

(Baptism)

by
(Bill Boushka)

(Based on, If Any)

Revisions by
(Names of Subsequent Writers,
in Order of Work Performed)

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FADE IN:

INT. SMALL CHURCH - DAY

YOUNGER ART FEMERI, 30, stands at a lectern. The picture is a bit grainy, as with less well-defined digital video. Femeri is a short, blond man, face just a bit unkempt, slightly Mongoloid features mixed.

YOUNGER ART FEMERI

Salvation is a gift. You don't save yourself to get to go to Heaven. But what happens in eternal life does depend on how well you do here. Grace is for forgiveness of sins, not for being a victim or for not performing. You can fail because of other people's sins, and your own failure is still very real.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

ART FEMERI, 50, looking pretty much as in the video, his age a bit indeterminate. He turns down the video set, which is playing a VCR tape when the setup makes DVDs available, too.

He looks outside, it is apparent that they are in a highrise office building. A busy rush-hour freeway stays in slow motion.

FRANK L'ISTESSO, 44, dressed in a Navy blue EDS suit, walks over. He reaches to put his hands on Art's shoulders but restrains himself.

ART FEMERI

Overreaching, eh?

FRANK L'ISTESSO

You still think that today.

ART FEMERI

We all know that. Your sidebar Bill was right. Love has to be a transitive verb. Now I didn't tell him that.

INT. CHURCH OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Frank sits behind a power desk in a corner office in a church that looks out on a middle income suburban neighborhood, at small tract homes. BILL Ldzett, 45, bald, spindly, sits in front of him in a kitchen chair, loosely draped in summer clothes (but long pants).

ART FEMERI

But you know, Bill, that the Lord loves all people. Regardless of what they've accomplished.

BILL LDZETT

Then it wouldn't matter if you accomplish things.

ART FEMERI

You accomplish things by fighting for other people. But you don't have to fight to love them. Now I think you're getting concerned about your Walk With the Lord.

INT. BOARD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Frank opens a draw cabinet exposing a white board, and it looks like it is covered with a proof of a geometry theorem.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

You agree with Bill, though.

ART FEMERI

I took the vows. I have to save myself. You don't have to. Neither does Bill. Now Toby.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

But then Bill will have to father at least one child, right? Those are your rules, right?

Frank tries to erase the board, and grunts when he notices that it was written on with permanent wet marker.

ART FEMERI

Being able to marry and father counts if you're a brownie, because it's the best way to uplift people. Anyone needs uplift or he will fail, even before God.

(MORE)

ART FEMERI(cont'd)

He will stay in his station in life until uplifted. You know that.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

You didn't need uplift. That's what...

ART FEMERI

But you did. That's why we had you rescue Erin from the Marine Corps.

INT. CHURCH SANTUARY - DAY - FLASHBACK

Frank, in Marine Corps formal, and ERIN, 30, in a relatively inexpensive wedding dress, stand in front of the altar, as Femeri presents the wedding ring.

INT. BOARD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Erin and I are really trying on the kids.

ART FEMERI

Well, you still have some time. You have to make an heir as it stands now. You know that. But Toby won't.

Frank circles behind Femeri, stares at his computers, and approaches the white board. He sees a still of YOUNG TOBY on the computer screen.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Femeri, I thought you had taught school before. You used the wrong kind of ink.

ART FEMERI

We'll see if Toby knows how to take care of it.

Frank presses the phone intercom.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

I'll do it.

Frank winks.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Send him up.

Frank approaches Art.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

It'll be a minute or so.
Anticipation is the greatest
pleasure. I guess you haven't been
in the classroom much.

ART FEMERI

You hadn't been until we built The
Academy.

Art presses a button on his clone desktop computer and a
picture of The Academy, a low-rise structure of two buildings
out on the prairie, show.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Hhm. Teaching people to tear apart
and assembled hardware doesn't
require blackboards much. Maybe
handouts. Really, just doing it.
Particularly with Linux when you do
more for yourself.

Art brings up another video, somewhat grainy, on his
computer, of YOUNG TOBY, 10, in a bathing suit, staring at
himself in a mirror in a locker room, and then floating in a
swimming pool, then starting again.

ART FEMERI

Frank, you were in the military
then, becoming a man, for once. I
thought Toby was grad student age.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Twenty-nine, I think. You'll be
impressed. Don't you worry, now.

ART FEMERI

Pretty much his summer solstice.
Plenty of this July left.

Frank taps him on the shoulder. The intercom buzzes, and
there is a tap on the door. Art presses a hidden button on
his desk, and TOBY STRICKLAND, 29, average height, slightly
Mediterranean with the slightest Oriental softness around his
eyes, black hair, very fit, dressed in a white format suit,
as if for a wedding-- leisurely strides in. He hesitates,
eyes both men, and offers a handshake to Frank, who
reciprocates. He then looks at the board.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Teaching school.

ART FEMERI
That's what we're gonna do.

TOBY STRICKLAND
Like a Master's oral.

ART FEMERI
You don't mean to hide behind your
smarts. Well, I know I did.

TOBY STRICKLAND
Get me some benzene and acetone.
I'll clean this up. Otherwise I
have to write over all the letters.

Femeri presses a button.

ART FEMERI
Toby, your girl friend is coming on
the trip.

TOBY STRICKLAND
She's looking forward to it.

ART FEMERI
You haven't.

TOBY STRICKLAND
She's no virgin. But, no, I haven't
taken her. I know the rules.

ART FEMERI
I see.

TOBY STRICKLAND
She's considerate, of my
masculinity. Well, let's roll.

The door knocks, and Frank goes to the door, and picks up a
bottle of solvent.

FRANK L'ISTESSO
Time to play janitor.

TOBY STRICKLAND
You don't need to say that to me.

Toby quickly cleans the board.

ART FEMERI
So, Toby, you know what we're all
about by now. And you're really on
your own.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Like you were.

ART FEMERI

Green Boss. That's what they call me.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

You must have a pretty good idea what we're gonna do. We're gonna handpick some people who might almost have made it on their own, and train them.

TOBY STRICKLAND

So they can join me.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

At least at mundane places like truck stops in Pennsylvania.

TOBY STRICKLAND

This is still Texas.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

I've never even asked the Big Guy this. But you'll tell me. Look, how many planets in our neighborhood have life?

TOBY STRICKLAND

Depends on what you mean by life. I don't know if that's a drill sergeant's question or a Master's question.

ART FEMERI

Sounds like you've been reading Bill all right.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Bill sits across cubicle booth table in a restaurant, looking at Younger Tobey, 21, in a T-shirt. There are various books, including Bill's authored DADT books on the table.

INT. BOARD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ART FEMERI

He's kind of like a social security bridge. Or offset. Jesus, I'm old enough to know about those things.

TOBY STRICKLAND

So was Bill.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

He could have your father.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Not quite a grandpa.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

For me, he wasn't too old.

INT. GAY BAR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A YOUNGER BILL undoes a button on YOUNGER FRANK's shirt and fingers Frank.

INT. BOARD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TOBY STRICKLAND

And you changed, right.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Yeah. I rescued Erin from a Marine Corps discharge, and we're trying to have a child. How did you feel about the attention he gave you.

TOBY STRICKLAND

It's easier to answer your quiz question. As far as I've learned by viewing, there's just on other planet. But when I go on my Preview, Matt will confirm it.

ART FEMERI

Right. He's already back. You'll have to catch up with him down here.

TOBY STRICKLAND

I still get my trip.

ART FEMERI

You'll have to figure out what to do about the body.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Whoa!

ART FEMERI

Let's get on with saving Bill, now. We've got to go through his thesis. His mathematical proof. You remember the plane geometry from middle school.

TOBY STRICKLAND

I think for me it was sixth grade. I think you want a drilldown into Bill's brain.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Like a root canal job from your my dentist. I can afford it now.

ART FEMERI

Frank, is Bill's site still up. Have we left it alone?

FRANK L'ISTESSO

So far. Maybe not for long.

Art goes into terminal mode on his computer and keys some complicated commands.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Unusual for an older guy.

ART FEMERI

Not for an angel. I got it. Toby come over and look at this.

Toby walks over and keys in some more commands himself, and then brings up Bill's site. Art seems to be staring at his hands and shoes. He gets up as if to invite Toby to sit down, but Toby declines. Toby steps over to the blackboard.

ART FEMERI

Let's gosestep it.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Toby, Bill told you about his agreement, didn't he?

(MORE)

FRANK L'ISTESSO(cont'd)

He had a verbal agreement with his employer to transfer him away from the military account as long as he gave up all rights to the old job, even for legally driven things like family leave.

ART FEMERI

He gave up his responsibility to his blood family. Only angels get to do that. And he's no angel.

TOBY

Let's be kind. He did the best he could.

He leans toward the desk, and Art tilts the computer screen. Frank plays with another screen in the room, and the text comes up, projected, as if from a film strip.

Toby walks over to the board and writes "**GIVEN: (1) I get sexually excited by men who are better than me; (2) I seek them out.**"

Toby looks back, and then writes "**(3) I remain aloof with everyone else. TO PROVE: I can still be a good person.**"

TOBY STRICKLAND

I know my *Smallville* episodes. Remember, Clark was said to be a good person by that sot reporter because he helps others and doesn't expect anything in return.

ART FEMERI

He helps others because he's gifted. It doesn't require a sacrifice.

Toby drew the usual columns from geometry text books on the board.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Look at all the other people who had powers from the kryptonite rocks. They just used them for short term gratification. So did Clark when he was on red kryptonite. But I know the clinical term. It's "upward affiliation."

Toby wrote on the board, "**The best people will prevail.**"

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Bill's trouble is that he doesn't have the ability himself.

ART FEMERI

If you believe in Christ, you don't have to. You don't have to save yourself. It's just that if you want to have anything, you have to get it yourself, or somebody has to help you.

Art gets up and walks toward the window and looks out at the traffic. There is a wreck and pileup on the freeway below, with cop cars in abundance.

ART FEMERI

What about the people who can't?

Toby writes on the board, "**Others become subordinate.**"

ART FEMERI

Did he say that in so many words. Gee, you can't say that!

TOBY STRICKLAND

It's hard to remember the exact words of his book. You know, in humanities, you had to learn to read for the details. We got tested on the details on those reading quizzes in English. You know, looking for that rescuer drifting down from a parachute in *Lord of the Flies*."

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Not *Lord of the Rings*. We'll, we'll find out in due course when we do the tribunals.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Bill writes that he skipped out on the tribunals at William and Mary at 18. He wasn't enough of a grown up for it.

ART FEMERI

Or to let the barber in Ohio shave him at 15. Would you enjoy it?

TOBY STRICKLAND
Not at all. Well, maybe, now. I
guess I have to.

ART FEMERI
I would at 60. So will Bill.

TOBY STRICKLAND
He is not an angel. You've told me
that secret. Nevertheless, look at
your literature. In Arthur C.
Clarke's Childhood's End, The
voyager enjoys his own desecration.
He gets aroused by it.

ART FEMERI
Then he perishes.

TOBY STRICKLAND
We won't.

ART FEMERI
I might, Toby. I gotta watch it
now. You, starting out, have every
chance.

TOBY STRICKLAND
Just don't enjoy myself too much.

ART FEMERI
We enjoy subjugation and
desecration.

TOBY STRICKLAND
Even subjunction. Maybe that's not
moral.

ART FEMERI
That's evil. That's what it is. If
I give into that, I die forever.
There is nothing. Bill, maybe not.
He has a chance for his own
salvation.

TOBY STRICKLAND
If he wants it. Matt may know more
about that than us.

Toby writes on the board. **"Bill promotes himself. Therefore,
he is accountable for the outcome of his own desires."**

INT. BOARD ROOM - LATER

Toby is gone, and Frank and Art hover over the computer, with glazed, fixed stares like schoolboys.

FRANK L'ISTESSO

Without the Good Man here, you can do what you want.

Art keys in a lot of strokes at a command prompt.

ART FEMERI

Okay, here is the jibber jabber. Now look at his discussion of the suitcase nukes.

Art navigates to Bill's web essay, now corrupted halfway down the page.

EXT. HIGHWAY THROUGH PRAIRIE RIDGES - DAY

Toby drives his Hyundai, with SHEILA DANIELS, tall, thin, brunette, in the passenger seat, buckled in properly, as is Toby, who observes the speed limit. The car is a bit cluttered with books, magazines, cassettes, and even CDs. There is a copy of Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* in plain sight on the back seat. Sheila is dressed in shorts (the season is early spring), but Toby is in slacks, no socks, tennis shoes, loose sports shirt with sleeves rolled up. Toby adjusts his position as he drives.

SHEILA DANIELS

I'll drive.

TOBY STRICKLAND

My car. The insurance is only on me.

SHEILA DANIELS

Your so careful.

TOBY STRICKLAND

I have to be, with a name like mine. It can be a girl's you know.

She reaches and tugs on his collar, then his sleeve.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Yes, I'll want you to prep me. I think Matt will be there. But he's too young for me.

They pass a FEMA depot, and drive through a little pass in a ridge covered with juniper and mesquite.

TOBY STRICKLAND
So you got Bill's argument, too, I take it.

SHEILA DANIELS
I had to if I proofread it. You say I might not have done my job?

TOBY STRICKLAND
Of course not.

He smiles, a slight gap tooth showing. She looks at it.

TOBY STRICKLAND
I know. When Art's funds come through, the cosmetic dentist will take his tribute.

SHEILA DANIELS
Does it matter to us? I'm still going to do it.

TOBY STRICKLAND
It's just --a good philosophy. It makes sense. Bill couldn't compete like other boys, but he was sensitive, so he could tell what was beautiful, what was good.

SHEILA DANIELS
That means you. And he won't have to watch anything he doesn't want to see.

INT. GAY BAR - NIGHT - FANTASY

A drag queen roams around the bar, begging for tips. Bill refuses.

INT. TOBY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

TOBY STRICKLAND
You see his logic chain.

SHEILA DANIELS
Like a Lutoslowski violin concerto.

TOBY STRICKLAND
He looks at his own family

SHEILA DANIELS
He sees balding pates and balding
legs.

TOBY STRICKLAND
You read it.

SHEILA DANIELS
So pick out someone else and
support him.

TOBY STRICKLAND
Affiliate with somebody stronger,
and he becomes better. But then
others feel he repudiates his own
family, by not carrying it on. Not
giving his mother grandchildren.

INT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT - FANTASY

Bill's MOTHER tries to lift herself from bed, while an
inattentive NURSES'S AIDE.

INT. MUSEUM - AFTERNOON - FANTASY

Bill sits by his mother on a bench and they talk quietly.

BILL
I don't make people do things. I
just give them access to the
information. They have to do the
right thing on their own. Without
emotional access to having my own
children, I can't take on the
responsibility for protecting
others, even my own blood, from
enemies. The potential wrongdoing
of others can't generate my first
priority. Yet, that's why there is
a military and why there was and
could be a draft again.

INT. TOBY'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

SHEILA DANIELS

So, I get it. The nursing home thought he wasn't man enough to come back to protect his mother. So they took advantage of it.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Not moral. He had already given up his right to transfer back because that office dealt with the military, and he was fighting the military gay ban, like in his lecture.

INT. PERSONNEL OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Bill walks into a private human resources office carrying a box. A female HR DIRECTOR stands.

HR DIRECTOR

What's in the box. Oh. Gays in the military.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Bill, on crutches, writes notes on the blackboard for his lecture. A technician adjusts the videocam. Toby practices his introduction at the lectern.

INT. TOBY'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

TOBY STRICKLAND

It's a kind of selection.

SHEILA DANIELS

Darwinism. He eliminates his own blood by not having children.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Well, maybe a bit of Herbert Spencer.

SHEILA DANIELS

So if people say he is immoral by living as an equal without having children, isn't that a bit of a circle?

TOBY STRICKLAND

Yes, any computer person says that.

Sheila smirks. (There is a quick montage of her maintaining a bank of servers at work.)

TOBY STRICKLAND

That says people marry and children to earn brownie points -- or, rather, to be thought of as elves.

SHEILA DANIELS

Or angels.

TOBY STRICKLAND

No, that's a contradiction. Angels are supposed to be good, but they don't have kids. Remember our agreement.

He smirks at her.

SHEILA DANIELS

We'll still enjoy it.

TOBY STRICKLAND

I'll enjoy it. It's all about passing the wand. To be good, you have to do good for someone else. For ordinary people, marrying, having children and staying faithful is the most straightforward way to do that. It's a source of identity for most people.

SHEILA DANIELS

Bill says that in his intro.

TOBY STRICKLAND

And in his lecture.

The camera focuses on a copy of Bill's book and DVD in the back seat.

SHEILA DANIELS

It's just not a source of identity for him.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Nor for me.

SHEILA DANIELS

That's why you can deal with him.

TOBY STRICKLAND

For him it's fame. But it's not living forever. But it looks like maybe it's not for Art either. Not anymore.

SHEILA DANIELS

Oh.

TOBY STRICKLAND

He may go down. I'll have to do a lot better as his replacement. Live forever and actually do what you want.

The car progresses onto flat prairie.

TOBY STRICKLAND

As long as it's moral. That's it. You have to pass the wand. The easiest way is to your kids. Otherwise, it has to be somebody else.

SHEILA DANIELS

So for you it's Bill. You are assigned to Bill.

TOBY STRICKLAND

You know, it takes some gall, to want to die for other people, or even to be willing to. Bill is capable of that.

EXT. ACADEMY GROUNDS - DAY

Toby and Sheila get out of the car and walk on the grounds. There is a four-story concrete classroom and administration building, and a two-story brick dorm, all new, at right angles.

They walk around the grounds. There is a swimming pool divided into isolated sections, some of them filled with blue water. There is a baseball field, with an outfield fence at varying asymmetric dimensions. There is a mechanical pitcher.

Toby walks out onto the field, followed by Sheila. MATT SKIIS, about 17, very tall, shorts and sports shirt, looking like a high school senior, approaches.

Matt picks up a bat and walks up to the batters box. Toby presses a button in the dugout, and the mechanical pitcher tosses a pitch. Matt knocks it over the center field fence.

MATT SKIIS

Your turn.

Toby walks up to the batter's box. The mechanical pitcher tosses the ball. Toby lines the ball to left. It hits the fence on one bounce. He tries again. He hits the second pitch off the fence on the fly. Matt plays the carom.

MATT SKIIS

You did well enough.

SHEILA DANIELS

He qualities.

TOBY STRICKLAND

This isn't, what they call it, the rifle range.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Toby walks into a clean dorm room, followed by Sheila, with Frank some paces behind. There is a cot near the window, with a view of prairie and red dirt going down to a drying river. Another cot is at a right angle against one wall. There is a large trunk in the back, and ample clothes closets.

On the left wall there are two desks, with one laptop computer, off. There are a couple of pieces of trash on the floor.

Toby walks back and looks at the trunk, opens it, and sees paperback thriller novels and a few gay magazines inside. He lets it close.

TOBY STRICKLAND

So put away your dirty books.
Mother is coming.

SHEILA DANIELS

I didn't think you knew how to talk to yourself.

TOBY STRICKLAND

I don't. My assumed personalities soliloquize, however. Remember Carousel?

SHEILA DANIELS

You mean Bill.

TOBY STRICKLAND

No, the 144,000 that I have assumed. So far there are five of them. I think two of them really didn't want to be saved. Odd.

Suddenly, Art Femeri comes through the drywall, leaving a perfect silhouette that closes itself. He carries a convenience store brand book of matches. He lights it and throws it on the trash papers, which blow up like sparklers. Then Art disappears through the wall.

SHEILA DANIELS

So that's what you're gonna be able to do.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Yes can do. We just have to be careful.

INT. MEN'S LOCKER AREA - DAY

Toby has just finished putting on white undergarments. They are a bit like pajamas. Matt, almost a head taller, moves in, and stands next to him, as if to measure him. For a moment, he strokes Toby's neck.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Can Sheila take care of this? Really, it's more appropriate. She's old enough, after all.

MATT SKIIS

It's your call.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Before long it will be yours, too.

MATT SKIIS

I'll take the baby oil back to the dorm. Well, that's what we call it. Look outside. There is a window. A fenestration.

Toby walks over, let Matt lift him up at the waist, as he looks out over the pool, that is filling with cool water in the late afternoon warmth.

INT. DORM ROOM - EVENING

Sheila follows Toby into the room. Toby, in the white robe, lies on the cot. Sheila is in shorts and is "PG-13" provocative.

Toby jumps up.

SHEILA DANIELS
Don't put it off.

TOBY STRICKLAND
What did Bill once say, don't kiss her on the lips. That was in Honors Chemistry, too.

Toby boots up the laptop, and starts typing. Soon he brings up Bill's website.

TOBY STRICKLAND
He ftp-ed over the hack. But he kept a copy of the corrupt file for the whole planet to see. This planet, anyway. Just as I expected.

Toby keys in a little more and brings up a Real Player movie. It shows Bill sitting, slightly slouchy, in front of a college classroom and taking questions.

TOBY STRICKLAND
I missed this one. Here goes.

Toby lets the movie play.

BILL LDZETT
Well, I confess, I'm an elistist. I am gay because I identify with beautiful men. Superior men. I can't live up to my own teaching.

VOICE
So you're a hyporcite.

BILL LDZETT
Well, I say everybody has to make it. No exceptions. But everybody has to help somebody else make it. I haven't done as much with that as I should. Family is the easiest way to do that, have and raise your own kids, and stay faithful.

(MORE)

BILL LDZETT(cont'd)

People do that to gain social validation or, as I call it, authentication. You should do that out of love.

VOICE

But do you? It seems that's the whole point, to make what you do good for your family.

BILL LDZETT

Well, it should be good for people who need you. That doesn't have to be blood family. But it should take something out of the emotional body.

VOICE

You sound boppity.

BILL LDZETT

Do a thought experiment. Boy, that's visual isn't it. Imagine a world where you are responsible for supporting your parents and paying their medical bills once they can't work. That's how it was before Medicare. Parents in old age would benefit from having had as many kids as possible. An only child like me would have a big burden to pay back for having been spoiled as a kid himself. You would go out and sell stuff and promote your family as much as possible, right or wrong. If you don't have children of your own, you hang around to caretake for other family members. That's how it used to be. That's how a lot of people think it should be. Of course it perpetuates injustices between groups. But within a family it really takes care of people. I used to smirk at this reasoning. Not any more.

Toby halts it.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Enough for now.

He lies back.

TOBY STRICKLAND

I'm yours.

SHEILA DANIELS

You didn't read the label for the cream.

TOBY STRICKLAND

I didn't analyze it. You would.

She picks up a bottle of beige colored cream, and reads it.

She then lies next to him. He takes her into his arms. They kiss, somewhat in PG-13 fashion again, and giggle. She tickles him. She reaches down and tugs at his trousers.

SHEILA DANIELS

I leave that alone.

TOBY STRICKLAND

You'd better. This is the summer of life.

She mounts him again, and unbuttons his white shirt-top to about the nipple level. She reaches for the cream and starts to apply it, rubbing it in. Tobey giggles. She then unbuttons more.

EXT. BAPTISTRY - EVENING

Toby stands above the baptistry, which is the segmented swimming pool. He is still in white garments, the chemise draped over him but not buttoned. Matt stands next to him, then climbs in, and gradually disappears to neck deep.

MATT SKIIS

Your section is shallower. But I want you to just ease in and float on your back at first. I'll drag you by the hands.

Toby lies perpendicular to the pool, and Matt gently pulls him in. Tobey floats on his back.

MATT SKIIS

Just hold your breath, please. Forty five seconds.

Matt pushes Toby down, head first, as the water "rises" against his chest, separating the leaves of his tunic. Matt releases him. He bobs up as his tunic flies off. Matt carries him out of the water to "shore."

Matt smiles.

INT. ACADEMY DORM ROOM - DAY

Bill sits on a cot near the window looking out over the prairie. Another cot, made with hospital corners, makes a right angle to it. There are boxes of books and clothes closets, and ashes from a pyre in the middle of the room. Femeri walks in and sits on the other cot.

ART FEMERI

So you know you get your chance in Old Virginny.

BILL LDZETT

Yes. You want me to give it all up.

ART FEMERI

I started to but never did. That's why I'm in trouble. Tobey will do better.

BILL LDZETT

Because he is better than most of us.

ART FEMERI

Good enough to be an angel forever.

BILL LDZETT

Even you couldn't keep it.

ART FEMERI

No, I didn't want to be immortal after all.

BILL LDZETT

I'd have to cut off all relations with people. Say I'm not their equal. Because I didn't take care of family first. So I serve a sentence. So would they.

ART FEMERI

Well, if this were family, they'd say you want an inheritance. Or at least a blessing. And a ten percent blessing, not a four percent. A real tithe. But, family takes care of people. If you have to take care of family first, then everyone gets cared for.

BILL LDZETT

And it's giving them meaning, not just keeping them alive.

ART FEMERI

Meaning is tough. I had to enjoy myself to get my meaning. But nobody fought for me. You never fought for people did you?

BILL LDZETT

No.

ART FEMERI

And Toby doesn't have to.

BILL LDZETT

I think I said in the book, it doesn't have to be family. It shouldn't all be family. I think you said we could have a system where you have to prove you can support somebody else before you get to speak. That would balance things out. The bad things about family, for lineage to substitute for the self, the desperation, the jealousy, all goes away. But people are care ford.

ART FEMERI

And I hope given meaning. But I wasn't. Well, go to Virginny and see Toby again and get your chance.

BILL LDZETT

I look forward to it. But you..

ART FEMERI

I'll make it to the space ship, to Titan, and that's about it. You'll never remote view me.

EXT. MANOR ESTATE - DAY

Toby, at great distance, appears to be walking down a muddy dirt road, along the edges, from a brick manor house in plush southern Piedmont countryside. BILL Ldzett, 62, stands near his Escort car on a two-lane road and snaps a digital picture.

His digital camera reads "DISK FULL." He opens his car, slides the diskette into an envelope, gets out another one. By this time, Toby is much closer. Bill snaps another picture.

Bill opens the trunk, and looks at a picture of Toby in a (non porno) male model magazine. He picks up a similar black-and-white post card with Toby in a soccer uniform, looking about 21.

Bill walks off the road into a clearing. Toby approaches, and then is suddenly behind him, toward the woods.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Yes, Bill, I can take care of you.
You can't go into the manor.

BILL LDZETT

You're taking your training there.

TOBY STRICKLAND

A phase. It's not for you.

BILL LDZETT

Unless I become part of you. Sort
of an incorporation doctrine.

Toby smiles.

INT. BILL'S HIGHRISE APARTMENT - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Bill still on crutches, talks on the phone.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Make sure you put on a good suit,
Bill, and freshen up.

INT. AUDITORIUM - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Toby introduces Bill on crutches. Bill is in a good suit but a bit sloppily fit.

INT. BILL'S HIGHRISE APARTMENT MONTHS LATER - EVENING -
FLASHBACK

The apartment is cluttered with multiple computers, books, and magazines, TV, and primitive VCR playback. Bill freshens up again, this time in summer street clothes, picks up his books, goes down to the garage, and starts his car.

Bill pauses by a railroad freight yard and watches a train go by, and then heads for a restaurant. As he pulls in, he sees Toby in shorts at a pay phone. He approaches with the books.

YOUNGER TOBY STRICKLAND
Lit-er-a-ture

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Now Toby approaches slowly. He is in the same soccer uniform, looking pretty much perfect.

BILL LDZETT
You know, when we left the
restaurant ..

TOBY STRICKLAND
You think I rebuffed you. Or was a
little bit reticent.

BILL LDZETT
Well, the restaurant closed.

TOBY STRICKLAND
The BLT wasn't very good.

BILL LDZETT
Neither was the veal. But they
squeeze cows into immobility to
make them.

TOBY STRICKLAND
That's not moral Bill.

BILL LDZETT
Something came of our friendship.
Like from no other.

TOBY STRICKLAND
You got to become a Star.

BILL LDZETT
That's because you want to be one.

TOBY STRICKLAND
And you proved, **I'm better than
you**. So Maybe I carry you some day.
But you gotta have kids someday.
Then you get to come along.

BILL LDZETT
Of course you don't.

TOBY STRICKLAND

If I do, I ruin it. People like you
are dangerous, Bill. And necessary.
Kind of like the Clutching Hand.
Bill, you can look at me now.

Bill walks up close. Tobey appears now to him as a black-and-white image.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Reveal!

BILL LDZETT

Texture.

TOBY STRICKLAND

You see as much as you should see
now.

BILL LDZETT

My life is so much fantasy, the
music that plays in my head,
displaces the tender mercies of
ordinary people, the protectiveness
of family, the readiness for
children. I've gotta change if I
can't save myself.

TOBY STRICKLAND

There is no They, you know, unless
you become They. We can take care
you Bill. You learn to do a real
job. You know what an asset person
is, you wrote about it. But you
have to up your concentration. No
bathroom breaks. No lunches. But
you'll have the full medicals
first. Enemas, and all that stuff.
They'll biopsy your leg and watch
what that virus is doing in you.
You can have another chance to save
yourself. You'll board the
spaceship to Titan on your own
terms, after all.

BILL LDZETT

Likety split.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Go on the trip. Roam. Run around.
With all of that soul searching,
you've lost a lot of freedom. But
we were naive in the good old days.

BILL LDZETT

Well, the unsupervised use of a public space. People would say, with all of my self-publishing, I was exposing myself in front of kids too young or disadvantaged for the material of mine that they could find through Google. They were right. I kept on. Maybe that makes me evil.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Turn around, Bill. Time for that clutching hand.

Bill turns around in front of Toby. Hands run up and down his chest, staying away from buttons at first, then reaching in.

TOBY STRICKLAND

Some day I will baptize you. But there is no running water on Titan.

Toby evaporates. Bill is alone. He puts his hand on his heart, and feels for his own chest.

FADE OUT.