

Sands of Time

by
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INT. LAB - DAY

A BLUE TINT to everything seen. Inside a sterile, high-tech lab. Close on lab instruments and upright refrigerators with see-through glass doors.

A lid is lifted on a large, prone stainless steel bin. It depressurizes, releasing "freezer smoke." A few workers with lab coats mingling about with busywork. Their faces unseen.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
First discharge date. Excited?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Mm-hmm.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Oh yeah...you did come in an hour early, didn't you?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
You know this is my life.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Nice pun.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
(laughs)

The lab doors start to open.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

The subway doors start to open.

WRITTEN ON THE SCREEN: TWO YEARS LATER

End of a work day. Rush hour foot traffic, just wanting to get home, jams into a crowded subway car. Two punk TEENS-- one long-haired, one short-haired, shove into the car at the last second to make capacity as the doors close. Sardines in a can.

The SHORT-HAIRED TEEN is pressed up against a middle-aged MAN--DON BRANDON, 48, conservative clothes. The LONG-HAIRED TEEN is just a few feet away.

SHORT-HAIRED TEEN
Dance floor was slammin' last
night. Told ya you shoulda gone
man.

LONG-HAIRED TEEN
Yeah, yeah. You see Nikki?

SHORT-HAIRED TEEN
See her? She was all over me. Seen
her, felt her, bumped her.

LONG-HAIRED TEEN
Shut up.

SHORT-HAIRED TEEN
Serious dude. Hey, if you're
afraid of the answer, don't ask the
question.

LONG-HAIRED TEEN
Yeah, whatever.

SHORT-HAIRED TEEN
Besides, you told me you passed on
her anyway.

LONG-HAIRED TEEN
Didn't mean I wasn't gonna come
back to it.

The long-haired teen motions with his eyes for his friend to notice the candy bar sticking out of Mr. Brandon's back pocket.

The friend slides his hand down and places it on the chocolate bar. He lunges his body into Mr. Brandon, and smoothly lifts the candy out. Mr. Brandon reacts to the bump.

SHORT-HAIRED TEEN
Sorry man.

Mr. Brandon reaches to his pocket to find his candy bar missing. He turns all the way around to face the teen, and sees him holding it.

Without missing a beat, Mr. Brandon pulls a knife from his jacket and thrusts it into the teen's stomach, stabbing him repeatedly.

A woman SCREAMS.

Passengers shove each other to make room--away from Mr. Brandon.

LONG-HAIRED TEEN
You crazy son-of-a-bitch!
Get off him!

The bleeding teen hunches over in pain, moaning. Mr. Brandon points his knife in the other boy's direction as he's retrieving his candy bar from the bloody teen on the floor.

Fearful, and keeping their distance, the passengers look on in shock as Mr. Brandon calmly and without expression unwraps and begins to enjoy his candy bar.

His eyes glaze over as he drifts off someplace else.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

The subway now at a stop, TWO POLICE OFFICERS--weapons drawn, barge through the subway doors and charge toward Mr. Brandon. He snaps out of his daydream.

FIRST OFFICER
Drop the knife! I said drop the
knife and kneel down!

DON BRANDON
(dumbfounded)
What? What is it?

SECOND OFFICER
(into his shoulder mic)
This is Davis. We've got a 10-72!
Request 11-41 in the subway below
Central and Fifty-first!

Mr. Brandon calmly drops his knife to one side and his candy bar wrapper to the other, as he eases to his knees and into a large pool of blood.

SHORT-HAIRED TEEN
Oh God, it hurts. I ain't gonna
make it man.

The long-haired teen cocks his arm and jacks Mr. Brandon in the jaw with a right cross. His facial glare changes.

FIRST OFFICER
Hey--get back!

Mr. Brandon looks down and realizes he's kneeling in blood. Shocked, he jumps up and runs out the other set of opened doors.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBWAY - DAY

The officer gives chase, but loses him in the subway crowd.

CUT TO:

INT. BRANDON RESIDENCE - DAY

A modest decor with conservative colors. Definitely functionality over style.

MRS. BRANDON--61, conservatively-dressed, walks from the kitchen into the living room, straightening up a few magazines, as the television broadcasts the news.

TELEVISION (O.S.)
In breaking news, just moments ago, a vicious knife attack occurred on the city's subway. This is closed-circuit surveillance footage of the assailant running from police.

Mrs. Brandon glances at the television for the footage. Don Brandon is seen, with bloodied pants, running from a police officer off the subway car.

TELEVISION
He's already been identified as Don Brandon, age forty-eight, of Madison Heights.

She falls onto the back of the chair, as her knees buckle.

MRS. BRANDON
Oh no...Oh Don...Oh God, no.

TELEVISION (O.S.)
If you see this man, please contact
police immediately.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRANDON RESIDENCE - DAY

Mr. Brandon comes jogging up the steps and through the front door, panting.

CUT TO:

INT. BRANDON RESIDENCE - DAY

Getting up from the living room chair...

MRS. BRANDON
(crying)
Don, what on earth has happened?
What did you do?

In a "fog"...

DON BRANDON
I don't know honey. Someone
wronged me, and I just wronged them
back.
(beat)
That's all I remember.

He walks from room to room, frantic.

She follows.

MRS. BRANDON
It was on the news. You have blood
on your pants.

Retrieving nothing, he walks back to the front door and leaves.

DON BRANDON
(distracted)
I can't stay here.

He disappears down the sidewalk.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABBOTSVILLE CEMETERY, GROUNDSKEEPER'S SHACK - DUSK

A GROUNDSKEEPER--70, male, wearing a hearing aide, coveralls, and holding a shovel, approaches his shack and leans his shovel up against the opened door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - DUSK

Panicked, Mr. Brandon frantically lunges down the sidewalk, turning his head from eye contact with passersby.

CUT TO:

INT. ABBOTSVILLE CEMETERY, GROUNDSKEEPER'S SHACK - DUSK

Once inside, the groundskeeper flips on a small television, as he sits to eat his sandwich.

Still on foot, Mr. Brandon solemnly approaches the door of the groundskeeper's shack.

DON BRANDON

Evening. Is it still okay to enter the cemetery?

GROUNDSKEEPER

Sure mister. Go right ahead.

DON BRANDON

Thank you.

GROUNDSKEEPER

Mm-hmm.

He leaves.

The groundskeeper turns up the television louder, as he adjusts his hearing aide accordingly.

TELEVISION (O.S.)

...has been identified as Don Brandon, shown here fleeing the scene, covered in the victim's blood, after the stabbing. The subway passenger did expire shortly after Mr. Brandon's disappearance.

The groundskeeper drops his sandwich on the dusty floor. He quickly turns the television down and stands to his feet.

Petrified, and thinking he may be bludgeoned to death, he picks up the phone and dials it with his shaking hands.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABBOTSVILLE CEMETERY, GROUNDSKEEPER'S SHACK - DUSK

Mr. Brandon is walking toward the shack again.

CUT TO:

INT. ABBOTSVILLE CEMETERY, GROUNDSKEEPER'S SHACK - DUSK

GROUNDSKEEPER

Yes. He's here right now. The
Abbotsville Cemetery. Hurry!

Out of nowhere, Mr. Brandon reappears in the doorway. Stunned, the groundskeeper falls back into his chair and drops the phone.

GROUNDSKEEPER

What?

Mr. Brandon looks down at the shovel.

DON BRANDON

I'm sorry...to have startled you.
But do you have rest rooms
available?

Reaching to adjust his hearing aide again...

ANGLE--We see an interior restroom with its door ajar, just out of Mr. Brandon's eyesight.

GROUNDSKEEPER

Damn thing. I didn't hear ya come
up.

(beat)

No sir, I'm sorry. We don't.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - DUSK

From above, with lights aglow, three police cruisers trail each other through city streets.

CUT TO:

INT. BRANDON RESIDENCE - DUSK

Mrs. Brandon is on the phone.

MRS. BRANDON
Yes. Dr. John Brandon, please.

CUT TO:

INT. WAYNE HOSPITAL - DUSK

Wearing a white lab coat, a sharply-dressed MAN--DR. DON BRANDON--66, grabs a phone.

DR. BRANDON
This is Dr. Brandon.

MRS. BRANDON (O.S.)
John, something terrible has happened with Don.

DR. BRANDON
What is it? Is he hurt?

MRS. BRANDON (O.S.)
No. But I think he may have hurt someone.

Off his concern--

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVESITE - DUSK

Sobbing uncontrollably, Mr. Brandon is kneeling at a gravesite in his bloody pants.

The name on the marker remains hidden, as we MOVE slowly around the back of the headstone while he speaks.

(No name on the back of the marker)

DON BRANDON
 Why?...What'd I do?
 (few beats)
 I can't...I can't live like this.

The police cruisers come storming through the front gate.

The groundskeeper, with shovel in hand--as a weapon, points them in Brandon's direction.

DON BRANDON
 I won't live like this.

The three cruisers skid to a stop, as six officers--weapons drawn--break into a sprint and surround Mr. Brandon.

OFFICER
 Interlock your fingers behind your head. Do it now!

Mr. Brandon, still sobbing, slowly raises his head and (now) notices the officers. He does as he's told.

The officers move in.

OFFICER
 You're Don Brandon, right?

DON BRANDON
 Yes.

They frisk and cuff him, and lead him to a cruiser.

As an officer begins reading him his rights...

OFFICER
 You have the right to remain silent.

We PUSH IN slowly to read the gravestone:

DON BRANDON BORN: NOV. 27, 1945 DIED: SEPT. 29, 1992

Only one (young) officer notices the headstone's engraving, as the others return to their cruisers. Eyes lit up and speechless, he stands there in disbelief and backs away slowly.

OFFICER (O.S.)
 If you give up that right, anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. Watch your head.

Car doors slam.

OFFICER (O.S.)
You have the right to an attorney.
If you cannot--

Another door slams.

From a separate cruiser...

OFFICER
(out his window)
Bobby, let's go.

The stunned officer retreats to the cruiser, gets in, and rides away...looking dead ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

The young officer looks pale.

OFFICER
What's wrong with you?

BOBBY
I um...he uh...did you see...

OFFICER
What?

BOBBY
Nothin'...nothin'.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE PRECINCT, FRONT DESK - NIGHT

Dr. Brandon and a MAN/ATTORNEY--50s, suit, are standing at the check-in desk. A UNIFORMED OFFICER--40, sits behind the desk.

UNIFORMED OFFICER
And your relationship to the prisoner?

DR. BRANDON
I'm his brother...this is his
attorney.

UNIFORMED OFFICER
Okay. I need a form of
identification from both of you and
sign here.
(beat)
Enter over here. The guard will
escort you in.

They are escorted through two locked doors by a uniformed
officer.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

ATTORNEY
You were in fear for your life,
weren't you?

No response.

ATTORNEY
Well, weren't you?

DON BRANDON
No.

Dr. Brandon and the attorney look at each other, at a loss
for words.

DR. BRANDON
Maybe I should call BCF.

ATTORNEY
(to Dr. Brandon)
Call me tomorrow John.

DR. BRANDON
Mm-hmm.

Perplexed, the attorney leaves. Dr. Brandon sits in a chair
outside Don's holding cell.

DR. BRANDON
What happened?

No response.

DR. BRANDON
What were you thinking?...Do you
think it's related to your
suspension?

No response.

DR. BRANDON
My attorney can't help you if you
don't tell him your side of the
story. Even if you don't tell me.

DON BRANDON
(resentful)
Best money can buy, huh?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

Dr. Brandon gone, Mrs. Brandon now appears in the chair where
he sat.

MRS. BRANDON
(crying)
It's like I don't even know you
Don. You're a million miles away.

Don has a look of internal anguish, but no response.

Mrs. Brandon gazes off into the distance.

FLASHBACK

EXT. CEMETERY GRAVESITE - DAY

Falling rain further dampens the moods of mourners gathered
around a burial site. Umbrellas dot the crowd.

Near the casket, a conservatively-dressed Mrs. Brandon, then
just 45, says her last goodbyes-without words. Dr. Brandon,
then just 50, comforts her. The PASTOR--60, white hair,
winds down the service...

REVEREND

...Although his body isn't contained in this casket for the ceremony, by the family's choice, we can certainly still remember him in our memories, as a devoted husband, brother, and churchgoer. May we take with us his example of a giving spirit in our day-to-day encounters.

(beat)

This concludes today's services. God's blessings be with each of you.

The crowd disperses slowly, leaving Dr. Brandon still comforting his sister-in-law.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

MRS. BRANDON

I knew this was a mistake. I just knew it.

He's crushed. She just "ripped his heart out."

CUT TO:

EXT. BERKELEY CRYONICS FOUNDATION - DAY

A government vehicle enters the driveway of a large, corporate building. "BCF, BERKELEY CRYONICS FOUNDATION" is etched in a stone marker.

CUT TO:

INT. BERKELEY CRYONICS FOUNDATION - DAY

TWO "SUITS"--male & female, enter a lab. (The same blue tint to the room). Various employees in lab coats are mingling about.

MALE "SUIT"

I need to speak with any employee involved with Don Brandon's case, if they're still on staff.

Two LAB TECHNICIANS--male & female, approach the man.

MALE "SUIT"

You are hereby ordered by the
District Attorney's office to
appear as expert witnesses in the
case of a Mr. Don Brandon. All the
information you need is right here.

He hands them both their papers and his business card.

MALE "SUIT"

If you have any questions, feel
free to give us a call.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

News trucks line the streets. Skirts and suits make their
way to the courthouse.

Large crowds of picketers are separated by barricades, on
both sides of the courthouse steps. They're yelling and
screaming at each other.

On one side, three signs read:

STOP PLAYING GOD!

TWISTED SCIENCE!!!

THIS IS NOT MEDICINE!!!!

The other crowd displays signs that read:

SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS!!!

BRANDON IS INNOCENT!!!!

A FEMALE REPORTER--30s, pretty, standing on the courthouse
steps, gives the camera what it wants...

FEMALE REPORTER

The D.A.'s office will bring closing arguments today, in their murder case against Don Brandon. Mr. Brandon is accused of maliciously slaying a teen passenger, by stabbing, earlier this year on our city's subway.

As Mrs. Brandon tries to make her way up the steps, she's bum-rushed by a pack of reporters.

REPORTER

Do you think your husband deserves the death penalty?!

SECOND REPORTER

Did your husband confess anything to you?

Trying to protect her, Dr. Brandon escorts her in with his arm around her.

DR. BRANDON

All right, back off.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

The jury box full, Don Brandon sadly scans each jurist from his table, trying to make some connection--to save his neck. His wife and brother are over his shoulder in the front row.

The PROSECUTING ATTORNEY--45, sharply-dressed, all business, sits at his table looking confident.

The JUDGE--60, gray hair, stern looking, watches the Defense Attorney return to the witness stand from his seat beside Mr. Brandon.

The DEFENSE ATTORNEY (the same Attorney Dr. Brandon brought with him to Don's jail cell) addresses the subpoenaed FEMALE LAB TECHNICIAN from the Berkeley Cryonics Foundation...

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

(motioning back to his table)

I have a few variations of the definition, but I'd like to hear your take on it. So, in a nutshell, it's exactly what ma'am?

FEMALE LAB TECH

Well, in layman's terms, it's this... From the Greek word "Kryos," meaning "icy cold," Cryonics is the process of using ultra-cold temperature to preserve human life when medicine today can no longer sustain it. In the hope that future medicine might restore health.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

I see. And the long-term goal?

FEMALE LAB TECH

The long-term goal is to preserve the physical basis of the human mind for an unlimited length of time. We just got so good at it that...well, we were able to bring the body along for the ride.

The courtroom looks puzzled.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

I see. And that's the long-term goal of every Cryonics institution?

FEMALE LAB TECH

Yes. Well, any reputable one with the individual client's best interest at heart. So...yes. There's no experimenting going on, if that's what you're getting at.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

No. That's not what I'm asking.
(pause)
And who, at BCF, had the hands-on responsibility of these clients?

FEMALE LAB TECH

Dr. Braun and myself.

DISSOLVE TO:

NEW ANGLE

DR. BRAUN, the MALE LAB TECHNICIAN from the Berkeley Cryonics Foundation, is on the stand.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY
So, Dr. Braun, you're saying Mr.
Brandon was society's very first
"re-birth" from Cryonics, released
back into population?

DR. BRAUN
That's correct.

Still puzzled, the courtroom murmurs in it's ignorance.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY
I see. And how long does the
Berkeley Cryonics Foundation track,
or monitor, their former clients?

DR. BRAUN
For the first six months.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY
(sarcastically)
Wow, that long huh?

DR. BRAUN
Well, you know insurance companies
these days.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY
Mm-hmm. I certainly do.

DISSOLVE TO:

NEW ANGLE

Dr. John Brandon on the stand, being questioned by the
Prosecuting Attorney.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
So, your brother, Don, who's now
forty-eight, was surpassed in age
by his wife, now sixty-one.

DR. BRANDON
Yes.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
But you probably didn't take that
into account, now did you?

No response.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

No, you didn't.

(beat)

And wasn't it you, Dr. Brandon, who felt so badly that you couldn't save your own brother, that you pressed Mrs. Brandon to have him frozen?

DR. BRANDON

That's not true.

Both the Judge and Defense Attorney look confused.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

So your medicine couldn't save him, but your money could...temporarily?

Dr. Brandon's offended.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE COURTHOUSE ROOM - DAY

Incensed, Dr. Brandon tears into Don's/his attorney.

DR. BRANDON

What in the hell are you doin' to me in there?! Are you gonna let him string me up, without an objection?!

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Relax. He's trying to show that you've created a murdering monster. But he's actually making my case for me. What you did wasn't a crime. But I have to lead up to proving what your brother did wasn't his fault.

Dr. Brandon contemplates.

A UNIFORMED BAILIFF--35, large, opens the door.

BAILIFF

It's time.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

We join Prosecution midstream...

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

(addressing the jury)

...as we fully expect a guilty verdict, and movement into the penalty phase for sentencing, I'm reminded of all the insanity defense pleas we read about in our newspapers. Then we sit there as our stomachs turn when killers go free in a matter of months. Well, this is worse than that. They didn't even go for insanity. This is cut and dry because Mr. Brandon is nothing more than a cold-blooded killer. And soon, you're going to hear defense wanting to put "spin" on a simple murder. But you can't put "spin" on the evidence that prosecution's provided. Camera footage, a murder weapon, and fingerprints. Mr. Brandon must be found guilty of murder...in and of the action itself, supported by evidence, and because defense hasn't even come close to proving his innocence.

DISSOLVE TO:

NEW ANGLE

The Defense Attorney strolls the room...his actions, seemingly in defiance of what Prosecution just said...

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Prosecution's right about just one thing. Oddly enough, I could do nothing but leave the bulk of any "evidence" for my closing arguments. And, I'm going to ask you to follow me here...to trust me. Because this evidence will be in the form of rational thought...as we will, with any luck, be setting a precedent today.

He returns to the front of his table, looks Mr. Brandon in the eyes, and turns back to the jury.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Webster defines a soul as this:

(counting on his fingers)

The moral and emotional nature of human beings.

The immaterial essence, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life.

And...Spiritual or moral force.

(beat)

Your honor, members of the jury, I propose to you this. The defendant, Don Brandon, cannot be held responsible for this murder. Yes, the security cameras recorded the victim's death. Yes, there were witnesses who can testify that he stabbed the victim multiple times. And yes, the prosecution has even entered, as evidence, the knife with his prints on one end, and the victim's blood on the other.

Dr. Brandon and Mrs. Brandon look at each other, bewildered.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

But he's not at fault. You've heard us speak of Mr. Brandon being frozen, and of a "re-birth." And you've heard the expert witnesses speak about the term, "Cryonics." And to this point, you may have been completely unaware that this even takes place in today's society. So, this may come as a shock to most of you in this room...but Mr. Brandon died sixteen years ago.

The room gasps and whispers. The Defense Attorney looks at his client, sadly.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

And he's only been alive now for the past two years.

The courtroom erupts with louder talking and a few laughs.

The judge raps his gavel on his desk.

JUDGE

Order! Council, you will not turn
my courtroom into some science
fiction freakshow!

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

No your Honor.

(few beats; to jury)

Ladies and gentlemen...sixteen
years. It's been sixteen years
since Mr. Brandon's death, and two
years since his re-birth. And he's
led an extraordinarily-clean life,
spotless...after his life-
extension. Until now. Now he's
forced to deal with something
that's reared its ugly head...the
consequences of what we've created.
Mr. Brandon didn't ask for this.
All he asked, sixteen years ago,
was to be placed in the ground when
he died of cancer. He didn't ask
to be cryonically-frozen. But his
family did it anyway. He didn't
ask to be thawed out, after we
finally found the cure for his
particular cancer. No...no, he
didn't ask for society to open
Pandora's Box--releasing him
without his soul.

We PULL BACK slowly to the back of the courtroom, ceiling.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

We did this. We decided to begin
creating a society of soul-less
beings. A society which brings to
life a modern-day Frankenstein, and
then decides he must be destroyed.
Mr. Brandon sits before us not
knowing between right and wrong, or
at least the degrees therein,
because we decided to cheat
death...and to play God.

The courtroom sits entirely motionless, soundless...paralyzed
with not having the answer.

From Mrs. Brandon's (Pg. 13) jail cell visit to Don...

MRS. BRANDON (V.O.)
I knew this was a mistake. I just
knew it.

END