

ROXÉ15©
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A SCREENPLAY EXCERPT
"Change Is Our Only Constant"

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INT. CRITICAL CARE CLINIC, WAITING AREA - DAY

The dingy, chaotic waiting room is packed with people who can't afford to be sick. Lots of hacking coughs, snotty noses, feverish brows, running sores, short tempers and general misery. The same commercial echoes eerily across all the hanging TVs, which show an epic water reservoir.

COMMERCIAL V.O.

FRESH WATER. Our most precious commodity is disappearing...but a commitment to shave your head for three years will save enough water to hydrate hundreds of children through the critical first four years of life. Commit to doing your part. Brought to you by the New York City Department of Public Health and Wellbeing.

Like an old-school junkie, Roxë huddles and shivers in a coat and inky sunglasses. Her knee jumps like a jackrabbit on coke. She looks up at the commercial on TV.

INT. EXAM WARD - CONT.

Without her shades, Roxë looks like hell in the harsh light. Close by, a worried Father holds his young Daughter. Roxë makes a face at the girl and she giggles. A BALD NURSE in a huge mask and goggles approaches Roxë and draws her blood. From her father's lap, the girl HOWLS in terror and clutches her dad when she sees the masked nurse coming her way.

INT. CONSULTATION ROOM, CONT.

Chaotic rows of worn-out cubicles are jam-packed with people's disease and desperation. In one cubicle, Roxë is in outerwear again, facing an overworked, masked DOCTOR who's also shaved bald. The Doctor studies a tablet. Nearby, Roxë sees the weary Father stand and smile at his little girl.

FLASHBACK: Roxë's father, Rockland, comes home exhausted, with a stethoscope around his neck. He smiles sadly, then FADES AWAY.

ROXË

(huddles in her coat)

So what do I have?

Above the mask, behind a shield, the Doctor's eyes pierce hers.

DOCTOR

I have no idea. (beat) I've never seen anything like this. Not even close...and I've seen a lot. It---

The Doctor looks back at the tablet. Avoiding her.

ROXË

It what?

DOCTOR

(hesitates)

It almost looks synthetic...and with bioterrorism where it is...I don't know. Nobody knows. As it is, some of these super-viruses can mutate every few hours. We can't keep up.

ROXË

(alarmed)

There's no vaccine you can give me? How contagious is it?

DOCTOR

(shrugs)

The average immune system beats most viruses all day long. Problem is, this is not your average virus.

Roxë looks away, hugs herself, whispering frantically. Throat clearing from the doctor and wild-eyed Roxë comes back.

ROXË

(hyperventilating)

My father was an ER doctor...but he never caught anything. He had a chemokine receptor mutation, you understand? And I NEVER get sick!

DOCTOR

(shrugs)

Change is our only constant. (beat) And viruses are crafty little bastards that survive by any means necessary. (pause, devastated) I can't help you.

ROXË

(jumps to her feet)

There HAS to be something you can do! Give me something! I can't get sick.

(MORE)

ROXË (cont'd)
Not NOW...not like *this*. Please!
(pause) I'm SCARED.

The Doctor stands, takes a long, slow look around the packed room. TEARS well up behind the eye shield. The Doctor looks at Roxë in utter defeat and tries to shake the tears away.

DOCTOR
Sorry. (pause) Look, I can't even identify this virus. Stay hydrated. Try to get your hands on some meds... *any* antivirals--they'll at least make you feel better. I'm over my quota for dispensing state-sponsored meds...and we're all out anyway.

ROXË
(urgent, agitated)
Wait, what?! WHAT? What the shit am I supposed to do?

DOCTOR
If I were you... (beat) Do as much as you can, *while* you can. It's going to get worse. And then, hopefully, you get better.

The doctor looks at her oddly and hands her a tissue. The doc straightens up under the weight of the world, pulls off the latex gloves and heads to the next patient.

Alone in a dire crowd, Roxë wipes her very runny nose.