

CHILDREN OF TOMORROW
A TREATMENT BY JASON DOYLE WARD

EXT. THE OCEAN

The vast, open sea stretches into the evelong before our eyes, its arms wide in all directions. Bodies of water - black, green and midnight blue - flow through and into one another.

Small jewels of pale moonlight dance upon the oily blanket of the sleeping sea, undulating leisurely under bleak skies.

We hear faint gusts and whistling as the wind picks up ever so slightly. The serene waters flow quietly amidst a dead calm.

Somewhere in the distance, the murmur of an engine begins to draw closer.

Mere seconds pass, and the sound finds company. The rhythmic chugs of wheels and pistons. The crackling of wood being tested. The sleepy groans of metal bending.

EXT. KRONOS

Slowly and sluggishly, the cargo ship Kronos moves into frame.

The ship, a hulking merchant vessel that's seen its fair share of rough seas, sports dabs of rust and decay all over its moss green body, highlighted by red paintwork.

A large piece of the starboard stern has been replaced with a slab of gun metal grey steel. The rusty rivets have weakened severely throughout the patchwork.

The chimney coughs and hisses with difficult breath. Half of the top is missing, apparently torn off by an explosion.

Amidst the wear and tear are numerous bullet holes and black, sulfuric spheres left by hard-fought battles and narrow escapes.

As the ship moves across the frame, we see the faded letters of her name:

THE KRONOS
ACHERON CORPORATION

We turn to a wide shot of the ship as it splits the waves in its path. Foamy spears of murky, pitch black water slam against its bow as the Kronos drearily makes its way across the ocean.

The waters appear calm and the wind blows gently, but something is amiss. Something uneasy stirs below the surface.

The silence is broken. We hear the voice of Adam Titus. A Skin Jockey, merchant of blood, slave trader for the wealthy. An unlikely hero.

ADAM (VOICEOVER)
The world ended with a whimper.

CUT TO:

POSTCARD #1

A single, postcard-esque picture fills the frame (think "50s movie poster"). The picture itself is static, but the camera pans across it ever so slowly to provide vibrancy.

We see the deserted street of a major city. In the foreground lies the decaying arm of a corpse.

A horribly disease-ridden man is stumbling along the street. Behind and around him, piles upon piles of bodies are rotting in black plastic bags.

Even further, office buildings and tall skyscrapers are engulfed in smoke and flames.

ADAM (VO)

All the military might in the world couldn't stop the wind. The disease we now call The Faceless Death was an endless, unstoppable assassin.

CUT TO:

POSTCARD #2

A child's bedroom.

A woman sits on her knees on the floor, hunched down and crying profusely. She cradles the lifeless body of a young girl in her arms.

The dead girl's skin is tinted with a greenish hue and lashed with a barrage of lacerations.

Somber music begins to creep into the audio space.

ADAM (VO)

This was a war we all lost. The Faceless Death ravaged every continent and evaporated entire nations before we could react.

CUT TO:

POSTCARD #3

We see a well-dressed man backed into a corner of some side street, helplessly flailing his arms in front of him.

His body is swallowed by shadows; silhouettes of people about to attack him.

ADAM (VO)

People took to the streets and panic swept the entire world in one ice cold flash. Friend turned against friend, brother against brother.

CUT TO:

POSTCARD #4

We see an array of giant, dome-like structures standing atop long and wide shafts. The buildings look like cyberpunk mushrooms the size of large cities.

The air beneath the massive domes is bleak and grey, yet within the domes the air seems to pulsate with a vibrant mix of bright green and azure.

Above, the blood red sun peers through a hazy blanket of pollution.

ADAM (VO)

But the rich and powerful had prepared. They walled themselves up in massive disease-proof colonies and surrounded themselves with luxury, turning a blind eye to the horrors outside their front door.

CUT TO:

POSTCARD #5

A man in an expensive suit is consulting with a doctor deep in thought. The man seems displeased, yelling and pointing his finger at the doctor.

The doctor, however, seems distracted. He is staring intensely at a round mixing flask before him, filled with a purple liquid.

ADAM (VO)

They gave their doctors every resource imaginable to ensure they would live to see another day. They were prepared to do anything... just to survive.

The scene crossfades from the mixing flask to a small, round window on a cabin door aboard the Kronos.

CUT TO:

EXT. KRONOS - DECK

A lone sailor emerges from the door and walks off towards the deck. The sailor is a large, brawny man in his fifties. His amber beard would make lions jealous.

The boys call him Grizzly.

ADAM (VO) (cont'd)
And you know what? They succeeded.

The camera moves through the cabin window, down the narrow hallway and into the adjacent cabin. We see two drunken sailors sitting on the bunk, toasting with two whiskey bottles.

The camera flies into the brown liquid of the whiskey. Crossfade.

INT. KRONOS - CARGO BAY

The liquid is now an unknown substance in an I.V. bag.

The beeps and ticks of medical machinery fills the air.

We pan out and see that the I.V. is next to a sleeping child bound to a bed with restraints. Her face is covered with a breathing mask and an array of tubes run into her skin.

The camera pans out and we see the entire cargo hold of the ship housing beds upon beds of children, youths and young adults, all with the same restraints, breathing masks and tubes.

In their midst, doctors and nurses pace about, checking up on their patients.

Among and around them prowl a legion of armed guards at the ready.

The doctors and guards all sport the same emblem on their clothing. A red and yellow tesseract with the central lines forming the letter A.

The A stands for the Acheron Corporation, the world's foremost retailer in exquisite body parts and internal organs, free from all disease and decay. A full six-month substitution warranty is issued with every surgical replacement and/or enhancement.

Acheron - We breathe new life into you.

A doctor preoccupied with his electric glass clipboard passes a teenage boy, who appears to be sleeping.

ADAM (VO)
Now, the greatest commodity isn't gold, jewels or oil.

After the doctor has passed, the boy suddenly springs to life and rips his wrist free from the binds. He fiercely pulls the mask from his face and begins unraveling the other restraint.

A bulky commando flashes into frame, raises his assault rifle and hits the boy with the butt of his gun. Blood begins oozing from the boy's mouth immediately.

Undeterred, the boy lunges at his assailant with all his muster and a bloodcurdling scream, but the guard renders him unconscious with another blow.

ADAM (VO) (cont'd)
It's flesh.

A doctor runs to the boy's side and begins to inspect him, turning the boy's head from side to side as he taps away at his clipboard.

He appears to be inspecting cattle rather than tending to a patient.

The doctor forces one of the boy's eyes open and we zoom in.

CUT TO:

POSTCARD #6

We zoom out of the eye of an old lady peering into the mirror of an extravagant make up table, applying lipstick with a small precision brush.

Behind her we see the upper torso of a man whose hand rests upon her shoulder. His face is hidden from view.

We intuit that they are wealthy; the woman wears an elaborate golden headdress decorated with a ruby. The man sports a diamond cufflink and a handsome suit.

ADAM (VO)
See, they couldn't cure the plague, no matter how hard they tried.
You're either born immune, die of the plague, or... become something.
Something in between. So they came up with another way to survive:
The Flesh Exchange.

FADE TO:

POSTCARD #7

The setting and postures remain exactly the same as in the previous picture, but both the man and the woman appear not only older, but... transformed.

The top half of the woman's face has been replaced with the skin of another. The signs of surgery are faint, nearly artistic, yet very noticeable as the skin tone changes color.

Her left eye is a bright yellowish green, while her right is blue and grey. A long, still healing scar runs from the tip of her jaw down her neck.

The man's thumb, index finger and middle finger are white, but the skin on the two remaining fingers is brown. The change is highlighted by a prominent scar.

ADAM (VO)
A piece here, a piece there. As long as you have the coin to pay for
spare parts, you can literally live forever. And make no mistake - those
in power will have no part in dying, no matter how high the cost of living
becomes.

CUT TO:

POSTCARD #8

We see a hooded old woman in dirty clothes cowering in a street corner. Her arm is stretched out as if she's expecting a handout.

A shadowy figure with a sophisticated breathing apparatus and sporting an Acheron emblem stands before her. She is whispering something into his ear.

The Acheron employee seems to be holding something to reward this informant with.

ADAM (VO)

If you were unlucky enough to come into this world in good health and immune to the plague, chances are someone will rat you out to a Skin Corp rep, those of us who prowl the settlements looking for fresh supplies. The children of the badlands have no rights.

CUT TO:

POSTCARD #9

We see a young child being carried away by the same Acheron employee as in the previous shot.

The child is screaming and crying in horror, trying to break free.

Out of frame, the outstretched arms of his mother grasp at the child. She is being held down at gunpoint by an Acheron mercenary.

ADAM (VO)

Someone will exchange their survival for yours, turning a profit from your hide. One day you'll look behind you and see one of us. A Skin Jockey coming to claim you, sweep you away to a Colony and let the company sell your skin, flesh and organs to the highest bidder in need of an Exchange.

CUT TO:

EXT. KRONOS - DECK

We see Grizzly again, walking along the side of the ship towards the bow with a large ring of rope wrapped around his shoulder, pressing fresh tobacco into his pipe.

ADAM (VO)

It isn't pretty, but it's a living. A living for the likes of me, a third generation Skin Jockey. A merchant of life, a thief of youth. I've got no illusions about what I am.

Grizzly passes an Acheron guard leaning against the railing and cleaning his pistol. The two men exchange glances, but say nothing.

ADAM (VO) (cont'd)

I'm a peddler of blood who will deal with anyone loaded and twisted enough to finance life eternal for themselves and their loved ones.

Grizzly finally stops near the bow and looks off into the distance.

ADAM (VO) (cont'd)

No illusions. None of us will see heaven.

We fix on Grizzly's eyes as he lights the pipe. The flame illuminates his weary eyes with an ominous flash of red and gold.

The flash is punctuated by a rising noise carrying us to the next scene.

INT. KRONOS - ADAM'S CABIN

A sailor is violently awakened by what appears to have been a nightmare. Breathing heavily, he glances left and right at a fevered pace trying to find his bearings.

He rubs his face and takes a deep breath, shrugging off the horror.

Here we have our first glimpse of Adam Titus. (*Design discussion!*)

EXT. KRONOS - DECK

Suddenly, an eerie, breathy sigh fills the air. As if driven by the noise, the camera descends rapidly towards the ship and flies towards Grizzly.

Instinctively, he takes a cautious step back from the edge.

Following the noise we hear the crackling shriek of what sounds like a woman's laughter somewhere in the distance. But it is not a woman.

The guard on the deck springs to life and readies his weapon with a swift stroke. He looks absolutely terrified, yet steadfast.

The laughter is followed by a growing choir of animalistic, terrifying sounds. They rise and rise, echoing throughout the the ship with a bone-chilling effect.

INT. KRONOS - CARGO BAY

The doctors, nurses and guards in the cargo hold all stop and freeze in their tracks as the sound washes over them.

INT. KRONOS - ADAM'S CABIN

Adam hears the noises outside and immediately leaps out of bed.

EXT. KRONOS - DECK

Grizzly stands motionless upon the deck, watching the sea.

The waters are no longer quiet.

Ethereal, slowly soaring groans, roars and shrieks rumble from beneath the waves, rising to a cacophonous wave of dread.

Adam appears next to Grizzly. Neither man says a word.

INT. KRONOS - KITCHEN

A cook is cowering under the sink in the kitchen, rocking back and forth while shivering from fear.

Whatever those sounds are, they have scared him senseless.

EXT. KRONOS - DECK

Grizzly and Adam stare into the blackness with an intense gaze.

ADAM (VO)

The world is different now. A new beast.

Grizzly spots something in the sea and motions towards it with a small flick of his head. Adam nods, keeping his eyes fixed on the water.

Both men spring into action and pull their jackets open to reveal makeshift utility belts with tube-like explosive devices.

Grizzly picks up a grenade from his belt, flicks the cap off and pushes a button on the tip. Adam follows suit.

The grenades begin beeping as strings of LED lights flicker along the shafts. The men glance at each other, brace themselves and fling the grenades into the sea in different directions.

EXT. THE OCEAN

The camera follows a grenade as it flies over the water in slow motion.

As it nears the water's edge, long, pale fingers emerge from the depths, grasping at the device with jagged claws.

ADAM (VO)

Every shadow hides another nightmare.

We catch a glimpse of a female face rising from the water, its long and narrow mouth disfigured by stringy, crooked fangs and its sickly pale skin covered by what appear to be scales.

Its head is covered with dirty strands of grey and jet black hair. Its eyes are deep, murky pools devoid of light. Its tongue is a sharp, coarse whip thirsty for blood.

The being - the Maiden - shrieks violently and lunges at the grenade just as it explodes.

EXT. KRONOS - DECK

The camera turns to a wide angle high above the stern of the Kronos. We see small figures of people all across the rim of the deck.

ADAM (VO)
But we endure.

Small puffs of flame illuminate the hull as grenades explode in the water all around the ship. The shrieks of dozens of Maidens encircling the vessel echo throughout.

In an instant, everything falls back to a dead calm.

The camera pans up. The sun peeks from behind the crest of the earth and we see the silhouette of a large city in the horizon.

ADAM (VO) (cont'd)
We survive.

OPENING CREDITS

CHILDREN OF TOMORROW
A TREATMENT BY JASON DOYLE WARD