alarm. It is 0700. You must depart in 21 minutes to arrive at ICRS Headquarters on schedule.

Theo:

You weren't in the lab.

Gabriel:

Neither were you.

Theo:

Sorry I'm late. Did I miss anything? Is there tea?

Gabriel:

You look like shit. What's going on?

Theo:

My mother was taken to Denver QF last night.

Gabriel:

What? Wh- why didn't you call me?

Theo:

I, hm, sorry.

Gabriel:

No. Don't apologize, that was shitty of me. Wait, did the Redivir stop working?

Theo:

No. She, she missed two doses.

Gabriel:

Fuck.

Theo:

Yeah.

Gabriel:

When you say she missed two doses, you mean she was late taking them, right?

Theo:

No. She said she ran out.

Gabriel:

That's strange.

Theo:

Yeah, and, and don't think I'm not having a word with the Denver pharmacy.

Gabriel:

Fuck. Are you all right?

Theo:

Not really.

Gabriel:

Why are you even here?

Theo:

What am I gonna do at home? And we have to present to Xavier.

Gabriel:

Yeah, but I think that can wait.

Theo:

Not if we wanna move forward the rest of the year. I mean it, it's almost the end of the quarter, and if we wanna keep our same team we have to get the next round of trials approved as soon as possible.

Gabriel:

I can handle it.

Theo:

I know you can, but I wouldn't hear the end of it if I'm not here.

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Gabriel:

I think he'll understand.

Theo:

Sure. "So Dr. Ramsey, you skipped out on presenting your pivotal findings today because you're upset about your mother. The work we're doing here is more important than just one person."

Gabriel:

Yeah, I believe he would also say, "You can't be at the top of your game if you feel like shit."

Theo:

Plus I have to ask him a favor, and that's a lot harder if I have to take a personal day.

Gabriel:

Fine. Computer, page Annabelle Scott.

ICRS Computer:

Paging Annabelle Scott.

Theo:

What are you doing?

Annabelle:

Hi, Dr. Larson. Do you need something?

Gabriel:

Hey Annabelle, have the mice been euthanized?

Annabelle:

Yeah, I took care of it first thing this morning.

Gabriel:

Are Horatio and Elliott there?

Annabelle:

Yes.

Horatio:

Dr. Larson, the tissues are being mounted for analysis as we speak.

Gabriel:

Elliott, have you started the blood analysis report?

Elliot:

Doing it now.

Gabriel:

Great.

Theo:

What was that for?

Gabriel:

I know you worry things won't run smoothly if you're not here, so I thought I'd give you a little peace of mind. Now, go home.

Theo:

We've got work to do.

Gabriel:

Yes, we do, and there's an entire team taking care of it right now.

Theo:

I don't wanna go home.

Gabriel:

Why not?

Theo:

I can't do anything there.

Gabriel:

You can rest. We'll do the presentation with Xavier over holo.

Theo:

You're gonna sit there and say that with a straight face? Uh, we both know that resting is the last thing I would do if I went home.

Gabriel:

Okay. Fine. Then this is what we're gonna do. Tell me how you're feeling.

Theo:

Like shit.

Gabriel:

Well that's obviously, but come on, Theo, tell me how you're really feeling.

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Theo:

I just, I just feel helpless. We've worked for years on this vaccine and, and it wasn't fast enough.

Gabriel:

Your mom would be furious with you if she heard you say that.

Theo:

Doesn't make it less true.

Gabriel:

She'd tell you she's not the only person we're gonna help, that we have helped.

Theo:

But she's the one I care about helping. I mean what if...

Gabriel:

What if what?

Theo:

It's stupid.

Gabriel:

You haven't had a stupid thought in 20 years.

Theo:

What if she lied to me?

Gabriel:

About missing the doses?

Theo:

Yes.

Gabriel:

But wh- why would she do that?

Theo:

I don't know. I'm... we don't talk as often as we used to, so maybe, maybe something's going on that she didn't want me to know about.

Gabriel:

I'm about to be blunt, so don't jump down my throat.

Theo:

Okay.

Gabriel:

If your mother was going to take her life, this isn't how.

Theo:

But-

Gabriel:

She called for a containment vehicle. She's at QF. Whatever this was, it wasn't that.

Theo:

Fine. But I still think she's lying to me. I don't know why, but I think Savreen might know something too.

Gabriel:

Have you talked to her? Savreen.

Theo:

Yeah last night. She said what you said, uh, my mother wouldn't do this on purpose, but she also wouldn't miss a dose.

Gabriel:

Have you talked to anyone at QF?

Theo:

They sent a message with her stats.

Gabriel:

And?

Theo:

No fever, 36 degrees this morning, no paralysis.

Gabriel:

That's good.

Theo:

But she's experiencing neuropathy in her hands and legs.

Gabriel:

Uh.

Theo:

Ah. All I'm doing is going in circles. I've gotta get my mind somewhere else.

Gabriel:

You think working is going to help?

Theo:

I know it will.

Gabriel:

Your head has to be here though. Distractions in the lab-

Theo:

I, I know. I'm good, I promise. If I'm not, I'll, I'll take a break.

Gabriel:

All right. Then shall we head to the lab?

Theo:

So I passed your little therapy test?

Gabriel:

It wasn't a test. I love you and I have to know you're okay.

Theo:

Thank you.

Gabriel:

So what's the favor you need to ask Xavier?

Theo:

Oh, uh, Savreen said she'd try to get my visa expedited, but-

Gabriel:

Xavier has to sign off on it.

Theo:

Exactly.

Gabriel:

When are you gonna talk to him about it?

Theo:

At the end of the day. No need to distract from our presentation, plus who knows when the travel bureau request will come.

Gabriel:

I'm sure Savreen lit a fire under someone's ass. (laughs) Stop worrying if he'll sign off on it or not. I'm sure he will.

Theo:

If you were asking, he'd probably go down to the travel bureau himself.

Gabriel:

Yeah, I think this traumatic experience is messing with your head.

Theo:

Hm, he loves you. He tolerates me.

Gabriel:

He calls me Gabe.

Theo:

(laughs) Because you never corrected him. He loves you.

Gabriel:

Xavier Weiss doesn't love anyone, just the work they do.

Theo:

Then he loves your work and tolerates mine.

Gabriel:

Hey, first of all, my work and your work are essentially the same thing. Second of all, he hired you. I was the consolation prize.

Theo:

(laughs)

Gabriel:

Annabelle, show me the H&E stained spinal cord slides.

Annabelle:

Sure, Dr. Larson.

Gabriel:

I was right. There's no sign of demyelination.

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Theo:

Yes, but what does the control group look like?

Gabriel:

Annabelle?

Annabelle:

Here's the control group.

Gabriel:

See, the controls are definitely declining. Look at the severity here. The amount of samples with no pathology and less virus specific stain coupled with no demyelination in the spinal cord is an obvious indication of a successful vaccine. Why do I feel as if you're fighting me on this?

Theo:

I'm not fighting you, I'm reigning you in.

Gabriel:

Then we should do confirmation tests.

Theo:

RNA Scope?

Gabriel:

Yes.

ICRS Computer:

Reminder, meeting with Xavier Weiss at 10:15. Current time 9:15.

Theo:

Oh, I completely lost track of time.

Gabriel:

Horatio?

Horatio:

Yeah?

Gabriel:

Take these and setup RNA scope scanning for AVS envelope and polymerase in parallel with antibody staining for macrophage markers.

Horatio:

I'm on it.

Theo:

Thank you, Horatio.

Horatio:

Of course, Dr. Ramsey.

Gabriel:

I was gonna thank him.

Theo:

No you weren't. Computer, page Elliott Hess.

ICRS Computer:

Paging Elliot Hess.

Elliot:

Elliot here.

Theo:

Hi Elliot. I'm sending you the spreadsheets for today, I need you to cross reference the animals to each study group.

Elliot:

Consider it done.

Theo:

Thank you.

Elliot:

Uh, you're welcome.

Gabriel:

Yes, yes, you're better than me.

Theo:

(laughs)

Gabriel:

Ready for the gauntlet?

Theo:

Never.

ICRS Computer:

Admittance requested for Larson, Gabriel and Ramsey, Theodora.

Weiss:

Admittance granted. Good morning, Gabe. Good morning, Theo.

Gabriel:

Morning.

Theo:

Good morning Dr. Weiss.

Weiss:

What have you got for me today?

Gabriel:

Incredible news, actually.

Weiss:

Really? I'll be the judge of that.

Theo:

Hm, we'll just bring up our data on the screen. These are the results from the first mouse experiment with the mRNA 6129 at 80 micrograms. As you can see, the study shows strong protection against AVS. Every specimen in the control group succumbed within five days. Three in the treated group specimens 410, 415 and 418 developed a fever, nothing above 39.4 degrees Celsius. Specimen 410 also showed decreased movement in the rear legs, but never reached paralysis or had decreased movement in any other extremities.

Weiss:

Did the fevers resolve?

Theo:

Specimen 415 and 418 returned to normal body temperatures within 12 hours. Specimen 410's fever never resolved.

Weiss:

Where's incredible news?

Gabriel:

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The spinal cord tissue our team prepared this morning show no signs of infiltrating cells, or demyelination in specimen 410. That might mean we've successfully blocked AVS.

Weiss:

It might mean that.

Theo:

You can see here that the strong virus specific staining in the unvaccinated mouse blood is not seen in the blood of the 6129 treated animals.

Gabriel:

Even just by H and E, you can see the tissues from the treated mice look like the tissues from an uninfected mouse and nothing like the obvious pathology in the control animals.

Weiss:

All right, then. These are definitely good results.

Theo:

Thank you, sir.

Weiss:

But you can cure mice of just about every human disease when you do your job right. What's next?

Theo:

We would like to repeat the study as soon as possible.

Gabriel:

In macaques.

Weiss:

Really?

Theo:

What? No. Uh, we want to repeat the experiment with mice.

Gabriel:

I think we can move to macaques.

Theo:

I don't think we can make that decision at this stage. I would like to increase the study to 50 mice.

Gabriel:

The study showed 90% protection. We could run parallel studies.

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Theo:

No.

Weiss:

Well, which is a doctor's? What are you requesting?

Theo:

Mice [crosstalk 00:17:58]

Gabriel:

A parallel study. I think these results truly are incredible. Dr. Ramsey and I have proved ourselves time and time again, and I think we need to move forward at an accelerated pace.

Theo:

This experiment is still just one experiment, that's the reason why we use mice. So we can use enough animals to get statistical significance to be sure that the data is not a fluke.

Gabriel:

It's not a fluke when every specimen in the treated group survives. That's never happened before.

Theo:

Did you forget what the definition of a fluke is? We have to make sure that the results can be replicated.

Gabriel:

And we can do that in a parallel experiment with higher mammals.

Theo:

Not only do we need to replicate our results on mice first, we also need to determine the lowest effective dose.

Weiss:

Are you two done? I would expect this type of reckless nonsense from my first year interns but not from my senior staff.

Theo:

Yes, uh, apologies. I wasn't aware that Dr. Larson was interested in moving on to higher mammals. I wish he'd spoken to me first.

Gabriel:

I knew you wouldn't approve.

Theo:

Of course I wouldn't becau-

Gabriel:

Sorry, sir.

Weiss:

I do love your enthusiasm, Gabe. I truly believe it's why the two of you have been so successful, but Theo is right. We can't rush this. You of course have the approval to repeat the experiment with mice. 50 specimens. We'll move to macaques when your results are replicated.

Theo:

Thank you, sir.

Weiss:

And the next time you're in my office, have your shit together.

Gabriel:

We will.

Weiss:

Right. Your experiments have to be perfect, the results have to be airtight for us to move on. I need both of you to be on the same page and at the top of your game.

Theo:

We are.

Weiss:

Are you certain?

Gabriel:

Yes.

Weiss:

Alright then. Thank you both. I wish you all the luck over the next couple of weeks. Don't let me down.

Gabriel:

We won't disappoint you.

Weiss:

No, I expect you won't. Theo, can you hang back a second?

Theo:

Of course.

Gabriel:

I'll be in our office.

Theo:

Yeah.

Weiss:

Right before our meeting I received an interesting message. It's from the travel bureau stating that you were requesting an expedited visa.

Theo:

I was going to talk to you about that.

Weiss:

When exactly?

Theo:

This meeting was about our findings and I didn't think it appropriate to bring up personal matters.

Weiss:

I find it inappropriate that you're trying to take your vacation earlier than originally planned, especially with the success of this experiment.

Theo:

It's no longer a vacation. Uh, my mother is at Denver QF.

Weiss:

Oh. When did this happen?

Theo:

Last night.

Weiss:

You must have friends at the travel bureau for this to be on my desk already. When do you want to leave?

Theo:

Tonight, if I can.

Weiss:

How long do you think you'd be in Denver?

Theo:

A week at the most.

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Weiss:

You need seven days to check on your mother?

Theo:

Sir, other factors may come into play. I-I just want to make sure she's cared for properly.

Weiss:

You're the lead on this experiment?

Theo:

I came up with the formula but Dr. Larson knows it as well as I do, and we tend to equally split the work.

Weiss:

He can handle it without you here?

Theo:

My mother has a personal holo, so I can be in the lab when necessary.

Weiss:

That's not exactly in the lab.

Theo:

I know that this is an inopportune time to request leave, and I understand if you would prefer me to stay.

Weiss:

I'll approve you for seven days of emergency leave.

Theo:

Thank you, Dr. Weiss-

Weiss:

Seven days, Theo. I think it's a bit excessive, but I'm giving it to you. I'm fully aware that your family matters must be dealt with, but the work we're doing here is of the utmost importance. If you're not back here in seven days, you're not back at all.

Theo:

Of course. Thank you.

Gabriel:

Did he improve-

Theo:

What in the actual hell was that?

Gabriel:

I was going to run it by you this morning, but the stuff with your mom, I just, I didn't think.

Theo:

(laughs) Oh, you sure as shit didn't think. You made us look woefully unprepared.

Gabriel:

So he didn't sign off on the expedited visa? Shit, I'm sorry.

Theo:

No, he did sign off.

Gabriel:

Oh, well, that's good.

Theo:

He also told me that if I wasn't back in a week, I'd lose my job.

Gabriel:

What-... Hold on, you think that's my fault?

Theo:

Yes.

Gabriel:

I didn't make Xavier Weiss into an asshole.

Theo:

Oh, but you definitely pissed him off. And as always, he's taking it out on me.

Gabriel:

I love that you have this notion that he hates you so much.

Theo:

(laughs) Oh, I'm sorry. He loves your enthusiasm and thinks it's the reason we've been so successful. My mother is dying, and he threatens my job.

Gabriel:

You made this breakthrough, and I know how much you want this. Plus, you know I'm right. This experiment was no fluke.

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Theo:

It doesn't matter, it was stupid of you to bring it up out of the blue like that. And what he'd said yes?

Gabriel:

Then we'd be one step closer to getting the vaccine to the public.

Theo:

Yeah, and if it failed, we would have blown our budget and be five steps behind. Like Weiss said, we can't mess this up.

Gabriel:

It was a shitty move.

Theo:

Yes, it was.

Gabriel:

I'm sorry.

Theo:

You should be.

Gabriel:

You're not gonna cut me a break, are you?

Theo:

Not even a little bit.

Gabriel:

I really was doing it for you.

Theo:

For me? God dammit, Gabriel. We're partners. You cannot take risks without me. If you go off the deep end, you drag me down with you. Weiss's approval went through, they're processing my visa.

Gabriel:

What time are you leaving?

Theo:

I don't know yet, but hopefully this evening.

Gabriel:

I already checked with the Horatio, everything's good. You should probably eat something.

Theo:

Oh shit, Savreen.

Savreen:

Everything going well with your family, Gabriel?

Gabriel:

Yes, Lincoln's good.

Savreen:

How old is he now?

Gabriel:

15

Savreen:

Oh my, basically a man already. Theo, you've barely touched your meal.

Theo:

Hm? I'm, I'm not exactly hungry.

Savreen:

But you do need to eat something.

Theo:

It's a travel bureau. I-I need to take this. I'll be right back.

Savreen:

How has she been today?

Gabriel:

Extremely focused.

Savreen:

She's always used work as a coping mechanism.

Gabriel:

Don't we all?

Savreen:

I'm thankful that Xavier agreed, she needs to be in Denver.

Gabriel:

Yeah, about that. There's no way Theo is going to tell you, but Weiss said she'd lose her job if she's gone longer than a week.

Savreen:

Pardon me?

Gabriel:

I don't know, he has a stick up his ass. We've made a... our experiment is going well and he wants us both fully committed as if we're anything but that.

Savreen:

That man is a piece of work.

Gabriel:

Yeah, but he's brilliant. So...

Savreen:

He surrounds himself with brilliant people, there's a difference.

Gabriel:

What does that mean?

Theo:

My flight leaves in four hours.

Gabriel:

Then you should head home.

Theo:

No, wha- we can get a few more things done before I have to go.

Gabriel:

30 minutes to don and remove PAPRs, 20 minutes for you to get home. What 90 minutes for you to get ready and pack?

Theo:

Fine. Uh, am I at least allowed to go back to the office and get my stuff?

Gabriel:

I mean I can get Elliot to bring it down.

Savreen:

Since I can't go to the second floor, I'll say goodbye now.

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Theo:

I'm so sorry I have to cut this short.

Savreen:

No apologies, Jamilla needs you. I'll see you when I get back home.

Theo:

Are you coming up?

Gabriel:

Yeah, I'm right behind you.

Theo:

Okay.

Gabriel:

What were you saying about Dr. Weiss?

Savreen:

It's nothing.

Gabriel:

Savreen, if there's something that I need to know that, Theo needs to know-

Savreen:

Uh, I have a meeting to get to.

Gabriel:

Yeah.

Savreen:

Make sure Theo doesn't stay too long, she can't miss that flight.

Gabriel:

I'll drag her to the train myself if I have to.

Savreen:

Good, and best wishes on your experiment. You and Theo are going to change the world. I just know it.

DIPA:

This episode featured the voices of Marquita Richardson as the Theo Ramsey. James David West as Gabriel Larson. Pamela Paul as Savreen Khanna. J.K. Robbins as Xavier Weiss. Meg Biddle Smith as Annabelle. Will Candelaria as Horatio. Mauricio Ortiz-Segura as Elliot. Marta da Silva as ICERS Computer.

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And me, Drea Silvertooth as DIPA. Producer, Amanda Lorraine. Sound design and mix, Joshua Suhy. Sound recordist, Karl Huber. Original theme, Katherine Seaton. Additional Music provided by Soundstripe Music. Virology consultants, Lindsay B Crawford PhD, and Peter Krug PhD. For more information, please visit Apollyon.Observerpictures.com