

INT. HALL OF SCIENCE - ORSON'S OFFICE - DAY

A long room lined with books and artifacts. A yellowed human skeleton hangs from a tall stand. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!

ORSON (O.S.)

Come!

Phoebe slips inside, clutching her portfolio. She scans the desk: A brass lamp, several skulls- a nameplate identifies:

PROFESSOR ORSON REGOLITH, PhD. behind the desk. We'll call him ORSON, but he'd prefer Professor Regolith. He's 48. His eyebrows nearly jump off his forehead as he sees her.

ORSON

Ahh- and you are?

PHOEBE

...Phoebe Clacher. I'm here about the doctoral program?

His Mid-Atlantic accent has buried the letter R at sea.

ORSON

Miss Clacher... Doctoral...

(calls out to door)

Miss Blankenship! Did I have something this morning?

There is no answer. Orson shrugs and offers her a seat. He blindly pulls a book off the shelf behind him, scribbles across the title page, and slides it to Phoebe.

She looks at the cover: "O.C. Marsh's Scientific Offenses."

ORSON

A souvenir, for your trouble. Do you have a... curriculum vitae? Yes, capital.

She hands him the portfolio, which he peruses.

ORSON

Double major- geology, biology, to be expected... several papers... Glowing letters of recommendation, yes, yes, this should be adequate.

PHOEBE

Err... Thank you, Professor.

Orson CLICKS his pen and jots a note.

ORSON

And how did you want to spend your time here at Queensgram?

PHOEBE

I'd love to expand on your work on Ordovician trilobites and how-

ORSON

Trilobites? I believe my work demonstrated we have quite enough of them.

He stands and moves around the desk.

PHOEBE

What are you working on now?

ORSON

Now it's the dry season. The Trustees want grant money. That means cutting edge research. And the same damn theropod teeth do not count as cutting edge!

He gestures at a fragment of a jaw bone with long, pointed teeth resting on a bookshelf.

ORSON

Dryptosaurus aquilungus. All we have are these fragments Professor Edward Drinker Cope found in the 1860s. Right here, in this county. A cousin of T. rex, stalking the eastern seaboard, and no one's ever seen the rest of it.

Phoebe stands to look at the ancient jaw bone. Orson turns to the human skeleton suspended on strings.

ORSON

Where is it, Cope? Tell me, man!

Phoebe reaches for the skeleton's hand.

PHOEBE

Is that...

ORSON

Of course not. It's a cast- but a prime specimen for homo sapiens. Don't touch him.

He jabs a finger at the portraits of two 19TH CENTURY GENTLEMEN- one picture is much larger than the other.

ORSON

Prof. Cope had his body preserved
and brain measured to prove his
fitness to that villain- Othniel
Charles Marsh.

PHOEBE

Of course- Cope and Marsh- the Bone
Wars. I always forget who's who...

ORSON

Prof. Cope is the gentleman
scholar. Dr. Marsh is the lying,
cheating, pea-brained fraud.

Orson wipes the dust off Cope's larger frame.

ORSON

Prof. Cope named his find
"dryptosaurus laelaps," but Marsh
changed it, just because "laelaps"
belonged to a species of mites.

Orson wanders around his desk and gazes out the window.

ORSON

If only some Ivy League snob was
going to destroy some specimen that
was rightfully mine. That would
spring the Trustees to action!

Phoebe watches, slowly sitting down in her chair again.

ORSON

Life, in all its forms, is a great
struggle, Miss Clacher. If we don't
get our act together, Dartmouth-
Dartmouth! is going to get the
biggest berry bushes and most
fertile females.

He gazes out the window for a long, long beat.

PHOEBE

So... about the PhD program...