

**GATTACA**

by

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FADE IN:

A white title appears on a black screen.

*"As night-fall does not come at once, neither does oppression...It is in such twilight that we all must be aware of change in the air - however slight - lest we become victims of the darkness."*

Justice William O. Douglas

The title fades off, replaced by a second title.

*"I not only think that we will tamper with Mother Nature, I think Mother wants us to."*

William Gaylin

The second title fades off, leaving a dark screen.

The darkness gradually gives way to a dawning light.

We are confronted with sight of a barren, empty landscape. A wide expanse of wasteland.

Suddenly, without warning, an elephant tusk falls from the sky and crashes onto the parched ground. The earth-shuddering impact causes the tusk to rebound once in slow motion before finally settling to the desert floor in a cloud of dust.

The first tusk is quickly followed by a second, also dropping from the heavens. It lands near the first. Another tusk smashes to earth several yards away. Yet another comes crashing into the foreground.

Finally the dust settles upon a graveyard of tusks.

DISSOLVE TO:

A BARREN, EMPTY LANDSCAPE

In another region of the wasteland, a forest of tree trunks suddenly rains down from the sky. The trunks thump to the hard ground, also rebounding in slow motion. Cleanly sawn, branchless, palm-like trunks, they come to rest in the dust only to be followed by a second cascade of lumber.

When the dust finally clears. the felled tree trunks lie in a huge, log-jam in the desert.

DISSOLVE TO:

A BARREN, EMPTY LANDSCAPE

Next to descend from the sky, a torrent of firewood. One shower after another, crashing to the plain. Enough chopped lumber to fuel a thousand hearths.

DISSOLVE TO:

A BARREN, EMPTY LANDSCAPE

Joining the rest of the debris is a deluge of slate - sheets of shale from a great unseen quarry in the sky come slamming to earth. Some of the pieces shattering, some rebounding into the air until the granite litters acres of landscape as far as the eye can see.

TITLES ARE SPACED APPROPRIATELY THROUGHOUT THE PRECEDING SEQUENCE. THE FINAL TITLE READS:

The camera commences a long, slow pull-back from the pile of elephant tusks. Gradually they are revealed as human fingernails magnified many hundreds of times.

The tree trunks are mere hair follicles. The firewood, whiskers. The slate, flakes of skin.

INT. INCINERATOR. EARLY MORNING.

A naked MAN, thirties, seen in profile, is crouched upon a metal floor inside a small, brushed stainless steel tank, rubbing his skin raw with a wire brush. JEROME MORROW.

Having completed his scrupulous ablutions, Jerome arches his lean frame through the small, oval door of the metal room with practised ease.

Securing the thick, fireproof windowed door behind himself, he turns a switch to release gas into the vacated chamber. The gas instantly ignites in what is now revealed to be a gleaming modern stainless-steel custom-made incinerator.

We refocus on a MAGNIFIED CLOSE UP of his exfoliated flesh in the incinerator as it blackens, curls and burns.

Jerone covers himself with a silk robe and steps into a pair of backless slippers.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. EARLY MORNING.

JEROME emerges from the incinerator room into a large, luxurious loft-style condo containing a bizarre assortment of equipment -arranged somewhat like a production line.

Long, scrupulously clean metal work benches are arranged along one entire wall. Laid out on the benches in neat rows are dozens of plastic bags - some filled, some unfilled. Instruments on trays - various types of tweezers, scissors and other less familiar utensils. Round, stainless steel containers filled with hairs of differing lengths and other body matter.

JEROME approaches another man slumped over one of the benches. EUGENE. He clutches an empty vodka bottle. He is snoring lightly - sleeping off the night before. As JEROME gently prises the bottle out of his hand, we are struck by the similarity of Eugene's face to Jerome's.

Jerome pulls Eugene's chair back from the desk with surprising ease. A wheelchair - a modern, ergonomic design. Jerome wheels Eugene to a bedroom and, with some difficulty, hauls the larger man onto the bed. Through his alcoholic fog, Eugene feebly co-operates - his paralyzed legs a particular dead weight.

After covering Eugene with a blanket, Jerome enters a bathroom containing a surgically-clean stainless steel basin, sink, shower and toilet.

Beside the toilet stands a large, industrial-style stainless steel refrigerator.

Donning protective gloves, Jerome opens the liquid-nitrogen cooled refrigerator. A cloud of condensed water vapor billows out. Revealed inside the fridge are racks of labelled jars and silicon pouches - some containing a yellowish liquid, some a deep, red liquid.

In front of one of the jars is a handwritten shopping list - "TRUFFLES, CIGS, VODKA". Jerome smiles to himself as he retrieves the note along with one of the jars. He checks the jar's label. Satisfied with the date written there, he breaks the seal and pours the contents into the clear, silicon pouch of an IV-like device lying on the steel bathroom counter.

He seals the pouch and checks the apparatus by opening the valve on its fine tube and squirting a small quantity of the liquid into the nearby toilet bowl, as one would test a syringe. We remain on Jerome's face as he reaches between his legs and inserts the pouch.

neat rows of slim, fingertip-sized plastic sachets filled with a deep, red-colored liquid. He removes his gloves, selects one of the sachets and carefully adheres the sachet to the pad at the end of his index finger.

He prepares a second sachet for his middle finger. Jerome then applies skin-colored cover-up makeup to the sachets, blending them in with the color of his fingers. JEROME, still dressed in his robe, climbs a large, spiral staircase to the floor above.

INT. JEROME'S CONDOMINIUM. EARLY MORNING.

He emerges at the top of the staircase into a similarly large, loft-style condominium. Through the floor to ceiling window that opens onto a balcony we see that dawn is only just starting to leak into the night sky.

In the bedroom JEROME removes a shirt from a dry cleaning bag. Printed on the bag "Confidentiality Guaranteed". He emerges from his bedroom, dressed in a smart albeit unconventionally cut suit. He adjusts his tie in the mirror, careful not to disturb the sachets attached to his fingertips.

INT. INVESTIGATOR'S POOL. MORNING.

A lone MAN swims a ferocious lap of freestyle in what appears to be a pool of enormous length - yet he never reaches the pool's end. We pull wider to reveal that the man is swimming against an artificial current in a pool barely larger than himself.

Abruptly, the man stops and stands up - the fast-flowing current instantly stilled. We glimpse the face of INVESTIGATOR LUCAS. Thirties, he has a youthful yet rigid face. We have the impression that he does not swim for pleasure.

EXT. CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX. MORNING.

It is still early as JEROME exits the building's underground parking garage in an immaculate Studebaker Avanti and proceeds down the long straight driveway. He exchanges a wave with a GARDENER trimming a lawn.

The whir of the car's electric powered engine belies its conventional appearance.

EXT. GATTACA AEROSPACE CORPORATION. DAY.

JEROME's car exits a highway and turns up the sweeping road leading to the parking lot of "GATTACA AEROSPACE CORPORATION". A sleek, modern, low-rise industrial compound boasting perfectly manicured landscaped gardens.



Jerome is transported - plotting a path through the heavens. As his fingers fly across the keys he does not once take his eyes from the screen.

His is one of hundreds of ergonomically designed work stations, arranged in ever-widening circles in a huge, circular, well-appointed if antiseptic room. Each curved desk contains a computer terminal consisting of a keyboard and a slim, transparent screen behind which is seated a PROGRAMMER, designing software for the aerospace agency. At the center of the room is a donut-shaped command console, chairs facing outwards, from which operations are monitored.

Floor to ceiling smoked-glass curved walls offer the only concession to nature - a tinted view of a man-made, meticulously landscaped garden.

Jerome tears himself away from his screen and picks up a discreet mini-vac. He vacuums between the keys of his keyboard. DIRECTOR JOSEF, 50's, a shorter, official-looking man approaches. His assistant IRENE stands at his shoulder.

DIRECTOR JOSEF

You keep your work station so clean, Jerome. JEROME --Next to Godliness, isn't that what they say?

The Director smiles at the notion and places a computer disc on Jerome's desk.

DIRECTOR JOSEF

I reviewed your flight plan. Not one error in a hundred thousand keystrokes. Phenomenal.

(placing a hand on Jerome's shoulder)

It's right that someone like you is taking us to the Belt.

(glancing to notification on Jerome's screen)

You have a substance test.

The Director briskly departs, Irene in tow. At a nearby work station, a painfully thin programmer, NAPOLEON, perks up at the mention of the test.

Jerome merely shrugs and pretends to reach down and scratch his ankle. However he surreptitiously produced one of Eugene's transparent specimen bags from his sock.

An EXTREME CLOSE UP reveals the bag's contents - flakes of skin, hair follicles, eyelashes, a fingernail. Cupping the bag in his hand to avoid detection, Jerome sprinkles the fraudulent body matter over his keyboard, desk surfaces and the floor around his work station.

He opens his desk drawer and casually scatters the remainder of the bag. Finally he inspects a comb already laced with two hair follicles.

Jerome rises from his work station and makes his way towards the testing lab.

INT. GATTACA AEROSPACE CORPORATION - TESTING LABORATORY.  
DAY.

White-coated LAMAR, forties, buzzcut, a man's man, checks JEROME's eyes with an instrument. Satisfied with his examination, he passes a transparent plastic container to JEROME. Standing directly in front of the technician with his back to camera, Jerome opens his fly. A steady stream of urine begins to flow into the container from Jerome's hidden pouch.

LAMAR  
(staring admiringly  
at the discharge)  
Jerome...never shy. Pisses on  
command. You've got a beautiful  
cock. I ever told you that,  
Jerome?

JEROME  
(deadpan as he  
continues to urinate)  
Only every time I'm in here.

Jerome refastens his trousers.

LAMAR  
I see a lot of cocks. I speak  
from experience. Yours is a  
beautiful example. Why didn't my  
folks order a cock like that for  
me?

LAMAR pours the urine sample into a high-tech device where it is instantly analyzed. The urine identifies Jerome while also registering a negative drug reading. The computer reads "VALID".

LAMAR  
(walking Jerome to  
the door)

If everything goes to plan, this could be the last time I see you for a while. One week to go. Please tell me you're the least bit excited.

JEROME  
I'll tell you at the end of the week.

Jerome departs.

INT. GATTACA - REST ROOM. DAY.

JEROME enters the rest room and glances at the toilet stalls. Only three in the bank of twenty is occupied. He tarries at the mirror above the uniform line of basins, unnecessarily reknitting his tie.

A toilet flushes and a COLLEAGUE exits one of the stalls. He and Jerome exchange a nod. When the man has exited the rest room, Jerome enters the man's vacated stall.

INT. GATTACA - TOILET STALL. DAY.

JEROME immediately feels around the back of the toilet bowl and detaches a secreted stainless steel container.

With surprising swiftness and dexterity, Jerome removes an extremely fine contact lens from each eye and drops the pair into the toilet bowl. He inserts two replacement lenses from the container and reattaches it in its hiding place. Jerome flushes the toilet and exits the stall. He checks in the mirror that his new contact lenses are properly inserted.

INT. GATTACA - CORRIDOR. DAY.

Walking back along one of the long, glass-walled corridors, JEROME becomes aware of a peculiar noise in the complex -or to be more precise, a lack of noise. The incessant tapping of computer keys has stilled.

As Jerome gazes through the glass walled corridor, we see the reflection of his face, deep in thought.

JEROME (VO)

The most unremarkable of events. Jerome Morrow, Navigator First class, is only days away from a one-year manned mission to 951 Gaspra in the Outer Asteroid Belt. Nothing so unique in that. Last year over one thousand citizens from every walk of life embarked on some space mission or other. Besides, selection for Jerome was virtually guaranteed at birth. He is blessed with all the physical and intellectual gifts required for such an arduous undertaking, a genetic quotient second to none.

Jerome's gaze drifts to the sky.

JEROME (VO)

No, there is truly nothing remarkable about the progress of Jerome Morrow, except that I am not Jerome Morrow.

EXT. BEACH. DUSK - THIRTY-ODD YEARS EARILER

A starry sky. The camera tilts down to find palm trees swaying against a setting sun.

JEROME (VO)

I was conceived in the Riviera.  
Not the French Riviera.

The camera tilts down further to find a Buick Riviera parked in a deserted beach front parking lot on a polluted stretch of beach.

JEROME (VO)

The Detroit variety.

Through the car's steamed windows we see Jerome's mother and father, MARIA and ANTONIO, early twenties, making love.

JEROME (VO)

They used to say that a child conceived in love, has a greater chance of happiness. They don't say that any more.

INT. FAMILY PLANNING CLINIC. DAY.

MARIA, wearing a medical gown, lies on an examining table, feet in stirrups. A NURSE, forties, wheels an instrument tray towards her. Maria suddenly disengages her feet from the stirrups and swings her legs off the table.

NURSE  
What are you doing?

MARIA  
(shaking her head)  
I can't do this.

NURSE  
(misinterpreting the  
problem)  
I told you, the government pays.  
It's all taken care of.

MARIA  
No, you don't understand. I can't.

The nurse places a comforting hand on Maria's shoulder.

NURSE  
(reassuring)  
The doctor will give you something.

MARIA  
(removing the hand,  
adamant)  
I'm not doing it.

NURSE  
(trying to make her  
see reason)  
Honey, you've made one mistake --

The remark stings Maria.

NURSE  
(softening her tone)  
-- I've read your profile. I  
don't know about the father but  
you carry enough hereditary  
factors on your own.  
(pause)  
You can have other children.

MARIA  
 (holding her swollen  
 stomach protectively)  
 Not like this one.

NURSE  
 (trying to be  
 diplomatic)  
 Honey, look around you. The world  
 doesn't want one like that one.

Maria gets off the table and reaches for her clothes laying  
 across a chair.

MARIA  
 (irate)  
 You don't know what it will be!

The nurse watches Maria as she dresses, genuinely bewildered.

NURSE  
 (calling out to Maria  
 as she disappears  
 out of the door)  
 The child won't thank you!

INT. DELIVERY ROOM. DAY.

We focus on a crucifix dangling on a rosary. Tilting up we  
 find the rosary clasped between MARIA and ANTONIO's  
 intertwined hands.

JEROME (VO)  
 Those were early days--days when  
 a priest could still persuade  
 someone to put their faith in  
 God's hands rather than those of  
 the local geneticist.

Bathed in sweat, Maria gives a final push on the delivery  
 table.

While still attached to his umbilical cord, the heel of the  
 NEWBORN BABY BOY is immediately pricked by a masked NURSE.  
 A minute drop of blood is inserted into an analyzing machine.

Even as the baby is put into Maria's arms, page after page of  
 data begins to appear on a monitor, pulsing warning signals  
 throughout the spreadsheets.

Two assisting NURSES exchange a look. Antonio senses  
 something amiss.

ANTONIO

What's wrong?

JEROME (VO)

Of course, there was nothing wrong with me. Not so long ago I would have been considered a perfectly healthy, normal baby. Ten fingers, ten toes. That was all that used to matter. But now my immediate well-being was not the sole concern.

Antonio turns his attention from his baby to the data appearing on the monitor. We see individual items highlighted amongst the data - "NERVE CONDITION - PROBABILITY 60%", "MANIC DEPRESSION -42%", "OBESITY - 66%", "ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER - 89%"--

JEROME (VO)

My destiny was mapped out before me--all my flaws, predispositions and susceptibilities - most untreatable to this day. Only minutes old, the date and cause of my death was already known.

Antonio focuses on a final highlighted item on the monitor's screen, "HEART DISORDER - 99% - EARLY FATAL POTENTIAL.". "LIFE EXPECTANCY - 33 YEARS".

NURSE

The name?

(typing details into  
birth certificate)

For the certificate.

MARIA

Antonio--

ANTONIO

(correcting her)

--No, Vincent Antonio.

With a computer stylus he signs the nurse's handheld screen.

EXT. TRACT HOME - BACKYARD. DAY.

2-year-old jerome (referred to by his given name of "Vincent" for most of the following flashback) running with a toy rocket falls more in clumsiness than fatigue. Maria suddenly whisks up the toddler.

MARIA  
 (hysterical)  
 Oh, Vincent, Vincent, Vincent...I  
 can't let you out of my sight.

Maria frantically listens to her young son's heartbeat. For his part, Vincent appears surprised by the attention. Maria places a portable oxygen mask over Vincent's mouth.

JEROME (VO)  
 I was born Vincent Antonio Luca.  
 And from an early age I came to  
 think of myself as others thought  
 of me - chronically ill. Every  
 skinned knee and runny nose  
 treated as if it were life-  
 threatening.

INT. DAY CARE CENTER. DAY.

MARIA and ANTONIO drop off dark-haired 2-YEAR-OLD VINCENT at a Day Care Center.

JEROME (VO)  
 And my parents soon realized that  
 wherever I went, my genetic  
 prophecy preceded me.

While HEALTHY CHILDREN play outside on tricycles, clamber over jungle-gyms and finger-paint, the PRE-SCHOOL TEACHER shows Vincent into a room where CHILDREN WITH OBVIOUS DISABILITIES sleep on mats.

Maria wheels around and marches out of the center with Vincent in her arms. Antonio follows close behind, pleading with his wife to see sense.

JEROME (VO)  
 They put off having any more  
 children until they could afford  
 not to gamble -to bring a child  
 into the world in what has become  
 the "natural" way.

EXT. HOME. DAY.

ANTONIO reluctantly shows off his spotless Buick Riviera to a prospective BUYER.

JEROME (VO)  
 It meant selling the beloved Buick.

The two men haggle over the price while MARIA, holding VINCENT in her arms, looks on. Finally money and a pink slip are exchanged.

VINCENT (VO)  
 My father got a good price. After  
 all, the only accident he'd ever  
 had in that car was me.

As the BUYER drives away, Antonio shrugs to Maria to hide his disappointment.

EXT. GENETIC COUNSELLING OFFICE BUILDING. DAY.

ANTONIO, MARIA and 2-YEAR-OLD VINCENT exit a packed commuter bus and enter a Genetic Counselling office building bearing the sign - "PRO-CREATION".

INT. GENETIC COUNSELLING OFFICE. DAY.

A GENETICIST stares into a high-powered microscope as ANTONIO, MARIA and 2-YEAR-OLD VINCENT are shown into the office by a NURSE. On the counter beside the Geneticist is a glass-doored industrial refrigerator containing petri dishes arranged on racks several feet high.

GENETICIST  
 (to the nurse,  
 without taking his  
 eyes from his  
 binocular microscope)  
 Put up the dish.

While Antonio and Maria take a seat in front of a television monitor, the Nurse puts a labelled petri dish under a video-equipped microscope. The Geneticist swings around in his chair to greet his clients.

Four magnified clusters of cells - eight cells on each cluster - appear on the television screen.

GENETICIST  
 Your extracted eggs...  
 (noting the couple's  
 names from data  
 along the edge of  
 the screen)  
 ...Maria, have been fertilized  
 with... Antonio's sperm and we  
 have performed an analysis of the  
 resulting pre-embryos.  
 (more)

GENETICIST (cont'd)  
After screening we're left with two healthy boys and two healthy girls. Naturally, no critical predispositions to any of the major inheritable diseases. All that remains is to select the most compatible candidate.

Maria and Antonio exchange a nervous smile.

GENETICIST  
First, we may as well decide on gender. Have you given it any thought?

MARIA  
(referring to the toddler on her knee)  
We would like Vincent to have a brother... you know, to play with.

The Geneticist nods. He scans the data around the edge of the screen.

GENETICIST  
You've already specified blue eyes, dark hair and fair skin. I have taken the liberty of eradicating any potentially prejudicial conditions - premature baldness, myopia, alcoholism and addictive susceptibility, propensity for violence and obesity--

MARIA  
(interrupting, anxious)  
--We didn't want--diseases, yes.

ANTONIO  
(more diplomatic)  
We were wondering if we should leave some things to chance.

GENETICIST  
(reassuring)  
You want to give your child the best possible start.  
(more)

GENETICIST (cont'd)  
 Believe me, we have enough  
 imperfection built-in already.  
 Your child doesn't need any  
 additional burdens. And keep in  
 mind, this child is still you,  
 simply the best of you. You could  
 conceive naturally a thousand  
 times and never get such a result.

ANTONIO  
 (squeezing Maria's  
 hand)  
 He's right, Maria. That's right.

Maria is only half-convinced, but the Geneticist swiftly  
 moves on.

GENETICIST  
 Is there any reason you'd want a  
 left-handed child?

ANTONIO  
 (blank)  
 Er, no...

GENETICIST  
 (explaining)  
 Some believe it is associated with  
 creativity, although there's no  
 evidence. Also for sports like  
 baseball it can be an advantage.

ANTONIO  
 (shrugs)  
 I like football.

GENETICIST  
 (injecting a note of  
 levity)  
 I have to warn you, Mr. Luca, he's  
 going to be at least a head taller  
 than you. Prepare for a crick in  
 the neck in sixteen years time.

Antonio beams proudly.

GENETICIST  
 (scanning the data on  
 the screen)  
 Anything I've forgotten?

MARIA  
 (hesitant about  
 broaching the  
 subject)

We want him--we were hoping he  
 would get married and have  
 children. We'd like grandchildren.

GENETICIST  
 (conspiratorial smile)  
 I understand. That's already been  
 taken care of.

(an afterthought)  
 Now you appreciate I can only work  
 with the raw material I have at my  
 disposal but for a little  
 extra...I could also attempt to  
 insert sequences associated with  
 enhanced mathematical or musical  
 ability.

MARIA  
 (suddenly enthused)  
 Antonio, the choir...

GENETICIST  
 (interjecting,  
 covering himself)  
 I have to caution you it's not  
 fool-proof. With multi-gene traits  
 there can be no guarantees.

ANTONIO  
 How much extra?

GENETICIST  
 It would be five thousand more.

Antonio's face falls.

ANTONIO  
 I'm sorry, there's no way we can.

GENETICIST  
 Don't worry. You'll probably do  
 just as well singing to him in the  
 womb.

(rising to end the  
 appointment)  
 We can implant the most successful  
 pre-embryo tomorrow afternoon.

Maria is staring at the four magnified clumps on the screen.

MARIA  
What will happen to the others?

GENETICIST  
(reassuring)  
They are not babies, Maria, merely  
"human possibilities".

Removing the petri dish from beneath the lens of the microscope, he points out the four minuscule specks.

GENETICIST  
Smaller than a grain of sand.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRACT HOME. DAY.

A red pencil draws a mark on a doorway at the height of a child's head. The child moves away and the name, "ANTON 11" is written beside the mark by proud father, ANTONIO.

JEROME (VO)  
That's how my brother, Anton, came  
into the world - a son my father  
considered worthy of his name.

There is little physical similarity between 11-YEAR-OLD ANTON and 13-YEAR-OLD VINCENT standing beside him, apart from their height. In fact Vincent is mortified to see that his younger brother's mark is a fraction of an inch higher than the mark beside his own name, "VINCENT 13". Vincent runs from the room.

EXT. BEACH. DAY.

13-YEAR-OLD VINCENT and 11-YEAR-OLD ANTON sit together on a windswept beach.

Anton picks up a broken shell and deliberately slices the tip of his thumb with the sharp edge. He hands the shell to Vincent who hesitantly follows suit.

JEROME (VO)  
By the time we were playing at  
blood brothers I understood that  
there was something very different  
flowing through my veins.

The two brothers press their thumbs together, merging the blood.

JEROME (VO)  
 And I'd need an awful lot more  
 than a drop if I was going to get  
 anywhere.

EXT. BEACH. LATER IN THE DAY.

While ANTONIO and MARIA doze under a beach umbrella, ANTON and VINCENT enter the water, diving through the waves. From above we watch their two young bodies swimming beside each other beyond the breakers.

JEROME (VO)  
 Our favorite game was "chicken".  
 When our parents weren't watching,  
 we used to swim outside the flags,  
 as far out as we dared. It was  
 about who would get scared and  
 turn back first.

Suddenly VINCENT stops swimming, pulling up sharply in the water, exhausted and fearful. He watches ANTON swim on into the distance.

JEROME (VO)  
 Of course, it was always me.  
 Anton was by far the stronger  
 swimmer and he had no excuse to  
 fail.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM. DAY.

A TEACHER gives a physics lesson. The bespectacled 13-YEAR-OLD VINCENT has his arm energetically raised at each opportunity but is never called upon. Eventually he lowers his arm in defeat.

JEROME (VO)  
 My genetic scarlet letter  
 continued to follow me from school  
 to school. When you're told  
 you're prone to learning  
 disabilities, it's sometimes  
 easier not to disappoint anybody.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT.

13-YEAR-OLD VINCENT stands at a cul-de-sac at the end of a long, straight deserted street.

He places a basketball in the middle of the street to represent the SUN and begins to unwind the huge reel of string attached to the ball. 11-YEAR-OLD ANTON walks a pace behind him. Several yards along the trail a bead is threaded through the string to represent the planet MERCURY.

ANTON

How many astronauts are there,  
anyway?

ANTON

I bet I could be one.

VINCENT

You're standing on Venus.

Anton lifts his foot. There is a bead beneath it.

INT/EXT. CAR / SATELLITE DISH. DUSK.

VINCENT has developed into a handsome 17-YEAR-OLD. His spectacles hidden, he and a YOUNG WOMAN are necking in the front seat of a beat-up car, parked overlooking a huge satellite dish.

JEROME (VO)

I was popular enough until it got  
around that I wasn't a long-term  
proposition.

The love-making intensifies. The YOUNG WOMAN moves down Vincent's chest and unzips his fly.

JEROME (VO)

Those who didn't know already  
could easily find out for  
themselves. It was certainly no  
problem coaxing the information  
out of me.

We remain on Vincent's face as he climaxes. The YOUNG WOMAN turns her head away from the spent Jerome and, out of his view, trickles semen from her mouth into a clear specimen vial.

JEROME (VO)

I didn't blame them. You need to  
know if a prospective husband can  
qualify for a mortgage or life  
insurance or can hold down a  
decent job.

INT. HOME. DAY.

In the living room of their modest home, the dark-haired, 17-year-old, bespectacled VINCENT sits opposite his PARENTS. The crestfallen Vincent has a book on his lap entitled "CAREERS IN SPACE".

MOTHER

(trying to break it  
gently)

Vincent, you have to be realistic.  
A heart condition like yours--

VINCENT

--I don't care. I'll take the  
risk.

MOTHER

It's not just you they have to be  
concerned about. Perhaps we could  
get you one of those new  
pacemakers. They're not perfect  
but--

FATHER

(letting his  
frustration show)

For God's sake, Vincent, don't you  
understand. The only way you'll  
see the inside of a space ship is  
if you're cleaning it!

Vincent looks at his father in disbelief.

On a dinner table on the other side of the living room, 15-YEAR-OLD ANTON looks up from the biological specimen he is studying with a magnifying glass.

INT. PERSONNEL OFFICE - WAITING ROOM. DAY.

17-YEAR-OLD VINCENT hides his glasses in his pocket as he enters a WAITING ROOM. He gazes around at other APPLICANTS.

JEROME (VO)

My father was right. It didn't  
matter how much I lied on my  
resume, my real C.V. was in my  
cells.

(more)

JEROME (cont'd; VO)  
 Why should anybody invest all that money to train me, when there are a thousand other applicants with a far cleaner profile? Of course, it's illegal to discriminate - "genoism" it's called - but no one takes the laws seriously.

As Jerome enters the office, we focus on the doorhandle he has just touched.

JEROME (VO)  
 If you refuse to disclose, they can always take a sample from a doorhandle...

Vincent hesitates before shaking the PERSONNEL OFFICER's outstretched hand.

JEROME (VO)  
 ...or a handshake...

We focus on Jerome's envelope attached to his application form sitting on the Manager's desk.

JEROME (VO)  
 ...even the saliva off your application form.

Sitting opposite the manager, Jerome's face falls. The manager puts a clear, plastic cup in front of Jerome.

JEROME (VO)  
 But for the most part we know who we are. And if all else fails, a legal drug test can just as easily become an illegal peek at your future in the company.

Vincent saves the Manager the trouble and exits the office, leaving the cup where it sits.

EXT. BEACH. DAY.

17-YEAR-OLD JEROME walks up the beach to find 15-YEAR-OLD ANTON sitting with the YOUNG WOMAN Vincent had previously dated.

JEROME (VO)

I didn't blame Anton for his free ride. You can't blame someone for winning the lottery.

The Young Woman hastily departs.

LATER the two brothers face each other on the sand. Anton is the more statuesque of the two.

ANTON

(cocky)

You sure you want to do this?

Vincent's answer is to walk towards the water. Anton smiles mockingly at his brother's grim "game face" and follows.

From an aerial view we watch VINCENT and his younger brother, ANTON, swim beyond the breakers.

JEROME (VO)

It was the last time we swam together. Out into the open sea, like always, knowing each stroke towards the horizon was one we had to make back to the shore. Like always, the unspoken contest.

We watch the two young men swimming stroke for stroke. They swim far out, beyond the point. Suddenly ANTON starts to slow, his strokes becoming labored until he becomes motionless in the water. He begins to sink like a stone. VINCENT, realizing Anton is no longer beside him, turns back to lend support. Vincent takes him in a lifeguard hold and begins to nurse him back to shore. Finally the two boys are coughed up onto the shallows. They collapse, just beyond the waterline, exhausted, gasping for air. ANTONIO and MARIA arrive on the scene. ANTON is the first to recover while VINCENT clutches his side, his face screwed up in pain. Maria kneels down and starts to administer to Vincent but his father, Antonio, is unable to conceal his anger and contempt for Vincent.

ANTONIO

Vincent, you damn fool! You could have killed Anton with your ridiculous contest! Why should he risk his life to save yours?! When are you going to get it through your thick head--you can't compete with your brother! Why try?!

Maria takes Antonio aside. Anton and Vincent exchange a look.

ANTON  
Why didn't you say anything?

VINCENT  
Why didn't you?  
(staring back at his  
father knowingly)  
It's okay. It's the way they want  
it.

JEROME (VO)  
It confirmed everything in the  
minds of my parents - that they  
had taken the right course with my  
younger brother and the wrong  
course with me. It would have  
been so much easier for everyone  
if I had slipped away that day.  
I decided to grant them that wish.

INT. HOME. NIGHT.

ANTON stands at the mantelpiece in the dimly-lit living room. He gazes at a framed family portrait - Vincent's face has been torn out of it. He suddenly spies VINCENT exiting the front gate, carrying a suitcase. Anton goes to shout Vincent's name but the words don't get out.

EXT. GATTACA. DAWN.

A pick-up truck, packed with a CLEANING CREW, pulls into the rear of the building. They are no longer strictly the migrant workers we have come to expect but rather a mixture of ethnicities - all members of a genetic underclass that does not discriminate by race.

As VINCENT exits the truck and turns towards the camera, we discover that he has now matured into the man we have come to know as JEROME. The only visible differences are the glasses he wears and his hair, still naturally dark.

JEROME (VO)  
Like many others in my situation,  
I moved around a lot in the next  
few years, getting work where I  
could. I must have cleaned half  
the toilets in the state.

We follow VINCENT through the course of a day. Cleaning rest rooms, toilets, picking up litter, sweeping, washing windows - gazing at the AEROSPACE WORKERS below. The building is part of the Gattaca facility, located near a shuttle launch site. Throughout the day, with the regularity of 747's, Vincent spies rocket ships in the distance, launching into the sky. Jerome's is the only head that turns and looks up. Long after the sun has set, Vincent is still working. Another rocket ship lights up the darkness. Vincent gazes forlornly into the heavens.

EXT. GATTACA - GLASS WALL. DAY.

VINCENT cleans a window from the outside, staring in at the arrogant GATTACA EMPLOYEES entering the security channels - a sample taken from their fingertips. Jerome, in a trance, constantly cleans the same spot of glass. He fails to notice an Older Janitor, CAESAR, appear beside him.

CAESAR

When you clean the glass, Vincent,  
don't clean it too well.

VINCENT

(confused)

What do you mean?

CAESAR

(glancing to the  
Gattaca workers)

You might get ideas.

VINCENT

But if the glass is clean, it'll  
be easier for you to see me when  
I'm on the other side of it.

Caesar smiles at Vincent's cockiness.

INT. GATTACA. DAY.

VINCENT empties garbage into a dumpster adjacent to Gattaca. His attention is drawn to something in the trash. A discarded manual on Celestial Mechanics and Navigation. He wipes food residue off the corner.

INT. ASTRONOMY & TELESCOPE SHOP. DAY.

A forest of telescopes on tripods in an astronomy shop. VINCENT enters the store with a bucket and squeegee and immediately goes to clean the storefront window. The STORE OWNER looks up from his tabloid - "STAR" magazine.

OWNER  
Where's Earl?

JEROME  
He fell. Lucky it was only the  
second floor.

The owner nods and returns to his magazine. When he looks up again one of his tripods is missing its telescope and Jerome is nowhere to be seen.

INT. IN-VALID HOUSING PROJECT. NIGHT.

JEROME returns to his bare apartment. He removes the cloth covering the bucket to reveal a dumpy-shaped telescope snugly wedged inside. He starts to pour over his collection of textbooks. Other tattered space paraphernalia adorns the wall.

JEROME (VO)  
Of course the best test score in  
the world wasn't going to get me  
in the front door unless I had the  
blood test to go with it.

EXT. GATTACA. NIGHT.

While his fellow WORKERS sit on the steps at the service entrance to Gattaca, passing around an unlabeled bottle of clear liquor, VINCENT sits some distance away studying his text book. In the absence of a computer, he practices typing commands on a keyboard handdrawn on the flap of a cardboard box.

A tiny, seedy-looking man, GERMAN, forties, appears from nowhere and takes a seat beside him.

GERMAN  
(offering his hand)  
Vincent, I'm German--  
(anticipating  
Vincent's response)  
That's my name.

He looks the apprehensive Vincent up and down.

VINCENT  
What do you think?

GERMAN  
 (shrugs)  
 I think I could do something  
 (glancing to the text  
 book)  
 provided you know what you're  
 doing and you can meet the terms.

Vincent pulls a plastic e-money card from his overalls.

GERMAN  
 You got a photo of yourself?

Vincent produces a snapshot of himself - torn from the family portrait. German feeds the snapshot into the pocket-sized computer he carries. The picture is instantly scanned and appears on the computer's small color screen. German returns the photograph and hastily departs.

CAESAR, the elderly janitor, notices German's exit.

CAESAR  
 (to Vincent)  
 I thought I told you not to get  
 any ideas.

High up the side of a building, washing windows, VINCENT pauses occasionally to practice typing commands on his cardboard keys -viewing a screen in his imagination - or the night sky itself. He hears his name being called.

GERMAN  
 Vincent...Vincent...

VINCENT  
 (staring through his  
 glasses)  
 German, is that you?

GERMAN  
 Vincent, come down. I've found  
 him.

INT. IN-VALID HOUSING PROJECT. NIGHT.

GERMAN leads VINCENT through a maze of corridors.

JEROME (VO)  
 For the genetically superior,  
 success is easier to attain but is  
 by no means guaranteed.  
 (more)

JEROME (cont'd; VO)  
 After all, there is no gene for  
 fate. And when, for one reason or  
 another, a member of the elite  
 falls on hard times, their genetic  
 identity becomes a valued  
 commodity for the unscrupulous.  
 One man's loss is another man's  
 gain.

He gives a conspiratorial nod to another passing DNA BROKER,  
 both men carrying their palm-top computers.

GERMAN  
 (enthusiastically  
 reading from data on  
 his portable screen  
 as he walks)  
 He has the heart of an ox. He  
 could run through a Goddamn wall--  
 if he could still run. Actually,  
 he was a big college swimming star.

VINCENT  
 I hope he's not just a body.

GERMAN  
 No problem. Before he dropped out  
 he was an honor student, the right  
 majors--

VINCENT  
 How do I square the accident?

GERMAN  
 (still reading data  
 from his palm-top  
 computer)  
 It happened in Australasia. He  
 checked in yesterday. No family  
 complications, no record he ever  
 broke his neck. As far as  
 anybody's concerned, he's still a  
 walking, talking, fully-productive  
 member of society. You just have  
 to get him off the pipe and fill  
 in the last two years of his life.  
 (correcting himself)  
 Excuse me, your life.

German has stopped walking as if they have arrived.

VINCENT

(looking around for  
a likely candidate  
but finding none)

Where is he?

German reaches towards a PARAPLEGIC sitting in his wheelchair in the stairwell directly in front of them, his head slumped, an incriminating bong nestled in his lap. German pulls the man's head up by the hair. EUGENE. Despite the patchy, unkempt beard and thick glaze over his eyes he bears a striking similarity to Vincent. Vincent holds a mirror beside the face of the lethargic Eugene to compare his own reflection.

GERMAN

(smiling confidently)

What did I tell you? Which one's the mirror?

VINCENT

(still not fully  
convinced)

That's the hair color in his  
profile?

German checks an entry in his computer: "HAIR: BLONDE"

GERMAN

Yeah.

VINCENT

(touching his own  
dark strands)

I'd have to bleach my hair.

GERMAN

(irritated, impatient)

Why are you inventing problems?  
You two are a couple of goddam  
clones. You look so right  
together, I want to double my fee.

VINCENT

(a thought occurs,  
addressing the  
paraplegic for the  
first time)

How tall are you?

EUGENE  
 (deadpan)  
 Four foot six.

Vincent grins, realizing that Eugene is referring to his seated height. There is an instant connection between the two men.

VINCENT  
 Okay, how tall did you used to be?

EUGENE  
 (apathetic, still  
 under the influence  
 of whatever he's  
 been smoking)  
 Six one.

VINCENT  
 (to German,  
 disappointed)  
 He's too tall.

GERMAN  
 (shrugs)  
 You can wear lifts.

VINCENT  
 Even with lifts I'm never that  
 tall.

GERMAN  
 There's a way.

INT. BACKSTREET SURGERY. NIGHT.

In a primitive operating theatre, VINCENT lies on a table, his lower legs masked off for surgery. The SURGEON switches on a surgical saw and lines it up with handdrawn incision marks. Metal struts are ready to elongate his legs.

INT. IN-VALID HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. DAY.

GERMAN wheels the dazed EUGENE into the apartment, cluttered with space paraphernalia. One wheel of his rusting wheelchair is flimsily held on with wire. VINCENT follows behind on crutches, both lower legs in casts and cross-braces. Vincent signs the contract German puts in front of him.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE A BAR. DAY.

EUGENE, glassy-eyed, strides out of a bar, past camera and into the street. We hear a squeal of brakes and a sickening thud.

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. DAY.

EUGENE awakens with a scream, bathed in sweat, arms bound to a bed - the only real piece of furniture in the room. VINCENT, sitting on a crate beside him, soaking a towel in a bowl of water, is taken by surprise. Eugene continues to scream and thrash, fighting against his bindings. Vincent stuffs the towel into Eugene's mouth and holds onto his arms.

JEROME (VO)

I confess, at first I wondered if  
I had rescued a man who was  
already dead.

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT - BATHROOM. NIGHT.

VINCENT holds EUGENE's head over the toilet bowl as he vomits violently. Eugene's paralysis and Vincent's broken legs make the operation doubly difficult.

Finally Eugene has nothing left in his stomach to vomit. He drops to the floor in exhaustion. Vincent, also exhausted from the effort of holding Eugene over the bowl, joins him on the broken linoleum. Both men stare up at the ceiling that carries a map of the constellation.

VINCENT

You okay, Jerome?

EUGENE

(ironically referring  
to their mutual  
immobility)

Yeah. You want to go dancing  
tonight?

Vincent smiles.

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. NIGHT.

EUGENE turns his nose up at the plate of boiled meat and potatoes that VINCENT puts in front of him. Vincent catches the look.

VINCENT

What's wrong with it?

EUGENE

I think I'd better choose the menu. After all, you're learning how to be me, I'm not learning how to be you.

VINCENT

(shrugs)

Suit yourself.

EUGENE

(trying to be more  
diplomatic)

Listen, I don't want you to think I'm ungrateful --I know you and that little broker--what do you call him?

VINCENT

German.

EUGENE

You're both going to a lot of trouble--

(trying to be tactful)

Maybe you can con somebody into believing you're me to get your foot in the door--but once you're inside, you're on your own. I'm sure you're sincere...

(glancing to the  
space paraphernalia)

...but I was being groomed for something like this myself. Even without the accident I don't think I would have made it. My point is--how the hell do you expect to pull this off?

Jerome merely stares back as if the thought of failure has never occurred to him.

VINCENT

(shrugs and states it  
simply)

I don't know exactly, Jerome.

EUGENE  
 (laughing)  
 At least you're honest.  
 (a thought occurs)  
 Call me by my middle name--Eugene--  
 If you're going to be Jerome, you  
 may as well start getting used to  
 it.

[NB: FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE SCREENPLAY "VINCENT" IS REFERRED TO AS "JEROME"].

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. NIGHT.

JEROME looks through Eugene's personal effects, including a photograph album. He is drawn to a swimming medal inside the album at a page displaying a photo of a wealthy, austere MOTHER - Eugene evidently comes from money.

Even as he wheels into the room in his rickety wheelchair we see that EUGENE has the bearing of someone of good breeding. He has a bag of blood on his lap. More blood is being drawn from his arm through an IV. Eugene catches Jerome looking at the album.

JEROME  
 (guiltily closing the  
 book)  
 I have to know where you come from.

EUGENE  
 If anybody asks, tell them the  
 truth--your family disowns you.  
 You are a disappointment, Jerome.

JEROME  
 (referring to  
 Eugene's medal,  
 impressed)  
 What about this?

EUGENE  
 Wrong color. It's silver.  
 (tossing the bag of  
 blood to Jerome)  
 It's not easy living up to this.

Eugene wheels away.

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. DAY.

JEROME practises writing with his right hand, trying to replicate Eugene's signature.

EUGENE  
 (wheeling by, looking  
 over Jerome's  
 shoulder at the  
 signature)  
 It needs work.

JEROME  
 (rueful)  
 You had to be a right-hander.

EUGENE  
 Noone orders southpaws anymore.

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. DAY.

A pair of spectacles lie on the bed. JEROME, still wearing his twin casts, sits behind an optometrist's portable examining device. GERMAN hovering in the background, an OPTOMETRIST custom-fits JEROME with gossamer thin contact lenses.

JEROME (VO)  
 Myopia is a dead giveaway - one of the earliest and most justifiable of the quality-of-life corrections. Anybody with impaired vision is certain to be suffering from all the other deficiencies of a "nonadvantaged" birth.

GERMAN  
 (inspecting the lens  
 in Jerome's eye)  
 It's no good. I can see an edge.  
 He may as well walk in there with  
 a cane.

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. DAY.

The Optometrist has been replaced in the living room with a BLACK MARKET DENTIST who bonds JEROME's small, gapped teeth to match EUGENE's perfectly straight, white picket fences.

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. DAY.

Hair already bleached and cut to match Eugene's hairstyle, JEROME sits in a chair against a hastily erected white paper backdrop. From his wheelchair, EUGENE puts the finishing touches to Jerome's hair. He wheels himself out of the way. The final accomplice in Jerome's deception, a BLACK MARKET COMPUTER GRAPHICS DESIGNER, takes Jerome's photo with a video camera. Manipulating the captured image, the Designer morphs Jerome's face into the face of Eugene. The resulting photo that spits out of a printer is neither one nor the other but an acceptable combination of the two.

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. DAY.

EUGENE is starting to prepare Jerome's specimen bags for the first time. He winces in pain as he plucks several hairs from his head. JEROME, now out of his casts, prepares job applications.

EUGENE  
 (still grimacing,  
 referring to the  
 follicles)  
 You really need that much?

JEROME  
 More than that. You'll get used  
 to it.

EUGENE  
 (yanking out another  
 hair)  
 God, what wouldn't you do to leave  
 the planet?

JEROME  
 (inspecting a hair  
 follicle)  
 Leave? Just a few million years  
 ago every atom in this hair--in  
 our bodies--was a part of a star.  
 I don't see it as leaving. I see  
 it as going home.

EUGENE  
 (marvelling at  
 Jerome's earnestness)  
 God, you're serious, aren't you?

Jerome ignores him. Having learnt his lesson, he hands the envelopes to EUGENE to lick the flaps.

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. DAY.

JEROME is doing a late-minute cram on a geriatric computer from the late 1990's. Checking the time, Jerome hurriedly picks up the shirt that EUGENE has been ironing from a prone position on the floor.

JEROME  
It's not too late to back out.

EUGENE  
You don't know what a relief it is not to be me. Are you sure you want the job?

JEROME  
What about you? What's in this for you, Eugene?

EUGENE  
(referring to the bladder bag he wears)  
Listen, I bag this stuff anyway. It may as well pay my rent.

Jerome hurries to the bathroom where, with some difficulty, he inserts his urine device for the first time. The new improved Jerome emerges into the living room ready for his interview.

INT. GATTACA CORPORATION - TESTING LAB. DAY.

JEROME emerges from a bathroom and hands a TECHNICIAN his plastic cup full of fraudulent urine and inserts it into the analyzer.

TECHNICIAN  
(reading off the profile)  
Congratulations.

JEROME  
(perplexed)  
What about the interview?

TECHNICIAN  
(referring to the cup)  
That was it.

EXT. GATTACA. DAY.

JEROME, scarcely able to disguise his delight, exits Gattaca, trying not to stare at the superb specimens who are now his "colleagues".

JEROME (VO)

The majority of people are now made-to-order. What began as a means to rid society of inheritable diseases has become a way to design your offspring--the line between health and enhancement blurred forever. Eyes can always be brighter, a voice purer, a mind sharper, a body stronger, a life longer. Everyone seeks to give their child the best chance but the most skilled geneticists are only accessible to the privileged few.

In a nearby park MODEL CHILDREN from MODEL PARENTS play together.

JEROME (VO)

Anyone who is the product of an altered DNA is proudly referred to as a "DAN", "self-made man or woman", "man-child".

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - APARTMENT. NIGHT.

JEROME wheels EUGENE out of their housing project. He takes in the neighborhood for the last time. We focus on a POOR COUPLE cradling an INFANT.

JEROME (VO)

Those parents who, for moral or, more likely economic reasons, refrain from tampering with their offspring's genetic makeup or who fail to abort a deprived fetus condemn their children to a life of routine discrimination.

We glimpse other PEOPLE in the neighborhood. They appear poor but, for the most part, physically normal. However a pall of gloom hangs over them.

JEROME (VO)  
 Officially they are called "In-Valid\*" . Also known as "godchildren", "men-of-god", "faith births", "blackjack births", "deficients", "defectives", "genojunk", "genomes", "the fucked-up people".

[\* "IN-VALID" pronounced as in "an invalid license"]

JEROME (VO)  
 They are the "healthy ill". They don't actually have anything yet - they may never. But since few of the pre-conditions can be cured or reversed, it is easier to treat them as if they were already sick.

As they enter a car, driven by GERMAN, Jerome spies a beautiful young GIRL, 11, sitting on the steps of the housing project, staring forlornly into space. While there is no outward sign of any deficiency, she is somehow aware that she is damaged goods.

Jerome glances in the rear-view mirror.

JEROME (VO)  
 By means of a donor I have cheated the system for the last four years to open doors that would otherwise be closed to me.

Jerome wheels Eugene into the palatial condominium complex where the two men now reside.

INT. GATTACA. PRESENT DAY.

We return to JEROME's reflection in the glass. Other GATTACA EMPLOYEES are gradually gathering behind him.

JEROME (VO)  
 In the guise of Jerome Morrор I have risen quickly through the ranks of Gattaca. Only one of the Mission Directors has ever come close to discovering my true identity.

We now see what Jerome has been gazing at through the window the whole time - the sight that has brought a hush to the complex. Through an open office door lies the body of a large man - the MURDERED DIRECTOR, lying where he has just been discovered, in a pool of his own blood.

JEROME (VO)  
 Strange to think, he may have more  
 success exposing me in death than  
 he did in life.

Jerome wipes his eye and also goes to investigate. We focus on an extreme close up of his EYELASH. Loosened by Jerome's hand, it breaks free and floats gently down to the floor where it comes to rest.

INT. GATTACA AEROSPACE CORPORATION. MORNING.

DETECTIVE HUGO, late-forties, wearing a crime-scene hygienic suit and gloves and a full clear mask - looking more like a surgeon or a toxic waste worker than a detective - places a blood-spattered computer keyboard alongside the Director's shattered skull. The indentations match the blunt corner of the keyboard. Hugo detaches the dangling keyboard from its parent computer and seals the likely murder weapon in a marked, transparent plastic bag.

A CREW of similarly-suited homicide detectives systematically vacuum the surrounding office area with metallic, industrial-looking mini-vacs. Once each work space has been vacuumed, the transparent plastic vacuum bag is detached, sealed and labelled.

OTHER DETECTIVES video the scene with camcorders. Video prints spit out of the cameras for instant inspection.

EXT. GATTACA - LANDSCAPED GARDENS. DAY.

A silicon police tape cordons off the crime scene. From the landscaped garden, a crowd of GATTACA EMPLOYEES view the proceedings through the glass walls.

EMPLOYEE 1  
 (staring at the  
 Director's body)  
 Awful.

EMPLOYEE 2  
 Yeah, awful it didn't happen  
 sooner.

Nervous smirks from nearby employees. We focus on JEROME. Standing slightly apart from the others, he does not appear to share the joke, or perhaps even hear it. Jerome watches, wide-eyed, as a DETECTIVE approaches his work station with a mini-vac. A chill goes through Jerome as the detective's cleaner passes over his desk.

Jerome is distracted by a smear on the window, obstructing his view. Without thinking, he breathes on the glass and rubs the smear away with his elbow. Nearby, elderly janitor, CAESAR notices Jerome's fastidious act and reads the panic in Jerome's eyes. DIRECTOR JOSEF suddenly appears at Jerome's shoulder. Standing a pace behind the Director, computer notepad in hand, is IRENE.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
You're lucky to be getting out of this.

JEROME  
We're still going ahead as planned?

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
The launch window is only open until week's end. Tragic though this event may be, it hasn't stopped the planets turning.

He glances towards a group of Detectives headed by HUGO.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
You'll have to excuse me, Jerome. I have to meet with the authorities--naturally, we're co-operating in any way, although I won't tolerate a major disruption.  
(as he departs)  
I wish I was going with you, Jerome.

As the pair depart, Jerome and Irene exchange a glance. Irene is also aware of Jerome's unease.

INT. GATTACA - CORRIDOR. DAY.

We focus on JEROME's eyelash, still lying on the floor. A huge crescent-shaped hair that fills the screen. Suddenly there is a roar of a mini-vac and the eyelash is sucked up. We follow the eyelash's journey, down the throat of the cleaner into the specimen bag where it is sucked against the bag's clear, plastic wall.

INT. GATTACA - COMPUTER COMPLEX. DAY.

The DIRECTOR's corpse is sealed in a plastic body bag and wheeled away on a gurney. The blood and other body matter from the murder scene is sucked up by a portable wet-vac and the sample bag appropriately labeled.

EXT. GATTACA - COURTYARD CAFETERIA. DAY

A chime sounds over the P.A. followed by an announcement.

ANNOUNCER (OC)  
Thank you for your co-operation.  
Please return to your work  
stations immediately.

The PROGRAMMERS get to their feet en masse and begin filing into the work room.

EMPLOYEE 3  
(sarcastic aside)  
What, no counselling?

INT. GATTACA COMPUTER COMPLEX - DIRECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

A WOMAN ASSISTANT whose keyboard was used in the attack has to pause as a MAINTENANCE WORKER gives her work station a final spray to return it to its former pristine condition. A new keyboard is plugged into her monitor to replace the one taken as evidence.

INT. GATTACA COMPUTER COMPLEX. DAY.

JEROME opens his desk drawer to check his comb, now plucked completely clean. He carefully places two of Eugene's hairs to the comb and scatters another bag of fraudulent matter around his work station.

INT. GATTACA - SIMULATOR ROOM. DAY.

In a large, bare room a simulator does a slow dance back and forth on its hydraulic legs, miming the path of the space craft Jerome will soon be aboard. The simulation ends and JEROME exits the simulator through a small door. IRENE hesitantly approaches, carrying a slim electronic tablet.

IRENE  
Excuse me, Jerome. I'm sorry to  
bother you.

Jerome turns, not displeased by the interruption.

JEROME  
No bother.

IRENE  
(referring to her  
notepad)  
I've been asked to compile a log  
for the investigators--they want  
to know everyone's whereabouts  
last night.

JEROME  
Last night? I was at home.

Irene makes a note with her stylus.

IRENE  
Can that be, er, verified? Were  
you alone?

JEROME  
No it can't be verified. Yes I  
was alone.

Irene makes another note.

JEROME  
(wry smile)  
Looks bad, doesn't it, Irene?  
What about you? Where were you  
last night?

IRENE  
I was at home.

JEROME  
Were you alone?

IRENE  
(hesitant)  
Yes.

JEROME  
(teasing)  
So we don't know for sure about  
you, either.

IRENE  
 (wary, wondering  
 where the  
 conversation is  
 headed)

No.

JEROME  
 Why don't we say we were together?

IRENE  
 (confused)  
 Why would we do that?

JEROME  
 I have better things to do this  
 week than answer the foolish  
 questions of some flatfoot. Don't  
 you?

JEROME  
 (gently pressing)  
 Well, shall we say we spent the  
 evening together?

Irene is still unsure whether or not Jerome is serious.

IRENE  
 To be convincing, Jerome, I would  
 have to know what that was like.

Irene turns and departs. Jerome watches her go.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. NIGHT.

The paraplegic EUGENE, seated by the window, meticulously cuts a long fingernail into numerous clippings. He places the clippings in small plastic bags and seals them. He then begins to fill tiny sachets with blood. He turns as he hears JEROME enter down the spiral staircase with the groceries.

EUGENE  
 You didn't forget the truffles?

JEROME places the items in the refrigerator in the bathroom and retrieves a bottle of vodka - the vodka incongruous-looking beside the blood and urine specimens. Joining Eugene at his workbench, he pours them both a drink.

EUGENE  
(sensing something  
amiss, trying to  
keep his humor)  
Who died?

JEROME  
The Mission Director.

EUGENE  
(misinterpreting the  
deadpan remark)  
You wish.

JEROME  
They found him in his office this  
morning--beaten so bad they had to  
check his nametag.

Eugene takes in the news, a smile broadening across his face.

EUGENE  
What an act of benevolence--a  
service to the community. So  
that's it. Now there's nothing  
between you and ignition.

JEROME  
He was still warm when they  
confirmed.

EUGENE  
(confused by Jerome's  
attitude)  
This calls for a celebration.  
Doesn't it?

JEROME  
The place is crawling with Hoovers.

EUGENE  
So what? You didn't kill him, did  
you?

Jerome shoots him a glance for the inappropriate remark.

JEROME  
That's not the point.

EUGENE

(scoffing)

Hey, how much of you can be there?  
Even if the "J. Edgars" do find  
something, in a week--

(glancing up to the  
night sky)

you'll be slightly out of their  
jurisdiction.

(gently chiding)

Come on, we've got to get drunk  
immediately.

JEROME

(still tempering  
Eugene's enthusiasm)

You're going to have to earn your  
supper. I've got my final  
physical tomorrow.

Jerome wheels Eugene's chair to a specially constructed platform that allows the wheels to spin in mid-air. Jerome tapes an electrode to Eugene's chest and attaches the wire to a slim recording device. Eugene begins to spin the wheel of the chair faster and faster. Jerome monitors Eugene's steady heartbeat through a set of headphones.

INT. GATTACA AEROSPACE CORPORATION - COMPUTER COMPLEX.  
NIGHT.

The complex is virtually empty - only a handful of the hundreds of PROGRAMMERS working late into the night. IRENE approaches JEROME's work station on the pretext of delivering some documents. Trying to act casually, she looks under the papers on his desk, then opens the top desk drawer.

We see an EXTREME CLOSE UP of the comb lying there - the two hairs trapped between the teeth of the comb. Irene removes one of the follicles and drops it into an envelope she is carrying.

INT. 24-HOUR SEQUENCING LAB. NIGHT.

"SEQUENCING-WHILE-U-WAIT". Similar to a 1-hour photo lab, the store - little more than a booth - displays a price list on the wall. "FULL SEQUENCE - \$80". IRENE waits in line with a cross-section of other CUSTOMERS. She checks the contents of the envelope that contains the hair.

The YOUNG WOMAN in line ahead of her allows the TECHNICIAN to take a swab from her full lips with a Q-tip.

TECHNICIAN  
How old?

YOUNG WOMAN  
(confused)  
Me?

TECHNICIAN  
(mustering patience,  
referring to the Q-  
tip)  
The specimen.

YOUNG WOMAN  
(proudly)  
I kissed him five minutes ago. A  
real good one.

Overhearing, several PEOPLE in the line snicker.

TECHNICIAN  
(long-suffering)  
I'll see what I can do.

The technician hands the swab to an ASSISTANT. The Young Woman is handed a number and takes a seat. Irene hands her envelope over the counter. She too is handed a number. We follow Jerome's follicle as another TECHNICIAN places it in an analyzing machine.

INT/EXT. SEQUENCING LAB / PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

The TECHNICIAN returns the envelope to IRENE along with a miniature compact disc.

TECHNICIAN  
(remarking on the  
profile result)  
9.4...very nice.

Irene does not appear to share the technician's enthusiasm. She emerges from the sequencing lab and enters her car. Taking a palm-top computer from her purse, she inserts the disc into the computer. Jerome's counterfeit genetic profile appears on the screen. The details confirm her worst fears.

EXT. MICHAEL'S DINNER CLUB. NIGHT.

JEROME and EUGENE, dressed to the nines, pull up in the car to a darkened doorway in a poorly lit street. A VALET appears out of the shadows.

Familiar with the car, he goes immediately to the trunk to retrieve Eugene's collapsible wheelchair. Jerome tips the valet - a credit card wiped through a device.

INT. MICHAEL'S DINNER CLUB. NIGHT.

The chic, elegant establishment inside belies its darkened exterior. JEROME wheels EUGENE into a decadent dinner club full of an odd assortment of people. They are immediately greeted respectfully by MICHAEL, the owner and maitre d'. Jerome and Eugene are obviously regulars.

MICHAEL

Good evening, gentlemen. Your table is ready.

(referring to  
Jerome's mission)

Not long now, sir. You'll be upstairs before you know it. We're going to miss you.

JEROME

Not as much as I'll miss your Stroganoff. I'd like to take one of your chefs with me.

INT. MICHAEL'S DINNER CLUB. NIGHT.

In a secluded booth JEROME and EUGENE toast from a bottle of 1999 vintage Bordeaux. Eugene drinks longer than Jerome. Jerome dabs his mouth with a napkin. He fails to notice a minute FLAKE OF SKIN dislodged from his chin. We follow the flake as it comes to rest beneath the table.

LATER, Eugene and Jerome watch COUPLES dancing a samba on the dance floor. A WAITER vacuums the table with a discreet, handheld miniature vacuum while a WAITRESS clears the plates. She accidentally drops a knife onto Eugene's leg.

WAITRESS

(aghast at the sight  
of his lifeless legs)

I'm so sorry. Did I hurt you?

EUGENE

(smiling, a trace of  
bitterness)

Honey, if you'd hurt me, I'd be cured.

Eugene, the worse for drink, gropes for the waitress's leg but she easily avoids his clumsy pass.

EUGENE  
 You want to meet a real-life  
 spaceman?

Jerome, always aware, scanning the club, suddenly spies  
 NAPOLEON, his Gattaca colleague, on the other side of the  
 room. Napoleon is taking a hit from a vial concealed in his  
 hand. Jerome abruptly turns his back to avoid being  
 recognized.

JEROME  
 Let's get out of here.

EUGENE  
 (knocking back his  
 drink,  
 misinterpreting the  
 hasty departure)  
 You're right, there's more  
 atmosphere where you're going.

INT/EXT. CAR. NIGHT.

Driving along the freeway, Jerome's car suddenly dives down  
 an escape road. EUGENE looks sideways at JEROME.

JEROME  
 You drive.

INT/EXT. CAR. NIGHT.

The car careens around and around a small circular  
 building -a cloud of dust billowing up behind the car. We  
 focus on a BRICK wedged against the car's gas pedal.

EUGENE is at the wheel, JEROME in the passenger seat.

The hard turn is repeated with increasing recklessness,  
 Eugene fighting to control the bucking car.

EUGENE  
 (screaming in both  
 fear and  
 exhilaration)  
 I gotta stop!! I gotta stop!!

JEROME  
 Keep going!! Keep going!!

Finally the car spins to a halt in a cloud of dust. When the  
 dust settles it is revealed that they have been circling the  
 base of a huge satellite dish in a desolate location.

EXT. SATELLITE DISH. NIGHT.

EUGENE lies on the hood of the car, leaning against the windshield, drinking from a bottle of vodka. In the background, the unmanned satellite dish. JEROME relieves himself against the building at the base of the satellite.

EUGENE  
 (gently chiding  
 Jerome over the  
 joyride)  
 You idiot. You could ruin  
 everything with a stunt like that.

Eugene spies a spacecraft launching from Gattaca city.

EUGENE  
 (gazing up into the  
 night sky)  
 At least up there your piss will  
 be worth something.  
 (smiling at the  
 thought)  
 You'll all be showering in it,  
 right?

JEROME  
 (zipping his fly)  
 And drinking it. It's like Evian  
 by the time it's filtered.

EUGENE  
 (referring to the  
 rocket ship)  
 What is that one?

Jerome doesn't bother to look in the direction of the craft but merely glances to his watch. He joins Eugene on the hood of the car.

JEROME  
 (looking at his watch)  
 11.15 to the port. A maintenance  
 crew.

EUGENE  
 How long do you stay up there  
 before you go?

JEROME  
 A day or so.

EUGENE  
 (beaming)  
 I still can't believe they're  
 sending you to the Belt--you of  
 all people--never meant to be  
 born, on a mission to discover the  
 origin of life.

Eugene laughs to himself and passes the bottle to Jerome.

JEROME  
 You should be going instead of me.

Jerome taps Eugene's lifeless legs with his foot.

JEROME  
 Up there they wouldn't be a  
 problem.

EUGENE  
 (glancing  
 heavenwards, shaking  
 his head)  
 You know I'm scared of heights.

INT. CRIME LABORATORY - AUTOPSY ROOM. NIGHT.

The body and clothing of the MISSION DIRECTOR, lying on a metal examining table is scanned with a blue-light magnifying instrument. Fingernail specimens are taken for analysis. In another area of the laboratory, the labelled vacuum bags are attached to analyzers and the contents sucked out and automatically identified. ID names and photographs of GATTACA EMPLOYEES begin appearing on a computer screen at high speed along with other personal details - all data automatically logged for later review.

The photographs and personal details of JEROME and IRENE flash past, amongst the faces of other employees.

We focus on a magnified close up of JEROME'S EYELASH, still clinging stubbornly to the side of its specimen bag. We continue to follow its journey as it is finally sucked into the analyzer.

INT. CRIME LAB - ANALYZER MACHINE. NIGHT.

Inside the machine, a minute, cell-thin sliver is sliced from JEROME'S EYELASH and analyzed.

INT. INVESTIGATOR'S CRIME LAB. NIGHT.

A severed HUMAN TONGUE sits on a tray in a sterile, sealed chamber. Using gloves that protrude through the chamber's glass wall, face buried in a binocular eyepiece, the INVESTIGATOR takes a swab from the tongue.

INVESTIGATOR

(to the tongue, as he  
inserts the tip of  
the swab into an  
analyzer)

Let's see what you've got to say  
for yourself.

A FEMALE ASSISTANT, looking on, hardly has time to smile at the remark before information begins to appear on a nearby computer terminal. The computer gradually builds a portrait of the owner of the tongue using genetic predictors. The Investigator wanders over to the window as his Assistant reads the information from the screen.

ASSISTANT

The tongue is male. Mature.  
Blonde hair. Brown eyes. Light  
complexion. Between 5'11 and 6'1.  
Pronounced Caucasian nose. Thin  
lips. Weak chin. Lobeless ears.  
Prematurely balding. Slightly bow-  
legged. Broad shoulders. Barrel  
chest...

(pause)

Blind.

INVESTIGATOR

(interest piqued)

Blind?

(mildly amused,  
checking the monitor  
for himself)

The tongue is blind?

ASSISTANT

(confused)

Who cuts out the tongue of a blind  
man?

INVESTIGATOR

(shrugs)

Someone who is mindful that the  
blind still speak.

The INVESTIGATOR is alerted by the chime of his nearby computer. On the screen, he discovers the face of 20-YEAR-OLD VINCENT and the accompanying flashing message: TRACKING INVALID 883000181105-10 - NEW DATA -

INT. CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX - PARKING GARAGE. NIGHT.

Having plugged his car into an overnight charger, JEROME pushes EUGENE in his wheelchair to the elevator. Bottle in hand, Eugene leans over and vomits on the ground. Jerome shakes his head resignedly. Eugene looks drunkenly up at Jerome.

EUGENE  
 (sarcastically  
 referring to the  
 pool of vomit)  
 I'm sorry. Did you want it?

Jerome meets Eugene's gaze. There is a trace of bitterness in Eugene's drunken smile.

EUGENE  
 Let me get it for you.

Eugene bends down to scoop up some vomit with his hand but the elevator arrives and Jerome quickly wheels him away. Eugene's head flops to the side as he passes out.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. NIGHT.

JEROME unlocks EUGENE's condo and wheels his chair inside. We see their reflection in a full-length mirror as Jerome pushes Eugene to the bedroom. After removing Eugene's soiled clothing, he heaves the tall man from the chair and onto the bed.

EUGENE  
 (maudlin, sobbing  
 like a child)  
 I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

JEROME  
 (attempting to  
 comfort)  
 It's okay, Eugene.

EUGENE  
 You know I wasn't drunk--I knew  
 what I was doing when I walked in  
 front of that car--

JEROME  
 --What car?--Go to sleep.

EUGENE  
 --I walked right in front of it.  
 I was never more sober in my life.

Jerome looks at Eugene's lifeless legs, trying to cover his shock at the revelation.

JEROME  
 It's all right.

EUGENE  
 (grabbing Jerome by  
 the collar)  
 I'm proud of you, Vincent.

Eugene's head falls back onto the pillow.

JEROME  
 (smiling to himself)  
 You must be drunk to call me  
 Vincent.

But Eugene does not reply, drifting into sleep once again. Jerome pulls a blanket over him.

On the verge of leaving, Jerome's attention is drawn to a wall on the far side of the room. Approaching the wall, near Eugene's mirrored closet, he detects a faint mechanical whir coming from inside the adjacent condominium. Jerome contemplates investigating but exits the condominium instead - climbing the spiral staircase to his own condominium.

INT. JEROME'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

JEROME fastidiously vacuums with an upright cleaner. Using a hose attachment he cleans around a picture frame that contains Jerome's original computer keyboard handdrawn on the flap of a cardboard box.

INT. GATTACA - COMPUTER COMPLEX. DAY.

In the vast room of COMPUTER PROGRAMMERS we pull-focus to discover that we have been filming the complex through the transparent specimen bag containing JEROME'S EYELASH.

On the mezzanine floor overlooking the scene of the crime, the INVESTIGATOR holds the bag, transfixed by the lash.

The lead homicide detective, DETECTIVE HUGO, finishes interviewing a GATTACA SECURITY GUARD and approaches the Investigator. A large telescope in the background.

Although Hugo is deferential to his more youthful superior, his body language betrays his displeasure. Hugo clearly does not relish the Investigator's involvement in his case.

DETECTIVE HUGO

I don't understand why you were dragged out here, Sir. It's hardly worth wasting your time--a no-nothing case like this.

INVESTIGATOR

(gently rebuking his subordinate)

A man's dead, Detective.

DETECTIVE HUGO

Of course, Sir. We're checking the entry log, alibis, grudges...

INVESTIGATOR

Grudges?

DETECTIVE HUGO

(looking out over the balcony)

I look around, I see a lot of dry eyes. The Director was not...

(searching for the words)

...universally loved. He was leading the cut-backs in the program. You're looking at a room full of motives.

INVESTIGATOR

(shaking his head adamantly, referring to the bag in his hand)

No, this is your man.

DETECTIVE HUGO

(not so convinced)

With respect, Sir--it may be the only unaccountable specimen but the profile suggests--

INVESTIGATOR  
--What about his profile?

Hugo refers to a print-out of 20-YEAR-OLD VINCENT's profile including his Genetic Quotient. (The fifteen-year-old photo of Vincent now bears little resemblance to his assumed identity.)

DETECTIVE HUGO  
According to this, he's a sick man. Congenital heart condition. Who knows how long the specimen has been here but there's an 80 percent chance the owner of that eyelash has already died himself from natural causes.

INVESTIGATOR  
(terse)  
So there's a 20 percent chance he's not dead.

Detective Hugo goes to comment further, then revises his remark in his head before speaking.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
Even if this Vincent Luca is alive, is it likely he could bludgeon a man to death?

INVESTIGATOR  
No. Not likely.

The Investigator's tone suggests that the identity of the culprit is no longer a matter for debate. There is an awkward pause before the Detective falls into step with his superior.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
I take it you're thinking along the lines of a robbery gone sour-- a thief disturbed in the act?

The Investigator merely shrugs.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
(skeptical)  
Of course that doesn't jibe with what we found. This was an angry killing.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (glancing to the  
 profile in Hugo's  
 hand)

Who knows with these "deficients"?  
 His profile indicates a proclivity  
 for violence.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
 (trying to appear co-  
 operative)

I'll run a crossover on the  
 eyelash for any family or  
 associate connections--

INVESTIGATOR  
 --I've already run it. There's no  
 record of any living relative.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
 What a pity.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (irritated, glancing  
 to the sample bag)  
 Detective Hugo, it's a simple case  
 of lost and found. All we have to  
 do is locate the man who's minus  
 an eyelash and this murder will  
 solve itself.

We focus on JEROME at his work station. Although he  
 continues to work, he clearly feels the presence of the  
 INVESTIGATORS on the mezzanine floor behind him.

A MEDICAL DIRECTOR approaches the programmer in the  
 neighboring work station - NAPOLEON, the programmer Jerome  
 encountered in the nightclub the previous evening.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR  
 Napoleon, you're late for your  
 substance test.

Napoleon looks up, ashen-faced. Jerome intervenes.

JEROME  
 Director, Napoleon's helping me  
 today.

The Director regards both men suspiciously.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Well, you take it for him, Jerome.

The Medical Director departs. Napoleon, stunned by the reprieve, approaches Jerome's work station and pretends to study the program on his computer screen.

NAPOLEON

Why did you do that?

JEROME

(exiting to the  
testing lab)

Don't worry about it.

INT. GATTACA - TESTING LAB. DAY.

From behind we observe JEROME standing in front of LAMAR, issuing forth his steady stream of fraudulent urine.

EXT. GATTACA AEROSPACE CORPORATION - WORKOUT CENTER.  
DAY.

Twenty GATTACA EMPLOYEES, identically-outfitted men and women, run in a perfectly straight line towards the tranquil lake of the picturesque grounds, never getting any closer to their goal. They run at a steady 10mph on twenty identical state-of-the-art treadmill machines sunken into the floor and arranged in a uniform row facing a floor to ceiling window. The strain is beginning to show on many of the faces. The heartrate of each employee is monitored via a wireless electrode attached to the chest.

Outside in the sunshine the next batch of twenty EMPLOYEES limbers up in readiness for their physical. JEROME's only preparation consists of thoughtfully dragging on a cigarette while staring out at the man-made lake. His nonchalant attitude disheartens nearby colleagues, including IRENE who is amongst a group of workers excused from the run by benevolent, over-protective TRAINERS.

TRAINER

You're excused, Irene. You may  
resume your duties.

On the way into the work-out facility Jerome stubs out his cigarette in a stainless steel ashtray. Only we are aware of the slim credit card-sized recording device that he furtively slips out of his cigarette pack and secrets in his hand.

As he takes his place on one of the treadmills and adheres the cordless electrode to his chest, Jerome surreptitiously attaches his device to the underside of the running machine's control panel.

INT. GATTACA - WORK-OUT OBSERVATION ROOM. DAY.

From a mezzanine floor above the work-out room, LAMAR, the medical officer, monitors computer read-outs displaying the pace and pulse of the runners on each treadmill machine.

INT. GATTACA - WORK-OUT CENTER. DAY.

One by one the GATTACA EMPLOYEES drop out until JEROME is the sole remaining runner. Several of the other employees stand around and watch Jerome run as they towel off.

He appears under little duress, staring directly ahead, seemingly in a trance. As we focus on his chest, only we are aware of the sound of his furiously pounding heart making a lie of his calm exterior.

INT. GATTACA - WORK-OUT OBSERVATION ROOM. DAY.

Jerome's heart registers a far more measured beat on the computer in the observation room. The DIRECTOR is at LAMAR's shoulder, beaming proudly.

LAMAR  
 (marveling at  
 Jerome's heartrate)  
 Six miles later it's still beating  
 like a Goddamn metronome. I could  
 play piano by that heartbeat of  
 his.

The INVESTIGATOR and DETECTIVE HUGO enter the observation room, escorted by IRENE.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
 Director Josef, this is our lead  
 Investigator.

The two men exchange a polite handshake. However the Investigator is immediately taken with the SOLE RUNNER with his back to him, on the treadmill below.

INVESTIGATOR  
 How often do you test, Director?

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
 Often.

INVESTIGATOR  
(intrigued)  
Surely you know what you have.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
We have to be certain. Once  
they're up, we can hardly turn the  
boat around.

On the treadmill below, Jerome glances to his watch as he runs, the distress starting to show. Caught up in the conversation, Lamar has forgotten to end the work-out. Remembering, he finally presses the "WARM-DOWN" button, slowing the treadmill.

LAMAR  
(still marveling at  
Jerome)  
I swear if I went to lunch and  
came back, he'd still be there.

We focus on Jerome's recording device attached to the bottom of the control panel. It clicks to a stop, indicating that the bogus heartbeat recording has ended before the workout.

The heartbeat monitor in the observation room suddenly races from 80 to 250 beats per minute. Lamar catches the discrepancy out of the corner of his eye but before he can take a second look, Jerome has whipped his electrode from his chest. The physician shrugs it off as a glitch in the machine.

The Investigator has turned his back on Jerome to face the Director.

INVESTIGATOR  
We believe we have a suspect.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
What a relief.

INVESTIGATOR  
(referring to the  
profile of VINCENT  
on Hugo's computer  
notepad)  
This unaccountable specimen was  
found in the south wing corridor.

In the room below, Jerome nonchalantly steps off the treadmill, stealthily retrieves the recording device from beneath the control panel and returns it to his cigarette pack.

He casually wipes off drops of sweat from the machine with a towel, briefly glances to Irene with the Investigators and exits to the locker room.

The Director idly regards the image of VINCENT on Hugo's handheld screen. He does not recognize the face.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
An age enhancement is being  
prepared as we speak.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
(referring to his  
assistant)  
Irene will make it available to  
security.

INT. GATTACA - LOCKER ROOM. DAY.

JEROME wears his assured smile all the way along the corridor and into the now empty locker room. He exchanges a cheery greeting with an exiting COLLEAGUE, enters a shower stall, closes the door behind him and promptly collapses on the shower stall floor.

The effects of the grueling work-out are only now apparent. No longer sucking up the pain, he gulps air into his oxygen-starved lungs, his heart looking for a way through his tightened chest. He writhes in agony on the white-tiled floor - a brutal reminder of the physical frailty he seeks to disguise.

EXT. GATTACA - GARDEN. LUNCHTIME.

In Gattaca's perfectly landscaped gardens JEROME, dressed and recovered from his ordeal, joins his COLLEAGUES for lunch at one of the umbrella-covered tables. While most of the others pick at unappetizing salads and take their individualized medication, Jerome carries a steak sandwich on his tray.

The sight of the juicy steak is greeted with envious looks from his colleagues. Jerome pretends not to notice and rubs it in by liberally sprinkling salt onto the meat.

However when Jerome looks over towards IRENE, she avoids eye contact.

When she abruptly gets up and leaves, Jerome follows - thinking twice before depositing the napkin in the nearby trashcan. A janitor reaches for the napkin. It is the Old Janitor, CAESAR, from Jerome's former life.

CAESAR  
I'll take care of that for you,  
Mr. Morrow.

The two men exchange a conspiratorial smile.

EXT. GATTACA - WIND FARM. AFTERNOON.

A forest of wind turbines, supplying energy to the aerospace complex. However the blades of the turbines are motionless in the still afternoon. JEROME finally catches up with IRENE. She turns, unsurprised by his appearance. Standing beside her, he looks out over the complex as if he too has come for the view.

JEROME  
(eyes fixed on the  
view)  
We were looking at each other.  
You stopped.

Irene, also keeps her gaze ahead.

IRENE  
I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything.

JEROME  
(shrugging as if it  
makes no difference  
to him)  
We were just looking.

IRENE  
I know about you.

Jerome turns to her, startled, trying to read her face. Irene takes a deep breath and abruptly plucks a long, dark hair from her head.

IRENE  
(offering the hair to  
Jerome)  
Here, take it.

Jerome, confused, takes the hair - more in reflex than intent.

IRENE  
 (a challenge)  
 If you're still interested, let me  
 know.

Jerome contemplates the hair in his fingers for a moment,  
 then deliberately lets it fall to the ground.

JEROME  
 (never taking his  
 eyes from her)  
 Sorry, the wind caught it.

Irene meets his gaze. There is not a breath of wind. The  
 hair lies, plainly visible on the ground.

EXT. GATTACA AEROSPACE COMPLEX. AFTERNOON.

As JEROME and IRENE walk between the wind turbines, Jerome  
 pretends not to notice that Irene keeps furtively checking  
 the pulse on her wrist. They pause in the shade.

JEROME  
 (as if making  
 conversation)  
 Have they found our friend?

IRENE  
 Friend?

JEROME  
 (shrugs)  
 It was a mercy-killing after all.

IRENE  
 They found an eyelash.

JEROME  
 Where?

IRENE  
 In the South Wing.

JEROME  
 Does it have a name?

IRENE  
 Just some In-Valid. Vincent--  
 (trying to come up  
 with the last name)  
 --somebody.

Jerome turns away to disguise his alarm. He quickly recovers.

JEROME  
Perhaps we ought to celebrate,  
Irene.

IRENE  
(a smile playing  
around her lips)  
You celebrate, Jerome?

INT. EUGENE'S CONDO. NIGHT.

a newly opened case of hair bleach.

EUGENE  
(into phone)  
--I know what I ordered. I  
ordered "Honey Dawn" and you sent  
me "Summer Wheat".

JEROME descends the staircase, taking the steps two at a time. He immediately goes to the refrigerator, removing trays of samples. Eugene abruptly hangs up the phone.

JEROME (OC)  
Call German.

EUGENE  
Any particular reason?

JEROME  
(collecting up sample  
bags from the work  
bench)  
We can't stay here.

EUGENE  
What are you talking about?

JEROME  
They think I offend the Director.

Eugene wheels himself over to Jerome, unconcerned.

EUGENE  
What makes them think that?

JEROME  
They found my eyelash.

EUGENE  
(a flicker of anxiety)  
Where?

JEROME  
In a corridor.

EUGENE  
(blase once again)  
Could be worse. They could have  
found it in your eye.

Jerome half-smiles despite the situation.

JEROME  
(resuming his  
collection of  
samples)  
Come on--we're taking off.

EUGENE  
I'm not going anywhere. Less than  
a week to go. Not on your life--

JEROME  
--You don't understand, they'll  
make the connection, they'll  
hoover again. We should cut our  
losses.

EUGENE  
(angrily grabbing a  
tray from Jerome's  
hands)  
Where is your head, Jerome?  
You're acting like a guilty man.  
They won't marry the eyelash to  
you. They won't believe that one  
of their elite navigators could  
have suckered them for the last  
five years.

JEROME  
They'll recognize me.

EUGENE

(scoffing)

How could they recognize you?

(referring to the  
torn photo of 20-  
year-old Vincent on  
the wall)

I don't recognize you. Anyway,  
you don't have a choice. You run,  
you may as well sign a confession,  
turn us both in right now. No, we  
stick this out--find out what we  
can but change nothing. This is  
a minor inconvenience is all it  
is. We've taken worse heat than  
this.

(angry now)

Jesus, if I'd known you were going  
to go belly up on me at the last  
fucking gasp, I wouldn't have  
bothered. You can't quit on me  
now. I've put too much into this.

(returning the  
samples to the  
fridge)

Besides, this stuff is mine. I  
had other offers, you know. I  
could have rented myself out to  
somebody with a spine. You want  
me to wheel in there and finish  
the job myself?

(meeting Jerome's  
gaze)

We'll take off all right, from pad  
18 just like we planned.

Jerome slumps down in a chair, Eugene's tirade starting to  
get to him.

EUGENE

And keep your lashes on your lids  
where they belong. How could you  
be so careless?

JEROME

I'm sorry.

(reluctant admission)

I think I was crying.

Eugene is uncomfortable at the notion.

EUGENE  
Well save those tears.

Jerome shrugs awkwardly and pours them both a drink.

JEROME  
You really had other offers?

EUGENE  
(shrugs)  
I'm sure I could have.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - INCINERATOR. NIGHT.

The naked JEROME scrapes away at his skin with even greater ferocity than usual. After exiting the incinerator, he deposits all the incriminating trash he has collected during the day into the furnace and ignites the gas.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. NIGHT.

From outside, a car horn sounds. JEROME, in a formal suit and spectacles, abruptly enters the condominium. He goes to a closet and starts searching through Eugene's clothes.

JEROME  
Mind if I borrow a tie?

EUGENE is more interested in the car parked outside the condominium. IRENE sits in a convertible Citroen DS, dressed in a classic but provocative black suit. Unaware that she is being observed she touches up her lipstick in the rearview mirror.

EUGENE  
So it's not just the Hoovers  
who've got you rattled.

JEROME  
You're the one who said not to  
change anything. She's my ear to  
the investigation.

EUGENE  
(skeptical)  
Is that all?

JEROME  
I've got enough on my mind without  
that.

EUGENE

If you say so.  
 (referring to the  
 ties in Jerome's  
 hand)  
 The stripe.

JEROME

(agreeing with the  
 selection)  
 Good choice.

Jerome fumbles with the knot. From his chair, Eugene knots Jerome's tie for him. Jerome is intrigued that for once Eugene is abstaining - he has not touched his drink.

JEROME

Not thirsty?  
 (referring to the  
 fridge)  
 We've got enough virgin samples to  
 last us the week.

EUGENE

I don't feel too good. I think  
 I'm still drunk from last night.

JEROME

Never stopped you before.  
 (regarding Eugene's  
 head)  
 And for God's sake stop plucking  
 your hair. Someone went to a lot  
 of trouble to make sure you  
 wouldn't go bald.

EUGENE

If I were you I'd worry about  
 myself.  
 (nodding to Jerome's  
 spectacles)  
 Haven't you forgotten something?

Jerome pockets the spectacles and enters the bathroom for his contact lenses. The horn sounds outside the window a second time and Jerome hastily exits. We stay with Eugene. Irene catches a glimpse of him before he moves away from the window. Jerome emerges from the building.

As the couple drive away, Eugene wheels himself to the full length mirror.

He regards his own reflection for a moment and opens the mirror - a disguised door opening into the adjacent apartment. A cloud of condensed water vapor billows out. GERMAN, the DNA Broker, emerges with an ENGINEER.

He sends the engineer on his way and joins Eugene at his desk. Eugene hands German a credit card that he wipes through his computer.

GERMAN

We still need to overhaul the back-up generator.

(fixing Eugene with  
a penetrating stare)

What's going on, Eugene, I thought he was going away, not you--you going on vacation?

EUGENE

(looking away)

You got it, German.

GERMAN

(nodding thoughtfully)

You deserve it.

INT. CONCERT HALL - AUDITORIUM. NIGHT.

JEROME and IRENE step over feet, apologizing as they go, eventually finding their seats in a box in a sold-out concert hall.

On the stage below, a YOUNG PIANIST - a teenage prodigy - has already taken his place at the keys of a grand piano. The pianist removes his white gloves and begins to play - an extremely complex and beautiful piece we have never heard before. IRENE looks to JEROME. He is clearly caught up in the music.

EXT. IN-VALID HOUSING PROJECT. NIGHT.

hang around on street corners. Menace in the air - a feeling of impending violence.

Suddenly unmarked police cars appear from all directions, blocking any escape route. Dozens of PLAINCLOTHES DETECTIVES pour out of the cars and onto the street.

People scatter, many running straight into the arms of the Detectives. OTHERS, spilling out of the housing project, are also immediately apprehended.

The Detectives quickly weed out those suspects not fitting Jerome's description - WOMEN, OLD MEN and TEENAGERS. They are shepherded off the street. A line of IN-VALIDS is formed several hundred yards long. Detectives begin to laboriously move along the line, taking finger-prick blood samples from each suspect - instantly confirming their identities with portable analyzers worn on their hips.

As if having the idea at the same time, TWO SEPARATE MEN suddenly bolt from the line, knowing that their blood will incriminate them. Other Detectives, watching for such escape attempts, easily apprehend them and escort them to a waiting police van.

INVESTIGATOR that it is safe to exit his car. The Investigator appears irritated, only half-glancing at the TWO MEN already in custody, apparently certain that neither one is his suspect.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
(enthusiastic)  
Not our fish, but something stuck  
in the net.

The Investigator clearly does not share Hugo's enthusiasm. The Detective offers the Investigator an age enhanced photograph, computer-generated from the last existing photo of VINCENT as a 20-year-old.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
This is the age enhancement we're  
working with.

The Investigator ignores the photo, preferring instead to trust his own eye as he wanders along the line of suspects.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
(referring to the  
line-up)  
As you requested, we've kept the  
parameters wider than usual.

The MEN they scrutinize are hardly mutants - the differences between an IN-VALID and a DAN are subtle at best. Some shorter, some wearing glasses, some with receding hairlines or bald, many with no discernable physical difference at all. The Investigator is only halfway down the line before he turns and starts walking back to his car.

The mystified Detective Hugo follows his superior.

INVESTIGATOR  
We're in the wrong place. We're  
wasting time.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
This is the most likely location--

The Investigator wheels on Hugo, suddenly angry, clearly  
unused to having his judgement questioned.

INVESTIGATOR  
--There's that word again. I have  
a feeling This man doesn't play  
the odds, Detective. Not exactly  
a slave to probability. Is it  
"likely" that a man who has  
successfully eluded authorities  
for fifteen years--a brutal  
killer--is going to come to us now  
like a lamb?

DETECTIVE HUGO  
(taken aback by the  
outburst)  
Is there something more we should  
know about this suspect, Sir? I  
mean besides what's on his sheet.

INVESTIGATOR  
Since going underground, traces of  
this In-Valid have shown up at the  
scene of four serious felonies.  
Do you need any more than that?

DETECTIVE HUGO  
With respect, Sir, many perfectly  
innocent citizens have left  
specimens at as many crime scenes.  
Maybe he's just unlucky.

INVESTIGATOR  
I don't like anybody this unlucky.  
(pause)  
Widen the sweep. The West side.  
Draw a five mile radius around  
Gattaca. Hoover some of the  
classier establishments. Random  
car stops.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
We're already getting complaints  
about frivolous search.

## INVESTIGATOR

This is a murder investigation.  
The public should be happy to co-  
operate, to get this disease off  
the streets.

INT. CONCERT HALL. NIGHT.

A standing ovation. The YOUNG PIANIST on the stage bows deeply, soaking up the applause of the AUDIENCE. The pianist tosses one of his white gloves into the front row where it is caught by an adoring FAN. The second glove he tosses up to the box where JEROME and IRENE are standing. Jerome snares the glove out of the air and immediately hands it to Irene. She promptly slips the glove on her own hand.

The glove fits snugly over her five fingers. However one finger of the glove remains unfilled. Jerome is stunned to realize that it is a six-fingered glove.

## IRENE

(catching his look of  
astonishment)

You didn't know?

## JEROME

(trying hard to  
convince)

Yes...yes...

## IRENE

(picking up a  
resentment, confused)

You're angry--

## JEROME

Why would I be angry? It was  
beautiful.

He quickly turns away to lead the applause. On stage, the pianist raises his hands to acknowledge the crowd. Both his hands contain a perfectly formed extra finger.

INT. IN-VALID HOUSING PROJECT - PROSTITUTE'S BOUDOIR.  
NIGHT.

From an upstairs window we observe the INVESTIGATOR's car cruise slowly back into the squalid housing project. A MAN is buckling his pants at the window.

JOHN  
 Shit! One of those Hoovers is  
 back.

A prostitute, VALERIE, a slender, sylphlike beauty, joins him  
 at the window.

VALERIE  
 It's alright. He's here to see me.

Her client looks at her askance. Despite her assurances, he  
 hurries into his clothes anyway.

VALERIE  
 (to an unseen woman  
 in the next room)  
 Sonja, I can't see anyone else  
 tonight.

INT. IN-VALID HOUSING PROJECT - PROSTITUTE'S BOUDOIR.  
 NIGHT.

The INVESTIGATOR, sits up in the bed, glass in his hand.  
 VALERIE lies on the tangled sheets, naked, making no effort  
 to cover herself. She regards the Investigator curiously.

VALERIE  
 I don't understand you,  
 Investigator.

The Investigator glances idly in her direction.

VALERIE  
 (teasing good-  
 naturedly)  
 You hunt us by day and fuck us by  
 night. Do you only get it up for  
 In-valids?

The Investigator smiles and rejoins her on the bed.

VALERIE  
 Wouldn't you be happier with one  
 of your made-to-order whores?

INVESTIGATOR  
 (gently stroking her  
 hair)  
 You are so beautiful, are you sure  
 you weren't altered? This is not  
 the face, the body, of a Godchild.  
 (more)

INVESTIGATOR (cont'd)  
 How could something so lovely be  
 a product of chance?

VALERIE  
 Is that what keeps you coming back?  
 (meeting his gaze)  
 Look at you. Such angry,  
 beautiful, perfect eyes. Do you  
 ever wonder what they would see if  
 they weren't quite so perfect?  
 They will never see what I see.

The Investigator tries to laugh off her assertion but his tight-lipped smile betrays his displeasure.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (a cruel edge to his  
 voice)  
 You have so much wrong with you,  
 you'll be lucky to see next year.

He roughly forces himself on top of her but she remains defiant.

VALERIE  
 Are you so much more alive,  
 Investigator?

INVESTIGATOR  
 (parting her legs)  
 I'm not paying you to talk.

INT/EXT. IRENE'S CAR. NIGHT.

IRENE drives, JEROME at her side. Cars are being flagged down by uniformed POLICE OFFICERS. Irene slows down behind the car in front. Spying an OFFICER shine a flashlight in the eyes of the MALE DRIVER up ahead, Jerome wipes the contact lenses from his eyes and flicks them out of the passenger window when Irene is not looking.

An OFFICER approaches Jerome and, without a word, opens an electronic testing kit worn on his hip. He removes a sterilized Q-tip and motions for Jerome to open his mouth so he can scrape a culture. Jerome waves his hand in front of his mouth, feigning embarrassment.

JEROME  
 (conspiratorial)  
 Better not.  
 (nodding in Irene's  
 direction)  
 Don't want to give you a  
 contaminated specimen...if you get  
 my meaning.

IRENE plays along, shrugging coyly at the cop.

We see an EXTREME CLOSE UP of Jerome's hand as he furtively retrieves a hair follicle attached to his shirt cuff. With the hair already in his fingers, he pretends to pluck a hair from his head, faking a wince at the appropriate moment.

The cop, wearing transparent latex gloves, takes the follicle and places it in a receptacle in his kit. After a short moment the hair confirms JEROME's driving ID which appears on the kit's electronic screen. As the cop departs, Irene looks questioningly at Jerome.

JEROME  
 Thanks.  
 (answering her  
 unasked question)  
 You never know where those swabs  
 have been.

Irene nods, however clearly not convinced. She shakes the doubt from her mind.

IRENE  
 I want to show you something.

She accelerates away. We see the road ahead from Jerome's POV. Without his contact lenses, it is a blur.

INT. MICHAEL'S CLUB. NIGHT.

After closing time, suited DETECTIVES vacuum the club in which Jerome and Eugene dined the previous evening. MICHAEL, the owner, looks on disdainfully. Waiting in the background, the regular CLEANERS - most likely In-valids themselves - smirk to each other, enjoying watching the cops do their work for them.

EXT. OCEAN HIGHWAY. NIGHT.

With no place to turn the car around, IRENE parks on the cliff side of the six-lane highway.

In the darkness she dashes from the car and, without a second thought, runs directly out into the heavy commuter traffic. Easily negotiating the on-coming cars, she emerges safely on the other side of the highway.

JEROME, rounding the car from the passenger side, is about to follow, when he suddenly pulls up sharply at the curb. We focus on his eyes, deprived of the benefit of their contact lenses. From Jerome's POV, we see that the headlights rushing towards him are nothing but a series of fast-moving blurs - blurs that merge together. He is unable to distinguish between the vehicles or judge their distance.

IRENE

(calling back  
urgently from the  
other side, mindful  
of the light  
beginning to leak  
into the sky)

Come on! We'll miss it!

Irene stares expectantly back at Jerome with her 20/20 vision, unaware of his predicament. Jerome puts a foot off the curb at the wrong moment and is almost collected by an on-coming car. Irene is taken-aback at his mistiming. Does she detect a squint on Jerome's face? To Jerome, the figure of Irene on the other side of the highway is merely a featureless shape but he feels her expectation. He touches the spectacles, still in his pocket, but they are an unthinkable option.

He shakes the idea from his head and turns back to the swiftly-flowing highway. He makes up his mind - he cannot allow himself to be shamed, even at the risk of life and limb. Hardly even glancing at the traffic, he suddenly bolts blindly across the road. Headlights hurtling towards him, cars fortuitously brushing past his heels, horns blaring. Jerome makes a final leap to the haven of the far curb, the rush of air from a large, fast-moving truck blowing him the final inches to the sidewalk.

Irene is stunned by the near miss. She is about to comment but Jerome takes her by the arm and ushers her towards the dunes.

JEROME

Come on. We'll miss it.

EXT. BEACH. DAWN.

JEROME and IRENE huddle beneath an overcoat as the sun crests the horizon, staining the sky with an ochre blush.

IRENE  
What did I tell you?

Jerome nods. However, to his eyes the rising yolk is nothing but an out-of-focus, abstract ink blot.

IRENE  
I envy you, Jerome.

JEROME  
You'll be next.

IRENE  
I don't think so. The only trip I'll make in space is around the sun--

(letting a handful of  
sand slip through  
her fingers)  
--on this satellite right here.

Irene turns to Jerome.

IRENE  
(blurting out what's  
really on her mind)  
--Listen, I don't want to waste  
your time and I really don't want  
you to waste mine. I don't know  
what you're after but I have a  
feeling I'm not it.

Irene suddenly takes Jerome's hand and puts it up her sweater, onto her breast. Although taken aback, Jerome makes no effort to withdraw his hand.

IRENE  
(enjoying his unease)  
It's here. My heart.  
(adding quickly)  
I'm careful--weekly check-ups.  
I'm on a drug maintenance program,  
blood thinners, diet--  
(slowly removing his  
hand)  
I just want you to know what you'd  
be getting yourself into.

JEROME  
What exactly is wrong?

IRENE  
Nothing yet. I'll start  
experiencing symptoms in my late-  
fifties.  
(matter-of-fact)  
But unless they come up with  
something between now and then, I  
won't live much past 67.

Jerome's mouth drops a little, betraying his surprise at the  
statement from a woman plainly still in her twenties.

IRENE  
Of course I think about it every  
day.

JEROME  
(still not quite  
recovered from his  
surprise)  
Of course.

INT. POOL. MORNING.

The INVESTIGATOR swims his race with the unseen opponent.  
The Investigator's ASSISTANT, carrying a phone, tries to  
attract his attention.

EXT. JEROME'S POOL. MORNING.

JEROME sits at his own poolside in his robe, feet dangling  
over the edge, smoking a cigarette. EUGENE, from his  
wheelchair, is applying bleach to Jerome's hair and eyebrows  
with gloved hands.

At the same time, Jerome plays a sleight-of-hand game with a  
syringe.

EUGENE  
How was your evening?

JEROME  
Complicated. I couldn't stop her  
apologizing.

EUGENE

(teasing)

You are a catch. No doubt she's worried that she would lower the standard of your offspring. Everybody wants to "breed up".

(idly curious)

What's wrong with her?

JEROME

(trying to be blasé)

You know how it is with these altered births --somebody told her she's not going to live forever and she's been preparing to die ever since.

EUGENE

You're not thinking of telling her, are you?

JEROME

Of course not. But she's have to know eventually.

EUGENE

(adamant)

She doesn't have to know. She doesn't want to know.

The camera travels down Jerome's scarred legs to find that the pool is completely drained. We now realize that it never contained water.

A BARREN WASTELAND.

A desolate landscape, resembling the surface of the planet Mars. We pull back to find that we are peering at this forbidding desert through a circular aperture.

INT. CRIME LAB. DAY.

The INVESTIGATOR lifts his head from the eyepiece of an electron microscope through which he has been examining a tiny fragment of skin - the skin is identified as belonging to 20-YEAR-OLD VINCENT. DETECTIVE HUGO stands at the Investigator's side - his attitude more respectful in light of the discovery.

Detective Hugo points out a location on a computer-generated map.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
 (chagrined)  
 The skin flake was found in  
 Michael's Restaurant. The  
 employees are all accounted for.

INVESTIGATOR  
 A customer? Does this Michael's  
 cater to misfits?

DETECTIVE HUGO  
 (shifting the view of  
 the map to include  
 the Gattaca complex)  
 No. But one or two "borrowed  
 ladders" have shown up there in  
 the past.

The Investigator understands the significance. They wander  
 over to a blow-up photograph of the 20-YEAR-OLD VINCENT.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
 We have to consider the  
 possibility that he's playing  
 somebody else's hand.

A smile gradually broadens across the Investigator's face.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (taking a perverse  
 pleasure in the  
 slowly dawning  
 revelation)  
 Of course. He's a "de-gene-erate".  
 (glancing to a photo  
 of the Gattaca crime  
 scene)  
 He works at Gattaca. Why else  
 would we find the eyelash near the  
 washroom? Nobody stops to take a  
 leak during a murder.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
 (quickly covering  
 himself)  
 It's still possible the eyelash  
 specimen came from a janitor,  
 delivery man--it could have blown  
 in through an open window.

The Investigator appears not to be listening, his mind made  
 up.

INVESTIGATOR  
(mind racing)  
He was afraid of being exposed.  
That's why he did it.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
(puzzled)  
It is hard to believe he could be  
one of their elite workers.  
You've seen their security system.  
They know who works there.  
(referring to 20-year-  
old Vincent's  
profile)  
Even if you ignore the man's  
expiration date, his profile  
suggests that he doesn't have the  
mathematical propensity let alone  
the stamina to pass their  
physicals.

INVESTIGATOR  
Don't underestimate these  
imposters.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
(skeptical, referring  
to a file of Gattaca  
employee ID photos)  
None of the ID photos match the  
enhancement.

INVESTIGATOR  
(smiling to himself)  
A man can change his face--but  
blood is forever. Sample every  
employee within the parameters I  
gave you.  
(pause)  
Intravenous.

Hugo's mouth drops open at the mention of "intravenous".

DETECTIVE HUGO  
(immediately  
protesting)  
You know their workforce. Two-  
thirds at least fall into the  
category. We'll be closing down  
their operation for days.  
(more)

DETECTIVE HUGO (cont'd)  
 (seeking a compromise)  
 At least go with a fingertip  
 sample or urine.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (shaking his head)  
 Blood. From the vein.

The Investigator turns on his heel to prevent further protest. The Detective and his ASSISTANTS exchange looks of exasperation behind the Investigator's back.

INT. GATTACA. DAY.

JEROME, drinking water, stands in front of a large video bulletin board. Among other things, it displays the electronic mugshot of 20-YEAR-OLD VINCENT alongside the recent computer generated age enhancement of his face.

Some distance away, CAESAR, the elderly janitor, discusses the mugshots with a YOUNGER JANITOR.

CAESAR  
 Look like anybody to you?

YOUNGER JANITOR  
 Not to me.

CAESAR  
 Ugly sonofabitch though, isn't he?

Jerome half-smiles, realizing that the conversation is for his benefit. Having made it clear that they do not intend to expose their former colleague, the two janitors continue their rounds.

Jerome crushes his paper cup. Forgetting himself, he drops the cup into the wastebasket.

INT. CRAFT. DAY.

JEROME familiarizes himself with the interior of a spacecraft under the supervision of DIRECTOR JOSEF and the MISSION COMMANDER. The screen that Jerome sits at is identical to the one he operates in the computer complex - displaying asteroid 951 Gaspra.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
 Somewhere in the dust of Gaspra is  
 the key.  
 (more)

DIRECTOR JOSEF (cont'd)  
 (warming to his theme)  
 Back to the beginning of the book--  
 the life we became. With the  
 original building blocks who knows  
 how far we can take "the godding".

MISSION COMMANDER  
 (wry smile)  
 Even someone as advanced as Jerome  
 will be last year's model by the  
 time we're done.

JEROME  
 (smiling back)  
 I wouldn't get your hopes up,  
 Commander.

Irene enters the craft.

IRENE  
 Excuse me, Mr. Morrow. The  
 investigators have begun their  
 testing.

DETECTIVE JOSEF  
 This is so inconvenient, Irene.  
 They can make an exception for  
 Jerome.

IRENE  
 I'm afraid not.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
 I apologize, Jerome.

JEROME  
 It's not your fault, Director.  
 (afterthought)  
 If your predecessor were still  
 around we may not be going to  
 Gaspra at all. That's what I would  
 call inconvenient.

Jerome exits the craft with Irene.

INT. GATTACA CORPORATION - CORRIDOR. DAY.

A line of MALE GATTACA EMPLOYEES snakes out the door and down  
 the corridor. The INVESTIGATOR walks slowly down the line,  
 trying to eyeball his suspect. Concentrating on the shorter,  
 dark-haired men in the line, he looks straight past JEROME.

However, as the Investigator ignores him and walks by, we see a haunted look in Jerome's eyes.

INT. GATTACA - TESTING LAB. DAY.

Every available TECHNICIAN is working to accommodate the testing of the thousand or so PROGRAMMERS. Twelve testing stations operate simultaneously. A HOMICIDE DETECTIVE supervises each station. JEROME reaches the head of the line. He notes an exiting COLLEAGUE holding a cotton ball to his arm.

A NURSE directs Jerome to LAMAR's testing station. Lamar deposits the previous patient's labeled vial into a blood carousel under the watchful eye of a large DETECTIVE, clearly not relishing his assignment. Jerome rolls up his sleeve.

JEROME  
(referring to the  
table lined with  
syringes)

What's with the plungers, Lamar?  
What are you doing, opening a  
blood bank?

The syringes are clearly not Lamar's idea.

LAMAR  
(sarcastic)

The gentlemen of law enforcement  
are concerned that my testing  
methods may have been compromised.

Lamar inserts a fresh syringe into Jerome's arm. As Lamar draws the blood, Jerome suddenly flinches and flexes his arm violently, causing the needle to bend and buckle, exiting the skin from a second puncture point.

JEROME  
Damn!!

Having pulled away from Lamar's grasp, Jerome withdraws the bent needle himself, blood still squirting from his vein.

LAMAR  
(grabbing a nearby  
wad of gauze)  
Jesus--I'm sorry, Jerome.

The large Homicide Detective winces and turns away from the red arcing spray, a splash of blood spattering his shoes.

In the midst of the commotion, with his practised sleight-of-hand, Jerome removes the vial from the syringe and replaces it with another concealed vial.

JEROME  
 (unfazed, putting  
 Lamar at his ease)  
 You must be out of practise, Lamar.

Lamar hurriedly takes the syringe from Jerome.

LAMAR  
 (examining and  
 removing the  
 switched vial from  
 the bent syringe)  
 I've got enough here.

JEROME  
 (regarding the  
 squimish detective,  
 as he holds the  
 gauze to his arm)  
 Need any more, you can always get  
 it off his shoes.

The Detective notices the spatter of blood across his brogues and, with a look of disdain, wipes it clean. He tosses the incriminating tissue down a hygenically sealed garbage shoot.

Lamar places Jerome's labelled vial in the carousel where it is immediately analyzed by the computer. Jerome's "legitimate" Employee ID code appears on the screen - "VALID". Another EMPLOYEE enters the testing lab.

INT. GATTACA. DAY.

JEROME exits the testing lab with the gauze held to his arm. IRENE is standing outside the door.

IRENE  
 So you didn't do it after all.

JEROME  
 (joking darkly)  
 I guess somebody beat me to it.

INT. GATTACA - MEZZANINE FLOOR. LATER IN THE DAY.

From above, the INVESTIGATOR and HUGO observe the final EMPLOYEE exit the testing lab.

LAMAR, following the employee out of the lab, throws a look of vindication to the two cops.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
That's the last.

INVESTIGATOR  
Something's not right.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
(losing his patience)  
He's not here. It's a blind alley.

INVESTIGATOR  
(resolute)  
No, we've missed something. We  
Hoover again.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
We don't have the manpower.

INVESTIGATOR  
Get it. From outside, if you have  
to.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
From what budget?

INVESTIGATOR  
(angered by Hugo's  
excuses)  
I'll take it out of your damn  
pension if you question my  
authority one more time!

The INVESTIGATOR turns his back on his subordinate and idly contemplates the nearby telescope. Hugo resignedly relays the news to Director Josef who is standing some distance away. Josef's immediate reaction is to march towards the Investigator, Hugo trailing behind. DIRECTOR JOSEF collects himself as he notices the Investigator's hand on the telescope.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
Would you care to look--in the  
telescope?

INVESTIGATOR  
Thank you, no.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
(still referring to  
the telescope)

One look through there and you would know why I can't possibly allow you to disrupt operations any further.

INVESTIGATOR  
(unfazed)

You're so unconcerned that you have a killer in your midst.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
Right now, your presence is creating more of a threat. I don't think you have any concept of what we do here--how meticulous our preparations must be. We are about to send twelve people through 140 million miles of blackness to rendezvous with an object the size of a house and the color of coal. So it's rather critical to point them in the right direction. And we certainly don't need you looking over our shoulders. Besides, I don't believe there is any evidence that the killer is amongst us. I don't see too many other dead bodies littering the place.

INVESTIGATOR  
(surveying the mostly  
empty facility)

No, but since there aren't too many live ones tonight either, you won't mind us conducting one further sweep. If he does not work here, then there should be no other trace of him.

(to Hugo)

I think you'd better get some people out of bed, Detective.

(a thought occurs)

In the meantime we can re-check his favorite haunt.

Director Josef quietly seethes.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (to Josef, referring  
 to the telescope)  
 You see, Director, I prefer my  
 microscope.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. DAY.

JEROME readies himself for an evening out - a bandage around  
 his arm from the needle puncture. EUGENE wheels himself in.

EUGENE  
 Where are we going?

JEROME  
 (slightly guilty)  
 I'm sorry. I've got plans.

EUGENE  
 (feigning hurt)  
 Again?

JEROME  
 (referring to his  
 bandage)  
 She's already got her doubts. I  
 have to act like nothing's wrong.

EUGENE  
 I'm sure you'll be very convincing.

Jerome ignores the remark.

EUGENE  
 Where are you taking her?

JEROME  
 Michael's.

Eugene looks at him askance.

JEROME  
 Everybody goes there.

EUGENE  
 (incredulous,  
 glancing around the  
 room)  
 You may as well invite her here.

JEROME  
 (afterthought as he  
 picks up his jacket)  
 Will you be okay?

EUGENE  
 Don't worry about your little pin  
 cushion. To be honest, I'm looking  
 forward to having the place to  
 myself.

JEROME  
 (seeing through the  
 bravado)  
 We'll still be able to talk when  
 I'm away. The conversation will  
 just keep getting longer.

EUGENE  
 How long?

JEROME  
 By the time I'm at the Belt, you  
 phone and say, "How are you?"  
 Forty-five minutes later I reply,  
 "Not bad. How are you?"

EUGENE  
 I guess I'd better have something  
 important to say if it takes that  
 long to get an answer.

INT. MICHAEL'S CLUB. NIGHT.

IRENE and JEROME step off the dance floor of the smoky,  
 decadent dinner club and take a seat at their table. Irene  
 is agog at the strange assortment of PATRONS, the cigars, the  
 laden dessert trolleys. It is all slightly off from the  
 pristine world she is accustomed to.

IRENE  
 What is this place?

JEROME  
 (wry smile, enjoying  
 her fascination)  
 You've never been here?  
 (a dessert trolley is  
 wheeled up)  
 Let me order for you.

Jerome selects a chocolate torte from the trolley. Jerome savors a spoonful. Irene is tempted but then remembers herself.

IRENE  
I'd better not.

She reaches for her elegant pill box. Jerome takes another spoonful.

JEROME  
So sure of what you can't do. Do you even know what it tastes like, Irene?

Irene goes to deny it but cannot.

MICHAEL suddenly approaches the table with a WAITER in tow. Irene is about to steal a taste of the dessert with her finger when their plates and glasses are whisked away and the table immediately hoovered. Michael whispers in Jerome's ear.

MICHAEL  
Take the side door.

Jerome looks up in time to see DETECTIVE HUGO coming through the front entrance with several other DETECTIVES.

DETECTIVE  
(to his colleagues)  
Check for lenses, hairpieces--

A Detective shines a flashlight in the eyes of a MALE PATRON. A SECOND DETECTIVE tugs the hair of a SECOND PATRON. Jerome takes Irene by the hand and escorts her out of the side exit. Several other COUPLES make for the parking lot.

IRENE  
Why are we leaving?

JEROME  
(attempting to explain the hasty exit)  
Those checks take forever.

EXT. MICHAEL'S CLUB - SIDE ALLEY. NIGHT.

Spilling out of the exit, JEROME and IRENE find a burly plain clothes DETECTIVE barring their way. Before the Detective can say a word, Jerome has wrapped his fist in his jacket sleeve and smashed him in the face.

He continues to beat the Detective until he lies motionless on the ground.

IRENE  
(stunned)  
Jerome!

Spying other Detectives some distance away in the parking lot. Jerome leads Irene out of a hidden side gate.

IRENE  
What about the car?

JEROME  
(grabbing her by the  
hand)  
Let's walk.

IRENE  
Who are they?

JEROME  
(holding his bruised  
knuckles)  
It's not safe. I shouldn't have  
brought you here.

Jerome drags Irene across a vast, desolate lot, lit only by moonlight. Feeling exposed, he breaks into a run.

IRENE  
I can't.

JEROME  
(anxious)  
Come on.

IRENE  
My medication. I left it back  
there.

JEROME  
We'll get it later.  
(forcing her to look  
him in the eye)  
Irene, please.

Irene realizes his seriousness. She begins to run with him. The clearing is wider than Jerome anticipated. They are only halfway across - extremely vulnerable if the Detective think you look in their direction.

INT. MICHAEL'S. NIGHT.

The INVESTIGATOR is grilling MICHAEL, the club's owner. The investigator suspiciously regards the multitude of mini-vacs in the kitchen and the incinerator burning the refuse.

INVESTIGATOR  
(an accusing tone)  
You run a clean establishment.

MICHAEL  
Are you a health inspector?

INVESTIGATOR  
(showing Vincent's  
mugshot)  
Do you recognize this man?

MICHAEL  
My eyes aren't so good.

INVESTIGATOR  
I bet.

Hugo calls out from the side door where he has discovered his fallen colleague.

HUGO  
Sir.

The Investigator hurries to him.

INVESTIGATOR  
(to the still dazed  
Detective, examining  
his injuries)  
Did he hit you with his fist?

DETECTIVE  
(head in his hands)  
More like a hammer.

INVESTIGATOR  
(reprimanding the  
beaten Detective)  
Don't touch your face. Don't  
swallow. Don't spit.  
(to Hugo)  
Quick, clean his teeth.

Hugo uses a flashlight and a small dental-like implement to try to pick skin from Jerome's knuckles from between the Detective's teeth. The Investigator finds the hidden side door.

EXT. DESOLATE LOT. NIGHT.

lot in the moonlight, splashing through deposits of mud and water. Just as the gate opens in the distance, Jerome hurls Irene into the safety of the undergrowth on the other side. Irene, out of breath, desperately feels for her pulse.

IRENE  
 (upset, a strangled  
 protest)  
 Are you trying to kill me? Are  
 you?! Don't you understand, I  
 can't do that!

Jerome tenderly removes Irene's hand from her pulse.

JEROME  
 You just did.

Irene looks back across the vast clearing they have just negotiated, realizing what she has just done.

From across the other side of the clearing comes an echoing cry from the center FIGURE.

INVESTIGATOR (OC)  
 Vincent! Vincent!

EXT. MICHAEL'S. NIGHT.

The INVESTIGATOR is about to cry out Vincent's name once again when he realizes DETECTIVE HUGO and the other DETECTIVES are watching him, askance.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (to Hugo, covering  
 his frustration)  
 What are you waiting for?

DETECTIVE HUGO  
 Where do we start?

INVESTIGATOR  
 We'll vacuum these streets if we  
 have to.

DETECTIVE  
 (handing the  
 Investigator Irene's  
 pill box)

We caught them trying to flush  
 these, Sir.

The Investigator carefully examines the heart pills.

EXT. IRENE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

JEROME walks IRENE to the steps of her apartment. Jerome  
 thinks about departing but Irene takes him gently by the hand.

IRENE  
 So sure of what you can't do.

Jerome follows her inside.

INT. IRENE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

JEROME and IRENE climb a staircase to her bedroom. Without  
 another word they begin to make love.

LATER THAT NIGHT, JEROME cannot sleep. He rises quietly so  
 as not to disturb IRENE. He silently opens the double-  
 windows of the upstairs bedroom. He carefully gathers his  
 pillow from the bed and shakes it out of the window.

Slowly Jerome turns to gaze at the wood floor. In the  
 moonlight we see an EXTREME CLOSE UP of a single hair lying  
 on the floorboards. Jerome bends and picks up the hair,  
 trying to identify it in the dim light. On his hands and  
 knees he tries to clean the floor with a towel. Irene turns  
 over in the bed. Jerome freezes but she continues to sleep.  
 He realizes he may be spreading even more of his skin and  
 hair over the floor. Overcome with frustration and the  
 enormity of his task, he begins to quietly weep.

EXT. A FIELD. DAWN.

A light shroud of mist hangs over the trees that encircle a  
 grassy clearing beyond Irene's building. Something lies in  
 the center of the clearing.

We jump-cut to an EXTREME CLOSE UP of two or three blades of  
 grass. Bristles rain down on the blades. Without access to  
 his incinerator, the crouched, naked figure of JEROME  
 disposes of his whiskers, skin and hair in an open field.  
 His clothes sit in a neat pile at his side. He pours  
 glycolic acid over his body and scrubs at his back, feet and  
 hands with a brush.

There is a haunted, tortured look in his eyes as he tries desperately to rid himself of himself.

INT. POOL. MORNING.

The INVESTIGATOR swims obsessively in his aquatic treadmill.

INT. IRENE'S APARTMENT. LATER THAT MORNING.

Back in the bedroom, JEROME, partially dressed, holds IRENE in bed. She softly touches the scars on his shins.

IRENE  
 (referring to the  
 shins)  
 What happened?

JEROME  
 You remember the '99 Chrysler  
 LeBaron? It's the exact height of  
 the front fender.  
 (shrugs)  
 Looked right instead of left.

IRENE  
 (comforted by the  
 thought)  
 So you're not so smart after all.  
 (awkward about  
 raising the subject)  
 I want you to know--if it ever  
 came to it--I'd be willing to get  
 an ovum from the Egg Bank. In  
 fact, I'd rather use a donor egg--  
 (quickly covering  
 herself again)  
 --if it came to it.

JEROME  
 But "if it came to it" then it  
 couldn't have your--  
 (searching for an  
 appropriate body  
 part)  
 --nose.  
 (stroking her face)  
 How perfect does your child have  
 to be?

IRENE  
 (mildly irritated by  
 what she perceives  
 as his mocking)

You hypocrite. Do you think for one moment you'd be doing what you're doing if it wasn't for who you are--what you are? Don't you get any satisfaction knowing that your children will be able to live to a ripe old age unless they do something foolish?

JEROME  
 That's precisely what scares me-- that they won't do anything foolish or courageous or anything-- worth a Goddamn.

Irene is taken aback by Jerome's passion, regarding him in a new light.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. MORNING.

bottled water at the same time. He already has several other containers of urine on the table beside him.

INT. GATTACA. MORNING.

The INVESTIGATOR and DETECTIVE HUGO keep a wary eye on the outfitted DETECTIVES re-vacuuming the empty computer complex with their mini-vacs.

HUGO  
 (reading newspaper)  
 My wife and I--we're thinking of starting a family.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (shrugs, ambivalent)  
 Why not?

HUGO  
 These new personality corrections I've been reading about.

INVESTIGATOR  
 You worried about the cost?

HUGO  
 Not that.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (regarding Hugo with  
 a condescending  
 smile)

They said the same thing about myopia and obesity. You think your children would be less human if they were less violent, angry, spiteful? Maybe they'd be more human. From where I sit the world could stand a little improving.

We dwell on one DETECTIVE in particular, snatching a garbage bag from CAESAR, the janitor.

DETECTIVE  
 Don't touch that. It's evidence.

He puts a pile of discarded paper cups aside for later testing.

INT. GATTACA CORPORATION. LATER THAT MORNING.

In the vast, empty Gattaca complex the INVESTIGATOR inspects a specimen bag containing Jerome's paper cup with DIRECTOR JOSEF and DETECTIVE HUGO.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
 Positive saliva match. The cup was definitely used since the original sweep.

INVESTIGATOR  
 So we have two choices. Either our suspect came back to the murder scene for a drink of water and I don't know anybody that thirsty or...  
 (looking out over the empty complex)  
 ...he is here.  
 (resolute)  
 We test again. You're right, Hugo, this was a desperate act. Someone had a lot to lose that night--perhaps their place in line.  
 (to Director Josef)  
 I'd like the profiles of everyone with an upcoming mission.

DIRECTOR JOSEF

(nervous)

Twelve have a mission within the week.

INVESTIGATOR

This time I will supervise each test personally.

INT/EXT. GATTACA. MORNING.

JEROME and IRENE walk towards the entrance to Gattaca. Spying the Homicide Investigation trucks parked at the rear of the building and the silhouette of the INVESTIGATOR in the doorway, Jerome pulls up sharply. Irene notices his unease.

IRENE

What is it?

JEROME

I forgot something--something at home. I'll see you later.

Jerome kisses her. Irene, also aware of the trucks, interrogates Jerome with her eyes.

IRENE

I'll miss you.

Jerome is still focused on the entranceway.

IRENE

(looking skywards)

--when you go away.

JEROME

We could go together one day.

Irene considers the idea. She enters Gattaca alone.

INT. GATTACA AEROSPACE CORPORATION - COMPUTER COMPLEX. DAY.

IRENE prepares a stack of ID photos of CREW MEMBERS for the INVESTIGATOR. She closely inspects the doctored photo of JEROME, hesitating before adding it to the file.

The camera dwells on JEROME's vacant work station. The INVESTIGATOR curiously regards the empty chair. He is accompanied by DETECTIVE HUGO, DIRECTOR JOSEF and IRENE.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
He's the only absentee.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
A little nausea. Quite common.

INVESTIGATOR  
At least it's nothing contagious.

DIRECTOR JOSEF  
(unduly agitated)  
I will not permit any further  
testing on the eve of a mission.  
We're already counting backwards.

The INVESTIGATOR ignores Josef and takes a pocket knife from his jacket. He prises out the "ESC" key from Jerome's keyboard, places the key in a specimen bag and deposits it in his jacket.

IRENE  
(picking up a phone)  
I'll call and let him know.

The Investigator gently but firmly removes the phone from Irene's hand and replaces the receiver in the cradle.

INVESTIGATOR  
Let's not spoil the surprise.  
(to Irene)  
I understand you can show us the  
way.

The anxious Director Josef calls out to protest one further time but the Investigator is on his way out of the door.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE GATTACA. DAY.

Outside the entrance to Gattaca, trying to hail a taxi, JEROME is startled to see a car carrying the INVESTIGATOR, DETECTIVE HUGO and IRENE roar out of the driveway. JEROME calls on his portable wristphone.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. DAY.

EUGENE, at his window, filling sachets as usual, hesitates before answering the phone.

EUGENE  
Hello?

JEROME (OC)  
 How would you like to be yourself  
 for the day?

EUGENE  
 (nonchalant)  
 I was never very good at it,  
 remember?

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM / HALLWAY. DAY.

With a look of resolve, EUGENE hangs up the phone.

He wheels his chair up to the sweeping staircase and regards the first of many dozen steps. The daunting staircase spirals away above him.

INT. INVESTIGATOR'S CAR. DAY.

HUGO drives. The INVESTIGATOR looks to IRENE in the rear seat.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (taunting)  
 You don't know who he is, do you,  
 Irene?

He hands her the pill box found in Michael's.

INVESTIGATOR  
 You think you have problems?

INT. EUGENE'S CONDO/JEROME'S CONDO. DAY.

Having wheeled his chair out of sight, EUGENE eases himself out of his wheelchair and onto the floor. Using his elbows, commando-style, dragging his lifeless legs behind him, he proceeds to crawl across the floor and up the first step of the long spiral staircase. We observe his agonizingly slow progress up a staircase that, from Eugene's point of view, appears to have doubled in length.

EXT. CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX. DAY.

The INVESTIGATOR and DETECTIVE HUGO emerge from their car with IRENE in tow. They take in the impressive complex - the Investigator gets a glimpse of the empty pool. They approach the intercom at the entrance.

INT. JEROME'S CONDOMINIUM. DAY.

EUGENE, bathed in sweat, finally crests the landing of the staircase. No respite. As he drags himself across the floor the internal phone rings. He frantically stretches up and knocks the phone off its hook so he can talk from his prone position on the floor.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - LOBBY. DAY.

IRENE is on the phone, closely watched by the INVESTIGATOR and DETECTIVE HUGO.

EUGENE (OC)  
(through intercom, no  
trace of his  
distress)

Hello.

IRENE  
(a moment's  
hesitation)

Jerome--?

EUGENE  
Hello, sweetheart. Come on up.

INT. JEROME'S CONDOMINIUM. DAY.

With no mean effort, EUGENE finally manages to replace the phone on its cradle. He desperately crawls up onto the sofa. However, spying the upright vacuum cleaner in the open closet, he is forced to crawl there and remove the vacuum bag. He frantically crawls back towards the sofa and stuffs the bag behind a cushion.

INT. JEROME'S CONDOMINIUM. DAY.

IRENE enters the door deliberately left ajar, closely followed by the INVESTIGATOR and DETECTIVE HUGO. EUGENE is propped up on the sofa, TV remote control placed in his useless hand to cover his paralysis. He has a stainless steel bowl next to him and has crossed his lifeless legs for a more natural effect. Eugene calmly motions the confused Irene towards him.

EUGENE  
Where's my kiss?

The Investigator scrutinizes Irene's reaction. With only the merest hesitation she takes her cue from Eugene and kisses him affectionately on the forehead.

She perches herself on the arm of the sofa. Eugene takes the opportunity to rest his arm on her leg.

IRENE  
Good to see you're feeling better.

EUGENE  
Now you're here. Who are your  
"friends"?

IRENE  
It's about the Director.

EUGENE  
(feigning boredom)  
Again?

The Investigator slowly circles Eugene, regarding him with the utmost scrutiny. He compares his face to the doctored Gattaca ID photo - a passable likeness. Eugene bends towards the bowl and dry retches.

EUGENE  
Forgive me for not getting up.

Irene puts a comforting hand on Eugene's shoulder.

IRENE  
(to the Investigator)  
Couldn't we do this another time?

INVESTIGATOR  
I don't believe so.

Detective Hugo takes a seat in the chair beside the sofa and unpacks a syringe from the kit he carries.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
This won't take a moment.

Detective Hugo swabs Eugene's inner arm. All eyes are trained on the tip of the needle as it punctures the vein.

EUGENE  
(reassuring to Irene,  
referring to the  
blood flowing into  
the syringe)  
It's okay. Maybe they can find  
out what I've got.

Under the Investigator's watchful eye, Detective Hugo withdraws the syringe and immediately inserts a small amount of the blood into the portable analyzer he wears. Naturally, it confirms that Eugene is Jerome.

Irene does her best to conceal her shock. Hiding his frustration, the Investigator distractedly tours the room while Hugo packs up his gear. The Investigator idly toys with the telescope pointed out of the window.

Next he wanders towards the closet and reaches for the doorknob.

INVESTIGATOR  
Mind if I take a leak?

EUGENE  
As long as you don't do it in my  
closet.  
(nodding to the other  
side of the room)  
Over there.

INT. JEROME'S CONDOMINIUM - BATHROOM. DAY.

The INVESTIGATOR immediately pulls a specimen bag from his jacket pocket and closely inspects the stainless steel toilet and sink. They are both spotless. The shower stall is also scrupulously clean. He flushes the toilet and exits.

Lost in thought, the INVESTIGATOR approaches the closet again and wheels out Jerome's upright vacuum cleaner. He is disappointed a second time to find no vacuum bag inside. The Investigator returns the vacuum cleaner to the closet and produces a mini-vac from Detective Hugo's crime bag.

INVESTIGATOR  
(to Eugene, referring  
to their mini-vac)  
May I?

EUGENE  
Clean the whole house if you want.

IRENE  
(taking Eugene's lead)  
Actually, the kitchen needs doing.

The Investigator switches on the mini-vac to take a specimen from the floor, then promptly kills the machine.

Looking down, the Investigator notices the trail of Eugene's perspiration on the highly polished floor leading to the spiral staircase.

Eugene, reading the Investigator's mind, goes to call out but the words remain frozen on his tongue. Hugo follows his superior as they start to descend the stairs. Irene and Eugene are left staring at one another.

INT. CONDO - STAIRCASE. DAY.

JEROME catches the merest glimpse of the INVESTIGATOR and DETECTIVE HUGO before he slips behind a doorway in Eugene's condominium.

Jerome anxiously regards Eugene's empty wheelchair sitting there. On the stairs, Hugo's phone rings.

DETECTIVE HUGO (OC)  
 (into phone,  
 increasingly  
 encouraged)  
 Yes?...Yes...yes...

The Investigator is already at the foot of the stairs in Eugene's condo when the Detective calls to him.

DETECTIVE  
 (urgent, to  
 Investigator)  
 Come quickly. We have him.

The Investigator's eyes light up. He retraces his steps up the staircase after Detective Hugo.

INT. JEROME'S CONDOMINIUM. DAY.

JEROME, white as a ghost, climbs the stairs, emerging into his own condominium. He embraces the beaming EUGENE, still sitting on the sofa.

JEROME  
 (numb)  
 How are you, Jerome?

EUGENE  
 Not bad, Jerome.

JEROME  
 How the hell did you get here.

EUGENE  
 (deadpan)  
 I could always walk. I've been  
 faking it.

Jerome almost laughs, despite the situation. Only now does he notice Irene on the other side of the room, her mind racing. She looks at Jerome and Eugene together and runs from the apartment.

JEROME  
 (calling after her)  
 Irene.

Jerome goes to follow but Eugene stops him.

INT. CRIME LABORATORY. DAY.

An EXTREME CLOSE UP of dried blood - brittle and cracking - on a pair of soiled latex gloves. A latex head mask, suit of clothes and shoe covers are similarly caked. The INVESTIGATOR and DETECTIVE HUGO watch as a white-coated FORENSIC TECHNICIAN feeds a minute sample of the dried blood into an analyzer.

The INVESTIGATOR wanders over to a one-way glass window through which he can observe DIRECTOR JOSEF, sitting numb but strangely serene in an interrogation room. The Investigator, in a state of shock himself, cannot yet bring himself to believe what is plainly obvious.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (gazing at the  
 Director, struggling  
 to come to grips  
 with the turn of  
 events)  
 This can't be him.

The Detective regards his superior incredulously, intrigued that he could still cling so stubbornly to his theory in the face of such overwhelming evidence.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
 (intrigued)  
 We found his spit in the dead  
 director's eye. He's signed a  
 confession--supplied us with the  
 suit he wore on the night. What  
 more do you want?

INVESTIGATOR  
 (a trace of  
 desperation,  
 grasping at straws)  
 Luca could still be an accomplice.

The Investigator turns away, unwilling or unable to accept the explanation. Hugo regards the Investigator with a trace of sympathy. He furtively retrieves the Investigator's tissue from the trash.

INT. GATTACA. DAY.

JEROME sits in a formal briefing room with the other CREW MEMBERS of his mission, receiving their final pre-flight instructions. LAMAR looks on approvingly.

MISSION COMMANDER  
 Finally, I'd like to welcome Navigator Morrow on his debut mission--if we get lost out there, nobody has a map of the heavens in his head like Jerome.

Jerome looks up bashfully.

MISSION COMMANDER  
 (adopting a more serious tone)  
 I'm gratified that there is no longer a cloud hanging over tomorrow's launch. Now we can put this unpleasantness behind us and concentrate on the task at hand. I don't have to tell you how important this mission is--the Belt could hold the key to the origin of life - why we are what we are.

(injecting a note of levity)  
 I know many of you have been asking that question about me for long enough.

(referring to a projected photograph of a misshapen asteroid behind his head)  
 Gaspra--how could something so ugly hold so many beautiful secrets?

Polite smiles from his colleagues.

MISSION COMMANDER  
 Enjoy your final evening with your families. We'll all be a year older when they see us next. And don't be late tomorrow. You don't want to miss this.

We focus on Jerome. He appears to have his head in the heavens already.

INT. CRIME LAB. NIGHT.

The tormented INVESTIGATOR lies on the floor of his lab, staring at the ceiling. he winces in discomfort. He is lying on something. He rolls over and retrieves the irritation from his pocket. It is the "ESC" computer key he prized from Jerome's keyboard.

He gazes at the key for a moment and then gets to his feet. He resurrects an old fingerprint kit from a cupboard. Carefully removing the key from the specimen bag - marked, "MORROW, Jerome" - he begins to dust it for a fingerprint.

He places the key under a camera. The enlarged print appears on the lefthand side of his computer screen. The word "MATCH" blinks onto the screen. However the face that appears from the computer's databank is not that of "MORROW, Jerome" but "LUCA, Vincent". The Investigator regards the photograph in disbelief.

DETECTIVE HUGO casually enters the lab, something odd in his nonchalant demeanor.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (excited)  
 Hugo! I've found him!

HUGO  
 I've found him too.

INVESTIGATOR  
 (not listening,  
 referring to his  
 discovery)  
 A fingerprint. There's something  
 to be said for nostalgia.  
 (realizing what Hugo  
 has said)  
 What did you find?

Investigator's discarded tissue. The Investigator does not recognize it.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
It's not exactly him.

INVESTIGATOR  
(interest piqued)  
Where did you get this?

The Investigator immediately deposits the tissue into an analyzer.

DETECTIVE HUGO  
(referring to the  
tissue)  
But this man does share some  
common characteristics with your  
suspect. Not so many but enough.  
It appears the eyelash has a  
brother--of a kind.

The Investigator realizes the significance and looks guiltily to Hugo. Hugo exits the lab, leaving the Investigator to stare at his own FACE in his analyzing machine.

INT. GATTACA - JANITOR'S LOCKER ROOM. NIGHT.

CAESAR, the old janitor, enters the locker room. He is about to wearily open his locker when he senses another presence in the room.

He turns to find JEROME sitting there on a bench. Although clearly delighted, CAESAR tries to disguise his pleasure.

CAESAR  
So you've finally seen sense and  
come back to your old job, Vincent.

JEROME  
Not yet, I'm afraid.

CAESAR  
No? What's keeping you?

JEROME  
I guess I'm a slow learner.

CAESAR

I guess so.

(looking up through  
the small window)

Well, while you're up there, maybe  
you could tidy the place up a bit.

JEROME

I'll see what I can do.

The two men embrace, Caesar breaking off before Jerome.

CAESAR

And don't go getting everybody  
lost out there. You'll give us a  
bad name. You won't have me to  
keep an eye on you, you know.

JEROME

(glancing to Caesar's  
locker)

By the way, I left some trash in  
your locker.

CAESAR

(happy to oblige)

I'll take care of it.

Jerome departs. Caesar watches him go and turns back to his locker. He opens it to find a brand new, high-tech telescope sitting inside.

The old janitor gets over his surprise and beams broadly -he looks back in Jerome's direction but he has gone. The old janitor cannot help himself and reverently reaches for the telescope's eyepiece.

INT. GATTACA - COMPUTER COMPLEX. NIGHT.

In the dimly-lit, empty computer complex, JEROME takes a last look around. He sits at his computer, one final time replaying the graphic representation of his path through the cosmos that he is on the eve of taking for real.

He notices the key missing from his keyboard. Instantly realizing the significance, he rises from his seat to flee.

INVESTIGATOR

Vincent--

Jerome is stopped in his tracks by the sound of his given name and the voice that calls it.

He makes no further attempt to flee but turns to face his pursuer. The Investigator steps out of the shadows.

INVESTIGATOR  
Vincent, what are you running from?

JEROME  
(disturbingly calm)  
From Vincent.

The two men face each other for the first time in a long time. The Investigator is transfixed by Jerome's face -scarcely able to believe his eyes.

INVESTIGATOR  
Has it been so long, you don't remember who I am?

JEROME  
(nodding to the  
Investigator's badge)  
Maybe it's you who's forgotten.  
(meeting his gaze)  
What are you doing here, Anton?

It is finally apparent the Investigator is Jerome's younger brother Anton [AS WE SHALL REFER TO THE INVESTIGATOR FOR THE REST OF THE FILM].

ANTON  
I could ask you the same question.  
(glancing to the  
impressive complex)  
I have a right to be here, you don't.

Jerome smiles at him condescendingly.

JEROME  
You almost sound like you believe that.

ANTON  
(ignoring the remark,  
extending his hand)  
Come with me now, Vincent. You've gone as far as you can go.

JEROME

(refusing Anton's  
hand, glancing to  
the telescope above  
them)

There are a few million miles to  
go yet.

ANTON

(adamant)

It's over.

JEROME

(shaking his head)

Is that the only way you can  
succeed, Anton, to see me fail?

ANTON

It's for the best.

JEROME

(increasingly angered)

God, even you want to tell me what  
I can't do. In case you hadn't  
noticed, Anton, I don't need  
rescuing. But you did, once.

Anton is clearly stung by the memory.

JEROME

(goadng)

Well? You have all the answers.  
How is that possible?

ANTON

(resolute)

You didn't beat me that day. I  
beat myself.

JEROME

Who are you trying to convince?

ANTON

(angry)

I will prove it to you. Come swim  
with me now, Vincent. Now--  
tonight.

Jerome regards Anton with a knowing smile. Somewhere in  
Gattaca a phone rings.

INT/EXT. IRENE'S CAR OUTSIDE CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX. NIGHT.

IRENE, sitting in her car outside Jerome's condominium, hangs up her portable phone. In her agitation, her finger involuntarily goes to her pulse. She catches herself and removes the finger from her wrist as if it has burned her. She exits the car.

INT. JEROME'S CONDOMINIUM/EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. NIGHT.

IRENE quietly knocks on Jerome's door but there is no response. Trying the handle, the door opens. Her curiosity takes her inside. All is quiet. IRENE calls out.

IRENE

Hello.

No reply. Irene hesitantly ventures further, drawn to the spiral staircase. She tentatively makes her way down the stairs and into Eugene's dimly lit condominium. With wonder and reverence, she examines the instruments and samples laid out on Eugene's work benches. She opens the refrigerator in the bathroom and inspects the samples and sachets. Finally she regards the empty incinerator.

EUGENE (OC)

Quite something, isn't it?

Irene turns.

Eugene has entered through the mirrored door, not at all displeased by her unexpected visit.

EUGENE

(referring to the  
incinerator)

That's where we get rid of the traces of him although we never truly succeeded.

IRENE

I've been looking for him. Do you know where he is?

EUGENE

(unconcerned)

He's probably leaving some more of me around the place before he goes.

Eugene idly inspects one of the blood sachets.

EUGENE

Don't be deceived, Irene. These are just the clothes. He has to wear them. Something I could never do.

IRENE

What's wrong with him?

EUGENE

(sympathetic smile)

You have more in common than you know.

Irene's hand involuntarily goes to her heart.

EUGENE

But they say he's already ten thousand beats overdue. I have my doubts.

(wry smile)

For all my gifts, they could never engineer me a heart like Vincent's.

Irene turns back to the incinerator, lost in thought.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT.

JEROME and ANTON walk down a dune together towards the beach not far from Gattaca - an ocean beach pounded by an angry, black sea. Jerome picks up a sharp piece of shell and slices the end of his thumb. A drop of blood oozes out. He offers the shell to Anton but Anton does not take it.

Both men begin to disrobe. The brothers stand beside each other on the sand once again - Anton still the more athletically-built of the two.

Together, they enter the raging surf. Diving through the breaking waves, they begin to swim.

In the moonlit night, we watch their two bodies swimming side by side. They swim a long distance, Anton waiting for his brother to tire. But the pace does not slacken. Anton pulls up in the water. Sensing his brother is no longer beside him, Jerome also pulls up. They tread water several yards apart.

ANTON  
 (attempting to  
 conceal his distress)  
 How are you doing this, Vincent?  
 How have you done any of this?

JEROME  
 Now is your chance to find out.

Jerome swims away a second time. Anton is forced to follow once again. Angry now, gritting his teeth, Anton calls upon the same determination we have witnessed during his constant swimming in the pool. He puts on a spurt, slowly reeling in Jerome.

Anton gradually draws alongside Jerome, certain that this effort will demoralize his older brother. But Jerome has been foxing -waiting for him to catch up. Jerome smiles at Anton. With almost a trace of sympathy, he forges ahead again. Anton is forced to go with him. They swim again for a long distance.

It is Anton who gradually becomes demoralized - his strokes weaken, his will draining away. Anton pulls up, exhausted and fearful. Jerome also pulls up. However his face displays none of Anton's anxiety.

They tread water several yards apart. The ocean is choppy now. The view of the lights on the shore is obscured by the peaks of the waves.

ANTON  
 (panic starting to  
 show)  
 Vincent, where's the shore? We're  
 too far out. We have to go back!

JEROME  
 (calling back)  
 Too late for that. We're closer  
 to the other side.

Anton looks towards the empty horizon.

ANTON  
 What other side? How far do you  
 want to go?! Do you want to drown  
 us both?  
 (becoming hysterical)  
 How are we going to get back?!

Jerome merely smiles back at his younger brother, a disturbingly serene smile.

JEROME  
(eerily calm)  
You wanted to know how I did it.  
That's how I did it, Anton. I  
never saved anything for the swim  
back.

Anton stares at Jerome, aghast. The two men face each other in silence, treading water several yards apart in the dark, rolling ocean.

Jerome turns and heads back towards the shore. Anton is left alone with the terrifying realization. The only sound, the wind and the water.

EXT. CONDOMINIUM. NIGHT.

JEROME, disheveled and distressed, arrives back at the condominium. He notices IRENE standing at the edge of the pool.

She turns. He approaches her. They stand several yards apart. Looking into each other's eyes, they do not speak. Jerome abruptly pulls a hair from his head - for once one of his own.

JEROME  
(wry smile, offering  
the hair to Irene)  
Here, take it.

Irene takes the hair, the significance not lost on her.

JEROME  
(echoing Irene's  
words from their  
first encounter)  
If you're still interested, let me  
know.

Jerome contemplates the hair in his fingers for a moment, then deliberately lets it fall to the ground.

IRENE

(never taking her  
eyes from him,  
echoing Jerome's  
words from their  
first encounter)

Sorry, the wind caught it.

Once again there is not a breath of wind. The hair lies, plainly visible on the edge of the pool.

From an upstairs window, EUGENE observes the couple.

INT. JEROME'S CONDOMINIUM. NIGHT.

We watch the silhouette of IRENE and JEROME making love in the bedroom.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. NIGHT.

EUGENE, sitting in his darkened room, unscrews the cap of a plastic container and places it on a nearby table. We remain on Eugene's face as he opens his fly.

INT. JEROME'S CONDOMINIUM. NIGHT.

IRENE and JEROME lie in bed together after making love. For once Jerome is able to sleep unconcerned. It is Irene who lies awake, head against JEROME'S chest, listening to the sound of his erratically beating heart. However it has a soothing effect on her.

She kisses Jerome and reluctantly rises from the bed.

JEROME

(awakening)

A year is a long time.

IRENE

Not so long--just once around the sun.

Jerome smiles. For once Irene seems to be looking forward to the trip. She exits the room.

INT. INCINERATOR. MORNING.

Inside the incinerator, JEROME scrapes away at himself - for the final time. He wistfully regards the brush in his hand.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. MORNING.

JEROME, dressed for his departure, emerges down the spiral staircase into Eugene's condo. Jerome notices several suitcases at the foot of the stairs.

EUGENE wheels into the room.

EUGENE  
I have your samples ready.

JEROME  
(confused)  
Have you forgotten? I don't need  
any samples where I'm going.

EUGENE  
(meeting Jerome's  
gaze)  
No, but you might need them when  
you get back.

Eugene wheels across the room and opens the mirrored door. The water vapor billows out. Jerome regards Eugene.

Eugene leads Jerome inside for the first time.

Inside are two rows of four identical, industrial refrigerators. They contain thousands of blood and urine specimens.

Jerome regards them with awe and more than a little unease.

EUGENE  
Everything you need to last you  
two lifetimes.

EUGENE points out an extra specimen of semen in the first refrigerator.

EUGENE  
There's an extra specimen. I wish  
I could give it to her myself.  
(afterthought)  
But then, you always were better  
at being me.

Eugene leads the way out of the refrigerator room.

JEROME  
 (struggling to come  
 to terms with the  
 discovery)  
 Why have you done this?

EUGENE  
 (as he seals the  
 mirrored door)  
 In case you get back before I do.

JEROME  
 Where are you going?

EUGENE  
 (glancing to the  
 suitcases)  
 I'm traveling too.

Jerome goes to question Eugene's travel plans but thinks better of it. He kneels before his friend and embraces him.

JEROME  
 Thank you.

EUGENE  
 I got the better end of the deal.  
 I just lent you my body--you lent  
 me your dream.

Jerome smiles and hugs Eugene a final time. Eugene stuffs an envelope into Jerome's pocket.

EUGENE  
 (referring to the  
 note, glancing  
 heavenwards)  
 Not until you're upstairs.

Jerome exits. Eugene watches him go.

INT. GATTACA - DEPARTURE LOUNGE. NIGHT.

JEROME enters a large holding area along with his other eleven CREW MEMBERS.

Jerome's heart sinks as he recognizes LAMAR, greeting the crew for one final unexpected substance test. His colleagues groan good-naturedly but it is clearly far more than an inconvenience to Jerome. He looks towards the door he has just entered but there is no way back. One by one the crew are ushered behind a screen.

Before he can think of a way out, it is Jerome's turn. He enters the cubicle.

JEROME  
 (as he takes the  
 plastic cup from  
 Lamar)  
 What's this, Lamar?

LAMAR  
 New policy.

From behind, we see Jerome unzip his fly. However for once Jerome does not urinate on cue - unused to operating his own equipment in front of the physician.

LAMAR  
 (intrigued by the out-  
 of-character  
 discharge)  
 Flight got you nervous?

JEROME  
 There's a problem, Lamar.

LAMAR  
 (apparently not  
 listening)  
 Did I ever tell you about my son,  
 Jerome? He's a big fan of yours.  
 He wants to apply here.

Jerome realizes he has no choice. Resigned to his fate, he begins to fill the cup.

JEROME  
 (as he urinates)  
 Just remember, Lamar, I could have  
 gone up and back and nobody would  
 have been the wiser--

LAMAR  
 (cutting him off)  
 --Unfortunately my son's not all  
 that they promised. But then, who  
 know what he could do.

Lamar takes the cup from Jerome in his gloved hand. Jerome anxiously watches his sample poured into the analyzer.

Confirming Jerome's worst fears, the face of 20-YEAR-OLD VINCENT appears on the computer screen.

However Lamar does not look at the screen. He stares Jerome in the eye.

LAMAR  
 For future reference--  
     (a brief glance to  
     where Jerome has  
     just zipped his fly)  
 --righthanded men don't hold it  
 with their left. It's just one of  
 those things.

Never looking at the screen, Lamar presses a button marked, "VALID".

LAMAR  
     (knowing smile)  
 Have a safe trip, Vincent.

Jerome exits up a long enclosed escalator, realizing that Lamar has known all along.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. NIGHT.

EUGENE knocks back a vodka. With a certain reverence he places his silver medal around his neck.

INT. ESCALATOR. NIGHT.

At the top of a long escalator, the door to a craft is secured.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM. NIGHT.

Eugene's wheelchair, empty, sits beside the door of the incinerator, also secured.

EXT. LAUNCHPAD. NIGHT.

A CLOSE UP of the flame of a rocket's engines igniting - the ball of fire engulfs the launchpad - filling the screen.

INT. EUGENE'S CONDOMINIUM - INCINERATOR. NIGHT.

Inside the incinerator another ball of fire - this time engulfing the unseen figure of EUGENE. We glimpse the medal around his neck, melting in the fierce blaze.

EXT. GATTACA - LAUNCHPAD. NIGHT.

As we have seen so often in the past, a rocket launches into the sky over Gattaca - however on this occasion it carries Jerome.

INT. SPACECRAFT. NIGHT.

We focus on JEROME's face - seeing little if any of the craft. Jerome's eyes are closed. His head is still - alarmingly still. Could the launch itself have been too much for him? He hear the thoughts in his head.

JEROME (VO)

We came from the stars so they say, now it's time to go back. If I was conceived today, I would not get beyond eight cells, and yet here I am. In a way they were right, I don't have the heart for this world.

(pause)

The question is, why am I having so much trouble dying?

Jerome's eyes blink open. He holds the letter from Eugene in his hand. It contains no words, merely a lock of EUGENE'S hair - for once preserved solely for its sentimental value. The hair, weightless, floats off the page.

We focus on a porthole looking out upon a starscape.

A STARSCAPE

As we pan across the constellations, a title is superimposed upon the starscape:

In a few short years, scientists will have completed the Human Genome Project, the mapping of all the genes that make up a human being.

After 4 billion years of evolution by the slow and clumsy method of natural selection, we have now evolved to the point where we can direct our own evolution.

The first title is replaced in the heavens by a second title.

If only we had acquired this knowledge sooner, the following people would never have been born:

A succession of portraits and photographs of RENOWNED and HISTORIC FIGURES fades in and out of the constellations - the accompanying titles list their affliction rather than their accomplishments.

HOMER  
Blind from birth

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE  
Epileptic

COLETTE  
Arthritic

LOU GERHIG  
Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis  
(Lou Gerhig's Disease)

RITA HAYWORTH  
Alzheimer's Disease

HELEN KELLER  
Blind and deaf

STEPHEN HAWKING  
Lou Gerhig's Disease

JACKIE JOYNER-KERSEE  
Asthmatic

CHARLES DARWIN  
Chronic invalid

The face of Charles Darwin fades off and another title appears out of the stars.

Even Charles Darwin, the man who told of the survival of the fittest, numbered amongst our frailest.

The title fades off and is replaced by one final title in the night sky.

Of course, the other birth that would surely never have taken place is your own.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END