

ARIA

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SMASH IN:

INT. UNDERGROUND VAULT - NIGHT

ISAAC, wizened and disheveled, holds his knees to his chest, rocking back and forth. Back and forth. His chin quivers underneath his ragged beard. His teeth chatter. His eyes tear. His voice nothing more than a whimper.

ISAAC

I am alone. I am alone. I am alone.
I am alone. I am alone.

Isaac's jaw clenches. Rage burning away his fear.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

I am alone. I. Am. Alone. I am
alone!

Isaac continues to echoes himself. SCREAMING. With each syllable he slams the back of his head against the wall behind him. With each syllable he slams harder.

Around Isaac, three figures suddenly come into view.

SEW, a female form without definition, a patchwork of drab clothing, a life-size doll mutilated of discerning characteristics. She sits perpendicular to Isaac, whispering.

KAZIMIR, a hulking giant, wearing grungy coveralls. He places a large Hazmat helmet over his bald, bulbus head.

ROPES, a withered husk, a petrified corpse suffering a severe case of radiation exposure; its face and arms are crosshatched by large, mutated, leathery ropes of skin. It is no longer human, let alone man or woman.

Ropes hobbles to Isaac, bending to take a seat beside him.

Isaac's head flops forward, his eyelids twitching, his jaw slack. One eye opens, its view enveloped by the disgusting face of Ropes as it smiles a terrible grin. Then, like delayed whip-lash, Isaac's neck tenses and he thrusts his head backward with a--

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

--THUD. A CACOPHONY OF CONCUSSION BLASTS. Low and rumbling. Three, four, seven, twelve explosions rattle the dark, smooth corridor. The detonations ceaselessly continue.

Far down the descending corridor, two flashlight beams cut the darkness, crisscrossing and bouncing around the stark grey concrete walls.

MAN (O.S.)

Go! Run!

END FLASHBACK

INT. UNDERGROUND VAULT - NIGHT

Isaac, his mind elsewhere, stands over a disgusting, clogged sink spooning black beans from the can into a plastic bowl floating on top of the viscous water. A misjudged spoonful causes the entire bowl to capsize into the chunky water.

ISAAC

Goddamnit!

Ropes suddenly appears behind Isaac, reaching its bony hand into the sink to collect the beans. Ropes shoves the handful into its mouth.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Get the hell away from me. Go eat the roaches you're used to.

Isaac shoves Ropes back against a wall.

KAZIMIR

Isaac. Can't be havin' you shove 'em like that.

ISAAC

Mind your business. Nothin' to do with you.

Kazimir lumbers toward Isaac, towering over him-- a noise, a CLANK startles them all.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Who's there?

A beat. Then, Isaac chuckles to himself, then breaks into a fit of wild laughter.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Who's there?! HahahHAHAhahAHAHah!
Who's there! The milk man? UPS?

Kazimir and Ropes stare at Isaac.

Isaac pushes Kazimir in the gut. Kazimir barely moves.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Tryin' to make me crazy. Not gonna work. It's not going to work. So fuck off with it!

A shrill hiss, like a whistle caught on a howling wind, emanates from Sew.

SEW

Stop. A child is here.

ISAAC

A child? Nothin' down here to make a child, doll.

SEW

Yet here he is.

A fingerless hand, just wispy cloth, points toward the room's entryway.

Isaac lurches for a flashlight, its beam erupting like buckshot from the barrel of a shotgun. He twists the light toward the entryway-- nothing.

Wait. A slight movement. A shoe?

ISAAC

Who's there?! Come out or I swear to fucking--

--a BOY, maybe 12, trembling, dirty, his skin scarred and lips busted, takes a step into the flashlight's beam. His hand blocks his face, shielding his eyes from the harsh light.

The boy moves his hand, revealing his eyes.

Isaac lurches backward, the flashlight slipping from his grip, sending it--

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

--CRASHING to the concrete floor. Mid-stride, a WOMAN shifts the TODDLER in her arms to her other hip. She reaches to pick up the now broken light.

MAN (O.S.)

No! We don't need it! Run!

Abandoning the flashlight, the woman quickens her gait, attempting with all her engery to catch up with the MAN and BOY (6) in front of her.

Four silhouettes. Two adults, two children. All running for their lives. One silhouette, the man, is all but dragging the boy by the arm, while the boy is dragging his stuffed armadillo by its tail. The woman cradles the toddler, both of them still far behind.

Their feet pound the concrete like dissident drums.

END FLASHBACK

INT. LOWER CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Isaac is in full stride, racing down the narrow corridor. Halogen tubes ignite in front of him, keeping pace with his movement. Behind him, shrinking with distance, are Ropes and Kazimir. Peeking over his shoulder, Isaac knows he's broken free--

--SLAM. Isaac crashes into Kazimir. He may as well be a wall. Isaac staggers back, looks over his shoulder-- nothing.

KAZIMIR

Can't go that way, Isaac. Can't be goin' that way and you knows it.

Isaac rights himself, turns to run away, back to where he had come from--

--but Ropes twists his grotesque, spidery arms around Isaac. Ropes' arms lengthen, extend as they constrict Isaac like a python would prey. Ropes is far stronger than he should be.

KAZIMIR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Ya need to calm down. Ain't no good strugglin'.

ISAAC

Get offa me. Get off me! I want to be alone. I'M ALONE!

Isaac smashes the back of his head into Ropes' face--

--Isaac is free and Ropes is no longer behind him.

In front of Isaac, Kazimir stands beside a now oozing Ropes.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Just leave me alone.

Isaac turns to walk away, defeated.

KAZIMIR

You know we can't, Isaac. Ain't in our power to leave.

And Ropes explodes forward, lunging for Isaac's back, each of its bony fingers shaved down to points sharp as an ice pick.

Isaac reacts, sidestepping the attack, slams Ropes' head into the wall at his side.

Ropes staggers to recover. Isaac doesn't relent. Isaac crushes Ropes' head against the wall again. Again. Ropes slashes blindly, tears through Isaac's tattered shirt and opens five, thin gashes across Isaac's right arm.

ISAAC

Ah! Die! Just fucking die!

Isaac slams Ropes to the concrete floor and stomps his heavy boot atop Ropes' face. Ropes' skull implodes beneath the weight, now just a lifeless crater.

A CAVERNOUS SILENCE overwhelms the corridor. Isaac staggers forward. Stops, vomits, continues forward. Kazimir is gone.

INT. LOWER/UPPER CORRIDOR JUNCTION - NIGHT

A large, metal blast door releases its air-tight seal. Isaac steps into the small room where yet another blast door looms only fifteen feet forward. Isaac turns, shuts the first door and locks it behind him. He turns--

--Kazimir. His massive frame eclipses the second blast door. He slowly removes his Hazmat helmet.

KAZIMIR

Shoulda stopped, Isaac.

ISAAC

I'm leaving. Can't stay. I can't stay here anymore. I'd rather die than stay here anymore.

Isaac begins to walk forward. Kazimir remains still, patient.

Isaac stops, just out of Kazimir's reach--

--Kazimir lunges forward with a massive punch, barely missing Isaac, but connecting fully with the reinforced concrete wall.

Isaac lands a weak kick on Kazimir's knee, but is able to sidestep around him and reach the blast door's control panel--

--a monstrous hand lands on Isaac's shoulder, twisting him around. Two, three, five punches connect with Isaac's stomach and ribs. Isaac COUGHS blood, then slams the heel of his palm into Kazimir's nose. Kazimir reels backward.

Isaac punches in the key-code and springs through the open door, shut--

--Kazimir's bloodied hand blocks the door's seal. He thrusts it open. Isaac stumbles over something at his feet. A BROKEN FLASHLIGHT. He grabs it, swings, connects hard with Kazimir's temple. Kazimir collapses. Isaac slams the blast door on Kazimir's corpse. Again, again.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The blast door VACUUMS closed. Isaac ascends the corridor. Ahead, the passage is blocked by a huge pile of rubble and debris. And standing in front of the rubble, the boy.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A GARGANTUAN BLAST, far louder than those before it. The blast door in front of the man pops open, an array of halogen ceiling lamps ignite, their light erupting from the tiny junction room.

ANOTHER BLAST, even louder. The man and the boy holding his hand lose their balance and their grip on one another as they fall against the wall of the corridor.

Farther down the corridor, the woman and toddler fall.

BOY
Momma! No, momma!

The boy races toward his mother and the toddler cradled in her arms. The man rights himself, turns after his son, his family--

--AN EARTH-SHATTERING EXPLOSION rocks the corridor. The ceiling begins to crumble.

The eerie, artificial halogen glow reflects off all of their faces. The woman, exquisitely beautiful. The toddler, in tears. The boy, eyes as blue as pre-war sky locked with determination as he tugs on his mother's hand.

THE CEILING COLLAPSES.

MAN
No! NO! NO!

Isaac races forward, a futile attempt to save them. He digs into the rubble, each rock he removes replaced by another--

--ANOTHER BLAST shocks him sane. He turns, his face in the full light of the halogen tubes: it's Isaac.

Isaac is blank, devoid of everything he should be feeling.

He shuts himself in the junction room, locks the blast door. His face crumbles, a wave of overwhelming emotion overtaking each muscle, each nerve. He pounds the blast door. Anger. Rage. Pain.

END FLASHBACK

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Isaac stares at the boy. It's far too dark to discern anything more than size and the vaguest of features.

ISAAC
You're dead.

SEW (O.S.)
No.

Sew is now standing directly behind the boy, one cloaked hand on his shoulder. The boy is frozen, a mix of fear and awe and bewilderment.

ISAAC
He's dead. You are dead!

Isaac points at the boy.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
You're dead.

Isaac breaks into a run, straight at the boy.

Sew releases a DEAFENING SCREECH, stopping Isaac immediately, his hands rising to cover his ears. The boy doesn't move.

SEW
He is yours.

ISAAC
He's nothing. You're nothing.

SEW
You will not touch him.

ISAAC
Then I'll kill you first. Like I
killed them. Both of them.

SEW
You can not kill us.

Isaac lunges at Sew, grabbing her by her scraggly hair,
dragging her to the blast door behind them. Opens it--

ISAAC
Look at him. Look! He's dead--

--Kazimir's body is gone.

Isaac CHUCKLES to himself. The laugh of a broken mind.

SEW
And the slashes on your arm?

Isaac releases Sew, twists his right arm around. Not a single
gash, his shirt no longer in shreds.

Isaac laughs harder, walks to the rubble, pushes the boy out
of his way. Isaac begins to dig.

BOY
Dad?

Isaac stops. Then continues with more verve.

BOY (CONT'D)
Dad?

Isaac stops again.

ISAAC
No. No.
(his eyes well with tears)
No.

BOY
Dad. I know way out. Up top.

The boy removes a large board from the wall, revealing a
gaping hole.

ISAAC
The way out. The surface?! No. You
aren't. You aren't! Just shut up.
Shut up!

Isaac's jaw tightens. He springs from the rubble, grabs the
boy by the arm, drags him into the hole.

SEW (O.S.)
 Your life is here, Issac. Your life
 has always been here!

EXT. CAMP SITE - DAWN

A round vault door CREAKS to life. It BURSTS open. Isaac, at the top of a ladder, emerges; the boy's arm still firmly in his grasp.

BOY
 Dad. Hurting me.

ISAAC
 Shut up.

Around them, what once must have been a house, but is now a shoddy camp site. Only one corner of the long-since-demolished home stands amongst the barren field.

BOY
 Where you? Where you been, Dad?

ISAAC
 I'm not your fucking father. My son is dead. He's dead. I watched him die. Crushed to death before my own goddamned eyes. And you are not my son. I am not your father!

BOY
 Dad. It me. Michael.

Isaac pounces, knocking the boy to the ground, straddling the boy's small frame with all of his weight. Isaac wraps his hands around the boy's neck, starts to squeeze, rage and pain burn in Isaac's eyes.

ISAAC
 You don't say his name. You don't say his name!

BOY
 Dad. I got out-- it me. Daddy.
 Daddy-- please. Plea--

Isaac strangles the boy, killing him. Isaac falls backward, laying on the dirt covered ground.

Behind him, Isaac's vision upside down, he sees a Hazmat suit, the same as Kazimir's. Isaac jumps up, startled-- it's empty.

Above the Hazmat suit is a poster.

INSERT - POSTER

"The Stages of Radiation Exposure"

A flowchart, illustrated pictures of the effects of radiation exposure. The last image strikingly similar to Ropes.

BACK TO SCENE

Isaac's breathing quickens. Turns around--

--attached to the wall is a piece of his mother's dress, the same pattern as Sew's patchwork cloak. And on the ground, beside a ripped, stained mattress -- a worn, but recognizable stuffed armadillo.

Isaac's lips quiver. His jaw shakes. Tears begin to stream from the corners of his eyes. Isaac tugs his hair, his shirt. He drops to his knees beside the boy. Michael.

Isaac starts to laugh, insane and overwhelmed. He sobs. His emotions in a blender. Then anger. Rage. Hate.

ISAAC

No! NO! Michael! Michael.

And the sun begins to rise.

FADE OUT.