

THURSDAY'S CHILD  
An Original Feature Film  
by Louise Geraghty

First Fifteen Pages

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T: +353 87 665 2691  
E: [writer@screenlouise.com](mailto:writer@screenlouise.com)  
W: [screenlouise.com](http://screenlouise.com)

INT. TV NEWS MONTAGE - DAY

BEGIN MAIN TITLES

A montage of:

A cluster of weeping Chinese people show the rashes on the insides of their arms to doctors in white masks. One of the doctors shines a penlight into blood seeping out of the corner of a patient's eye.

CHINESE NEWSREADER  
(subtitled into English)  
There are now 151 confirmed cases,  
with another 130 suspected.

An African woman in a hospital bed weeps blood, screaming.

A red-haired woman crawls after four white-suited medics carrying away a body on a stretcher. Behind them are rows and rows of filled body bags.

A building with a sign saying "Biblioteca". On the door is a handwritten sign that says "Depósito de Cadavres" and a crudely drawn crucifix. In front of the sign people weep.

A newspaper headline screams "MOA SWEEPS ACROSS GLOBE!"

A world map shows red dots sprouting in every country.

SWEDISH NEWSREADER  
(subtitled into English)  
Despite the development of anti-  
retroviral drugs, we are no closer to  
containing the epidemic.

A ward of blonde patients, all wearing surgical masks, rashes on their forearms, bleeding from the eyes.

Soldiers in surgical masks threaten weeping Indian people with machine guns, forcing them to stay behind a barbed wire fence as they plead for help.

Another newspaper screams "MOA DEATHS RISE AGAIN"

A blonde woman holds up her crying child, blood flowing from her eyes.

AMERICAN NEWSREADER  
There were more drug riots in Boston  
today as supplies of anti-retroviral  
Moa drugs ran dry for the second time  
in a month.

A crowd of mixed-ethnicity bangs on the locked doors of a hospital begging to be let in.

END MAIN TITLES

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN

INT. COMPUTER SCREEN - DAY

We don't yet realise it's a computer screen, the field of vision is filled with blood vessels as seen through a powerful microscope. Blood pulses through them relentlessly, life at its most elemental.

The picture disappears, replaced by a box that screams "FILES DELETED".

INT. UNIVERSITY LABORATORY - DAY

The lab is cluttered with apparatus and experiments in progress. On the wall, a poster declares "Moa Symptoms - Don't Delay, See A Doctor Today". The symptoms listed are rash inside the joints, bleeding from the eyes, metallic taste in the mouth. Another poster pleads "Don't Waste the University's Health Insurance!"

DR BRENDAN FITZPATRICK (62) rumped and clearly unwell, frenziedly but methodically trashes the lab. He throws full flasks and test tubes down the sink, erases whiteboards, bundles papers and microscope slides into the fumigation cabinet and uses a lit Bunsen burner to set them on fire.

The door flies open and in rush the DEAN OF THE UNIVERSITY (45), wearing a plain black armband and Brendan's LAB ASSISTANT (25).

THE DEAN

Brendan! Stop what you're doing!

LAB ASSISTANT

(to the Dean)

And he's sterilised the clean-room too.

(to Brendan)

Please Brendan!

The Lab Assistant lurches towards the fire in the fumigation cabinet but Brendan threatens him with the Bunsen burner and he retreats.

BRENDAN

You! You think I didn't know you were spying for them?

THE DEAN

(to Lab Assistant)

Spying for who?

At that moment SENAN CASSIDY(63), expensively suited, a man used to commanding rooms, strides through the door.

SENAN

Dr Fitzpatrick stop!

BRENDAN

Which one are you? Bayer? Smith Kline? Muller Dupuis? Well you'll never have it.

SENAN

Cassidy Pharma. We can help you.

THE DEAN

You do not have any authority to be in the university!

SENAN

(to Brendan)

I can get this to the people who desperately need it. The millions already infected, the thousand new people a month around the world.

BRENDAN

That's just a thousand new paying customers to you. Well you're too late!

THE DEAN

(to Senan)

What's going on?

SENAN

Dr Fitzpatrick has created a cure for Moa.

The Dean's jaw drops. She turns to Brendan.

THE DEAN

Brendan, if this is true - you have to stop destroying your work! Please!

BRENDAN

(to Senan)

It's out of your reach now.

THE DEAN

There'll be backups on the network, we--

LAB ASSISTANT

He's a technophobe, he refuses to use the network!

SENAN

Brendan, please. Come under Cassidy Pharma's roof, we'll take care of you and your work.

BRENDAN

You drug companies-- you're the ones killing people!

He's sweating now, unsteady on his feet, getting paler.

SENAN

We're the ones who can get it to the people who need it!

BRENDAN

No, there's-- there is another way. There has to be. I've run out, I've run out of time. But there's one person. One person, I trust. The only, one--

He sways, reaches to support himself, then collapses. The others rush over. The Lab Assistant pries an empty bottle of pills from his grasp. The Dean feels for a pulse.

THE DEAN

He's dead.

Senan slams his palm down hard on the floor.

EXT. CASSIDY PHARMA OFFICES - DAY

The building is low, four stories, but sprawling. A modernist rectangular arrangement of glass and steel, a facade determined to give nothing away.

INT. CASSIDY PHARMA EXECUTIVE CORRIDOR - DAY

CONOR CASSIDY(32), confident and impeccably groomed, strides along the corridor clutching a slim folder. The lift pings open and FIONA WHELAN(38), focused and power-suited, emerges, also carrying a slim folder.

CONOR

Fiona.

FIONA

Conor.

CONOR

How many did you get?

FIONA

Wouldn't you like to know.

CONOR  
You know the daughter is estranged.

FIONA  
Want to take her off your list?

Conor grins at her. The second lift pings open and DREW FERGUSON (35), shrewd and ambitious, steps out.

DREW  
Take who off your list? I got six.

CONOR  
Drew, we all got six.

They arrive at Senan's office door. Outside at a desk is his PA, DEBBIE (40), wearing a black armband.

CONOR  
Debbie.

Debbie nods at him. They go in.

INT. SENAN'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is large and plush, with a desk, television and conference table. In the centre of the conference table are bottled water and hand-sanitiser. Senan and the three sit at the conference table.

SENAN  
Talk to me.

CONOR  
His wife died twenty-three years ago, rare kidney disease.

FIONA  
There was a treatment but it was expensive, very expensive.

DREW  
Still is. They couldn't afford it, she died.

FIONA  
He's hated all drug companies ever since.

SENAN  
So who does he trust?

CONOR  
This wasn't a man with a large social circle. Just two friends, two colleagues, a lawyer, a daughter.

DREW  
That's what I got too.

CONOR  
It's possible none of them even knew  
he was dying.

SENAN  
Surely the daughter.

FIONA  
He's estranged from the daughter.

CONOR  
She's worth checking out anyway.

SENAN  
Check them all out. Good work.

They turn to leave.

SENAN  
Drew, how's the leg?

DREW  
Better thanks. Physio says I'll be  
back on the pitch in a fortnight.

SENAN  
You're lucky you didn't break it. Eh,  
Fiona?

FIONA  
(laughs)  
I try not to make a habit of it.

SENAN  
Glad to hear it. Conor, was it one or  
both collar bones you broke?

CONOR  
One, but I did break it twice.

SENAN  
Always good to check your work. Go,  
all of you. Find me the only person  
Brendan Fitzpatrick trusted.

EXT. CASSIDY PHARMA EXECUTIVE CORRIDOR - DAY

The three walk and talk, looking at their lists.

CONOR  
I'll take him and her.

FIONA  
I'll take them.

DREW  
And I'll take those two.

CONOR  
Last one back buys the coffees.

He goes off. Drew and Fiona turn to the lifts.

DREW  
Alright for some.

FIONA  
Can't stand the heat? None of Senan's other kids work for him.

DREW  
Maybe he's just the favourite.

FIONA  
Maybe you're just not.  
(off his look)  
It doesn't matter if you're related to him or not. If you're on Senan's team, he's on yours.

DREW  
I am on Senan's team. Do you want to go for a drink later on?

FIONA  
Drew it was one night, get over it.

The lift arrives and Fiona gets in first.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A bustling coffee shop. Brendan's FIRST FRIEND (55) takes his coffee. Conor is at his elbow.

FIRST FRIEND  
I mean, I knew he was very sick, but I understood he had three, maybe even four months. Surely the pain couldn't have been that bad yet. I only saw him last week.

CONOR  
That recently? Did he give you anything? Probably something small.

FIRST FRIEND  
Nope. We were really just chess buddies. Not much for conversation or

exchanging presents or anything.

EXT. PARK - DAY

On this bright day the park is lazy with families, some in surgical masks. Fiona is with Brendan's SECOND FRIEND (65), feeding the ducks with his toddler granddaughter.

FIONA

Did he give you anything recently? Or ask you to hold something for him?

SECOND FRIEND

No. Last time I saw him was Christmas. He looked good, considering...

(to granddaughter)

That's it, just throw it.

(to Fiona)

I'll tell you this though, if the pain was that bad he was right to end it.

That's what I'd do.

INT. UNIVERSITY OPEN SPACE - DAY

Brendan's MALE COLLEAGUE and FEMALE COLLEAGUE walk with Drew.

FEMALE COLLEAGUE

Nobody was really that close to him.

DREW

You might have meant more than you know.

FEMALE COLLEAGUE

I didn't even know he was sick. I mean, I knew he was sick, I didn't know he was dying.

DREW

But might he have given either of you something? Maybe something to mind?

FEMALE COLLEAGUE

Nope.

MALE COLLEAGUE

Not unless you count a spare printer cartridge.

A beat.

DREW

Could I see that?

INT. HEEL BAR - DAY

On the wall among the ads for shoe polishes is the same Moa Symptoms poster we saw in Brendan's lab. A TV on the wall broadcasts a news report of a protest march.

TV PRESENTER

Protesters also called for an extension of the government Moa drug program to include people on middle incomes.

The OWNER (50) turns it off irritably. ROSE FITZPATRICK (30), a woman who doesn't take up much space in the world, stands at the counter holding a pair of very worn, low-heeled shoes.

ROSE

The left one. It still leaks.

OWNER

There's only so many times you can repair them.

ROSE

But you said you'd be able to.

The Owner shrugs. A GLAMOROUS CUSTOMER (35) sweeps in and deposits a pair of gleaming stilettos on the counter.

GLAMOROUS CUSTOMER

Sorry, in a rush, have an opening tonight.

(to Rose)

You don't mind, do you?

OWNER

No problem.

ROSE

(to herself)

No, take your time, I'll just stand here and seethe quietly. And wish I could afford hair like that.

The Owner drops Rose's shoes and picks up the stilettos.

GLAMOROUS CUSTOMER

I'm just running in next door for my eyelashes, could you have them in fifteen minutes?

OWNER

No problem.

GLAMOROUS CUSTOMER

You're a star.

She sweeps out. The Owner picks up a pliers and pulls the worn heel off a stiletto.

ROSE  
What about my shoes?

OWNER  
Yeah, I can try, but there's only so many--.

ROSE  
Yeah, I know.

OWNER  
I'll have them for you tomorrow.

ROSE  
Tomorrow?

Rose struggles with her outrage for a beat.

ROSE  
Yeah, okay.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SCHOOL - DAY

Rose walks along the street. Around her, teenage girls in uniform walk in clusters. She is about to turn into the school gate when Conor stops her.

CONOR  
Rose Fitzpatrick?

ROSE  
Yes.

CONOR  
I'm Conor Cassidy, from Cassidy Pharma. I want to extend my condolences about your father.

ROSE  
Don't bother. I hadn't talked to him in twelve years anyway.

She moves on past him, but Conor keeps up with her.

CONOR  
So he didn't give you anything recently?

ROSE  
If he had I'd have binned it.

CONOR  
Is that a no?

ROSE  
That's a no.

She goes through the school gates.

SCHOOLGIRL  
Miss Fitzpatrick, that your boyfriend?

ROSE  
Spy from the Department of Education.  
But don't worry, I didn't give him  
your real name.

The girl laughs and they go into the school together.

EXT. LAWYER'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

On the ground floor, a Florist displays its wares - funeral sprays and wreaths, including a set in the shape of the letters "M", "A", "M". Above the florists, gilt-painted windows announce "Gerald Barnes Law".

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE RECEPTION - DAY

The Reception is small and cheaply furnished. Fiona sits on the sofa. A SECRETARY types at a computer.

A door opens and the LAWYER, Gerry Barnes(40) comes out looking stressed. Fiona stands.

LAWYER  
Mary, I have to go back to the  
hospital.

FIONA  
Mr Barnes, I'm here about Brendan  
Fitzpatrick.

The Lawyer pauses.

LAWYER  
I'm sorry to have to tell you, but Dr  
Fitzpatrick passed away.

FIONA  
I know, I just need to know if he gave  
you anything recently.

The briefest of hesitations from the Lawyer.

LAWYER  
I'm sorry, I can't talk about client  
affairs. I have to go. Mary, I'm on  
the mobile if it's urgent only.

SECRETARY

Okay. Tell her I was asking for her.

FIONA

Mr Barnes, if I could just--

LAWYER

I'm sorry, I can't help you.

He hurries out. Fiona turns to the Secretary.

FIONA

What's happening at the hospital?

SECRETARY

His wife, she's been Maa-positive for years. She's been on Kronabil but it isn't working anymore and their insurance won't cover Monobroxil.

INT. STAIRWELL OF LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Fiona clatters down the stairs after the Lawyer.

FIONA

Mr Barnes!

He turns, exasperated, at the door.

FIONA

I work for Cassidy Pharma. We make Monobroxil.

The Lawyer hesitates, hope in his eyes.

INT. SENAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Senan, Conor and Drew sit at the conference table. Drew has black smudges all over his sleeves, and is rubbing on hand sanitiser.

SENAN

When did he get here?

CONOR

Yesterday.

DREW

He's a day early.

CONOR

He's filling the time with drinks in the Horseshoe Bar.

SENAN

With certain other Board Members no

doubt.

CONOR

With all the ones you'd expect.

DREW

He knows the patent--

SENAN

Never mind that! If Ivor Madigan thinks he can sell my own company out from under me he's even stupider than he looks. I'm the one with the vision, I'm the one with eyes in every research lab in the country, I'm the one who found the cure for Moa.

The unspoken "Not yet" hangs in the air.

SENAN

The board needs me more than some upstart bean-counter and whatever cronies he can buy with a free drink. Drew, I want projections for production time on this cure. And a profit-and-loss up to five years out. Where's Fiona.

DREW

Shouldn't we wait--

SENAN

What, is--  
 (looks at his watch)  
 -- fifteen hours too much time for you?

Drew isn't stupid enough to answer.

SENAN

We can fill in any blanks once we have it in our hands. Where's Fiona?

As Fiona struts in and triumphantly holds up a white envelope hand-addressed to Rose Fitzpatrick. Senan beams.

SENAN

Excellent work.

Out of the steamed-open envelope Senan takes a handwritten sheet of paper. Although the envelope is in perfect condition, the page itself has clearly been crumpled and flattened out again. They all lean in.

DREW

"I dropped the strawberry on my yellow

shirt".

They all look at each other, baffled.

CONOR

An anagram?

DREW

Some kind of code?

Fiona holds the page up to the light. Senan checks inside the envelope. Nothing. Senan slams his palm on the table. The others shrink back.

SENAN

This was meant for the daughter?

FIONA

To be posted in the event of his death.

DREW

What if there is no cure. What if he's sending us on a wild goose chase as one last act of revenge. Using the daughter he never cared about anyway.

A beat while they all realise this a likely scenario.

FIONA

It must be something only she'd understand.

CONOR

She said if she got anything from him she'd bin it.

SENAN

That's no good to us.

They watch as Senan thinks.

SENAN

Re-seal the envelope, put it back in her letterbox tonight. Get to her after she picks it up, before she bins it. Impress upon her the urgency of telling us what it means. Conor, you do it.

Drew and Fiona hide their disappointment. Conor nods.

CONOR

How high can I go?

SENAN

Keep it under ten million. Don't want to eat into shareholder profits.

INT. HOTEL FUNCTION ROOM - NIGHT

The Hotel is traditional and opulent Georgian, with extravagant curtains on the large windows and oil paintings of horses on the walls. Men and a few women, all in expensive business suits, some sporting black armbands, confer in small groups. WAITERS in surgical masks circulate with trays of champagne, canapes and hand-sanitiser.

PILAR HERNANDEZ(52), American and impeccably dressed, takes a bottle of hand sanitiser from a passing tray. The WAITER pauses as she looks at the bottle, sprays some on her hands and puts it back. She rubs her hands elegantly as she surveys the room. Senan approaches from behind, holding two glasses of champagne.

SENAN

Pilar Hernandez. Beautiful as ever.

PILAR

Senan Cassidy. Imagine meeting you here.

She turns to him and he hands her a glass of champagne.

SENAN

Congratulations on finally getting the top job.

PILAR

Thank-you.

SENAN

Although since neither of your predecessors lasted more than a year, it might be a bit of a poisoned chalice.

PILAR

No, I plan to stick around as long as you have Senan. You're a national treasure. And I know that because I read it on the cover of the Irish Times Magazine. You looked very handsome, of course.

Senan inclines his head modestly.

SENAN

Two things never go out of style, Pilar. Armani and making sick people well.