

PHARMA

By

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FADE IN:

INT. WINDOW PANE - DAY

A FLY bounces across the glass, tries to escape. A plastic tumbler envelopes it -- a piece of card is slid under, traps the insect inside.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Like an old sweet shop of childhood, this one filled with controlled substances.

FRANK FARMER, (60's), pharmacist, a smile for everyone, that grows wider for those he likes, lifts the glass encased fly and releases it out the door.

Frank returns behind the counter, smiles across the cash register at --

MRS. TWOMEY, (70's), worn red bag clutched under her arm, scarf wrapped around a grey perm.

FRANK

Now, Mrs. Twomey, how can I help?

MRS TWOMEY

It's the knee again.

FRANK

Early morning, late evening?

Mrs. Twomey closes her eyes, nods.

Frank searches through the shelves below the counter. He reappears with a dusty white bottle.

FRANK (CONT'D)

One little spoon, twice daily.
When you wake, before you go to
sleep. That should have you right.

MRS TWOMEY

Oh, wonderful! How much do I owe
you?

Frank sniffs the air.

FRANK

Let's say two of those scones
you're hiding in your bag, and
we'll call it even.

Mrs. Twomey wags a finger at Frank.

(CONTINUED)

MRS TWOOMEY

Ha ha! Right you are, so!

She sets two scones down on the counter. Her expression changes as she places the bottle in her bag.

MRS TWOOMEY (CONT'D)

And Frank... is that the fella?

She tilts her head towards the back of the store. Frank looks to where the old woman indicated --

KESTER, a hawk with a superiority complex, thin and razor sharp. He always goes for the kill. The horn-rimmed glasses perched on his nose could just as easily be night vision goggles, such is the stare he aims at Mrs. Twomey.

Kester makes a mark in a journal with an elegant pen.

FRANK

That's the inspector, yes.

Mrs. Twomey whirls around, stabs a finger towards Kester.

MRS TWOOMEY

Shame on you! Shame! Coming in here, with your fancy Parker pen. And scribbling bad things about Frank. Nobody likes you around here!

Kester doesn't even flinch. He takes two long strides towards the old woman. She moves back an inch.

KESTER

No one likes me.

Another stride. Mrs. Twomey is against the counter.

KESTER (CONT'D)

I inspect them, get inside them, find their flaws.

(wiggling the pen)

Mont Blanc.

Mrs. Twomey finds it in her to glare up at the towering Kester, and scowl.

MRS TWOOMEY

You leave Frank alone, now. He's a good man. The best medicine man there is.

This raises an eyebrow on Kester's face. He puts the journal back in his jacket.

(CONTINUED)

KESTER

Oh, I have no doubt. Do you know Madam, that this town of yours has no doctor, no general practitioner of medicine? No one qualified to diagnose..? One chemist. And no medical issues. Strange, no?

Mrs. Twomey huffs and tips her head to Frank, her reprimand of the interloper now complete. She waddles out of the shop. Kester watches her leave.

FRANK

You've been here all morning. Seen enough?

Kester rotates to face Frank.

KESTER

No. Not nearly. I'll return tomorrow. Unannounced.

Kester leaves, chest out, slips his journal from his breast pocket and makes a note. He turns back --

KESTER (CONT'D)

We take these inspections very seriously at the board. We are the firewall between life and death. Be mindful of that. Frank.

(beat)

Tomorrow.

A stride later, he's gone.

FRANK

I can't wait.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Frank stands at the top of a wooden ladder, replaces stock on the highest shelf.

The door chime RINGS out. Frank looks down.

KATE (16), tiny and gaunt, stands inside, as the door closes behind her.

FRANK

Ah Kate, be down to you now.

Kate fidgets as she waits for Frank to climb down.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Frank unwraps a lollipop, passes it to Kate. They sit towards the back of the store, a semblance of privacy, confession, even.

The lollipop gets a good, long, lick.

KATE
He dumped me.

FRANK
...Really..?

KATE
For another woman.

Lick.

FRANK
Ah, now--

KATE
--Amy Kennedy. Caught him with his tongue in her face.

Frank can't argue with that.

FRANK
Oh. Well. That's not good.

KATE
It's bad. Terrible.

Another lick, and a pause, as Kate's bottom lip trembles, a teenage breakdown imminent. Frank glances away, pulls at the drawers behind him, finds a small brown paper bag.

He holds it out in front of Kate, weighs it in his palm.

KATE (CONT'D)
What's that?

FRANK
It'll take the edge off the memory.

Kate reaches out, a fascinated child --

FRANK (CONT'D)
Just a pinch, mind, okay? Show me your pinch now.

Kate presses her thumb and index finger together, holds them up.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Perfect.

(CONTINUED)

Frank lets the bag fall open. Kate slides her hand in, comes back with a pinch of pink powder. Like sherbert.

Frank nods his approval.

Kate tips her head back, drops the substance into her mouth, swallows, licks her fingers as if it's a guilty pleasure.

KATE

Fizzy.

FRANK

Means it's working. Go on home now, forget him.

Kate stands, smiles a thank you, and heads out the door, the lollipop hanging from her lips.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

HARRY, a teenager who's fallen through life and missed every lesson, lays his bare leg down on a stool.

Frank stares down at the knee, hairy as a kiwi.

FRANK

Problem?

HARRY

It's sore.

FRANK

Okay, well I know just how to fix it.

HARRY

Yeah?

FRANK

No. Of course not. Describe the pain. Where, exactly.

HARRY

(his finger traces a line)
Well, it's like a grinding, a pull, just below the knee, down the shin I guess, and back up over the knee, up along the thigh. And sorta back here, behind the knee.

Harry looks at Frank. Frank is not impressed. Not at all.

HARRY (CONT'D)

...So I guess all over the knee area, really...

(CONTINUED)

FRANK
All over, yeah. Did you kneel on a
landmine?

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

A big tub of butter-like substance is placed on the floor. Frank pastes a handful of it onto Harry's leg, massages it in.

HARRY
Looks like butter.

Frank scrunches his face in agreement.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Feels like it too.

Frank raises an eyebrow.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Smells. I meant smells.

Frank takes a sniff, shrugs.

FRANK
Suppose it does.

HARRY
Be crap in a sandwich, though.

FRANK
Wouldn't be the best, no.
(standing)
Now, that should numb the leg for a
day or two. Rest it.

Harry regards his leg.

HARRY
Jesus that feels great.
(up to Frank)
Sure it's not butter?

FRANK
It's not butter.
(beat)
Regardless of how it feels.

Harry stands, tries out his "new" leg.

HARRY
Brilliant. Modern science, huh?
Here, do you remember those
chemistry sets, Frank, the ones in
the Argos?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HARRY (CONT'D)
 Sodium chloride, the iron filings,
 that other one, di-hydrogen
 monoxide, or something?
 (a weary nod from Frank)
 Got loads with it. Now it's just
 household ingredients, salt, water,
 a potato.

FRANK
 You can do a lot with household
 ingredients.

Frank taps the side of his nose, a wry grin, warming up.

HARRY
 Like what?

FRANK
 Well, you can see your own DNA with
 a few things from the kitchen.
 Some cold vodka, saliva. And time.

HARRY
 Get out! Spit?

FRANK
 Yes, saliva.

HARRY
 Jaysus.

Harry does a little dance on his mended leg, as Frank moves
 behind the counter.

HARRY (CONT'D)
 That's great. I've been doing
 science every time I empty me
 mouth, huh?

FRANK
 Goodbye, Harry.

EXT. PHARMACY - NIGHT

A metal shutter rattles into place over the door. Lights
 blink off inside. Silence descends.

INT. PHARMACY, BACK ROOM - NIGHT

A couple of lit up displays illuminate the room. A cabinet
 of medical curiosities, still, silent. A plastic SKELETON,
 like a leftover from a cheap ghost-train, quietly watches
 from a corner.

(CONTINUED)

Frank reaches onto a shelf, tips a bottle of cod liver oil towards him -- the sound of well oiled machinery working fluidly, as the shelves crack down the middle, and silently separate.

New shelves, filled with a rainbow of ingredient jars, appear. Gloriously backlit, a pharmaceutical prism.

Frank searches them briefly, chooses a selection, lays them out on the work table in the centre of the room.

In a small alcove at the bottom of the shelves, a leather bound, pocket sized book. Ancient, yet still immaculate.

Frank slides the book out, places it amongst the items on the table, peels open the pages.

A flurry of measuring -- scales and weights, old, well used, get some late night exercise. Powders and liquids, gels and pastes of all sorts are scooped, stirred, mixed and poured.

Frank sits at the table, lifts a test tube to his lips, tips the green contents into his mouth.

One long swallow later, it's gone.

Frank leans on the table, presses his thumbs into his temple, suddenly uncomfortable. He groans through gritted teeth, squeezes his eyes shut...

They snap open, his blue iris's changing to --

GREEN. Very green.

He lets out a held breath, as sweat gathers on his brow.

FRANK

Christ.

Frank takes a few breaths, recovers, wipes his face, blinks. His eyes return to their original colour.

He closes the book, returns it to the alcove. The shelves slide shut, concealing the secret ingredients.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Frank reads the morning newspaper. Peers over the top, watches the street outside. He's anxious.

A couple of people wave in at Frank as they pass outside. Frank acknowledges each of them.

INT. PHARMACY - LATER

Frank places a steaming mug on the counter beside the paper, spread out, well read.

The tinkle of a bell, a shadow -- Frank looks up. Kester looms above him.

KESTER
Good afternoon. Frank.

A greeting laced with venom.

FRANK
Tea?

KESTER
If I must.

Frank hesitates, is that a yes or a no? He heads out to the back room anyway.

Kester scans the store again, looking for a flaw, a chink in Franks armour.

KESTER (CONT'D)
Black.

INT. PHARMACY, KITCHEN

Franks flicks the switch on the kettle.

FRANK
(under his breath)
Sure what else would it be?

INT. PHARMACY

Kester drags a finger over a shelf, as if checking for dust. He lifts jars and boxes, examines them, notes the expiry dates.

ON the ground, he sees a lump of a pale, cream-like substance. He bends down, rubs it between his fingers. Sniffs it.

KESTER
...Butter...?

He wipes his fingers on a travel towel hung from a display.

INT. PHARMACY, BACKROOM

Kester slides his index finger across the base of the false shelves. He stops, looks down at his finger, lifts it to his nose, inhales.

An eyebrow rises, his mouth opens, his tongue slides out, licks the finger.

Frank returns, puts a mug of black tea on the work table.

KESTER
Is this... sherbert?

FRANK
Possibly.

KESTER
Why is there sherbert spilled on these shelves?

FRANK
Placebos.

KESTER
I beg your pardon?

FRANK
Last night, I was making up placebos. For the weird ones.

So many questions cover Kester's face.

KESTER
Define, weird.

It's an order, not a question.

FRANK
The people who come in, looking for a quick over the counter fix, those ones. The ones where it's all in their head.

KESTER
Those ones. Okay.

FRANK
And the kids.

Kester raises an eyebrow so slowly, Frank has difficulty following it.

KESTER
Please tell me, please, by the grace of whatever gods are watching, that you give out pills to children?

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Only if they're with an adult.

(beat)

And then with strict instructions
on how to take medicine properly...

Frank trails off, realises the magnitude of the hole he just dug himself into.

KESTER

Damn. I believe that's the word
you're searching for.

Franks shoulders drop.

FRANK

The parents are okay with it...

KESTER

But the law, is not.

Kester, smug now, strolls out into the main store, stops, and without looking back --

KESTER (CONT'D)

I'll be back. With a warrant.

INT. PHARMACY

Frank can't see Kester's face. Or the sick little grin planted on it.

INT. PHARMACY, BACKROOM

Frank looks at his feet.

FRANK

Can't wait.

INT. PHARMACY

Kester reaches for the door, stops, something on the counter catches his attention -- a fly, turning in circles.

Kester slowly pushes his thumb, now covered in a handkerchief, towards the fly...

It disappears under the white tissue -- a tiny wet crunch signifying the end of the insect.

The sick little grin remains firmly on Kester's face.

INT. PHARMACY, KITCHEN - DAY

Frank sits at the table, clutches a steaming cup. His shoulders drop closer to the floor with each breath.

EXT. PHARMACY - DAY

Two guards, SERGEANT MORAN, round as a ball, and GARDA DOYLE, as experienced as an amoeba, wait as Kester reads through the warrant.

KESTER
Seems adequate.

SERGEANT MORAN
Does it?

Kester folds the paper neatly, tucks it into his suit jacket.

KESTER
Let's go.

Kester moves for the door.

SERGEANT MORAN
Hold it there now, sunshine. Just where, exactly, do you think you're about to go?

KESTER
Inside. Obviously.

SERGEANT MORAN
I don't think so. This is a serious complaint--

GARDA DOYLE
--seriously stupid--

SERGEANT MORAN
--and it has to be looked into properly. Can't be having civilians getting hurt.

Kester's entire body goes into protest mode.

KESTER
How on earth could I get hurt sitting at a table, asking questions?

GARDA DOYLE
Could ask the wrong question.

SERGEANT MORAN
We'll take it from here Mr. Kester.

(CONTINUED)

Sergeant Moran enters the pharmacy, Garda Doyle eyeballs Kester.

SERGEANT MORAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Howya Frank...

Garda Doyle whips the warrant out of Kester's pocket, follows the Sergeant, closes the door behind him.

As Kester moves to the glass door, peers in, the sign inside is turned to "CLOSED".

Kester narrows his eyes, walks away.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Frank shows the two cops a few items from the shelves -- all neatly arranged, all legit. They seem to have no problem with the stock.

INT. CAFE, ACROSS FROM THE PHARMACY - DAY

Kester sits at a table, half sipped espresso in front of him.

KESTER
Where exactly do you get your prescriptions?

Mrs. Twomey, on the other side of the table, looks at Kester as if it's blatantly obvious.

MRS TWOOMEY
What prescriptions?

KESTER
The prescriptions the pharmacist fills for you.

MRS TWOOMEY
Never had any. Frank just gives me whatever I need.

Kester leans in...

KESTER
Uppers? Downers? Spirits? Ice?
Meth? Speed? Skittles? Lego?
What exactly does he give you?

MRS TWOOMEY
Me arteritis mixture.

INT. PHARMACY, KITCHEN - DAY

The two cops wait as Frank boils the kettle. Sergeant Moran takes a seat, whips out his notebook.

SERGEANT MORAN

Now Frank, we've had a complaint.
A serious one, of a very serious
nature.

FRANK

Seriously?

SERGEANT MORAN

Well... Yes.

GARDA DOYLE

Ha! I see what you did there,
Frank.

Frank gives him a nod.

FRANK

What is it so? What am I alleged
to have done?

SERGEANT MORAN

Have you been selling mind bending
substances to the children?

INT. CAFE, ACROSS FROM THE PHARMACY - DAY

Kester sips a fresh espresso.

KESTER

Does he ever go into the back room?
Mention a secret stash, anything
like that? Anything freshly grown,
hmmm?

A woman with a pram held near now sits opposite Kester.

WOMAN

I only get the breast milk bags
from him. And the cream for me
nipples.

(beat)

I don't think he'd be hiding that
out the back.

INT. PHARMACY, KITCHEN - DAY

Sergeant Moran scribbles in his notebook. The two cops drink their tea in unison.

(CONTINUED)

SERGEANT MORAN

Do you mix ingredients? Make your own medicines? Concoctions?

FRANK

Concoctions? I put the occasional wee dram in a cup of coffee. And the odd gin in a tonic. Do they count?

SERGEANT MORAN

Ah no, no they don't.

FRANK

Everything I give out is over the counter.

SERGEANT MORAN

Mr. Kester seems to think it's all under the counter. But you're a good lad, Frank. Nothing dodgy or weird.

(beat)

Speaking of weird...

Frank watches the sergeant.

SERGEANT MORAN (CONT'D)

...I'm sure there was a specific reason to come and have the chat, but it's lost to me now. Just gone, like that.

FRANK

Really? Strange.

SERGEANT MORAN

Sure if it was important, it'll come back.

(beat)

Business going well, anyway?

INT. CAFE, ACROSS FROM THE PHARMACY - DAY

Kester has a third espresso in hand.

KESTER

When he gives you the "sweets" does he tell you what they are, what they do? Does he suggest coming back when you run out? Are they favours, friend to a friend?

Across the table, TWO YOUNG KIDS, blank expressions.

INT. PHARMACY, KITCHEN - DAY

Sergeant Moran underscores a note in his book. It's a scribble;

"ALCHEMY. 200 Euro. 3.20pm at Newmarket. 50:1"

A black line has been gouged under the time. Sergeant Moran glances at his watch.

SERGEANT MORAN

You know Frank, I think we've taken up enough of your time. A nice chat, and the tea hit the spot, as usual.

FRANK

No Problem, Pat.

SERGEANT MORAN

I'm still trying to work out what all the commotion was about to begin with, but still nothing. You, Kevin?

Garda Doyle shakes his head, stops, remembers something. He takes the warrant from his pocket.

FRANK

I think some young fella was handing them out earlier, fliers or something?

Garda Doyle nods. Without reading the paper, he tears it up, a big wad of scrap filling his hand.

The cops leave, lead out by Frank.

On the kitchen counter, hidden behind the kettle, the brown bag of pink powder.

EXT. PHARMACY - DAY

Kester bounds across the street, a wide, expectant grin on his face.

KESTER

Well?

Frank stands in the doorway, the two cops outside.

SERGEANT MORAN

Well what?

Kester reaches them.

(CONTINUED)

KESTER
Did you catch him out? Did he
spew?

GARDA DOYLE
Ah, this is the fella handing out
the fliers. And it's spill.

Doyle rummages in his pocket.

SERGEANT MORAN
Catch who out, exactly?

KESTER
Catch whom. Him. The chemist?

The two cops glance at Frank, back at Kester, shrug their
shoulders.

KESTER (CONT'D)
Really? No idea? Are you two
morons?

SERGEANT MORAN
Now, hang on. You're technically
disturbing the peace, sunshine. My
peace.

Kester throws his hands up.

KESTER
Disturb... This is ridiculous.

SERGEANT MORAN
That's what I was going for.

Doyle holds out the paper. Instinctively Kester puts out his
hand.

GARDA DOYLE
Here you go, recycle that at your
convenience.

The cops walk away up the street. Kester follows them for a
second, looks at his hand -- recognises the warrant. He
turns to the pharmacy, the door now closed.

Bits of torn paper float to the pavement as Kester rushes to
the door.

INT. PHARMACY

Display stands sway like storm pounded trees as Kester
barrels through the shop.

INT. PHARMACY, KITCHEN

Frank, sipping from a mug, waits for Kester as he slides in.

KESTER

I'm going to find something here,
something, any damn thing, to hang
you with. Farmer.

FRANK

Do your worst. I know I would.

Kester moves like a bull, tosses the kitchen like a
professional thief.

He stops, wheezing, but wide-eyed, mere seconds away from
foaming at the mouth.

KESTER

Nothing.

FRANK

What'd you expect? A hidden
laboratory?

Kester approaches Frank, nose to nose.

KESTER

I will crush you.

On the counter, a spider meanders, oblivious.

Kester's hand shoots out and down, like a whip --

But Frank's hand is like a bullet -- it covers the spider
before Kester reaches it. Kester locks eyes with Frank.

Frank holds the stare, calmly removes Kester's claw, pushes
it away.

The spider wisely seeks shelter.

KESTER (CONT'D)

What is this? Karma?

FRANK

Something like that.

KESTER

Really?

FRANK

The greater good, maybe. That
spider has a purpose somewhere,
besides being a target for your
wrath.

(CONTINUED)

KESTER
You can't play god.

FRANK
Neither can you.

Frank washes his hands in the sink, scrubs them, dries them in a towel.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Tea?

The kettle is switched on. Kester scratches his reddening hand.

KESTER
Tea? After this, you expect me to sit and drink your tea?

Frank sits, pulls the leather book from a pocket, puts it on the table. Kester stays standing, fumes.

FRANK
Every problem can be solved over a cup of tea.

KESTER
New age rubbish. What is that, that book?

And Kester coughs. Clears his throat. Coughs again, harder.

FRANK
It's a recipe book. Tea would help the tickle.

Kester coughs again, like a lung is about to come up. Rubs his shoulder, flexes his neck. Something bothers him.

KESTER
Give it to me.

FRANK
It's coming...

Frank holds the book out to Kester. The inspectors fingers glide across the surface, almost sensual.

KESTER
Goat skin?

A massive retch, phlegm and blood spill from Kester's mouth.

FRANK
Human.

Frank looks directly into Kester's eyes, waits...

(CONTINUED)

A guttural squawk from Kester, chocking back whatever is trying to escape his insides --

He clutches at his throat, his stomach. Eyes wide, they search the room, frantic, lock onto Frank.

Frank watches Kester fall to his knees, drop like a fainting deer in headlights to the floor.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Household ingredients. Amazing.

Frank leans over the table, peers down at Kester.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I can play god. When it's for the
greater good.
(beat)
Should have had the tea.

EXT. PHARMACY, BACK YARD - DAY

A suit, shirt, under garments and shoes fall onto a raging fire.

Frank sips tea, watches the clothes as they're consumed in a flaming drum.

INT. PHARMACY, KITCHEN - DAY

SHUNK! Lumps of raw meat being sliced by a cleaver. The cleaver is dropped in the sink, blood diffusing in the water.

INT. PHARMACY, KITCHEN

Two large stainless steel pots. Inside, meat boils in a sea of bubbles.

INT. PHARMACY, KITCHEN

Frank sits at the table, sips from a cup. He's now down to his shirt, tie gone, jacket hung loosely on the chair. The pots gurgle on the hob behind him.

INT. PHARMACY, BACKROOM - NIGHT

The little book is open on the table, surrounded by an array of colourful ingredients.

Franks finger scans the lines of one page --

(CONTINUED)

The writing isn't in English. It's a collection of symbols, glyphs, and backward letters. Frank reads it from right to left.

Ingredients are measured and mixed, Frank gets faster, more efficient.

After much effort, Frank places a handful of test tubes filled with a clear liquid on a rack. He admires them.

Frank puts one drop of a bright green mixture from a eye dropper into each tube.

He waits -- All the tubes turn dark blue.

A wide grin settles on Franks face.

On the page of the book -- a clear diagram of a human body, intersected with cut lines, specific parts labelled.

And at the top of the page, one large, unintelligible word -- clearly the title of the recipe.

Beneath it, in parenthesis, is written -- "IMMORTALITY".

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Frank drinks tea behind the counter. Mrs. Twomey enters, a spring in her step.

MRS TWOOMEY

Marvellous Frank, just marvellous.

FRANK

So it worked?

MRS TWOOMEY

Like magic! Oh, I feel like I could run for miles. But that'd probably kill me!

Frank puts the cup down, takes a small vial from under the counter.

FRANK

Maybe not... try this, a new tonic. Should keep you going.

Mrs. Towmey takes the bottle with a smile, opens the door, turns back to Frank.

MRS TWOOMEY

How long for, Frank?

Frank looks down at the floor, as if thinking it over. He turns to Mrs. Twomey, and with a smile --

(CONTINUED)

Ages. FRANK

FADE OUT.

THE END