

"The Island"

by

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We PULL BACK, in marked steps, to include neighboring apartments with identical frosted facades. Then more apartments, above and below, the tiers linked by ramps and crosswalks. It might be a prison cellblock but there are no guards apparent. Indeed, the residents move freely, all notably male, all clad in shearlings, polo shirts and slacks. It is just another day in Sector Four.

3 INT. NUTRITION PLAZA - SECTOR FOUR - DAY

Satie's Gymnopedie plays from overhead speakers. A glass wall looks out across a green mountain valley. The plaza, formed in curves of creamy ceramic tile, is divided into two service areas. Male residents in line on one side, females on the other. Both genders combine in the seating area. Lincoln reaches the head of the line. He swipes his ethercuff over a scanner. A NUTRITION CLERK, a surly woman in uniform, eyes the readout on her screen-

NUTRITION CLERK

Lincoln Six-Echo... Options are dried fruit, oatmeal or anything in bran.

LINCOLN

What? No bacon?

NUTRITION CLERK

You got a sodium flag, pal - now what's it going to be?

LINCOLN

Whatever.

He shrugs, disgruntled. The clerk taps her screen. Turning to a row of chutes behind her, she collects a foil covered bowl and a drink can. Lincoln, less than appetized, loads his tray with the oatmeal and juice breakfast. Then he heads into the seating area.

In the seating area, male and female residents sit eating and chatting happily. Uniformed busboys intermix, clearing and wiping tables. A divide in this community now starts to become clear...

The busboys, like the nutrition clerk, like all the service, maintenance, and administrative staff we'll see, have distinct uniforms but no facial marking. They are known as "outsiders". The "residents", like Lincoln, have crosshatched scars on their upper left brows and ethercuffs on their wrists. Mostly Caucasian, from mid-twenties to mid-sixties. There are no children here.

We isolate a blonde - mid-20's, fresh, bright eyes, a fragile beauty, a crosshatch of two verticals and one horizontal. Her name is ESTER TWO-ALPHA. Seeing Lincoln, she smiles and waves-

ESTER

Lincoln! Over here!

Lincoln crosses, a little surprised to see her. Pleasantly so.

LINCOLN
Hello, stranger.

ESTER
What? You don't recognize me?

LINCOLN
It's just an expression, that's all.

ESTER
You and your expressions, Lincoln. Now sit down and ask me where I've been.

LINCOLN
(sits, a spreading smile)
Okay, Ester. Where have you been?

ESTER
At the medical center. Just for tests but they had me on liquid nutrition.
(forks a mouthful of eggs)
Mmmmm. This is the first solid food I've had in a week.

LINCOLN
Exciting.

ESTER
That's not the exciting part. I got my first trimester report: happy, healthy and contaminant-free... Both of us.

LINCOLN
Us?

ESTER
My baby... It's in perfect condition. I just hope I can keep it that way. I still have six months to delivery.

LINCOLN
Then you leave all this behind, huh?

ESTER
Why? Will you miss me?

Her eyes betray a flicker of something. It unsettles Lincoln.

LINCOLN
I'll miss your coffee. C'mon, I already burned up my quota.

ESTER

Okay. But this is the last time.

In a deliberate move, she drops her napkin on the floor. As she ducks down to retrieve it, Lincoln steals a gulp of her coffee. Rising again, Ester registers his souring look.

ESTER

What is it?

Lincoln just nods across the plaza. Ambient conversation is now ebbing at an arrival. An outsider in a grey, vaguely clerical uniform - sanguine, settled, precise eyes. He might be a prison warden but for the generally warm reception. He is known as The Community Director. His name is MERRICK.

He crosses to a lectern, unlooping a chain from his neck with a three-forked pendant known as a "tri-key". He slots the tri-key into the lectern. The glass wall frosts over and pixellates into a live feed of himself. Now amplified by the plaza speakers, Merrick begins his address-

MERRICK

Good morning. To everyone here and everyone watching on etherscreen, welcome to the community address. Today I'm coming to you from Sector Four. For those of you here with sugar quotas, let me recommend the french toast. I just tried some and it's excellent, really. But I know what everyone's hungry for so let's move on to the lottery. As always the draw will be made from our host sector. So tell me, Sector Four - is everyone ready for The Daily Spin?

Applause and whistles erupt, mostly from the younger residents, who take on the zeal of a game show audience. The older ones - including Lincoln - greet the prospect with labored tolerance. Merrick turns the tri-key in the lectern. The glass wall switches from the live feed to a jumbotron of flashing text;

--DAILY SPIN!... GET READY TO WIN!... DAILY SPIN!--

MERRICK

Let The Spin begin.

To a burst of cheers, he turns the tri-key another notch. The glass wall becomes a spinning blur, like a tumbler on a slot machine. But instead of icons, it clicks through names, each separated by a blank line - from "Adams One-Alpha" to "Zucker Three-Charlie" - scrolling the entire population of Sector Four.

As the spin slows, a pent silence falls. Expectant eyes watch the names click through the P's, the Q's, the R's, the S's and...

--SPIN WIN!... STARKWEATHER TWO-DELTA... SPIN-WIN!--

MERRICK

Starkweather Two-Delta! Step up!

Cheers and applause as everyone looks for the lucky recipient. The excitement abates as it becomes clear he's not among them.

MERRICK

Well, Starkweather, if you're watching on etherscreen - your time has come, my friend! You're moving out to The Island!
(another burst of cheers)
And the rest of you, never lose hope;
what do we know about The Daily Spin?

THE YOUNGER RESIDENTS

Everyone gets to win!

MERRICK

And tomorrow it could be you...

Merrick steps down and departs. The plaza reverts to its former mood, dotted with murmurs of disappointment. Lincoln scowls.

ESTER

Don't worry. Your time will come.

LINCOLN

That's easy for you to say. Your time's guaranteed. All you have is six months.

ESTER

Six months of mood swings, sore back and swollen feet. Want to trade places?

LINCOLN

(scowl lifting)
Give me some more of your coffee.

4 INT. SUBWAY PORTAL - SECTOR FOUR - DAY

The portal is spanned by a rank of latticed metal gates, known as an "ethergate." Residents swipe their ethercuffs over scanners, the gates hiss open and they step through in systematic order.

5 INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - SECTOR FOUR - DAY

The subway, formed in arches of creamy ceramic tile, is not unlike our own. In place of escalators, moving walkways deliver the residents onto the platform. Along the platform wall runs a strip of mirrored panels, etherscreen reporting in banner crawl:

--NEXT STOP... SECTOR 5 - SECTOR 6 - CENTERVILLE...

At the tunnel edge of the platform is a safety fence, where the residents wait in a patient line, Lincoln among them. His focus is drawn to two younger residents whispering furtively nearby.

RESIDENT #1

A stim unit says it hits the wall.

RESIDENT #2

Okay. But I get to set the can.

Resident #1 shrugs and hands him a drink can. Resident #2 ducks under the fence, reaching the can down to the track. Or what looks like a track. The struts lining the bed are not sleepers but buffers of galvanized rubber. Nor are there any rails. The relay system is provided by a series of metal posts, flanking the buffers to run in twin parallel. Known as "lode-poles," they now start thrumming and pulsing with red light, like runway beacons.

RESIDENT #1

Hurry it up. The shuttle's coming.

Resident #2 regains the platform. We PUSH IN on the drink can, balanced on a buffer. It starts rattling. Then suddenly shoots upward into the air, arcing and bouncing off the tunnel wall, clattering into obscurity. Resident #1 whoops in victory.

A rush of air heralds the shuttle. It sails out of the tunnel, floating three feet above the track. A hybrid of subway car and nautical craft, it has runners in place of wheels, like hulls on a catamaran. It is buoyed by a magnetic flow emanating from the lode-poles, an invisible river known as a "lode-stream". The shuttle drifts to a gentle halt, hovering, rocking a little. Its gangplanks fold out toward the platform and the safety fence lowers. Lincoln and the other commuters file routinely aboard.

6 INT. CENTERVILLE - DAY

An avenue of cream colored buildings. Uniform in architecture, rising five stories to meet a mirrored roof. Despite lighting arrays, the absence of sky lends a chasmic quality. Lincoln follows the flow of residents up the avenue. Building signs read: "Dept. Of Labor", "Dept. Of Health", "Dept. Of Sanitation". He splits off, turning into a building marked "Dept. Of Population."

7 INT. OFFICES - DEPARTMENT OF POPULATION - DAY

Frosted glass workstations, notably circular rather than square. Lincoln sits at his desk in front of a wraparound etherscreen, divided into three sections, a formation known as a "visor". Right-visor shows a polymorph in fractal cycle, like a permanent screen saver. Mid-visor shows a tomograph of a residential block; tiers of apartments shown as boxes, most in solid white, a few blink red with the text label "Vacancy". Left-visor shows a list of names and sociographic gradings headed "Residents Pending".

LINCOLN (TO VISOR)
Hudson Four-Alpha; profile reviewed.
Match to vacancy; 171, Sector 5.
Request clearance to populate.

--PROCESSING... FOUR-ALPHA, HUDSON; POPULATION APPROVED

Left-visor, the name highlights then blinks out. Mid-visor, a box labelled "Vacancy" turns from blinking red to solid white.

A VOICE (O.S.)
Hey, you want to know something?

Lincoln looks up at a face grinning over the partition - mid 30's, jovial, tall and burly. His name is JONES THREE-BRAVO.

JONES
You know that guy who won the Spin in your sector? Starkweather?

LINCOLN
No.

JONES
I had a bout with him last week. Guess how long he's been here? Six months.

LINCOLN
Six months?

JONES
You don't believe me - look it up.

LINCOLN (TO VISOR)
Census File: Two-Delta, Starkweather.

--TWO-DELTA, STARKWEATHER: 102, SECTOR 4 -- DAY: 186 / HR: 09:31

JONES
What do you say now? Still think The Spin's rigged for the long haulers?

LINCOLN

He got lucky, that's all.

JONES

And don't you wish it was you... out there on The Island... nature's own clean air zone... no screening, no quotas... unlimited pleasure...

LINCOLN

Shut up, Jonesy.

JONES

Why don't you make me? In the ring.

LINCOLN

You're out of my weight-class.

JONES

Not anymore. They just got the new program in - multi-weight balancing.

LINCOLN

I'll think about it.

JONES

C'mon, champ. A stim unit says you won't last three rounds.

8 INT. BOXING RING - CENTERVILLE - EARLY EVENING

-CRACK- The same face recoils from a punch. Jones shakes it off, retreating, recovering. He resets his guard as Lincoln moves in. Lincoln jabs at Jones' defenses, his blowing hitting harder than we'd expect from his stature. Suddenly he breaks through with a left hook. Jones staggers back. A strange ripple distorts his face. Stranger still, his skin tone takes on a grainy pallor.

As the bout continues, we widen to see the boxing ring is indeed a ring rather than a square and beyond the ropes is an outer ring. With Lincoln in FG, we now see another figure in the outer ring, mirroring his moves, dressed identically but for the gloves which are like gauntlets. The gauntlets are rigged to two armatures which are, in turn, rigged to a gantry-like mechanism. It glides noiselessly to and fro, shadowing the figure round the outer ring.

RACK FOCUS reveals the figure is *also* Lincoln. The real Lincoln, in fact. The one in FG is a derivative hologram known as a "proxy". As Lincoln fakes and jabs, the counter-weighted armatures drag and recoil, duplicating the exertions of his proxy. Jones moves more sluggishly, his proxy now ghostly, transparent. Now being sent on a last offensive only to be roundhoused by another left hook. Jones' proxy topples and explodes into a pixellated mist.

LINCOLN
Whooooooo!

Lincoln proxy - and Lincoln - punch the air in victory. Jones unlatches his gauntlets, sweating, galled by the defeat-

JONES
Sure you input the right weight class?

LINCOLN
You're just too slow, Jonesy.

JONES
You're faster 'cause you're lighter.
Programmers... they always miss
something.

LINCOLN
Hey, you put up, now pay up.

9 INT. STIM BAR - CENTERVILLE - EVENING

Rainbow light and swirling electronic music. The clientele are all male residents. Round the walls, poster-sized etherscreens display various dancing women, beckoning, text supers flashing:

--NEW AT THE PLEASURE CENTER!... OR TRY A MYSTERY DATE!...

At the bar, Lincoln and Jones, freshly showered, each swipe their ethercuffs over a scanner. A uniformed BARTENDER notes the readout-

BARTENDER
Jones Three-Bravo; you got five units.
Your friend, he's got an alcohol flag.

JONES
So make it a beer and a Vita Cola.

The bartender serves the drinks and they settle at the end of the bar. Scoping for onlookers, Lincoln steals a gulp of Jones' beer.

JONES
You know, you're going to get yourself
contaminated one of these days.

LINCOLN
Shut up, Jonesy.

JONES
So, you up for a rematch tomorrow?

LINCOLN
I can't. I got an interact.

JONES
With who? That blonde again?

LINCOLN
Hey, it's an authorized interaction.
We're on the same meditation program.

JONES
You want to get flagged for proximity?

LINCOLN
No law against friendship, Jonesy.

JONES
Quick... Give me that beer back.

TWO CENSUS OFFICERS ("CENSORS") enter the bar; in wireless headsets and white uniforms, they seem at once clinical and military. CENSOR 1 carries a tablet known as an "etherboard". CENSOR 2, more imposing, carries a wide-muzzle rifle known as a "stopgun".

Their foreboding appearance is greeted without alarm. As they move up the bar, the customers dutifully swipe their ethercuffs over the etherboard. Now reaching Jones, who swipes accordingly-

JONES
What's going on, officer?

CENSOR 1
Census check.

Censor 1 checks the etherboard; a headshot of Jones spins in 3-D. He offers it to Lincoln who swipes his ethercuff emphatically-

LINCOLN
What happened? You lost count?

CENSOR 1
I hope nobody's drinking off-quota.

LINCOLN
Vita Cola all the way, officer.

Lincoln sips his cola. As they move on, he grimaces at the taste.

10 INT. SHUTTLE - IN TRANSIT - LATER

Lincoln stares out of the window. The red pulse of the lode poles catches a glazed look in his eyes. His pupils, a little dilated. His focus returns to the interior and an etherscreen banner:

--GET READY FOR THE DAILY SPIN!... TOMORROW IT COULD BE YOU...

11 INT. BEDROOM - LINCOLN'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

The horizon. The morning sun streams over the green mountains. Lincoln lies sleeping, his head buried under the pillow. Off a beeping sound, he stirs and squints up at the mirrored ceiling:

--ETHERCALL PENDING; ACCEPT OR SEND TO MESSAGE BANK?

LINCOLN

Accept.

The etherscreen resolves Ester's face, fresh and bright.

ESTER (ON ETHERSCREEN)

Lincoln? I missed you at breakfast.

LINCOLN

I guess I overslept.

ESTER (ON ETHERSCREEN)

I just wanted to check we're still on for tonight. The interact.

LINCOLN

Right. I'll be there.

ESTER (ON ETHERSCREEN)

I'll see you then. Enjoy your day!

Her face blinks out. Lincoln gets out of bed with a smile.

12 INT. RESIDENTIAL BLOCK - SECTOR FOUR - DAY

Lincoln exits his apartment and heads up the walkway. We reveal the walkway ends at another ethergate, governing residential access. Lincoln swipes his ethercuff over a scanner and a gate swings open. He heads on, the gate hissing closed behind him.

13 INT. NUTRITION PLAZA - SECTOR FOUR - DAY

Ravel's Pavane plays overhead. The plaza is emptying as residents leave for work. Lincoln arrives at the service counter. He swipes his ethercuff and greets the clerk with an amiable grin.

LINCOLN

Just juice today. I'm late for work.

NUTRITION CLERK

Too bad. I gotta serve the full meal.

Lincoln shrugs, his gaze wandering past her into the kitchens. His grin fades as he spots TWO CENSORS talking to a busboy. Then the view is lost as he's served an oatmeal and juice breakfast.

14 INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - SECTOR FOUR - DAY

Not so crowded at this hour. Halfway down the platform we see a vending machine with confections in nameless silver wrappers. A mouse-ish resident collects a bar from the trough. His name is KLEINWORT NINE-ALPHA. Seeing Lincoln approach, he preempts-

KLEINWORT

No, no, no. Use your own sugar quota.

LINCOLN

C'mon, Kleinwort...

He says this amicably enough but he's using his imposing presence on the smaller man. Kleinwort sighs and breaks off a chunk.

LINCOLN

So what's up with the Censors, huh?

KLEINWORT

They're conducting a census check. Or don't you watch the bulletins?

LINCOLN

I know what it is. I've just never seen them out in this sector before.

KLEINWORT

Probably just tracking a glitch. A bad scanner or maybe an userware defect.

(off Lincoln's puzzled look)

Ethercuffs. They get damaged, you get a false read. Sometimes even a dropout.

LINCOLN

What are you saying? They lost someone?

KLEINWORT

Someone just isn't showing up where they should be. What do you care?

A rush of air heralds the shuttle, curtailing the conversation. Beneath his tousling hair, a frown plays on Lincoln's brow.

15 INT. LINCOLN'S WORKSTATION - DEPT. OF POPULATION - DAY

Lincoln stares at the fractal on right-visor, at the intricate paths of dysplasia. The glazed look has returned to his eyes, his pupils, a little dilated. His stare narrows at an errant thought. He shrugs it off. But the thought returns, persistent. More to dispel than indulge it, Lincoln turns to mid-visor-

LINCOLN (TO VISOR)
 Census File: Two-Delta, Starkweather.

--TWO-DELTA, STARKWEATHER: 102, SECTOR 4 - DAY: -- / HR: --

LINCOLN (TO VISOR)
 Accomodation Status: 102, Sector 4.

The tiered boxes resolve, zooming in to isolate Apartment 102.
 The box shows solid white. Lincoln frowns, assimilating this.

LINCOLN
 Hey, Jonesy. Remember the guy who won
 The Spin yesterday? His apartment's
 still showing as occupied.

JONES (O.S.)
 So?

LINCOLN
 So you get 24 hours to move out.

JONES (O.S.)
 Maybe the system didn't update yet.

LINCOLN
 No. It updates on the hour. If he's
 gone it should be showing a vacancy.

JONES
 (appearing over the partition)
 What? You think he's still here? The
 guy wins a place on The Island and you
 think he just decided not to go?

LINCOLN
 I don't know. He wasn't there to step
 up. And now there's a census check...

JONES
 And now nothing. It's probably the
 programmers messing up.

LINCOLN
 Maybe.

JONES
 A stim unit says I can prove it. Cross
 reference with sanitation.

LINCOLN (TO VISOR)
 Sanitation Status: 102, Sector Four.

--PROCESSING... APT. 102; CLOSED FOR CONTAINMENT CHECK--

JONES

See? Standard procedure. They got to sweep it for the next occupant.

Their supervisor interrupts them - an outsider, efficient-type-

SUPERVISOR

If you gentlemen aren't busy... Perhaps I could get an update on sector six?

LINCOLN

Still in the electrical phase, sir.

SUPERVISOR

Well the guys upstairs are griping about the backlog. So go over there and light some fires, will you?

LINCOLN

(pulls on his jacket to leave)
I'll take care of it.

SUPERVISOR

Aren't you forgetting something?
(holds up A STEEL BRIEFCASE)
Or do you want to get contaminated?

16 INT. CONSTRUCTION ZONE - SECTOR SIX - DAY

An arc of blue light. A uniformed worker steers a plasma torch over a conduit. In the fog of smoke, we see wires being spliced, circuits, tested. Outsiders in hardhats, goggles and cup masks. Lincoln comes over the crosswalk, starkly contrasted in dacron coveralls and a hooded gasmask. THE CREW FOREMAN intercepts him - drawn, desiccated features, a husky drawl. His name is MCCORD-

MCCORD

Sorry, chief. I can't let you get any closer. We got live wires over there.

Lincoln's reply is muffled by the gasmask, lost in the noise.

MCCORD

What's that you said?

Lincoln repeats to no avail. Frustrated, he peels off his gasmask-

LINCOLN

I said I can't hear you.

McCord chuckles at the irony.

MCCORD

Hey, you get yourself contaminated,
don't come pointing the finger at me.

LINCOLN

How are you doing, Mac?

MCCORD

You know how it is. 'Gets to the end of
shift, 'crew starts draggin their feet.

LINCOLN

Well the guys upstairs are griping
about the backlog. They want to know
when you'll be ready for move in.

MCCORD

I guess if we bust our backs, we could
be out of here by the end of the week.

LINCOLN

I'll tell them two weeks.

MCCORD

Thanks, chief. I appreciate that.

LINCOLN

So... got any stuff on you today?

17 INT. AIRLOCK - SECTOR SIX

A sign reads "Warning! Contamination Risk!". Lincoln stands by as McCord unloops a neckchain with a single-forked pendant known as a "uni-key". He slots it into the top of three keyholes. A light starts flashing and the airlock gives a heavily pressurized hiss.

18 INT. EXTRACTOR SHAFT

A deep steady thrum. Giant extractor fans churn above and below, both directions seemingly limitless. The bleak concrete shaft is streaked with soot, threaded by ladders and catwalks. On one such, we isolate Lincoln and McCord. Both smoking cigarettes.

LINCOLN

It's too bad.

MCCORD

What do you mean?

LINCOLN

That your shift's almost over.

MCCORD
You mean, these things? Well, these
things ain't good for you anyways.

LINCOLN
They taste good.

An exchanged smile. A pause as they enjoy the guilty pleasure.

LINCOLN
I like coming here. Talking. Most
outsiders don't like to talk.

MCCORD
That's because we ain't supposed to.
They got rules about fraternization.

Lincoln nods. Another pause as they drag on their cigarettes.

LINCOLN
What do you do when the shift's over?

MCCORD
More of the same. They cycle us onto
the disposal detail. Hump 'n dump crew.

LINCOLN
Hump 'n dump crew?

MCCORD
Debris clearance. We hump the heavy
stuff to a site on the outside.

LINCOLN
Is it as bad as they say out there?

McCord looks momentarily puzzled. Lincoln displays his gasmask.

LINCOLN
The air... the containments.

MCCORD
Right.

LINCOLN
But not everywhere. Not on The Island.

MCCORD
(beat, stubs his cigarette)
I don't know too much about that.

Lincoln eyes him narrowly. McCord pauses, then tucks his lighter
into the cigarette box and offers it with a palliative smile.

MCCORD

Hey, take it from me, you got a sweet deal right here. So why worry, huh?

Lincoln shrugs, accepting the gift with a slow exhale of smoke. We tilt up to follow the smoke plume, dissipating into the fans.

19 EXT. THE WORLD OUTSIDE - DAY

Air blasts up from a giant tunnel.

Widening, we see it is one of a huge ring, planted in the dust, backdropped by mountainous red rocks. At the hub of the ring is a large cubic building. From its facets, giant appendages of ducting plunge into its surround. These are the inlets for the processed air that feeds the underground...

This is the landscape of the world outside and manifestly *above*.

From the processing plant, we pull back and up, raking over a large industrial complex. More cubic buildings, cream colored, windowless, like stacks of giant playing bricks. Now we see the front of the complex. The planate facade, faceless but for the entrance, cubed in polarized glass, like a dark cyclopean eye.

From the entrance, we follow a walkway out to a dock where the ground drops away into a broad concrete trench; like the subway, lined with lode-poles and buffers, it is known as a "lodeway". From the dock, we follow the lodeway out to a perimeter wall; red rock slabs, twenty feet high, framing a giant gateway. The gates now glide open to disclose a view of the world outside the wall-

The shimmering bleached wilderness of The Arizona Desert.

Out in the distance, where the lodeway tapers into the scrub, a vehicle emerges from the shimmer. A hybrid of bus and nautical craft, single hulled, known simply as a "liner". Now as the liner becomes clearer, a decal on its prow is revealed - a crosshatch insignia over a blocky legend "The Sanger Institute".

20 INT. ENTRANCE HALL - THE SANGER INSTITUTE - DAY

The polarized glass shows the liner has docked and A TOUR GROUP is disembarking. The men are mostly over 40, bloated by luxury. The women, mostly under 30, wives and girlfriends, all jewels and haute couture. They filter into the entrance hall to be greeted by the courtesy staff. Pretty girls in short skirts and blazers with the crosshatch insignia, led by a pert redhead named LYDIA.

LYDIA

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Lydia and on behalf of our staff, I'd like to welcome you to The Sanger Institute.

LYDIA (cont'd)

Before we start the tour, we'll be serving refreshments in the visitor center and circulating our standard discretion agreements. I should add that today you are all very lucky because our CEO and founder, Dr. Henry Sanger, is with us and will be leading the tour personally.

21 INT. INNER FOYER - LATER

The crosshatch emblem spins on a wall-to-wall screen. Not a real screen but a projected flat known as a "holoframe". Here, Lydia assembles the tour group, nursing wine glasses and canapes. The holoframe fades up a serene music track and a commercial begins: A series of vignettes; an old man shuffling on a walking frame -- a middle-aged woman in a bathing suit, one breast flattened by a mastectomy -- a young woman in labor, her face knotted in pain. The group watches with frowns and disapproving mumbles. Then-

VOICE (O.S.)

It's not a pretty sight, is it?

Eyes turn to a figure behind them, dressed in a vestmental white labcoat - 70's, tall, slightly hunched by senility, eyes like quicksilver, glittering. He has the hauteur of a visionary stooping to the role of a salesman. His name is DR. HENRY SANGER.

DR. SANGER (cont'd)

Mortality. We all know its face and yet we look away, don't we? We deny that our lives are ordained to suffering. That we are all, inalterably, going to die.

He pauses, fielding the various disconcerted looks. Then smiles.

DR. SANGER

It takes courage to confront mortality, my friends. And I see it in each of you. My name is Dr. Henry Sanger and I'm here to reward your courage.

Lydia applauds. The tour group dutifully follows suit. Sanger whispers a question in Lydia's ear. She broadcasts her response-

LYDIA

Today's group is from New Gaza Health Care. They're with the platinum plan.

DR. SANGER

New Gaza. Yes, very good oncology unit.

Mulling this, he ambles through the holoframe which ripples at his passage. Rallied by Lydia the tour group follows him into--

22 INT. SALES HALL - DAY

A hall of windows, each window framing a display case, each display case housing a different taxidermied animal. Not unlike a museum. On closer inspection, more like a chamber of horrors. In one window is a pig with a horribly distended abdomen. Another, magnified, shows a mouse with a human ear grown on its back. In another, a chimpanzee stares out at us with glaringly human eyes.

DR. SANGER

It doesn't get any prettier, does it? But this is not a freakshow, my friends. This is a war museum. A history of our battles with mortality... and defeats. Take the stem cell, for instance. A bid to cultivate human parts for transplant - in rodents, primates, barnyard animals. It's enough to make your skin crawl. In some cases literally, giving rise to a new range of cross-species viruses. But that's how we learn. From our mistakes.

They turn a corner. Another hall of windows, portals onto tanks of amber fluid that might be formaldehyde. Suspended within are embryos, fetuses and infants. All human. All grotesquely mutated.

DR. SANGER

Case in point, the clone. Back in the beginning, the mapping of the human genome was declared a historic landmark - to break the curse of heredity, to correct congenital defect... genetic engineering became the brave new world of medical science. A bright future that led to a dark age and much of the legislation we know today. But while the clone laws may have narrowed the field, science marches on. Only to hit the same wall over and over again - the enigma of growth, the alchemy that takes us from embryo to adult. A clone barely reaches infancy before its growth enzymes misfire, resulting in the kind of monstrosities - which are only effigies - you see here.

Some reassured sighs from the women. They turn another corner onto another hall. A hall of mirrors. Simple, full-length mirrors.

DR. SANGER

So what do we learn from our mistakes? That human parts cannot grow outside a human body. That human bodies cannot grow outside nature's grand design.

A FAT MAN, supporting his bulk with a walking stick, grunts -

THE FAT MAN

So what the hell are we doing here?

DR. SANGER

Let's say one day you go to your doctor for a checkup. He discovers you have imminent renal failure and require a kidney transplant. What would you do?

THE FAT MAN

I wouldn't do nothing. My brother'd give me one of his. Or else.

DR. SANGER

Even if your brother's kidney is without defect, there's still a 38% chance of rejection. Or less if he's your twin.

THE FAT MAN

He's not. He's older.

DR. SANGER

But what if you did have a twin?

Off the fat man's confused look, Sanger smiles and gently coaxes him to face a mirror. Their reflections stare back at them.

DR. SANGER

What if you had a genetic double who'd give you not just one of his kidneys, but both? In fact, any organ or body part you ever had cause to need?

THE FAT MAN

What? You mean like a clone? I thought you said all that stuff was a bust.

DR. SANGER

I said the problem with a clone is it doesn't survive infancy. The solution is to find a different starting point. Why sow the seed when you can create the fruit? Or what we like to call... an "agnate".

Lydia starts clapping., then stops, realizing this wasn't a cue.

DR. SANGER

An agnate is sequenced from a point on the cellular timeclock. It is spawned post-maturate. It is 'created' adult.

DR. SANGER (cont'd)

Of course, its brain is still vestigial so for the first three years we keep it in suspension. During which time we use data impression to supply a template for functionality - a process we call "foundation". After foundation we transfer the agnate into "containment" where it enters the conditioning process. An ongoing series of quality controls designed to test and maintain its functionality. After a minimum of two years conditioning, the agnate becomes eligible for harvest...

(to the FAT MAN, smiling)

And you, my friend, get your new kidney.

A hush falls among the group as they process what they've heard. It's a sign of the times that none of them seems to be horrified.

THE FAT MAN

Let me see if I got this straight. You can create this whatever... this walking spare parts holder... but I gotta wait five years to get hold of em?

DR. SANGER

The spare parts, as you put it, need to be tested for integrity. But as many of our clients leave it till late in life to take out the policy, we do offer the option for early harvest. Given the risks, however, a waiver is required.

THE FAT MAN

So five years or no warranty? For the premiums you're asking?

DR. SANGER

And what if the organ you needed was a heart? Ask yourself, each of you. If you had to put a price on your life, your *very survival* - what would it be?

A deep lull as the group considers this. Sanger picks his moment.

DR. SANGER

It's a question your insurance company has already answered. For them, the agnate obviates costly and ineffective treatment programs. Should you decide to take out our policy, not only will they lower your existing premiums but they'll also cover the production cost.

The incentive ripples across the faces. A troubled one speaks up-

TOUR MEMBER

This "agnate"... what happens to it?
After our friend here gets his kidney.

DR. SANGER

That's entirely his decision. Our role is intermediary. We, as the insurance provider, guarantee the condition and availability of the agnate but all other rights are retained. In legal terms, the policy holder is defined as a "sponsor". The premiums, in effect, becoming sponsorship payments, maintaining the agnate until such time as harvest is required. At such time and where feasible, the sponsor has the option to extend sponsorship, retaining the agnate for secondary harvest or, shall we say, let the policy expire.

TOUR MEMBER

Expire? You mean... let it die?

DR. SANGER

No. Not as you and I know it, at least. The associations of life and death are no more applicable to an agnate than to a cow in a field. It exists in a state of limited consciousness - aware not of life but of functionality. Imbued with the knowledge to maintain its function but without the capacity to question it. And yet, in many ways, the end is the most humane part of the process. The agnate goes to harvest without any foreboding and is painlessly returned to the sleep from whence it came. Eternal or otherwise. There is mortality for an agnate. Just utility and redundancy.

TOUR MEMBER

So it doesn't know? It doesn't know its... its purpose in life?

DR. SANGER

Who does know my friend? Who among us knows our true purpose in life?

Sanger ambles on, plunged in thought. Lydia picks up the slack-

LYDIA

This month we're offering a special rate for new sponsors. Including a 10% discount on the his-and-hers plan.

She ushers the group round another corner. Another holoframe and another commercial, displaying the same characters as the first; The old man with the walking frame is now running in a park-- The woman with the mastectomy is now at a party, her cocktail dress broadcasting a full cleavage -- The young mother is now in a waiting room, smiling as a doctor hands her a newborn baby.

LYDIA

Dr. Sanger? Would you like to close?

DR. SANGER

Yes... Now some of you may be thinking this commercial is staged. But these are not actors, these are past customers. *Real* people enjoying the *real* fruits of sponsorship. What we offer here at The Sanger Institute is not just health insurance but *indemnity*. What we offer is the chance of a *new lease on life*...

The tour group applauds, this time without prompting from Lydia.

DR. SANGER

Now Lydia will walk you through the rest of the tour and explain the various limitations and exclusions. But I do have time for a few questions.

Hands are raised. A waspish-looking woman butts ahead of them-

THE WASP

The commercial. The girl with the baby. What is that? A fix for infertility?

DR. SANGER

You mean the maternity plan? No. Not endemic infertility at least. As I said, the law prohibits genetic alteration so a defect endemic in a sponsor will also be present in their agnate. No, what the maternity plan provides is a way round the risks and rigors of childbirth. Under this plan, an agnate becomes eligible for pregnancy shortly after foundation. A simple donation of sperm from the father, then the agnate is fertilized and brings your baby to term.

THE WASP

And then what? You get it in the mail?

DR. SANGER

For practical reasons, delivery is handled by your healthcare provider.

THE WASP

And "the agnate" - what happens to it? When it's, you know - delivered.

DR. SANGER

The same rule applies. You can continue your sponsorship. Or not. And in this case, there's a natural window for compliance as the agnate is routinely sedated after delivery. As to whether it wakes up from that sleep, like I said, the choice is yours...

THE WASP

(beat, a shrug)

Anything to avoid stretch-marks, right?

The other tour members, some more guiltily than others, laugh.

23 EXT. PROCESSING PLANT

Air blasts up from the same giant tunnel, swallowing the laughs.

24 INT. EXTRACTOR SHAFT

The acoustic hollowing as we look up from the now empty catwalk. The blast of air fading into the deep, steady thrum of the fans.

25 INT. CONTAINMENT

The thrum fading to silence. A flat, measured silence as we revisit the community in soundless montage. The residential block, the frosted facades. The nutrition plaza, the counters, the chutes. The subway, the moving walkways. Centerville, the buildings now emitting a trickle of agnates, ending their workday - unwitting participants in their own greater utility.

26 INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - CENTERVILLE

A glass wall looks down on the avenue. The furniture is transparent, ethereal. Merrick sits at a console desk studying an etherboard. Off a buzz, he taps a button. The door opens and Lincoln enters, composing a deadpan. He doesn't like this man.

LINCOLN

You wanted to see me?

MERRICK

Yes. Please, take a seat.

He taps a button. The glass wall frosts over. It's unnerving but Lincoln stays deadpan, moving the chair before taking a seat. Merrick reviews the etherboard: Lincoln's headshot spinning in 3D with a scroll of data. Then he looks up, forming a smile-

MERRICK

How's Lincoln Six-Echo today?

Lincoln shrugs, noncommittal. Merrick eyes him thoughtfully.

MERRICK

Everything going okay?

LINCOLN

I guess not.

MERRICK

Why do you say that?

LINCOLN

If I'm here.

MERRICK

I'm not sure I deserve such a negative association. My job's only to see that you're happy. That everything's okay.

LINCOLN

Right.

MERRICK

It sounds like you don't believe me.

LINCOLN

Why wouldn't I?

MERRICK

(sits back, smiling)

It's part of your makeup. To challenge things. To question what's around you.

LINCOLN

Ah.

MERRICK

Perhaps you can utilize that facility by helping me solve a little puzzle.

Lincoln shifts, feeling uneasy. Merrick consults the etherboard-

MERRICK

You're doing well in most areas - proficient at work, exercising rigorously, your last medical puts you in excellent condition. But screening's picked up some deviations. Trace levels, changes in your sleep pattern... I see you've also been burning up your quotas...

LINCOLN

Are you saying I'm contaminated?

MERRICK

No.

LINCOLN

Then what's the problem?

MERRICK

There are parameters, Lincoln. When someone starts straying from those parameters, we need to find out why.

LINCOLN

Why?

MERRICK

Because you - not just you, all of our residents - are special. Because people like me don't get to go to The Island.

He smiles. Lincoln stays deadpan, wondering where this is going.

MERRICK

So tell me, have you noticed any changes in yourself?

LINCOLN

No.

MERRICK

What about your sleep pattern? You feel you've been sleeping properly?

Lincoln shrugs, refractory.

MERRICK

Let me put it another way, when you wake up, do you feel... disrupted?

LINCOLN

Disrupted?

MERRICK
Restless, disoriented, uneasy...

LINCOLN
I don't know.

MERRICK
They're all words in your vocabulary.
I know you understand what they mean.

Lincoln's jaw clenches, patronized. Merrick notes this, resumes-

MERRICK
Quotas... nutrition. Do you feel like
you want more than you're given?

LINCOLN
I don't know.

MERRICK
Do you have any difficulty staying
focused? At work, for instance?

Lincoln's jaw twitches. Merrick notes this, proceeds with care-

MERRICK
Have you been experiencing feelings,
sensations you don't quite understand?

LINCOLN
I don't know.

MERRICK
Do you sometimes feel agitated for no
apparent reason? Frustrated, angry...

LINCOLN
That's it.

MERRICK
Angry? You feel angry?

LINCOLN
Right.

MERRICK
When exactly do you feel angry?

LINCOLN
Now...

Lincoln leans forward as if to assert this. Merrick slowly nods like he's just revealed something. He taps the etherboard-

MERRICK

I'm going to order some tests at The Medical Center. In the meantime, I'd like you to stay away from stimulants - protein, sugar, caffeine...

LINCOLN

I already burned up my quotas.

MERRICK

But I know you can get around them.

He levels a knowing look. Lincoln stiffens again, unsettled.

MERRICK

I'm asking you to cooperate. Not for my sake, Lincoln, but for your own.

LINCOLN

Is that it?

MERRICK

There is one other thing. You have a female friend. "Ester". Your file shows you've been interacting regularly.

LINCOLN

There's no law against friendship.

MERRICK

Of course not. We encourage interaction in the hope it'll be of mutual benefit. But given these deviations... let's just say proximity becomes an issue.

LINCOLN

I know the rules of proximity.

MERRICK

The rules of proximity apply to sexual contact, Lincoln. In this case it goes deeper than that. Ester is entering her second trimester. A time of change and emotional confusion. Further interaction might be... unhealthy for you.

Lincoln, patronized, looks away. This pill he won't swallow.

MERRICK

And for Ester - well, she has only six months left to delivery. Then she'll move out to The Island and whatever ties she has here will be broken.

MERRICK (cont'd)
 As a friend, shouldn't you make her
 transition as painless as possible?

Lincoln's deadpan falters. This one, a bitter pill, he swallows.

MERRICK
 Good. Now I'm also going to refill
 your pleasure quota. It may help to
 settle you down a little.

LINCOLN
 Thank you. I feel much better now.

MERRICK
 I'm not sure you do. But I think
 you'll do what's right, Lincoln. You
 may not trust me. But I trust you.

27 INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - CENTERVILLE - EVENING

A theater in the round. The audience is mostly pregnant females and older residents. As the lights dim, eyes turn to the stage. Speakers bring up Handel's *Ombra Mai Fu*. Then a glowing mist rises, condensing into a huge sphere, like a seed. Known as a "holomorph", it reacts sonically, germinating into stems and branches and blossoms, growing and evolving with the music. The diaspora is as spellbinding as it is pacifying. It is beautiful.

28 INT. FOYER - COMMUNITY CENTER - EVENING

The music from within is like a warm beckoning hand. The foyer is slightly vaulted to accommodate a statue. On a bench at its foot, Ester sits alone, waiting patiently. As Lincoln enters, she rises to greet him, smiling. He seems more sullen than usual.

LINCOLN
 Sorry I'm late.

ESTER
 It's okay. I was waiting to tell you
 something anyway. Guess what?

Lincoln looks at her, unsettled by her flourishing smile.

ESTER
 My baby - I felt it *move*. And it's the
 weirdest feeling too. I can't explain
 it. It's like being more... more *here*.

Lincoln returns a deadpan look. Ester's smile wavers a little.

ESTER
I'm sorry. I'm all excited and we're
supposed to be finding peace of mind.

LINCOLN
I have to cancel, Ester.

His voice is expressionless. Ester shrugs, refreshing her smile.

ESTER
So I'll see you at breakfast tomorrow?

LINCOLN
I don't think so.

Ester's smile falls. Her eyes, reaching, trying to understand.

ESTER
Did I do something wrong, Lincoln?

LINCOLN
No.

A small word but it comes heavily. Before Ester can ask another question, Lincoln turns and leaves. His jaw, clenching with the effort of self-containment. Ester watches him, not hurt, just a little confused. We widen to encompass the height of the statue. The likeness is idealized but unmistakably that of Dr. Sanger.

29 INT. PLEASURE CENTER - NIGHT

Blue light. Lincoln walks up a long corridor, carrying a sealed plastic bag. Along the walls, poster-sized screens like those in the bar, display images of women, gyrating, licking their lips.

30 INT. PLEASURE CELL - NIGHT

The blue light sustains. To one side is a mirrored wall, known as an "etherwall". It is currently pixellated to display a grid of women's faces, artificial consorts waiting to be selected. Facing the etherwall is a large aquarium-like tank, filled with gelatinous blue liquid. This vessel is known as a "sense tank".

Lincoln sits at the rim, naked, wearing a full-head oxygen mask. He couples it to a hose dangling from the ceiling. Then lowers himself into the tank. On the inner facet, a touchlight keypad resolves. Lincoln taps some keys and the etherwall acknowledges:

--PLEASURE PARTNER SELECTED; PROGRAM COMMENCING...

Lincoln looks out at the etherwall. The faces blink off to leave him staring at his reflection. Just one left, a pouting redhead, who licks her lips in anticipation as the lights dim.

A holographic mist now rises. First resolving a proxy of Lincoln, naked, replicating his posture in the tank. Then the redhead is conjured, her buxom nudity glimpsed through the swirling mist.

Lincoln proxy reaches out to stroke redhead proxy's breast. In the tank, Lincoln's fingers caress only the gel, his fingertips met by soft arcs of light - neurological charges, conducted by the gel, creating the sense of touch. They are known as "impulse arcs". Redhead proxy responds, dappling her lips across Lincoln proxy's neck. In the tank, impulse arcs flicker across Lincoln's throat, then down his chest, descending to more erogenous zones. Lincoln stiffens and closes his eyes, yielding to the sensation.

The sensation engulfing him, Lincoln's brow starts to furrow. Not with ecstasy. Something darker. His eyes open, his pupils fixed in a black dilated stare. Resisting the artificiality, his face forming a sneer, tightening until... he slams his palm into the touchpad. The tank shakes. The proxies blink out. Lincoln stands mirrored in the etherwall. His hand, pressed against the glass in a posture of defiance. His reflection, warped and shuddering.

31 INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT

From darkness grows a seed of light. Red light, pulsing to reveal the shaft, lined by lode-poles, here in triangulated relay. The polarity cradles a dark mass towards us. An elevator in descent.

32 INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Merrick is at his console, working late. Off a buzz, he taps a button. The door opens and an outsider enters - 40's, square set, hollow, remote eyes. His hair is damp and he wears post-decon scrubs. A USMC ring is visible on his finger. His name is SCHEER.

MERRICK

Karl... Welcome back.

Scheer pauses, his face twitching. Then sneezes violently.

SCHEER

I forgot how much I hate the air here.

MERRICK

Just a histamine reflex. Your system's readjusting to the sterile environment.

SCHEER

It's the smell I hate. Empty.

MERRICK

Yes, well I cut short your leave for a reason. I take it you've been briefed?

SCHEER
(sits, sniffing)
One of our lab rats is missing.

With a dour look, Merrick slots his etherboard into a dock. A proxy resolves over the console, quarter scale, spinning in 3D; male, African American, bull neck. Data etches across thin air:

--PRODUCT ID: STARKWEATHER; FOUNDATION: II; GENERATION: DELTA;
--INTEGRATION DATE: 01/27/84 // CONTAINMENT REF: 102, SECTOR 4

MERRICK
His name is Starkweather Two-Delta. He dropped off the ether two days ago. At first we thought it was a system error. Then we found this in a garbage chute.

He opens a drawer and pulls out an ethercuff. He hands it to Scheer who considers it remotely for a few seconds. Then-

SCHEER
Delta generation, huh?

MERRICK
That's right.

SCHEER
It was a Delta the last time.

MERRICK
That was entirely different. The product suffered a head injury.

SCHEER
What happened to this one?

MERRICK
We don't know. He just disappeared.

SCHEER
Not easy to disappear. Unless he figured a way through the boundary.

MERRICK
He's a code two, Karl. A low functioner.

SCHEER
If you ask me, it's a mistake giving them any functions at all.

MERRICK
They don't function mentally, they don't function physically - you know that.

SCHEER

Then perhaps if you're going to breed lab rats, you should breed them tame.

His look, albeit from a distance, throws a stone. Merrick hardens-

MERRICK

If you bothered to read the clone laws, you'd realize we have no choice in the matter. The virtual humanity statutes accord them a set of freedoms. All we can do is prescribe the limits. And even those are subject to regulation. Scope of knowledge, range of activity, even their speech patterns. The law requires that what is of human origin be provided with human characteristics.

SCHEER

You mean, like fallibility?

Merrick pauses. He's not going to take the bait.

MERRICK

The ether shows no attempts on the boundary. He's here, Karl. But for some reason, your men seem unable to find him. It's your job to contain the products. I'd like you to do it, okay?

SCHEER

A little sensitive, aren't we?

MERRICK

Just after Starkweather went missing, his sponsor placed an order. An order we can't fill. Damn right I'm sensitive.

SCHEER

Alright. How much time do I have?

Merrick taps a button. A holoframe appears beside the proxy. Even in two dimensions, the face is identical. Just a different hairstyle and a gold earring. This is the face of The Sponsor.

MERRICK

Jamil Starkweather... last week he sustained a hepatic trauma resulting in liver hemorrhage. In medical terms, we have maybe a few weeks. In legal terms, we're *already* on borrowed time...

(as Scheer rises to leave)

And Karl?

MERRICK (cont'd)

I don't want a godawful mess like the last time. *Minimal* damage. Understood?

33 INT. LINCOLN'S APARTMENT - PREDAWN

The horizon. The green mountains cast black by the predawn glower. Lincoln sits rigidly hunched on his bed, still in yesterday's clothes, sleepless. He is staring fixedly out of the window, hungrily, as if inviting the outer darkness to come in.

His gaze lowers onto his jacket, slung across the bed. He digs in the pocket. And pulls out the cigarette pack. For a moment he considers it. Then slowly, purposefully, he opens it. He slips a cigarette between his lips. And lights up. He leans back, taking a slow drag. Exhaling, he watches the smoke rise. His gaze rests on the etherscreen above, expectant. The cursor comes to life:

--SCREENING... CONTAMINANT DETECTED: ADVISING SANITATION CTRL

Reflected in the ceiling, Lincoln grins at his small victory.

34 INT. RESIDENTIAL BLOCK - SECTOR FOUR

Quiet, empty at this hour. Just the drum of footfalls as Lincoln marches up the walkway, puffing his cigarette. He stops at the ethergate, regarding it as if for the first time. Then he stubs out his cigarette. And swipes his ethercuff over the scanner.

35 INT. THE ETHER GRID

A blue dot blinks in space. We widen to establish its locus on a tomograph. Now building the boxes, the quadrants, the sectors. Revealing a vast, fully dimensional hologram of containment. It spins in the vaulted chamber like a giant geometrical phantom.

36 INT. ETHER CONTROL ROOM

Overlooking the ether, like a studio control booth. Known as "Ethercon", it's also the title of the Censor at the console. Scheer stands over him, now in a white censor uniform with black chevrons on the sleeves, marking his seniority. He instructs-

SCHEER

Reverse map. Crop to twelve hour segments. Then put up a sub-grid.

--STARKWEATHER TWO-DELTA: ETHER HISTORY; REVERSE MAPPING...

To one side, a miniature of the ether grid resolves. It peppers with a series of blue dots. Then a blue line stems from a point of origin to start joining them. Scheer leans in, eyes honing, watching the blue line retrace the last steps of his quarry.

37 INT. NUTRITION PLAZA - SECTOR FOUR - PREDAWN

The glass wall reprises the predawn glower. The plaza is empty at this hour. But the service counters are staffed as breakfast is being prepared. The clerk looks surprised to see Lincoln arriving so early. He seems grim, latent, stiffly swiping his ethercuff over the scanner. She eyes the readout on her screen-

NUTRITION CLERK

Lincoln Six-Echo... Options are dried fruit, oatmeal or anything in bran.

LINCOLN

I want some bacon.

NUTRITION CLERK

You heard the options.

LINCOLN

And coffee. I want coffee.

The clerk sighs and taps her screen. Turning to the chutes, she collects a foil covered bowl and a juice can and sets them on Lincoln's tray. Lincoln glances down at it, then back up-

LINCOLN

This isn't what I asked for.

NUTRITION CLERK

You want to get into it? Look, I just work here, pal. I serve the meal and make sure it goes down on your record.

Lincoln nods slowly. Then picks up the bowl. And *flings* it across the plaza. Then the juice can, trying to outdistance the bowl. Finally, the tray, which rotors almost to the far side before clattering into obscurity. Then he turns back to the clerk-

LINCOLN

Put that on my fucking record.

38 INT. SUBWAY PORTAL - SECTOR FOUR

The latticed wall of ethergates. The rising beat of footfalls as Lincoln approaches. He swipes his ethercuff over the scanner. The gate slowly hisses open. Too slowly for Lincoln, who kicks it and barges his way through, leaving the gate to shudder on its hinge.

39 INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM

The walkways, unmoving. The platform, deserted. The echoing beat of footfalls as Lincoln marches up to the vending machine. He swipes his ethercuff over the scanner. A screen illuminates:

--SUGAR QUOTA EXCEEDED; ACCESS DENIED

Lincoln glowers at the message. His jaw clenching, twitching with anger. Erupting, he lashes out, *punching* the machine. He winces as his knuckles crack. Then grabs the machine, trying to rip it off the wall. Pulling, straining, sneering with effort, until-

He lets go with a defeated gasp. Then kicks the machine in final affront. The machine resounds with a dull boom. For a moment, he stands there, chest heaving. Then suddenly traps his breath...

There, in the fading boom, a noise. Faint, rhythmic. Becoming discernible as THE SOUND OF A MAN SOBBING. Lincoln turns toward the platform. Tracing the sound, he crosses to the safety fence.

LINCOLN

Hello?

His voice echoes to nothing. He leans over the fence and peers up the tunnel. There. In the fog of darkness, a figure. A figure paused, half-standing, like an animal on the brink of flight.

The figure seems to stare at him. Then pulls upright. Now moving forward and into the light. His face is African American, bull-necked, eyes wild and bloodshot. A stranger to Lincoln, we know him as STARKWEATHER TWO-DELTA. His voice is quivering, unhinged-

STARKWEATHER

Please...

Lincoln stands, frozen by the sight of this dark, dishevelled resident. As he climbs up onto the platform, we see his hands, the fingertips grated and bloody. He lumbers towards Lincoln-

STARKWEATHER

Please, you have to help me...

He rushes forward, grabbing Lincoln, pulling him face-close-

STARKWEATHER

YOU CAN'T LET THEM TAKE ME!

The stranger's eyes grow darkly, his pupils abysmal, black with dilation. Lincoln fiercely shrugs off his grip, backing away...

LINCOLN

Who are you? What's wrong with you?

The stranger's eyes bore into him, obsidian. Face contorting, baring his teeth like a rabid dog. Suddenly he lunges at Lincoln-

-BOOM- ramming him back into the vending machine - Lincoln is stunned - suddenly a vice-like grip on his wrist swings him round-
-CRACK- into the etherscreen banner, webbing at the impact...

For a moment, all is a blur. Teetering, Lincoln props himself against the wall. Then his focus resolves on the etherscreen and his fractured reflection. He releases a deep, bewildered breath. Then he notices his wrist. His ethercuff is missing, his skin, grazed red from abrasion. Confusion yielding to anger, he looks for his assailant. But the platform is empty. His jaw clenches.

40 INT. SUBWAY PORTAL - SECTOR FOUR

THE DRUM OF FOOTFALLS as Starkweather rushes up to the ethergate. Hand shaking, he swipes Lincoln's ethercuff over the scanner. The gate hisses open and he barrels through, suddenly spurred by --

LINCOLN BURSTING UP from the well of walkways, charging forward like a bull. The gate now closing, Lincoln races for the gap, barging his way through. And the gate snaps shut with a CLANG.

41 INT. ETHER CONTROL ROOM

AN ALARM SOUNDS. The console flashes. Ethercon responds with a flurry of keystrokes. Scheer rejoins him as he pulls up a sub-grid. This one evolving past tomograph, mosaicing angles from etherscreen, conjugating a 3D live feed known as an "etherview"--

MATCH CUT TO:

42 INT. NUTRITION PLAZA - SECTOR FOUR - DAWN

STARKWEATHER BARRELING ACROSS THE PLAZA; glancing off tables, sending chairs flying. Some residents, arriving for breakfast, scatter at his onset. Shocked faces, looking back and forth as Lincoln follows, in hot pursuit, vaulting the toppled furniture.

43 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - AN UPPER LEVEL

A SQUAD OF CENSORS CONVERGING; called suddenly to duty, looping tri-keys round their necks, donning headsets, priming stopguns. Scheer leads them into the elevator, coolly relaying his orders-

SCHEER

Subject headed into North Quadrant. Two-man teams - we block him and force him to ground. If you have a shot, hook him but keep it above the belt. Management doesn't want us to "damage the product".

The Censors roll their eyes knowingly. Scheer taps his headset.

SCHEER (INTO HEADSET)

Ethercon? Sector Four North; code an exclusion for tri-key access. Then give me a full quadrant lockdown.

44 INT. RESIDENTIAL BLOCK - SECTOR FOUR

A VERTICAL ONTO A RESIDENTIAL BLOCK: the grid of crosswalks, the tiers of frosted facades; quiet, the residents still dormant--

A DRUM OF FOOTFALLS: Then a figure breaking frame, racing up the walkway of an upper floor; then another figure, in hot pursuit --

THE LOCKDOWN INITIATES: the lights shifting spectrum from white to ultraviolet, bathing the quadrant in a lambent purple haze--

STARKWEATHER: his eyes bulging with panic as he races up the walkway, straining for an ethergate at the far end of the floor--

LINCOLN: his eyes charged with adrenaline, straining to close ground on his assailant; oblivious to the building noise of--

THE LOCKDOWN: locks hissing, lights flashing, ripping up the row of frosted facades; sweeping past Lincoln and onward toward--

STARKWEATHER: the ripple of hissing locks rushing up on him, he pours on the pace, sneering with effort as he tries to outrace--

THE LOCKDOWN: the ripple spearing ahead of him to the end of the floor; now banking across the ethergate and sealing the exit.

STARKWEATHER: stalled by the realization he's trapped; he spins round, looking for another avenue of escape only to find--

LINCOLN: blindsiding his assailant with a headlong tackle; both men toppling over, hitting the floor with a bone-jarring thud--

STARKWEATHER: quick to recover, breaking lose of entanglement; now struggling to his feet, stumbling onward up the walkway--

LINCOLN: gets up to resume pursuit, then pauses, spotting his ethercuff, discarded on the ground. He looks up in confusion at--

STARKWEATHER: a short distance ahead, climbing over the walkway rail; launching himself off, into a seemingly suicidal plummet--

LINCOLN: leaning over the rail, seeing his assailant land safely on a crosswalk beneath, resuming his flight on the lower floor as--

-BOOM- A GUNBLAST rips the air. A KEENING SOUND builds to a wail-

-THUD- LINCOLN JOLTS as something hits his shoulder, catching him off-balance, a stab of pain keeling him onto the rail -CLANG -

LINCOLN SLUMPS INTO FG - TWO CENSORS converging like white ghosts from the purple haze - one reprimanding his recalcitrant cohort-

CENSOR

You asshole! You hooked the wrong one!

He crouches to examine Lincoln. Blood is blossoming from a wound on his shoulder, jutting from which is a projectile. The censor presses its base and it snaps loose of its unintended target.

Now we see the projectile more clearly. A fat metal pellet, snub-nosed, finned at the tail by four metal teeth. On impact, the nose recesses to release a springload and the teeth snap forward to bite into the target. This device is known as a "hookhead".

CENSOR

Just a flesh wound. 'Hit his head pretty hard. Possible concussion.
(inspecting Lincoln's pupils)
Think you can walk, buddy?

Lincoln nods slightly. The censor unloops a tri-key from his neck-

CENSOR

You see this? It'll get you past the lockdown. You're to report to The Medical Center. You understand?

Off Lincoln's blank stare, the censor presses the tri-key into his palm. Then departs. Lincoln stays where he sits, still dazed from the concussion. Absently he watches the censors race off up the walkway, dissolving back into the purple haze as we-

CUT TO:

45 INT. ETHER CONTROL ROOM

STARKWEATHER RUNNING. Meeting white uniforms at every turn, zig-zagging over crosswalks, down ramps. The rat in the maze, dumb to its inevitable destination. Widening, we see we are watching the action on etherview, racking and dollying like a deific eye.

ETHERCON (INTO HEADSET)

East side team hold position. Subject headed for the second floor crossramp.

46 INT. GROUND FLOOR - RESIDENTIAL BLOCK

Cloaked in shadow, Scheer listens to the play-by-play on headset. With a tap, he changes the channel, whispering to his squad-

SCHEER (INTO HEADSET)

Give him some space. I have him.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Starkweather hits the deck running, sprinting up the avenue. In BG, Scheer steps forth, stopgun levelled, aiming--

-BOOM- The flash of the muzzle, the shrill wail of the hookhead.

-THUD- Starkweather jolts as the shot hits him square in the back, arching as the hookhead bites; but he keeps on running-

-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM- Scheer unleashes his ordnance, filling the air.

-THUD-THUD-THUD- Starkweather jolts from one, two, three more hits; hookheads biting, spraying blood; but he keeps on running.

SCHER (INTO HEADSET)

All clear. Flood the area.

ANOTHER ANGLE; Floor level, as between the tiles, tiny red lights start blinking, rippling forward in a wave. Known as "lode-pins" their small magnetic pulses accumulate into a low level stream.

The hookheads clawed in Starkweather's back also start blinking red. The invisible stream flowing beneath his feet, Starkweather feels its force. The duelling polarities stealing his traction. His run reducing to a slipsliding stagger. Then his feet leave the ground. He flails for a handhold. But there's nothing. The force lifts him a foot clear off the ground before balancing out to dangle him in mid-air, squirming about like a fish on a hook.

ANOTHER ANGLE; Scheer advances to reel in his catch. The stream bows before him, red lights blinking out. Until all that remains is the section where Starkweather hangs suspended. Scheer stops at its limit, looking up at him like some curious zoo exhibit.

SCHER (INTO HEADSET)

Hood him, cuff him, patch the bleed.
Then let's get him up to Level Three.

ANOTHER ANGLE: looking down from high above as the Censors move in on Starkweather. Scheer now walking away, tapping his headset-

SCHER (INTO HEADSET)

Ethercon? Send word to dispatch.
Starkweather Two-Delta is secured.

REVERSE ANGLE: Lincoln in CU, looking down. He has seen and heard all that has just passed. In his eyes, we see his daze clearing, consciousness coalescing, deepening. His pupils dilating into a deep and uncanny stare. What can only be described as a dawning.

47 INT. NUTRITION PLAZA - SECTOR FOUR - LATER

Now full but unusually quiet. Residents sit in whispered, anxious discourse. The news of the incident is spreading. Off a series of chimes, eyes turn to the glass wall, now pixellating into an outsider's face - calm, official. THE COMMUNITY ANNOUNCER begins-

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCER

Good morning - this is a community bulletin... Following an incident in Sector Four earlier this morning, The Department of Sanitation is issuing an all-sector contamination warning...

TRACKING the rapt concern of the residents, Ester among them.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCER

The incident involved a resident found to be infected with a pathogen. While the risk is assessed, residents are advised to be aware of the symptoms. Should you experience aberrant levels of anxiety or witness it in others, immediately contact The Medical Center.

48 INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

The proxy of Starkweather spins over the desk. Merrick regards it with a frown. Scheer sits turning the ethercuff in his fingers with a demeanor of cool curiosity. Underneath, he's rattled.

SCHEER

You want to tell me what's going on?

MERRICK

There's nothing going on, Karl.

SCHEER

I'm jaded. Not stupid.

MERRICK

What's your point?

SCHEER

I checked up. In the past year, three products have destabilized. All of them Deltas... and there's nothing going on?

MERRICK

You're jumping to conclusions.

SCHEER

Once I can overlook. Twice I can call coincidence. Three times I start giving a shit. Because if these products are defective...

MERRICK

Quality control is not your concern.

SCHEER

So it *is* a quality control issue?

MERRICK

That's not what I said.

SCHEER

He was in the subway tunnels for two days. In the dark, no food, no water. His fingers were scraped to the bone. He was trying to dig his way out. Now you try to explain to me why that is.

His look says he smells a rat. Merrick weighs him a moment. Then sighs, a little depleted. He gets up and crosses to the glass wall. Looks down on the avenue, at the agnates milling beneath.

MERRICK

It's not an exact science - biogenesis. There's a degree of trial and error. If the agnate doesn't come together on the first pass, we have to abort and start over. It's like breaking inertia. The bioreactor, the growth medium - we just keep upping the levels till we achieve integration. At which stage the agnate is deemed physically stable. We rely on foundation to provide mental stability - matching the templates to their capacity but walling it in with parameters.

(beat, considers the proxy)

When signs of instability started to show up, it pointed to foundation. A hole in the wall, an oversight. But it was only happening in the later generations. Which pointed back to biogenesis.

SCHEER

So there was a production defect.

MERRICK

Actually the opposite. We found out in the later generations, the levels were so high that when we broke inertia, the process kept going. Over-integrating. Specifically the neural system. It produced a condition called synesthesia.

SCHEER

Synesthesia...

MERRICK

A fusion of the senses, creating a component awareness. Sixth sense, second sight, whatever you want to call it. Its emergence seems to be arbitrary. But it gives them experiences beyond their functional parameters. And ultimately... it destabilizes them. However, if we catch it early enough we can control it with re-conditioning.

Scheer absorbs this with a slow grin. Merrick looks puzzled.

MERRICK

You find this amusing?

SCHEER

Poetic.

MERRICK

Poetic?

SCHEER

This "agnate" took off just before his sponsor placed an order. Maybe he got the sense his days were numbered...

Merrick's composure cracks a little. He hadn't thought of this.

MERRICK

This stays between you and me, Karl. I trust I can rely on your cooperation?

SCHEER

Don't you mean my complicity?

MERRICK

(hardening again)

Remind me, why is it you were discharged from the military?

SCHEER

What's your point?

MERRICK

Learn to be a team player, Karl. Or you'll find yourself out of another job.

Scheer rises, discarding the ethercuff onto Merrick's desk.

SCHEER

Nobody else would take it.

49 INT. EXTRACTOR SHAFT

The deep steady thrum of the extractor fans. We are TIGHT ON the frame of an airlock. Hissing, it indents and opens. Lincoln steps through, eyes black and uncanny. The tri-key glinting, dangling from his fingers. Scanning around, he fixes on a section of wall. He wipes off some soot. Legible beneath is a number. Twenty. He assimilates this. Then turns his gaze up the extractor shaft.

50 INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT

Looking up an elevator shaft. The red pulse of the lode-poles, rippling downward as an elevator descends from the surface.

51 INT. OUTER THRESHOLD - LEVEL THREE

A tiled chamber. Draped off cubicles. The elevator doors slide open. An outsider emerges, dressed in a flightsuit, emblazoned "Medical Courier". He announces himself, seemingly to no one-

THE COURIER

Clearance code: NG-230-2DS.

VOICE ON SPEAKER

New Gaza Healthcare. Okay, you're clear. Go ahead and get undressed.

52 INT. DECONTAMINATION CHAMBER

The pressure door hisses, heaving open. The courier steps inside, naked, covering his genitals, some goggles slung around his neck. He takes position on two marked footpads and puts on the goggles-

THE COURIER

I tell you, I hate this fucking run. I always leave this place with sunburn.

VOICE ON SPEAKER

Try full-course decontamination. It's even more fun. Especially the colonics.

The lights blink out. A red glow rises. Twin planes of light scrape across the courier, infra-red, searing his epidermis.

53 INT. INNER THRESHOLD - LEVEL THREE

A chamber like the first. The inner pressure door hisses open. The courier emerges, dripping wet from a decon shower. He goes to a cubicle, grabbing a towel and dries himself off. Laid out within are some scrubs. Beside them is A STEEL COOLER, inset with a thermostat and embossed with the crosshatch insignia.

54 INT. CORRIDOR - LEVEL THREE

The courier strolls up the corridor, now dressed in the scrubs and carrying the cooler. He turns a corner and his footsteps gradually fade out. A flat, sterile silence falls in his wake.

A metal squeal. A ventilation grid levers down from the ceiling. A pause. Then a pair of feet drop through, legs, torso. Dropping to the floor, Lincoln stands revealed. Sweaty, smeared black with dust. For a moment he looks around to get his bearings. Suddenly he freezes, hearing-

A VOICE (O.S.)
Check in at the nurse's station. Up
the corridor, left, then first right.

The footsteps are now coming back. Lincoln spins round. He finds a door. A lock panel. A moment of panic. Then he fumbles the tri-key from his pocket, hurriedly slotting it into the lock panel.

55 INT. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR - SECONDS LATER

Lincoln waits, ear to the door, listening as the footsteps pass and fade out of earshot. Lincoln releases his breath in relief, calming a little, then frowning as he registers another sound.

Very faint, rhythmic. He turns and looks around. The room is in partial shadow. To one side is a row of seats, to the other, a row of windows, covered by blinds, light creasing through. The sound repeats. Muffled. But now unmistakably THE CRY OF A BABY.

56 INT. HARVEST ROOM

A grid of bio-readouts, each square alive with graphs and digits. The familiar baseline of a cardiograph. A lever-arm mounted with an IV reservoir, dangling tubes and wires onto the OR table.

We see A DOCTOR and A MIDWIFE, in whose arms A NEWBORN BABY squirms and bawls. Lying on the table, we see THE MOTHER, her feet up in stirrups, deeply flushed and puffing from exertion. Marked by her crosshatch as an agnate, she has just given birth-

THE AGNATE MOTHER
May I hold her?

THE DOCTOR
We have to run a few tests on her first.
In the meantime, I'm going to give you
something to help you relax, okay?

Off his smile, the agnate mother nods, anxiously watching the midwife wrap her baby in blanket. The doctor taps a button and watches the IV reservoir misting with a pale colored fluid.

The cardiograph marks the drop as the fast-acting sedative takes effect. The agnate mother watches drowsily as the midwife takes her baby from the room. Then the cry of the newborn is shut out.

Just the cardiograph now, the beeps evening out, the scart of peaks shallowing as the agnate mother falls asleep. The doctor taps a button. On the grid, the face of a DESK NURSE appears.

THE DOCTOR

I'm incubating the baby for 24 hours prior to transport. But go ahead and contact the sponsor. Tell her she has a beautiful baby girl.

The nurse nods. The grid square goes blank. A pause. Then the doctor taps another button. Text appears. Reading it, he cites-

THE DOCTOR

Let the record show the sponsor has signed Clause 22 of The Basic Sponsorship Agreement. Initiate compliance.

A light starts blinking. The doctor walks stiffly out of the room. The door hisses closed. The agnate mother is left alone. Sleeping peacefully, blind to the fluid now seeping into her IV. Deaf to the slowing beep of the cardiograph. The peaks of the baseline falling. Spacing, fading, slowing, slowing, until...

The cardiograph flatlines. And a sepulchral stillness falls. Our angle widens with the growing emptiness. The lifelessness.

57 INT. OBSERVATION ROOM

Lincoln looks down from above, eyes frozen in the slatted light. His fingers are trembling, rattling the blinds against the glass.

58 INT. CORRIDOR

Lincoln tumbles out of the door. He can't breathe, can't think, his mind is in overload. He stumbles around like a wounded animal. His focus suddenly and searingly returns as he hears-

DESK NURSE (O.S.)

Starkweather? Like the football player?

59 INT. NURSES STATION - LEVEL THREE - CONTINUOUS

A rotunda spoked by corridors. A console at its hub, manned by the desk nurse we saw earlier. The courier stands over her-

THE COURIER

That's right. Starkweather.

DESK NURSE
Still showing in surgery. Sorry.

THE COURIER
Honey, I got a bird on the pad and a
storm moving in. How long's it gonna be?

60 INT. ANOTHER OPERATING ROOM

Another grid of readouts. Another cardiograph beeps. A spotlight illuminates the OR table and STARKWEATHER TWO-DELTA - his face, slack with anesthesia, eyes rolling a little beneath the lids. The rest of him under a sheet, cut out over the belly, the flesh slit and parted by a clamp, framing a window into his innards.

Standing over him, mid-operation, A SURGEON and SURGICAL TECH. Interrupted by a chime, the surgeon looks up at a screen, where a panel flashes: "PAGING". He cradles his bloody gloves and elbows a button. The face of the desk nurse resolves on screen-

DESK NURSE (ON SCREEN)
The courier's here for pickup.

THE SURGEON
Well he's going to have to wait a while.
It took forever to put this one under.

SURGICAL TECH (O.S.)
Doctor...

DESK NURSE (ON SCREEN)
He's asking for an ETA. Said something
about some kind of storm moving in.

THE SURGEON
For Christ's sake, is that my fault?
Just find a way to stall him, okay?

SURGICAL TECH (O.S.)
Doctor.

SURGEON
What is it?

SURGICAL TECH
Subject's heart rate is spiking.

SURGEON
Not again. Boost the anaesthetic lev...

Suddenly he's sprayed with blood as the clamp springs loose from the stomach, clattering to the floor. He's frozen by shock as...

Starkweather sits bolts upright. Dazed, he looks at the surgeon, the tech, then down at his wide-open stomach. Instinctively, he clutches it. Then, his mind assimilating the horror, he SCREAMS.

Now launching off the operating table, the lever-arm swinging out, blindsiding the tech - tubes and wires snapping loose - instruments flying - Starkweather lunges for the doorway - the surgeon steps up to block him - only to be hurled aside...

61 INT. CORRIDOR - LEVEL THREE

THE BLARE OF AN ALARM. Starkweather, clumping down the corridor, clutching his open stomach, blood streaming down his legs. He's delirious, running nowhere, anywhere, running blind. Reaching the end of the corridor, he stops suddenly, seeing WHITE UNIFORMS.

He doubles back up the corridor. Kicking at doors with bare feet, frantic for any means of escape. He spots a ventilator grid, slightly open. He jumps, reaching for it. Once, twice, then his feet slip from under him. He hits the floor with a damp splat.

TWO CENSORS turn the corner, ready for action. But there is Starkweather, face-down in a starburst of his own blood.

CENSOR (INTO HEADSET)
Yeah, no sweat, subject is secured.

62 INT. DUCTING - MINUTES LATER

POV CEILING VENTILATOR GRID. Looking down through the slits onto Starkweather directly beneath. He now has a loose white hood over his head. His wrists and ankles are bound by plastic cuffs. A loop of intestine plumps out from his belly. His weight is such that the Censors have to drag him away, leaving a bloodsmear on the floor. His guttural whimpers are the only sign of life.

CLOSE UP: Lincoln's face in part shadow, looking down. The gleam of his eyes as Starkweather disappears from view. Listening now, to those feeble whimpers, growing fainter, ever fainter until they disappear from earshot. Silence again. Emptiness. All that remains of Starkweather is a wending bloodsmear on the floor.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK.

63 INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

The horizon. The green mountains in different aspect, framed by a different window. The bedroom is like Lincoln's but with a few feminine touches. Ester, in her papery pajamas, sits brushing her hair. With a chime, etherscreen scales over her reflection:

--ETHERCALL PENDING; ACCEPT OR SEND TO MESSAGE BANK?--

ESTER

Accept.

The etherscreen resolves Lincoln's face, dishevelled, urgent-

LINCOLN (ON ETHERSCREEN)

Ester... I have to talk to you.

ESTER

Lincoln? Are you okay? I was worried.

LINCOLN (ON ETHERSCREEN)

What are you talking about?

ESTER

The contamination warning. Somebody said you'd been exposed.

Lincoln pauses to process this. Hunted, more cautious now-

LINCOLN (ON ETHERSCREEN)

I want you to meet me as soon as you can. But you can't tell anyone.

ESTER

Is it true? Were you contaminated?

LINCOLN (ON ETHERSCREEN)

You know where to come.

His face blinks out. Ester is left frowning at her reflection.

64 INT. BEDROOM - LINCOLN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Lincoln stares at his own mirror image. His eyes, fraught with revelation. His clothes, begrimed with dirt and blood. He rests his head against the etherscreen panel, shuddering, pressing his eyes tightly closed. As if he could ever forget what he's seen.

65 INT. CENTERVILLE - DAY

The routine flow of residents up the avenue. Lincoln walks, head bowed, trying to look inconspicuous. Showered, white shirt and blue slacks under his shearling, he looks a little too scrubbed, too clean. He spots a familiar figure up ahead. He catches up.

LINCOLN

Jonesy...

Jones lets him fall into step with a look of mild curiosity-

JONES

Hey, champ. Are you alright? I heard there was a contamination scare.

LINCOLN

I saw what happened to him.

JONES

What are you talking about?

LINCOLN

Starkweather... What they did to him.

Jones huffs, dismissively. Lincoln grabs his shoulder, ardent-

LINCOLN

They cut him open, Jonesy. They took him upstairs and they cut him open.

Jones holds his gaze a moment, then shrugs off his grip.

JONES

You caught that fucking pathogen, didn't you? You're contaminated.

LINCOLN

Jonesy, *listen to me...*

But Jones just backs away. Lincoln makes to follow. Then stops dead in his tracks. Across the avenue, TWO CENSORS are on patrol and his best friend is now heading towards them. With a barren, torn grimace, Lincoln turns away and melts back into the crowd.

66 INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - CENTERVILLE - LATER

Rings of empty seats round the empty stage. Ester enters warily, walking up the aisle. Lincoln waits in the shadows. He checks to see she hasn't been followed. Then steps forward. Ester recoils-

ESTER

Please... don't come any closer. I don't want to get contaminated.

LINCOLN

Ester, I'm not contaminated.

ESTER

But they said...

LINCOLN

I'm not contaminated!

His shout echoes through the empty auditorium. Ester looks at him, alarmed by his vehemence. Lincoln calms himself a little-

LINCOLN
Contaminants, pathogens... it's just
what they tell us to keep us inside.

ESTER
What do you mean?

LINCOLN
I saw it. Why they keep us here. To
use us. To take things from us.

ESTER
You're not making sense.

LINCOLN
Your baby... they're going to take
your baby away... you understand?

ESTER
My baby? Why would they do that?

LINCOLN
I don't know! But I saw it!

ESTER
You're scaring me, Lincoln...
I want to go back now.

LINCOLN
You can't go back! Don't you get it?

A VOICE (O.S.)
Nobody move! Stay right where you are!

A CENSOR steps through, stopgun levelled. Ester freezes. Lincoln hovers, mind racing. The censor moves in, tightening aim on him.

Ester looks on anxiously as he approaches Lincoln. Lincoln now sees the censor pulling out some plastic cuffs. The same cuffs used on Starkweather, promising the same fate... TRIGGERING HIM--

LINCOLN LUNGES AT THE CENSOR - ramming him - toppling him across the seats - knocking the stopgun from his grasp - recoiling as--

THE CENSOR RETALIATES - driving a knee into his groin, doubling him over - then a knee to his head - THUDDING INTO HIS SKULL-

ESTER
Don't hurt him!

ESTER RUNS UP grabbing at the white uniform, trying to restrain him - the censor swats her blindly - hitting her in the stomach--

LINCOLN SPINS ROUND at the sound of Ester's yelp - only to be roundhoused by the censor - the blow sending him to the floor--

ESTER DOUBLED OVER - wincing at the pain - clutching her belly instinctively, protectively - an ominous scowl knotting her face-

THE CENSOR PUNISHING LINCOLN - kicking him down the aisle - then suddenly hearing a noise from behind - turning to face it as --

-BOOM- A GUNBLAST RIPS THE AIR. The brief wail of a hookhead.

-THUD- THE CENSOR RECOILING - lurching as the hookhead bites - starting to gag - blood jetting from his neck - a hookhead clawed into his jugular - gurgling, collapsing to the floor--

ESTER STANDING FROZEN - holding the stopgun - seeing Lincoln now getting up - she drops the stopgun like it's on fire, aghast-

ESTER

Lincoln?

Like she's asking him what she did... Silence - the rasp of the censor, blood foaming - another sound - FOOTFALLS. Lincoln goes to the door - an IMMINENT MASS OF WHITE UNIFORMS. He grabs Ester-

LINCOLN

RUN!!!

67 INT. FOYER - THE COMMUNITY CENTER

CENSORS BURSTING IN - led by Scheer, pushing through into the main hall - the statue of Dr. Sanger looking serenely down--

68 INT. MAINTENANCE CORRIDOR - BEHIND THE COMMUNITY CENTER

A HISS OF DEPRESSURIZATION - a pressure door swings open - Lincoln and Ester tumbling through - running up the maintenance corridor--

69 INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

CENSORS FANNING OUT - sweeping the hall, stopguns ready - Scheer finds the fallen Censor - crouches to examine him, then-

SCHEER

Somebody get someone down here!

A Censor splits off to join him, tapping his headset - Scheer rises again - in his eyes, detachment yields to cold intensity--

70 INT. VARIOUS CORRIDORS - CONTAINMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

THE CENSORS: flooding through into the maintenance corridor, in their white uniforms, they seem like a swarm of antibodies--

LINCOLN AND ESTER: deeper in, at another pressure door, fumbling the trikey into the lock. A tense second. The lock hisses open--

SCHEER: pushes through the opening gap of another pressure door, taking the lead, his Censors surging up in his wake --

LINCOLN AND ESTER: meeting an intersection, veering at random, running blind, running deeper into the faceless labyrinth--

SCHEER: catching up, hitting the intersection, pausing to split his squad in each direction - white uniforms dispersing--

LINCOLN AND ESTER: reaching another pressure door. Footsteps audible. Lincoln jams the tri-key into the lock. And waits. The seconds pass. But the door doesn't open. Lincoln looks around for another exit. Ester looks at him in mounting panic then--

THE PRESSURE DOOR OPENS: not onto a corridor but an elevator car. Pulling Ester inside, Lincoln finds an array of buttons. His fingers hovers, uncertain which to press. So he punches all of them, stabbing madly, trying to prompt the door to close.

SCHEER: turns a corner, seeing his quarry at the far end of the corridor, he gathers pace. The elevator is closing but he doesn't break stride. He deftly taps his headset, opening a channel to--

SCHEER (ON HEADSET)

Ethercon! The elevator - override it!
Do you read me? Bring it back down!

71 INT. ETHER CONTROL ROOM

Ethercon is working the console keys like a madman. His gaze flitting to a subgrid of the complex, spinning the angles, navigating the mesh of lines. His voice comes apologetically--

ETHERCON (INTO HEADSET)

You're off the grid, sir. Give me a second. Can you tell me where you are?

He recoils at the blaring volume of the response.

72 INT. CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE THE ELEVATOR

Scheer stands with his Censors, poised, watching the panel chart the elevator's descent. A light flashes and the doors open. They level their stopguns on... nothing. The elevator is empty.

SCHEER (INTO HEADSET)
Foundation Levels - all of them. Lock
them down. Access only on my command.

73 INT. FOUNDATION LEVEL

A dead acoustic. A corridor paved with sound proofing panels. It ends at a pressure door, where Lincoln and Ester now arrive. Lincoln looks back to the elevator at the other end. No going back. He slots the tri-key into the lock. The door hisses open.

74 INT. FOUNDATION CHAMBERS

Amber light. The sound of slow bubbling. Lincoln and Ester pause to adjust to the gloom. They are in a hall of windows. Ester is the first to venture forth, as if drawn, to the nearest window.

Behind the glass is a foundation tank. Bubbling with viscous fluid, laced with various tubes pulsing matter to and fro. The tubes connect to a form. A human form, an adult form but curled foetally. It is known as a "nascent". In this tank is a female nascent, shifting slightly, causing Ester to gasp. The nascent registers the noise, turning its head. Its eyelids are closed but its eyeballs move, questioning. A slight furrow appears on its crosshatched brow. Ester recoils in sudden horror, perhaps remembering on some deep level that this is where she came from.

LINCOLN
Ester! Come on!

Spurred to action, Ester follows Lincoln onward up the hall. Still conscious of movement all around, of nascents stirring at the sound of their footfalls like the ripples of a nightmare.

75 INT. FOUNDATION CHAMBER

A STOPGUN noses through the door. Followed by Scheer moving in silence, honed. How much time has passed is unclear. He signals his censors to split off. Tracking Scheer's advance, we INTERCUT:

ANOTHER FOUNDATION CHAMBER: Censors making their sweep. Strobes of light from an armature mechanism moving up the row of tanks. It angles to project a grid across each nascent's face, then fires a short laser burst, searing a crosshatch into the brow.

ANOTHER FOUNDATION CHAMBER: another contingent moves up another row of foundation tanks. The nascents within have cables plugged into their ears, filaments pulsing. The nascents are in a posture of rigor, sinews straining as they accept the data impression.

RETURNING TO SCHEER as he reaches the end of the first chamber. No further access, just a continuing wrap of foundation tanks. He pauses, confused for a second. One of the censors comes up-

CENSOR

Nothing, sir. No sign.

SCHEER

They can't have got past this level.

Scheer peels off his headset, giving full leash to his senses, straining to concentrate. Seconds of pent silence. Then he hears a faint humming. His gaze slowly drifts up to a ventilator grid.

76 INT./EXT. THE FUNNEL - NIGHT

A POV LOOKING UP. The funnel mouth framing a vista of the world outside. A hostile vista of black sky, maelstroms of sand. The sound of blasting air, suborned to the giant howl of a DUSTSTORM.

A HAND. Reaching over the funnel lip as Lincoln pulls himself up with a mighty effort. Blinking, blinded by the sand, he swings astride the lip. Then he reaches down to pull Ester up. Ester gains the lip and likewise swings astride, coughing, blinking.

THE DUSTY EARTH as Lincoln leaps down to meet it. We track up as he helps Ester down from the funnel. Her feet meeting the earth, we are now in CU on their faces. Gaping and blinking at the prospect of the world outside. A world of darkness and storm.

SUDDEN BLINDING LIGHT as halogens explode the darkness. Lincoln shields his eyes, scanning for their source. He spots a large cubic building, banks of spotlights on the roof. He pulls Ester away. Away from the lights and towards the safety of darkness.

77 INT. EXTRACTOR SHAFT

THE THRUM OF EXTRACTOR FANS. Scheer pacing on a catwalk. White uniforms above and below, flashlights roving, sliced by the blades of the extractor fans. From somewhere, comes a shout-

CENSOR (O.S.)

Sir! We got em! Motion sensors just picked them up at the surface!

78 EXT. FRONT OF THE INSTITUTE - NIGHT

ANOTHER BURST OF HALOGENS. More spotlights engage, their blaze flooding across the foreview, catching two figures; Lincoln and Ester, running, now, veering sharply away from the light. Now disappearing from sight, dropping into the trench of the lodeway.

79 INT. MAINTENANCE ELEVATOR - CONTAINMENT

THE RISING HUM OF THE LODE-POLES. The elevator crammed with censors. Scheer at the front, staring ahead. He looks very focused, bitterly so. The look of a man outwitted by lab rats.

80 EXT. THE LODEWAY - NIGHT

THE DARKNESS OF THE TRENCH. Lincoln and Ester running along the lode-way, stumbling over the buffers. Above them, the dust flails in lashing tongues, starkly depicted by the halogens.

81 EXT. PROCESSING PLANT - NIGHT

WHITE UNIFORMS IN THE NIGHT - censors spill forth into the halogen light, splitting in all directions. Scheer suddenly notices the corona of light from the front of the complex. He barks something inaudible to his men, launching into a run.

82 EXT. THE GATEWAY - NIGHT

THE GATEWAY LOOMING ABOVE. Beneath, Lincoln and Ester, on their knees, clawing at the dust. Like burrowing animals, trying to widen the gap between the foot of the gate and the lodeway.

83 EXT. FRONT OF THE INSTITUTE - NIGHT

A LONE WHITE UNIFORM. As Scheer reaches the forecourt, stopping to scan the spotlit view, the veils of the duststorm. His face tightening with urgency. Suddenly he taps his headset, barking-

SCHEER (INTO HEADSET)

The lodeway! Flood it! Light it up!

84 EXT. THE GATEWAY - NIGHT

THE RISING HUM OF THE LODE-POLES barely audible over the storm. Lincoln and Ester, washed by pulsing red light. Ester recoiling, her arm flinging back from the pull. Lincoln grabbing her, his own arm straining now. The polarity tugging their ethercuffs.

85 EXT. THE LODEWAY - NIGHT

THE RED WASH OF LIGHT from the lodeway as Scheer races up the edge, eyes trawling the trench for his quarry. His pace now suddenly dropping, slowing to a halt. He doubles over, catching his breath. More white uniforms now appear from the dust as the Censors, unable to match his pace, finally catch up. The first reaching him, Scheer pulls upright, bellowing over the wind-

SCHEER

Get me a bird!

CENSOR

A bird?! In this storm?!

SCHEER

They got out! They got past the gate!

Scheer spins on his heel back towards The Institute. The Censor lingers, confused. Then he fixes on the lodeway. Floating past in the red wash are the luminous blue seams of two ethercuffs.

86 EXT. THE DESERT - NIGHT

The perimeter wall silhouetted in the middle-distance. Lincoln and Ester scramble through the scrub, blinded by dust, driven by momentum. As Ester starts lagging behind, Lincoln grabs her arm-

LINCOLN

Ester! We have to keep going!

But Ester resists him, breaking loose from his grasp. Lincoln looks at her, uncomprehending. Until he sees her expression, the harrowed stare in her eyes, the labored heaving of her chest.

LINCOLN

Ester?

Ester staggers back, losing balance, reeling as if spun by the storm. Her eyes widening, senses flooding. The howling wind, the swirling dustclouds, the pendent gulf of black sky. Her reel returning her to face Lincoln, Ester opens her mouth to speak. But all that comes is A SCREAM. A scream from deep within, shrill and hysterical, the only articulation she can find. Lincoln grabs her and covers her mouth. Fighting to stifle her, rocking to her convulsions. But Ester keeps screaming. A scream of everything.

87 INT. BEDROOM - SOMEWHERE - LATE NIGHT

All is still. Just a muted shudder of wind on glass. The room is in shadow. All we see is a canopied bed where a figure, obscured, lies sleeping. The still is disrupted by a chime. The figure stirs, fumbling at the nightstand. A holoframe resolves, the light revealing Dr. Sanger, rumpled by sleep. He peers into the holoframe to find the face of Merrick, gaunt with concern-

MERRICK (ON HOLOFRAME)

Henry... There's been a breach.

HARD CUT TO BLACK.

SLOW FADE UP:

88 EXT. THE RED ROCKS - DAWN

A horizon. A brim of dawn over the red rocks. The view is framed by the mouth of a cave. Lincoln sleeps within, slumped against the rock, his head bowed heavily. The touch of first light opens his eyes. His brow creasing, as if waking from a bad dream into a worse reality. He looks around only to find himself alone. He gets up, a little shaky at first, then ventures out of the cave.

He emerges onto a ledge, perhaps fifty feet up. He pauses, eyes adjusting to the quality of light. He sees the storm has reduced to a low wind, combing the floorland of scrub. Now, across the ledge, he sees Ester. Perched on an outcrop, hugging her knees, watching the sunrise over the desert. He crosses and lowers to a crouch beside her. Ester turns to him with a confused frown-

ESTER

Where did all the green go?

Lincoln looks deep into her troubled eyes. He answers gently-

LINCOLN

There is no green. The windows in there... they were just pictures.

Ester absorbs this with difficulty. Lincoln rises again and stands looking out across the desert, into the barren unknown.

89 EXT. THE SKY OVER THE DESERT - MORNING

From the massive sky grows a glinting shape. Like a helicopter but sleeker, aquiline. Without combustion, its only noise is the sibilance of blades slicing air. It is known as a "whisper".

90 INT. WHISPER - MORNING

The pilot jockeys with the thermals. Scheer rides shotgun. Now in civvies, scanning the terrain with electronic binoculars. The flight console beeps. He taps a keypad. A holoframe resolves:

CENSOR (ON HOLOFRAME)

Ground team checking in.

SCHEER

Anything?

CENSOR (ON HOLOFRAME)

The storm pretty much covered their tracks. We're scanning for thermals but the hotter it gets, the harder it is to isolate a heat signature. I don't know, sir, it's a big desert out there.

91 EXT. CHASM - THE RED ROCKS - DAY

The desert sun clefts the chasm into light and shadow. Lincoln trudges into view, Ester lagging behind. He stops to let her catch up, only to watch her slump onto a rock. He allows her a moment to rest and walks to where the chasm comes to an end.

He surveys the terrain. His eyes roam the carpet of scrub, now narrowing on an inconsistency. A faint strip where nothing seems to grow. Tracing its lineage, he walks a few feet out. Then drops to a crouch and starts clawing away at the dust.

His fingers meet something hard. He sweeps off the dust to expose a layer of concrete. Continuing, revealing the ghost of a line. What we might recognize as a lane marker but a curiosity to him. Continuing, opening a window in the dust. Now his fingers snag on something. He tugs it and it gives a little, dust crumbling to reveal a section of rusted chainlink. A corner of metal is visible. Lincoln exposes the rest. A sign, barely legible: "US Government - Restricted Area". He frowns, trying to assimilate. Ester comes up to join him. Off her anxious look, he decides-

LINCOLN

I think I've found a path.

92 EXT. THE GREEN MOUNTAINS - DAY

White rock blanketed by stands of fir and ponderosa pine. A whisper skims over the treecaps, circling in on a high shelf. Here, remotely nestled in a clearing, stands a glass villa.

93 INT. THE GLASS VILLA - DAY

The flood of light, the majestic view lend an air of beatitude. The decor is minimalist with Native American accents, kokopelli spirits in carved silhouette. Dr. Sanger stands at a glass wall, looking out across the green mountain valley. On the sofa sits Merrick, now in civvies, still gaunt from worry. The air stirs as a maid ushers in A WOMAN - 30's, all business, sharp blue eyes, a severe, mannish coiffure. Her name is ELLEN CROWNE.

CROWNE

Good morning, gentlemen.

SANGER

Bernard, this is Ellen Crowne from our legal department. Ellen, this is Bernard Merrick, director of products.

MERRICK

Thank you for coming out here.

CROWNE

Well when Henry called me I got the sense it wasn't for a social visit.

They settle at a table. A jug of icewater and glasses laid out.

CROWNE

I understand there was an incident?

MERRICK

First, let me stress there's no way we could have anticipated what happened...

CROWNE

We're on the same team, Mr. Merrick. Just give me the facts down-and-dirty.

MERRICK

(uneasy, clears his throat)
We've lost two of our products. They escaped containment last night.

Crowne casts a troubled look at Sanger. Merrick quickly adds-

MERRICK (cont'd)

However, we have all available resources dedicated to the search.

CROWNE

How exactly did this happen?

MERRICK

We're still piecing it together.

CROWNE

Do we expect *more* products to escape?

DR. SANGER

Don't be so alarmist, Ellen.

CROWNE

I'm sorry, Henry, but you asked me here to assess our liabilities.

MERRICK

To answer your question, we condition our products with a deterrent. A fear of contamination. And thereby of the outer environment. So to escape, they first have to escape their conditioning.

Crowne pauses to absorb this and to light a slim black cigarette.

CROWNE

Containment is one of the terms of our state health license. The fact it was compromised could put us in violation.

DR. SANGER

Bureaucracy.

CROWNE

Henry, it was a bloody battle getting our license through in the first place.

DR. SANGER

They're not going to pull our license, Ellen. We have a lot of friends on the Commission. Not to mention the goodwill we earned in DC when we took over the facility; a bunker complex for a biochemical war that never happened... We relieved them of a costly embarrassment.

CROWNE

I'm not sure we can rely on that.

DR. SANGER

Alright. What do you suggest?

CROWNE

First, I need you to level with me. What are our chances of finding them?

MERRICK

Well, in our favor, they've never been outside containment. They'd have no coordinates, no sense of direction.

CROWNE

I don't see how that's in our favor.

MERRICK

They're in the middle of the desert. Food and water become an issue.

CROWNE

So they might return to the trough?

MERRICK

Possibly.

CROWNE

And if not? How long could they last?

MERRICK

A few days maybe. But there is another variable. We maintain the products in a sterile environment. So basically their immune systems are untested. Toxins, pathogens, environmentalists the rest of us overcome routinely, to them...

DR. SANGER

That's a little drastic. Some immune systems are more adaptive than others.

CROWNE

Let's take the drastic case. What then?

MERRICK

Well... the male, we could cover. Fast-track another generation before the sponsor ever needed access. The female comes under the maternity plan. She's three months pregnant. Even if we fast-tracked another generation, we couldn't fast-track the pregnancy. We'd miss the delivery date, the sponsor would wonder why and there would be... difficulties.

Crowne looks worried. Sanger pours a glass of icewater.

DR. SANGER

Even so, the worst may not happen.

CROWNE

We haven't even touched on the worst. If these products reach a populated area, there's the problem of scrutiny.

DR. SANGER

Ellen, we operate under State license on a lease from the Federal Government...

CROWNE

(cuts him off, harshly)

We slipped through a loophole in the clone laws, Henry. And they only let us through because they smelt money. And they gave us a government basement to cover their own asses not ours. It's at the core of our license - why we screen potential sponsors, why we make them sign discretion agreements, why containment is such a *critical* factor - to limit the extent of public scrutiny.

DR. SANGER

Either way, it's unlikely they'd get that far. It's at least twenty miles to the next settlement. Right, Bernard?

Merrick hesitates before nodding his assent. Crowne pounces on it-

CROWNE
 Something to add, Mr. Merrick?

MERRICK
 I just don't think we should underestimate them. Especially the male.

DR. SANGER
 And I don't think we should panic.

He cautions Merrick with a discreet look, then shakes a pill from a bottle. Crowne looks forward to both men. Very serious.

CROWNE
 Gentlemen, whatever happens we need to keep one thing clearly in mind. As far as the world at large goes, we are just another medical services company. Anything that alters that perception puts us at risk. And we cannot rely on the sanction of the law to protect us. Whenever and wherever and in whatever condition we recover these products, we have to stay beyond reproach. All it takes is one nudge to put us in the spotlight. Then you'll see how fast politicians can run for cover.

Merrick shifts, uneasy. Sanger takes the pill with a bitter smile-

DR. SANGER
 In other words we need to find them or else. That's very astute, Ellen.

94 EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - SUNSET

The dust swirls and puffs across a highway of yesteryear. A dirt track but for patches of exposed concrete and angles of buckled lampposts. The empty path reaches to a blood-red sunset.

95 EXT. SCRAPYARD - SUNSET

The dust skims over mountains of rusted scrap. Nestled in the mountains is a shack. A sign creaks in the breeze "Osmund Deer, Licensed Salvage Merchant". On the porch sits an old man in a greasy ballcap and dungarees. This is the eponymous owner, OZZIE.

He's sitting on a lounge, surveying his empire, enjoying a beer and a cigarette. Exhaling a drag of smoke, his eyes crease to a squint. He sees something through the smoke, silhouetted against the sunset. An approaching figure, wary, like a flighty animal.

OZZIE

Hello?

The silhouetted figure doesn't answer, just stares back at him.

OZZIE

Can I help you?

This seems to get a response. The figure ventures closer. We recognize Lincoln. Exhausted, dust-covered and dry-throated -

LINCOLN

My friend... she needs water.

96 INT. BACK ROOM - THE SHACK - SUNSET

A mass of technology and furniture from recent and distant past. Lincoln lowers Ester onto a threadbare sofa. Ozzie, excited to have visitors, bustles up with a water gallon, pouring a glass. Lincoln takes it and tips it to Ester's lips. She coughs it out at first. Then takes the glass and starts drinking with vigor. Ozzie sets down the water gallon in front of his visitors. Then settles in an armchair and cracks open a beer. It lends the mood, albeit strained, of a social visit. Lonely old Ozzie wanting to make it so. Despite which, both men have an eye on each other.

OZZIE

Got stuck in that supercell, didya?

Lincoln eyes him, wary of the question. Ozzie reads confusion-

OZZIE

Supercell storm, that's what they call it on the news anyways. In my day, we just called 'em "big ol' howlers".

Ozzie chuckles to himself. It seems to put his visitor at ease.

OZZIE

Yep, I heard it shut down some of the lodeways. Dust in the works, I guess. Where were you folks headed anyways?

Lincoln gulps down some water, deciding an answer. Then ventures-

LINCOLN

Away.

OZZIE

Away? You mean, like outta state?

LINCOLN

"Out of state"...

The term is meaningless to Lincoln but he likes the sound of it. Ozzie grins. This is starting to feel like a real social visit.

OZZIE

Now where's my manners gone? I'm Ozzie.
Osmund really. But folks call me Ozzie.

An awkward lull as Ozzie waits for his visitor to reciprocate.

OZZIE

Sometimes I like to make a joke of it,
my last name bein' Deer... "O. Deer".

Ozzie chuckles but the pun seems lost on his visitor. He lets it drop. The awkward silence returns. Lincoln drinks the water, wondering if this strange old man is as harmless as he appears.

OZZIE

Well now, looks like yer girlfriend's
made herself at home.

Lincoln looks at Ester, slumped over, asleep on the sofa. Ozzie puts a finger to his lips, beckoning his visitor out of the room.

97 EXT. SCRAPYARD - DUSK

The porch light comes on, casting the scrapyard in grades of light and shadow. Ozzie steps out onto the porch, lighting a cigarette. His visitor hovering at the threshold, he offers the pack. Lincoln steps out and takes one. Ozzie lights it for him-

OZZIE

Yer girlfriend sure is pretty.

His visitor looks at him curiously. Ozzie misinterprets that he's said something out of turn. Time to change the subject-

OZZIE

So what's with them tattoos, huh?

He taps his forehead. Lincoln fingers his crosshatch, suddenly aware of it now and suspicious of the question. Ozzie palliates-

OZZIE

Hey, in the eye of the beholder, right?
Now this place, this is beautiful to
me. This is my place. I own it. 'May
not look like much but you'd be
surprised. C'mon, lemme show you...

Ozzie moseys into the scrapyard, beckoning his visitor. Lincoln hesitates, then follows him, sensing it's better to play along.

OZZIE

Mosta this heavy stuff's industrial scrap. Comes in from all over. Easy way round the recyclin' laws. Me, I sell it on to the boondock boys for meltdown. Other stuff, I pick up at the scrap markets. Fix it up, 'fetches a price.

They reach a vehicle shell. A rust-pocked chassis, canted on its axle, we might recognize it as an automobile from our own era.

OZZIE

Fossil fuel transport. This piece o' junk's a collector's item. All that Age of the Wheel nostalgia, "elegant era of transport" bullshit. I find the parts, she's as good as solid gold.

Ozzie pats his investment and moves to another rusted metal pile. Steeped by rail tracks, we see elevator sheaves, tension cables.

OZZIE

Now this here's got a colorful history. Came in from this ol' government bunker out in the valley. 'Got shut down way back. Then this new outfit took over, stripped the place out. I guess they're doin' some more remodelling cause I just had 'em in again the other day...
(a tug of smoke, reflective)
Hump 'n dump crew. Nice fellas.

Lincoln frowns. The term is familiar. The taste of smoke, a hint. But his memory has been clouded by trauma. Ozzie reads his face-

OZZIE

You okay there?

Lincoln looks at him, something breaking the clouds. A sense of danger, indistinct. Suddenly cautious, he stubs his cigarette-

LINCOLN

I'm going to check on my friend.

98 INT. FRONT ROOM - THE SHACK - DUSK

A front room turned into a front office. Piles of paper teeter atop junk furniture. A bankers lap we might recognize from our own era glows over a desk where Ozzie is rummaging, looking for something. He stops to peer through and check on his visitors-

The woman still lies asleep on the sofa. The man is sitting beside her armchair, head bowed, seemingly plunged in thought.

Ozzie resumes rummaging to find a crumpled delivery note. He reviews it for a moment. Then quickly clears away some more papers to uncover a keypad device. It is known as a "holocom". He taps a key and a holoframe resolves. Then taps in some digits from the delivery note. The holoframe snows with static. Then a crosshatch insignia appears, spinning in 3D:

RECORDED VOICE (ON HOLOCOM)
Welcome to The Sanger Institute. If you
know your party's extension, press...

LINCOLN (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Ozzie jerks round to find his visitor suddenly standing there. He fumbles on the holocom keypad and the crosshatch blinks out.

OZZIE
Nuthin. I wasn't doin nuthin.

Lincoln frowns, the sense of danger becoming more distinct. Ozzie reads his visitor's troubled expression, realizing-

OZZIE
I knew it... them clothes... them
weird tattoos... I mean, I heard
stories from those guys but I never...

Off his visitor's frown, Ozzie bites his tongue. He's cornered in this cramped space with a freak of science. Time to backpedal-

OZZIE
Not that I believe 'em... buncha crazy
stories... nuthin to do with you...

He chuckles feebly. But his visitor just stares back at him, pupils dilated and dark, somehow inhuman. Time to wriggle out-

OZZIE
Whaddya say we just forget about it,
huh? How about I go getcha a beer?

He makes a move past but his visitor doesn't budge. Lincoln senses danger in this old man, whose fear is now manifest-

OZZIE
Whatever you want... Just take it...
Whaddya want...? You want money...?

His visitor frowns. Ozzie quickly unlocks a cashbox. He grabs some colored plastic cards and offers them like meat to a lion.

OZZIE

It's all I got... Take it... just please... just don't hurt me...

His visitor takes a blue card, inspecting it like a curiosity. Then steps closer. Ozzie shrinks back. An ominous moment, then-

LINCOLN

"Out of state" - how do I get there?

Off Ozzie's cowering and confused look, we -

CUT TO:

99 EXT. SKY OVER THE DESERT - NIGHT

From darkness grows a seed of light. The whisper flies low and quiet, its spotlight roving the undulant desert. Now picking out metal glints as it banks over a scrapyard. Now training its beam on a figure in the dust whirl beneath. Ozzie, his hair flying wild, gesticulating madly. The whisper follows his directions, nosing onwards, its spotlight corrugating across the red rocks.

100 EXT. SHUTTLE STOP - NIGHT

In the middle of nowhere, a canopied platform. Not unlike the subway platform, it borders a deeply trenched lodeway. A wave of dust rolls in, swelled by the whisper, landed beyond. It seems to bring Scheer to the platform. He scans around for a clue, a footprint perhaps. But somehow he already knows. He looks up the lodeway, eyes honing. The deep black line stretches far into the night.

101 INT. THE GLASS VILLA - NIGHT

Silence. Still. Sanger sits nursing a cup of herb tea. Crowne sits smoking. Stubs in the ashtray speak of long hours waiting. The still is broken as Merrick emerges from an adjacent room. Sanger and Crowne look up, expectant. Merrick closes the door with slow care. Then he faces them, a grim tenor in his voice-

MERRICK

Bad news.

102 EXT. PHOENIX - NIGHT

The whisper slices the night, running lights blinking. We pan to frame it against a skyline of black towers. A glittering row of domes and spires, somehow celestial, touching the sky. The city bears no trace of its origins, once built over Indian ruins, now rebuilt, subsumed by urban overhaul. It has become a metropolis.

103 INT. ROOFTOP NIGHTCLUB - PHOENIX

A glass dome, faceted, insectile. A haut-monde hive. The movers and shakers of the high-tech boomtown drinking, dancing. Shot waitresses dose blue tequila. Bass music thuds like a heartbeat. Scheer looks out of place here but the crowd's too self-absorbed to care. He moves through them, invisibly, towards a corner booth.

TWO MEN IN SUITS sit with a bottle of blue tequila. The first is bald, pale and dead-looking, he'd be the grim reaper but for his fixed leer. The second is long-haired, bearded, hulking, more of a grim ploughman. He has a metal brace screwed into his forearm.

SCHEER

Which one of you is Diggs?

DIGGS (THE BALD MAN)

That's me, slick. This here's my partner Burdon. Don't mind him. He gets a little shy around strangers.

SCHEER

What happened to his arm?

DIGGS

'Pursuit last week. The guy took a swing at him with a fireaxe. Didn't stop Burdie though. 'Took down that fucker with one arm, didn't you?

Burdon sips his drink. Scheer, underwhelmed, takes a seat.

SCHEER

You don't look like bounty hunters.

DIGGS

Well we're on the job, see? And it kind of helps if you bleed in. You don't look like a bondman either.

SCHEER

I'm just an intermediary.

DIGGS

Now that's what people use when they don't want to get their hands dirty.

He grins, cannily. Scheer grimaces, a pro suffering an amateur.

SCHEER

I was told you also handled civil bonds. Debt runners, data-thieves...

DIGGS

What we hunt depends on the bounty.

SCHEER

It's worth ten platinum. Unmarked.

Diggs pauses at this. A huge amount. Suspiciously huge. He licks some salt, downs a blue tequila shot and bites a slice of lime.

DIGGS

What's the bond?

SCHEER

The parties I represent want to limit the specific details. But let's just say industrial secrets are involved.

DIGGS

Ten platinum. Must be big secrets.

That canny grin again. It raises Scheer's hackles--

SCHEER

Any good at keeping them?

DIGGS

Oh, me and Burdie, we're busy bees. We don't have time to file every report and we got real bad memories. But just so we understand each other, slick, we're talking about a bag job, right?

Scheer returns an equivocal look. Then dips in his pocket for two digital slides - Lincoln and Ester's headshots, spinning in 3D.

DIGGS

What's up with these tattoos? They look like fucking boondock types.

SCHEER

All I'm authorized to tell you is they have no records in this state. Also that they're not armed or dangerous.

DIGGS

How about we start with their names?

SCHEER

John and Jane Doe...

DIGGS

You're kidding me, right? No names?

Scheer's look says he's serious. But Diggs is still confounded.

DIGGS

Then - with all due respect - how the *fuck* do you expect us to find them?

SCHEER

Because you won't have to look. They jumped an overnight shuttle. They'll be headed for the terminal, trying to get out of state. It's strictly a recovery job. For you, it should be child's play.

DIGGS

Then why not do it yourself? Or is the dog ring just to impress the ladies?

The grin. Scheer moves his hand to cover the USMC ring, stiffly-

SCHEER

The parties I represent want to stay at arm's length. And just so we understand each other that means no connection, no papertrail, no police interest...

DIGGS

Is that everything?

SCHEER

...no mistakes. They want these two brought in quickly and quietly and unharmed. Once you have them, you'll contact me for further instructions.

DIGGS

I don't know. What do you say, Burdie?

Burdon looks over. Then suddenly stands bolt upright, diving into his jacket, jerking out what looks like a pump-action shotgun.

BURDON

Frank Hofstetter! This is a bond recovery! Step away from the bar!

FACES TURN as he swings aim across the bar - HOFSTETTER, slight, wide-eyed, looking hunted - customers moving away, exposing him - Burdon chambering a cartridge, emphatic - Hofstetter freezes - a deer in the headlights - a moment of hesitation - then he runs.

-BOOM- BURDON FIRES but the shot misses, hitting the bartender - exploding on impact with A BLINDING ELECTRICAL DISCHARGE - the stunned bartender spasms and drops - Burdon pumps and chambers another slug - his weapon now earned the name of a "thunderbolt".

A STAMPEDE BEGINS - customers running scared - his quarry lost in the stampede, Burdon vaults over the table - Diggs pulls out what looks like a twin-barrel sawn-off and launches after him - Scheer stays seated, watching the hunt with remote curiosity--

HOFSTETTER CLAWS THROUGH THE STAMPEDE - spotting Burdon and the thunderbolt close behind - he drops out of the firing line - onto his knees - crawling, banged about - almost at the exit, almost--

TWIN BARRELS PRESS TO HIS HEAD - Diggs looks down - grinning, beckoning him upright - Hofstetter looks up - bleak, defeated - A GIRL blunders into them - toppling over Hofstetter into Diggs--

HOFSTETTER TAKES HIS CHANCE TO RUN - now scrambling against the stampede - Diggs disentangles himself and levels his weapon - the stampede parting - throwing themselves to the ground as--

-BOOM- DIGGS FIRES - the scattershot hits Hofstetter as he flees up some steps - peppering his leg - sparks off metal as Diggs keeps firing - his weapon now earned the name of a "rainmaker".

HOFSTETTER REACHES A CATWALK - his leg dragging, numbing from the tranquilizer cores - the catwalk dead-ends - blind panic now - He ducks under the rail, reaching for the dome - finding a precarious handhold, he swings across - trying to climb --

DIGGS COMES UP BENEATH - looking up, grinning - the pathetic sight of Hofstetter - one leg useless - clinging to the dome like a fly trapped under glass - as Burdon goes to recover him -

DIGGS

Don't bother. He'll drop by himself.

Burdon pulls out some handcuffs and stands waiting. Diggs returns to the booth. Pouring out two tequila shots, he grins at Scheer -

DIGGS

Now... where were we?

104 EXT. THE DESERT - MORNING

Sunlight blinks off a chain of carriages, travelling the trench of a lodeway. The overnight shuttle slits through the desert.

105 INT. PASSENGER CAR - MORNING

The sun is a muted orb behind polarized glass. Lincoln stares out of the window at the bleak new world blurring past. He's wearing Ozzie's ballcap over his crosshatch, his former clothes discarded for some of the old man's ill-fitting denims. Perhaps a disguise or perhaps just to shed the memory. He glances across at Ester, dressed likewise, her hair teased to cover her crosshatch. She's dozing, head rested on the glass. A TICKET COLLECTOR comes up-

TICKET COLLECTOR

Tickets...

Lincoln looks at the man in uniform, uncertain what he wants. The ticket collector shakes his head. These two look like deadbeats.

TICKET COLLECTOR (CONT'D)

Adult fare is forty five currency units. Do you have the money, sir?

Lincoln assimilates. Money. The word is familiar. He pulls out the blue plastic card. The man in uniform looks encouraged. He gives him the card, watching him slot it into a handheld device, which briefly flashes, then the card is returned. Lincoln sees a strip at the top is now transparent, like a depleted reservoir. He assimilates. Not so different from the transactions in the world below. Then he notices Ester is awake and is looking at him. Her bright eyes, dim and troubled, somehow accusatory.

LINCOLN

It's going to be okay, Ester.

ESTER

(faint)

Is it?

LINCOLN

We just need to get out of state.

Ester, disconsolate, looks out of the window. In her gaze, the forlorn air of a hatchling fallen from the nest. Lincoln watches her, knowing her troubles and knowing that he cannot relieve them.

106 EXT. PHOENIX - DAY

The skyline stands reprised in daylight. A glimmering citadel.

107 EXT. SHUTTLE STOP - PHOENIX - DAY

Passengers climb the steps from an underground gloom. Lincoln and Ester with them, jostled by the more certain flow. They cross the portal onto the street and stop, dazzled by the sunlight. Only to be dazzled again by the sudden, stunning prospect of the city...

First there's the quality of light, a burning white, perhaps from depleted ozone, depicting everything in a surreal shimmer. Then there's the towers, darkly crystalline, facets of polarized glass rising to domes and spires, like monolithic fingers reaching for the sky. The traffic flashing past, the chassis identifiable as trucks, taxis, compacts, sedans, streamlined in a nautical trim, hull runners in place of wheels. The sound of claxons, more like fog horns than car horns. Then there's the street itself, a six-lane lodeway, lanes marked with buoys, bobbing around on cables.

The graceful arcs of pedestrian bridges at the intersections. The citizens, strange hairstyles, fashions, all wearing sunglasses. Even to us it's a wondrous sight. The urbanism, the grandeur, as if here in the heart of southwest, Manhattan has met Venice.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, man, spare a little green?

Awe interrupted, Lincoln and Ester look around. Slouched by the street exit is A HOBO with a mangy dog. He grins toothlessly-

THE HOBO

Ain't eaten in two days, have we, boy?

Lincoln and Ester step back as the dog rises to greet them. Tail wagging, it noses forward, sniffing. Then, abruptly, drops its tail and backs off, whining. Lincoln and Ester likewise back off. Both sides have just discovered a new species. The hobo pets his whining canine, watching the strangers walk off with curiosity.

108 EXT. STREET - DAY

The sunlight flares off passing vehicles, hypnotic. The faces of pedestrians flash past. Lincoln and Ester wander in thrall up the street. Everywhere new sights, new curiosities bombard them...

The storefronts, mysterious recesses behind polarized glass. The glass, alive with pixellated graphics, marquees: *"Temps! Temps! New Tech Opportunities!"* - *"Beauty Therapy! Manicures, Dermals, Follicle Grafts!"* - *"Discount Legal Service! Class Actions Only!"*

Holoframe billboards loom over the street, huge shimmering panels like phantom jumbotrons, commercials playing on a loop:

-- A businessman in a conference room, shrinking from a fierce negotiation; the scene replayed with the same businessman, now on his feet, stabbing his finger angrily in the air; a pill bottle in CU, a text super *"Combatrine! The Aggression Enhancer"*

--A teenager bemused by his homework: his parents escorting him into a clinic; the teenager hooded by an electronic dome; his parents clapping; the teenager smiling as he accepts a diploma; a text super *"Intellex: Data Impression For A New Generation"*

Lincoln suddenly looks round, realizing Ester is gone from his side. He scans the sea of faces. Then spots her stepping through a doorway. Over the threshold is a holoform: a pig with wings, circled by the legend *"Hog Heaven! Home Of The True Hamburger"*.

109 INT. HOG HEAVEN - DAY

Fast food outlets have evidently changed little. Promotional posters in 3D: *"Ham Slam"*, *"Porker Forkers"*, *"Bacon Blitz"*.

Service counter, seating area. Ester is looking around like Alice In Wonderland. Lincoln comes up, out of breath, edgy-

LINCOLN
I told you to stay with me.

ESTER
(innocent, plaintive)
I'm hungry.

LINCOLN
Okay. Okay...

He nods, realizing he is too. He plants Ester in a seat and looks around. People stand in line transacting, receiving food trays. Not unlike nutrition plaza. Lincoln ventures to the counter. He offers the blue card hopefully. THE SERVICE CLERK looks at him-

THE SERVICE CLERK
Are you gonna tell me what you want?

LINCOLN
(beat, no other reference)
What are my options?

THE SERVICE CLERK
Knock yourself out, buddy.

He indicates a menu above. Lincoln assimilates, looking up at the menu. Understanding now, his face lifts to almost a smile. It's the first time he's been given an unrestricted choice.

110 INT. SEATING AREA - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Lincoln returns to Ester with a tray of food and drink. She's staring off again, distant. He puts a burger and drink cup in front of her. She seems not to notice. He tries to engage her-

LINCOLN
I asked the man how to get to the terminal. He said it's not far.

But Ester just keeps staring, her brow now furrowing as A LITTLE GIRL skips past, maybe 11, sipping a soda. Now Lincoln sees her too and is transfixed. Now the little girl notices the strangers, staring at her. She hurries onward, uncomfortable. Lincoln and Ester's eyes follow. It's the first time they've seen a child.

111 EXT. PHOENIX TERMINAL - DAY

A low rumble. A plume of smoke. A sudden eruption of fire. A bird rises from the flames and a phoenix spreads its wings. Widening, we reveal this is a holoform over the terminal entrance.

Union Station now looks more like Grand Central. A huge granite facade, a covered colonnade linking to pedestrian bridges at the corners. Here, in the flow of figures, we make out Lincoln and Ester, resembling tourists. Then, a short distance behind, we spot two more figures. The hobo and his timorous dog. Following.

112 INT. CONCOURSE - TERMINAL - DAY

Vaulted. Arched windows, mosaiced in polarized glass. Sunlight falls in filtered shafts. Footfalls echo off polished granite. Lincoln and Ester scan around. Ester looks daunted by the space. Lincoln looks focused. He sees people in line, transacting.

113 INT. TICKET WINDOW - DAY

The sign on the window reads "Tickets". Lincoln assimilates. The word is familiar. He steps up to the counter with Ester. A TICKET CLERK - female, immaculately groomed - greets them with a glossy smile. Lincoln offers her the blue card. She seems not to notice.

THE TICKET CLERK

Welcome to Phoenix Union Station. What is your date of travel, sir?

Lincoln has to think. Dates mean nothing to him. He ventures-

LINCOLN

Now...

THE TICKET CLERK

And what is your destination?

LINCOLN

Out of state.

THE TICKET CLERK

I'm sorry. Could you repeat that?

LINCOLN

We want to go out of state.

THE TICKET CLERK

I'm sorry. Could you repeat that?

VOICE (O.S.)

Like talking to a wall, ain't it?

Lincoln and Ester turn to look. The interceder is pale, bald, wearing leathers. A stranger to them, we recognize him as DIGGS-

DIGGS

Holoserve. Cheaper than flesh and blood but nothing between the ears.

Diggs demonstrates, wafting his hand across the ticket counter. It cuts through the ticket clerk with a holographic ripple.

DIGGS

First time I used one of these, I asked her out on a date...

He grins genially, examining their faces, verifying his quarry. Lincoln examines the pale man. The sense of danger is welling-

LINCOLN

What do you want?

DIGGS

Just wanted to help, that's all.

Diggs shrugs, disarming, trying to win them over, nice and easy per the mandate. Then he notices the eyes of his male quarry. The pupils, black and dilating. Suddenly the male jerks away, like a shying horse, drawing the female with him. Diggs, unperturbed, makes no attempt to follow. Turning his back on them, he touches a device concealed in his ear canal, a miniature two-way radio-

DIGGS (INTO RADIO)

Burdie, it's them. East exit.

114 EXT. TERMINAL - DAY

Lincoln and Ester emerge into the colonnade, rejoining the flow of figures. Lincoln presses the pace, alert, darting looks back. The pale man doesn't appear to be following. But the sense of danger is spurring him to gain distance. Ester, vicarious to the danger, stays close to Lincoln's side, scurrying to keep up. Neither of them notices the grey vehicle sliding up on them, kerbside. A commercial transit van known as a "cutter", it's a common sight on the streets. The driver leans out of the window - hair tied back, dressed in buckskins, we recognize BURDON-

BURDON

You folks need a ride?

Lincoln and Ester turn to look. The dark giant is just another stranger, cast in a demeanor of casual inquiry. He's offering an opportunity to gain distance but Lincoln remains hesitant. The sense of danger, turbulent, hard to read. Burdon sugars the way-

BURDON

Private cab. No state surcharge...

He taps a button and the side-door slips open. Lincoln looks into the lightless cavity, wavering, uncertain. Ester, hugging close, nervous. Figures passing, jostling them toward the cavity. The dark giant, looking on expectantly. The pause stretching, then-

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey! What the fuck are you doing, man?

Back down the colonnade, THE HOBO is gesticulating to Burdon-

THE HOBO

I told you! They went inside!

The hobo doesn't see Lincoln and Ester, unwitting that he's just betrayed himself as their shadow... and Burdon as their predator. His dog starts barking. Lincoln starts backing away with Ester, his eyes blackening, the danger surging, the dog barking, the giant's face dropping, the elements converging... They bolt.

BURDON

Shit!

BURDON JAMS INTO REVERSE - but his pursuit is cut short by a parked vehicle - he swings a look back, jabbing his earpiece-

BURDON (INTO RADIO)

North Corner! North Corner!

LINCOLN AND ESTER RACE UP THE COLONNADE - against the flow of figures - darting and weaving like fish swimming upstream --

DIGGS BURSTS FROM THE NORTH EXIT - launching up the north side of the terminal - thinner foot traffic here, faster going --

LINCOLN AND ESTER SLOWING - the flow massing under the portico - they peel through - the holoforn phoenix rumbling overhead --

DIGGS TURNING THE NORTH CORNER - pausing to touch his earpiece - now launching south down the colonnade - towards the portico - jerking a pair of handcuffs from his belt, ready for the snatch--

LINCOLN AND ESTER GAINING PACE - past the portico now, the way opening - Lincoln's eyes flaring - a face in the distance ahead - the pale man - he swings Ester around - doubling back to find --

BURDON COMING UP BEHIND - the flow of figures, no obstacle - parting at his thunderous onset - his quarry, stopped and staring at him - almost upon them - handcuffs at the ready--

LINCOLN FREEZES - caught between the dark giant and the pale man - Ester cringing to his side - the dark giant charging up on them - sunlight on metal - the sight of the handcuffs - TRIGGERING HIM--

LINCOLN GRABS ESTER - swinging her off the sidewalk - lowering her into the lodeway - leaping down to join her - lode poles pulsing, thrumming - rivets on their denims, rattling from the polarity - traffic soaring past on lode-stream, chest-high -

DARTING OUT INTO TRAFFIC - Lincoln leads Ester by the hand like a child - across the lanes, dodging, weaving through the gaps - claxons blaring, deafening - sunflashes, blinding - a sudden shadow - a huge freight truck bearing down, no gaps ahead --

LINCOLN DRAGS ESTER TO THE GROUND - both flattening against the concrete lode-bed - the shadow engulfing them - the truck's hull runners shearing narrowly over their heads - the rush of air, sweeping off Lincoln's ballcap - rousing a storm of dust--

LINCOLN AND ESTER CHOKING - crawling onward through the dust - hull runners scudding overhead - maybe only a foot of clearance - buoy cables whipping around like cheesewire - onwards, crawling across the concrete - fighting their way across the lode-stream--

BURDON WATCHING from the sidewalk where Lincoln and Ester first dropped, scouring the trench for a sight of them. Now he spots them, climbing up onto the sidewalk the far side of the street.

Diggs now arrives at his side, sweating, out of breath. Now seeing their quarry take off up the far side of the street, he turns to his lumberous partnet, fury mixed with incredulity-

DIGGS

Why the *fuck* didn't you go after them?!

Burdon just looks at him, displaying the metal brace on his forearm. Diggs, out of sheer frustration, gives him a pounding shove-

DIGGS

Fuck!

115 EXT. ALLEY - DAY

The refuge of shadow. The alley is divided by a lodeway and the walls on each side are juttred with dumpsters. Lincoln and Ester run up the narrowed strip of sidewalk, forced into single file.

A huge shape looms ahead. A garbage vehicle known as a "scow". Like a leviathan spreading its tentacles, the scow's tube-arrays dock with the dumpsters and start sucking the contents out.

Lincoln glances back to find Ester has stopped and is cringing away from the tentacled monster. He returns to her, his eyes flicking around, aware that their real predators are close-

LINCOLN

We have to keep going.

He takes Ester's hand, drawing her onward. But Ester recoils, shaking off his grip. Now he looks at her more closely. She's panting, shuddering, fraught with trauma. Her voice is haunted-

ESTER

Please... Please, I want to go back...

She shrinks into the shadows, shaking her head. The hatchling wanting to return to the nest. Lincoln meets her eye, deeply-

LINCOLN

Those men - that's what they want too.

Ester holds his gaze, chest heaving. Then looks back towards the alley mouth. Her fingers reach for her belly, clawing a little. Then her eyes lower, assimilating, reason reasserting its heavy grip. Lincoln senses her turmoil. His voice is soft but sturdy-

LINCOLN

We have to keep going, Ester.

Ester looks up at him again. The forlorn air seems to have faded. Her eyes, grimly set. Her face, a little haggard. Older somehow. She takes Lincoln's hand and together they head off up the alley.

116 EXT. ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

The alley mouth darkens as a vehicle turns off the street. The grey cutter moves through the shadows, prowling and shark-like.

117 INT. CUTTER - DRIVING

The drone of resistors. The throbbing glow of the drive console, a panoply of instrumentation. Burdon steers in silence, Diggs beside him, edgy, intent, combing the shadows for their quarry.

DIGGS

Sunnabitch! What the *fuck* do we do now, huh? They could be anywhere...

BURDON

We go back to the office and run 'em.

DIGGS

As what? John and Jane Doe?

BURDON

We ask the guy.

DIGGS

Yeah, let's tell him we couldn't hack it in kindergarten. See how long him and his ten platinum stick around.

He fires a barbed look. Burdon absorbs this, unflinched, thinking-

BURDON
It was blue, right?

DIGGS
What?

BURDON
They were using a blue currency card.

118 EXT. STREET - DAY

Lincoln and Ester walk up the street. Wary of attention, they go with the flow of figures, eyes peeled for predators. The sights of the city now seem hostile. Faces flash past, dead-eyed in sunglasses. Traffic rushes like steel rapids. Storefronts construct a black wall. Hologram billboards loom, mocking, half-noticed:

--A woman in a bathroom, adjusting her sexy negligee; a crack in the door shows a man in bed, waiting; the woman closes the door and picks up what looks like a toothpaste tube; she arches her eyebrow; "*F.I.G. Feminine Impulse Gel... Because who needs him?*"

--A cemetery under a grim overcast sky; suddenly a frisbee flies across frame; an old woman, dressed like a teenager, catches it; she tosses it to an old man dressed likewise; a text super "*Death Sucks!*", a sting, "*New Gaza Healthcare: Your Life Is Our Life.*"

Lincoln and Ester stop at the corner. They look around, blindly, no coordinates, no frame of reference. Urban canyons, identical, Gordian and chasmic. Passing figures jostle. Then Lincoln spots something across the street. It looks like an over-sized phone booth. Its beacon flashes; "*C.I.N. - CITY INFORMATION NETWORK.*"

119 INT. CIN BOOTH - DAY

A flourish of music greets Lincoln and Ester as they enter. The fanfare conjures a holoform in mid-air. A cartoon rattlesnake, benignly rendered, welcomes them with a clownish, fanged smile:

THE SNAKE
Hi there! I'm Tattletail! Whatever you want to know, wherever you want to go, I got the answers! Let's look at the menu!

A set of text frames appear: "*Residential Listings*", "*Business Listings*", "*Transport Listings*", "*Hotel Listings*". Lincoln assimilates. The terminologies are not unfamiliar.

THE SNAKE (CONT'D)
Now let's make a selection!

LINCOLN
 (beat, venturing)
 Transport...

THE SNAKE
 Okay! Let me open that directory for
 you! I'll be with you in two shakes!

The snake rattles accordingly and coils in a holding pattern. Then a tomographic map of the city appears. A red dot plants itself under a text flag "You Are Here!". Then other red dots scatter across the map, each flagging with transportation icons.

120 INT. CUTTER - STREETS - DRIVING - DAY

Burdon steers calmly, scanning the streets. Diggs impatiently bashes the keys of a holocom on the drive console. A holoframe hovers, snowed with static. Then a secretary's face appears - sagging, older, primed and painted young. Her name is JANEEN-

JANEEN (ON HOLOCOM)
 Diggs & Burdon Bond Agency.

DIGGS
 Janeen, where the fuck have you been?

JANEEN (ON HOLOCOM)
 Beauty therapy. I got a date tonight.

DIGGS
 Oh, Jesus... Listen, I want you to
 punch into the currency stream for me.
 Sweep for blue card transactions.

JANEEN (ON HOLOCOM)
 You're kidding me, right? You have any
 idea how long that's going to take?

DIGGS
 I want serial numbers, batched and
 cross-referenced. Start from Union
 Station and work your way out...

Before he can object he taps a key. The holoframe blinks out.

121 EXT. BUS STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

A surging sound. A surface of water. A burst of spray. A dolphin leaps from the waves and hangs suspended. Text scrolls around: "Get Out Of State & Out Of Mind - Ride the Grey Dolphin Line!" This is the next incarnation of the greyhound. The blue facade, crested into waves. We make out Lincoln and Ester, now looking more like transients than tourists, dirty, worn and exhausted.

122 INT. CONCOURSE - BUS STATION

Low roof. Flat lighting. The faces here seem less threatening, the young and the low-income. Lincoln and Ester look around. Not unlike the train terminal. People standing in line, transacting.

123 INT. TICKET WINDOW

Lincoln and Ester step up to the ticket window. A TICKET CLERK - male, immaculately groomed - greets them with a polished smile.

TICKET CLERK

Welcome to Grey Dolphin Bus Lines.
What is your destination, please?

Lincoln squints at him. Then wafts his hand across the counter. The ticket clerk flinches at the impact. Then composes himself. A trace of camp as he smiles bashfully at the rugged customer-

TICKET CLERK

It's okay. Really. I get that a lot.
I'm sorry, now where were we again?

LINCOLN

I want to get out of state. Now.

TICKET CLERK

Believe me, I know how you feel. So
where did you want to go exactly?

LINCOLN

Out of state...

TICKET CLERK

Just wherever the wind takes you, huh?

LINCOLN

Where's that?

TICKET CLERK

Well, if it was me, out to the west
coast. It's perfect this time of year.

Lincoln nods, liking the sound of this. The ticket clerk smiles, enjoying the acceptance of his suggestion, he ventures hopefully-

TICKET CLERK

Travelling alone, are we?

LINCOLN

No. With her.

He gestures, then realizes Ester is gone from his side again.

He scans the faces. The clerk, disappointed, taps some keys.

TICKET COLLECTOR

Two adults, let me see... I'm afraid I
can't get you seats till the morning.

124 INT. FOOD SERVICE AREA - BUS STATION

A grill bar. A rank of vending machines. Ester moves through the seating area as if drawn. Now over the ambient noise, we isolate the cry of a baby. Ester is following the sound to its source. She finds a Mexican woman shushing her infant. The woman looks up and smiles. Ester just stands there, awe-struck. Lincoln now comes up to reclaim her. He's about to ask why she wandered off when she turns to him. He sees her eyes are brimming with tears. Tears of joy and sorrow. It's the first time she's seen a baby.

125 EXT. STREET - DUSK

The winged pig flutters over the doors of "Hog Heaven". The milling customers are suddenly parted by Diggs, bursting out through the doors. He leaps into the grey cutter, parked kerbside. It peels out with a flash of its halogen eyes.

126 INT. CUTTER - DRIVING - DUSK

Burdon steers, glancing inquisitively at his partner. Diggs taps the holocom, urgently, galvanized. The holoframe resolves snowed with static. Janeen's face appears. Less primped, disgruntled-

JANEEN (ON HOLOCOM)

Diggs & Burdon Bond Agency.

DIGGS

We got a positive on the serial number.
Punch in and pull up the transactions.
Start with the last hour and work back.

JANEEN

Great. So I got to park my ass in
front of a screen all night?

DIGGS

It's a platinum bond, Janeen. We get
this, I'll buy you a new ass, okay?

He grins at Burdon. The thrill of the chase glows in his eyes.

127 INT. WAITING AREA - BUS STATION - NIGHT

A blue glass partition wall looks out onto the depot. More like a marina with an embarcadero and a row of docks. "Liners" slot in and out, their nautical trim making them seem like ferries.

Lincoln and Ester sit waiting. Lincoln, rigid, watchful. Ester, gazing across at the Mexican woman, who as the infant cradled asleep. Ester glances wistfully at Lincoln. Then she frowns-

ESTER
Lincoln, what is that? On your face?

Lincoln turns, touching his face. He feels stubble there. For the first time. His body is naturalizing but it feels unnatural to him. Ester reaches out and runs her fingers across his cheek. Lincoln stiffens a little, unused to this type of contact. But her touch is gentle and the contact is warming. Their eyes slowly meet, flickering, something passing between them. Then Ester's face contorts slightly. She emits a shallow cough.

LINCOLN
Are you alright?

Ester clears her throat. But another cough follows.

ESTER
My throat... it feels dry...

LINCOLN
Okay... I'll get you some water.

128 INT. FOOD SERVICE AREA - NIGHT

Empty. The grill bar is closed. Only the vending machines are active. Lincoln considers them. Not unlike those he used to know. He finds one that offers water bottles. The sign reads "Arctic Melt". He pulls out his blue card and looks for the slot. Then pauses, picking up his reflection in the glass. He examines the shadowy growth on his face. Then he notices his eyes. They seem to be darkening. The pupils, welling open. Then he feels it. The sense of danger, surging up like a geyser.

129 INT. DEPARTURE AREA

Ester sits waiting, anxious now, coughing persistently. Hearing footfalls, she looks round. But the face that greets her is not Lincoln. It's the pale man, the one who chased them. Before she can react, he forcefully pulls her upright, tapping his earpiece-

DIGGS (ON RADIO)
Piece of cake, Burdie. Jane Doe's in the bag. Keep an eye out for John-Boy.

Ester looks around in panic. Faces turn but none of them are Lincoln's. Diggs confronts the spectators, flashing a badge -

DIGGS
Bond recovery... state license.

He marches his female quarry towards the exit. Now she starts to struggle and he jerks her back, slapping a cuff onto her wrist-

DIGGS
Play nice, little girl. Now you want
to tell me where your boyfriend is?

LINCOLN (O.S.)
Behind you.

DIGGS
What?

-THUD- LINCOLN HAMMERS HIS FIST into the pale man as he turns -
dropping him, flat-on-his-ass - pulling Ester away from him -

DIGGS JERKS OUT THE RAINMAKER - quick to his feet - more insulted
than hurt - targeting his quarry - who suddenly duck down as--

-BOOM- DIGGS FIRES - A WOMAN SCREAMS - the Mexican woman - her
face, peppered with tranquilizer core - her baby starts crying--

ESTER FROZEN - horrified by the screaming woman - the bloody,
slack grimace - the baby bawling - Lincoln dragging her down-

-BOOM- THE BLAST OF THE THUNDERBOLT - Burdon positioned behind
them - narrowly missing his target - hitting the partition wall -

-CRASH- THE PARTITION WALL EXPLODES in a blinding electrical
discharge - shattering into a sudden TEMPEST OF GLASS SHARDS -

LINCOLN AND ESTER SPIN ROUND to see the pale man retargeting -
the dark giant reloading - exit blocked, they lunge towards --

THE PARTITION WALL - kicking through the hole in the glass -
Ester's last glimpse of the screaming woman - the howling baby -

130 EXT. BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

LINCOLN AND ESTER LEAP OUT onto the embarcadero - running -
faces blur past - liners flash by with glaring halogens--

DIGGS LEAPS OUT AFTER THEM - rainmaker poised - the embarcadero
glutted with passengers - he can't get a bead on his quarry--

LINCOLN AND ESTER VAULTING over the scattered luggage - the
crowd thinning - the canopy opening onto the street beyond--

DIGGS RIGHT ON THEIR TAIL - people screaming, parting as they
see his weapon - the firing line clearing - he levels aim and--

METRO PD OFFICER (O.S.)
Metro PD! Drop it!

DIGGS
I'm a bond agent!

METRO PD OFFICER
I said drop the fucking weapon!

Diggs sees his quarry now escaping. With a scowl, he complies. He laces his fingers, tapping his earpiece in the process-

DIGGS (INTO RADIO)
Northbound on Third. Get 'em, Burdie -
and take off the fucking gloves...

CUT TO:

131 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

THE GREY CUTTER VEERS ROUND A CORNER - Burdon at the wheel - his quarry visible ahead - he jams the throttle - revs rising -

LINCOLN AND ESTER SPRINT UP THE SIDEWALK - disorientation - the sudden diaspora of lights and darkness - the sharp acoustics -

TRAFFIC SWERVING - CLAXONS BLARING - the cutter hurtling up the street, relentlessly - its halogen eyes, burning, growing -

LINCOLN AND ESTER RACING FOR THE END OF THE BLOCK - towards a pedestrian bridge - trying to outpace the cutter -

THE GREY CUTTER CLOSING - Burdon punching a button - the side window slides open - he levels his thunderbolt, angling a shot-

LINCOLN AND ESTER VEER LEFT - up onto the pedestrian bridge - rising above the traffic - claxons blaring beneath as --

THE GREY CUTTER PLOUGHS INTO THE INTERSECTION - banking into a u-turn - vehicles braking to avoid collision - LIGHTS, CLAXONS -

LINCOLN AND ESTER - turmoil raging behind them - a glimpse of the cutter regaining pursuit - Lincoln sees an opening ahead--

132 EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

LINCOLN PULLS ESTER INTO THE SHADOWS - the sidewalk narrowing - they run onward, glancing off dumpsters - DULL BOOMS OF METAL -

A FLOOD OF HALOGENS - the cutter banking sharply into the alley - pouring on the speed - the quarry trapped in its headlights--

LINCOLN AND ESTER - nowhere to run - THE LIGHTS GROWING - THE RISING DRONE OF RESISTORS - Lincoln sees another opening --

133 EXT. PEDESTRIAN ALLEY - NIGHT

LINCOLN PULLS ESTER INTO THE DARKNESS - a narrow access, barely lit, hard to see - a sudden dead-end - they SLAM INTO A BARRIER--

A CHAINLINK FENCE - the links shuddering - Lincoln looks up and sees it's scalable - claws into the links - STARTS CLIMBING-

ESTER TRYING TO CLIMB - rattled by coughing - fighting to breathe - her limbs shaking - her muscles failing - then--

-BOOM- A BLINDING ELECTRICAL DISCHARGE - SUDDENLY THE FENCE IS ALIVE WITH ELECTRICITY - BURNING FINGERS JITTER ACROSS THE LINKS-

LINCOLN AT THE TOP OF THE FENCE - jolted by the sudden shock - muscles in reflex - falling - landing the far side of the fence--

ESTER STILL CLIMBING - the jolt instantly toppling her back - landing the near side of the fence - more rattled than hurt --

BURDON RUNNING TOWARDS THEM - thunderbolt smoking from the shot-

LINCOLN ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE FENCE - recovering from the fall--

ESTER ON THE NEAR SIDE OF THE FENCE - cowering, coughing -

BURDON JERKS HER UP BY THE HAIR - like a rapacious viking - he looks through the fence at Lincoln - sniffing her, almost bestial-

BURDON

Go ahead. I'll look after her.

LINCOLN'S EYES FLICKERING DARKLY - jaw clenching - the sense of danger urging him to run - but Ester is in the giant's grips -

ESTER CLAWING TO BREAK FREE - coughing, rasping - her fingers snag on the giant's arm-brace - TUGGING WITH ALL HER STRENGTH--

BURDON YOWLING AT THE SUDDEN PAIN - lashing out - flinging Ester into the fence - dropping the thunderbolt - CLUTCHING HIS ARM--

LINCOLN LEAPING ONTO THE FENCE - scrambling up the link - the dark giant momentarily off-guard - HE VAULTS OVER THE TOP --

-THUD- BURDON SPINS ROUND - takes the full brunt of Lincoln's impact - overbalancing - THEY CRASH TO THE GROUND -

LINCOLN STRUGGLES UPRIGHT - winded, but forced to face the dark giant - who is already on his feet, his mighty fist SWINGING OUT-

-THUD- LINCOLN TAKES A PUNCH TO THE JAW - recoils, reciprocates throwing a left hook - hitting hard but the giant barely flinches-

-THUD-THUD- BURDON POUNDS INTO HIM - a storm of punches - his quarry, ducking and blocking - now backed up against the fence--

ESTER RETRIEVING THE THUNDERBOLT - trying to work the mechanism - coughing - hands shaking - accidentally touching the trigger -

-BOOM- THE SHOT BLASTS INTO THE AIR - enough of a distraction for Lincoln - he lands the giant with A BONE-JARRING LEFT HOOK-

BURDON KEELS OVER INTO THE WALL - cracking the back of his head - his knees buckling - sliding down - just catching sight of--

LINCOLN AND ESTER SCRAMBLING UP OVER THE FENCE - and then the quarry is lost from sight in A DOWNPOUR OF ELECTRICAL SPARKS.

134 EXT. BACKSTREET - NIGHT

SIRENS WAILING IN THE DISTANCE. Lincoln and Ester race down the sidewalk, along a construction hoarding. Ester slows, doubling over, rasping. Lincoln looks at her, her lips, blue, her face, pale. The sirens, getting louder. He sees a gap in the hoarding-

135 EXT. ENCANTO PARK - NIGHT

Lincoln and Ester emerge through the gap onto a derelict tract. A once public park, now a construction site. Mounds and craters of earth. Dim shapes of huge vehicles, like sleeping dragons. Patches of parkland, as yet untouched. Bowed palms, dead grass, a stagnant lagoon, a dull mirror for the ascendant moon. On its shoreline is a dilapidated construct that was once a boathouse.

136 INT. BOATHOUSE - ENCANTO PARK - NIGHT

The refuge of shadow. The collapsed roof allowing streams and puddles of moonlight. Lincoln helps Ester onto a rotted bench. She slumps down, exhausted, Lincoln watches her, helplessly. She's fighting for breath, wheezing and coughing in deep rasps.

ESTER

I can't... I can't breathe... my throat... it's so... dry...

LINCOLN

I'll find you some water.

He looks around blindly. Some junk in the corner. He rummages, finds a rusted metal box. Pries it open, empties the contents. Gauzes, band-aids - evidently a first-aid box - then a bottle. He opens it, sniffs. It smells pungent. Alcohol, not water. Ester suddenly starts sobbing. Lincoln returns to her side-

LINCOLN

It's going to be okay, Ester.

ESTER

No... no, it isn't...

LINCOLN

I'll find you some water, okay?

Ester looks up at him, wheezing, tears streaming from her eyes-

ESTER

And then what, Lincoln?

LINCOLN

I'll find another way. Out of state.

ESTER

And then what? What if they find us?

LINCOLN

Then we'll keep going.

ESTER

I can't... I can't run anymore...

Ester folds over, sobbing and coughing at the same time. Pitiful to watch. Lincoln crouches, gaining her eyeline, very deliberate-

LINCOLN

We'll keep going till we get there.

Ester traps a sob, reading his eyes, something reviving in her-

ESTER

The Island... You mean, The Island?

Lincoln answers with a brief smile. If this will keep her going then the truth is redundant. He eases her out of the moment-

LINCOLN

Now I'm going to get some water. But I want you to stay here. It'll be safer.

Ester wipes away her tears, sniffing. Her breaths, calming.

ESTER

Don't go yet. Stay with me, Lincoln. Stay with me for a little while.

Lincoln looks puzzled by Ester's request. Even more puzzled as she rests her head on his shoulder, nestling into his neck. He feels her against him. The warmth spreading through him again. His arm reaching, as if of its own accord, closing around her. It feels right somehow. And there he stays, holding her, looking out across the dereliction. And the moon rises over Encanto Park.

137 EXT. METRO PD STATION - NIGHT

The holoform logo of The Metro PD glows over the threshold. Diggs exits with a dark glower. The cutter is waiting kerbside.

138 INT. CUTTER - DRIVING - NIGHT

Diggs climbs in an Burdon steers out into traffic. The thrill of the chase is gone from them now. Both seem equally grim and determined. Diggs taps the holocom. A holoframe resolves, snows with static. Then Janeen's face appears, dishevelled, bitter-

JANEEN (ON HOLOCOM)
What the fuck do you want now?

DIGGS
(very calm, very cold)
Punch into the currency stream, close the net on downtown and keep the search active. The next time they use the card, I want to be right on top of them...

Off his icy tone, Janeen nods without retort. Diggs hits a key and her face blinks out. And the cutter prowls into the night.

139 EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

The winged pig flutters over the doors of "Hog Heaven". Another franchise on a more downtrodden street. Lincoln emerges with a bag of food and drink. He considers the blue card. The reservoir, now close to the bottom, his resources almost exhausted. With a look of foreboding, he pockets the card and turns the corner. And suddenly stops in his tracks. But it's not a vehicle that he sees. Or a predator. His eyes are fixed on a holoframe billboard:

--A football player in montage; pummeling into a defensive line; running for a touchdown; gyrating in the endzone; spinning in an NFL podium shot, super; "*Nobody Stops The Juggernaut!*"; a team logo, super; "*Come See The Phoenix Admirals! Rulers of the AFC!*"

Lincoln recognizes the player's face but it's not possible. He waits for the loop to restart. There it is again. The face of Starkweather Two-Delta. Incredulous, he stops a pedestrian-

LINCOLN
The man, the man up there. Who is he?

PEDESTRIAN
What planet 'you been living on?
That's the Juggernaut, brother.

LINCOLN
The juggernaut...

PEDESTRIAN

Jamil "The Juggernaut" Starkweather - highest rushing total in the league. 'Least till that injury blew out his gut. Now the doctors are saying he'll be back on his feet next season. Those fuckers sure can work miracles, huh?

Lincoln doesn't respond. The pedestrian shrugs and heads on, writing him off. Lincoln lingers, staring up at the billboard.

140 INT. CIN BOOTH - NIGHT

The flourish of music greets Lincoln as he enters. The cartoon rattlesnake appears and smiles his clownish, fanged smile:

THE SNAKE

Hi there! I'm Tattletail! Whatever you want to know, wherever you want to go, I got the answers! Let's look at the menu!

The set of text frames appears: "*Residential Listings*", "*Business Listings*", "*Transport Listings*", "*Hotel Listings*".

THE SNAKE

Now let's make a selection!

A heavy pause. Lincoln's voice comes with a slight tremor.

LINCOLN

Residential...

THE SNAKE

Please give me the name.

LINCOLN

Starkweather...

THE SNAKE

Okay! Let me find that listing for you! I'll be with you in two shakes!

The snake rattles and coils. Then a headshot appears with the face of Jamil Starkweather, scaled across with a red line.

THE SNAKE

Starkweather, Jamil... I'm sorry! This listing is blocked from the directory!

Lincoln stands, darkly intent on the face. Now irrefutably the same face he saw in his life below. The snake shakes its rattle-

THE SNAKE

You want me to find another listing?

Lincoln looks at the snake, flicking its tongue, coiling.

FADE TO BLACK.

141 EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - MORNING

A downtrodden neighborhood. The buildings look like remnants from our own era. A scruffy man slouches up to a gated storefront. He slots a key into a lock panel and the gate rolls up, squealing. We widen to a vehicle parked kerbside. A familiar grey cutter.

142 INT. STORE - MORNING

Lights flicker on to disclose a gunshop. The array of firearms as fathomless as their purpose. The scruffy gunshop owner slouches inside. Diggs and Burdon enter on his heels. He yawns at them-

GUNSHOP OWNER

We ain't open for another hour.

DIGGS

Yeah, well we ain't in the market.

GUNSHOP OWNER

Everyone's in the market, pal. One end of the barrel or the other...

DIGGS

We're chasing up a currency record from last night. These two ring a bell?

Diggs displays two digital slides. The owner pauses, suspicious.

GUNSHOP OWNER

What are you? Cops? Lawyers?

Diggs answers by jerking out the rainmaker. The twin barrels aimed at his head, the gunshop owner loses his cool a little-

GUNSHOP OWNER

Him, I remember... Came in just before closing... wanted a shooter but didn't have no ID... settled for one of these.

He displays a HUNTING KNIFE, unsheathing it, showing the blade.

DIGGS

Did he give you a name?

GUNSHOP OWNER

No.

DIGGS

Did he say where he was going?

GUNSHOP OWNER

No.

Diggs cocks the hammer. The owner flinches. Then, off the knife-

GUNSHOP OWNER

There was one thing. Kinda weird.
He wanted to know how to use it...

143 EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

An apartment building towers overhead, vaguely ominous. Lincoln approaches the entrance with Ester. We now see he has a band-aid covering his crosshatch. He takes Ester briefly aside, teasing some tresses over hers. As she gently smooths down her hair, Ester catches his eye. A look flickers between them. Then-

DOORMAN (O.S.)

Fancy dress, was it, sir?

A DOORMAN is looking at them like they just rolled out of a club he wouldn't be seen dead in. Off their flustered looks, he gives an apologetic smile. Then opens the door and holds it for them. Lincoln reaches for Ester's hand. Then stiffly leads her inside.

144 INT. CORRIDOR - AN UPPER FLOOR - DAY

The doors are set with small glowing orbs at peephole level. Like eyeballs, watching, as Lincoln and Ester proceed up the corridor. They stop at a door. Lincoln checks the number. Pauses heavily. Then looks for some type of doorbell. As his eyes cross the orb, it seems to blink. Then comes a sound of disengaging locks. Then the door swings open. Lincoln flinches, taken by surprise. Then frowns as he sees there is no one on the other side of the door.

145 INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Lincoln enters, wary, scanning around. A living room. Framed pictures. A sofa, chairs. A coffee table, empty bottles, cigarette packs, a full ashtray. A bureau, some paperwork. Silence, stillness. No sign of life, no sense of danger. Lincoln moves across to the bureau and starts leafing through the papers. Ester ventures in through the door, curious-

ESTER

What are you looking for?

LINCOLN

I don't know. Something. Just wait there and make sure nobody's coming.

As he leafs the papers, Ester waits dutifully by the door. Her eyes wander across the framed pictures. Then narrow onto a 3D photograph. A college boxing team photo, grinning cup winners.

ESTER
Look at this...

Lincoln returns to her. Ester points to the photo. A face in the row, blurred but eerily familiar. Lincoln seems not to react. Ester, curiosity piqued, scans the other pictures. She alights on a framed certificate - "Thomas R. Lincoln, Attorney-at-Law".

A MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
What the hell are you doing?

Lincoln turns to confront A MAN in a robe. Disheveled from sleep, grey from a hangover... *the man's face is unmistakably his own.* This is TOM LINCOLN, sponsor of Lincoln Six-Echo, his bleary eyes now widening in disbelief as he recognizes his agnate-

TOM
Oh, Jesus...

Lincoln is better prepared for this encounter but still stunned by the sight of his double in the flesh. Sponsor and agnate stand frozen. The only movement is Ester, her eyes flicking between the same men, fraught, confused. Lincoln breaks the silence-

LINCOLN
Who are you?

Lincoln steps closer, eyes piercing. Tom takes a step back.

TOM
They said... I'd never have to see you.

LINCOLN
Who?

Lincoln takes another step closer. Tom takes another step back.

TOM
The people...

LINCOLN
What people?

Lincoln takes another step closer. Tom stiffens, gathers himself-

TOM
Look, if you don't get out of here right now, I'm calling security...

Lincoln examines him, assimilating. His double seems to be as belligerent as he is. Reasoning now, threat response kicking in. Lincoln draws the hunting knife. Unused to it, he points it like a gun. But it's enough of a threat for Tom, who swallows dryly-

TOM

Why are you here? What do you want?

LINCOLN

I want to know...

Tom grimaces at the ambiguity. That face. *His* face. If not for the pounding headache this would be a bad dream. He lowers onto the sofa. Finds a cigarette and lights up. A drag, mind kicking in. The knife cautioning him. With a slow exhale, he confesses-

TOM

One of the partners at my firm... he told me about it. Gave me a referral. I thought he was joking at first. I went out there, took the sales tour. Even before that I knew it wasn't a joke. There was this discretion agreement. I never saw anything like it and I've seen a lot. Ironclad... breathe a word and they've got you by the balls. I don't know... There's cancer in my family. Maybe it was just to keep up. All the partners were on the policy.

LINCOLN

The policy?

He looks at his agnate. Then realizes the level of ignorance.

TOM

Christ, you have no idea, do you?

LINCOLN

About what?

Tom drags his cigarette, fingers trembling. He shakes his head-

TOM

I can't fucking do this...

LINCOLN

What are you talking about?

Lincoln moves closer, pointing the knife. Tom flinches, then-

TOM

Insurance. You're an insurance policy.

LINCOLN
What is that?

TOM
Health insurance... medical...

LINCOLN
What does that mean?

TOM
If I get sick... if part of me gets
sick... I take a healthy part from you.

LINCOLN
Why?

TOM
How do you expect me to answer that?
It's just how it works, that's all.

Tom looks at his agnate. The insistent stare. The knife, pointing
at him like a finger. His fear yields to a flicker of anger-

TOM
What do you want? A fucking apology?

LINCOLN
Why do I look like you?

TOM
Because you are me...

LINCOLN
I don't understand.

TOM
Because they made you from my cells...

LINCOLN
Made me?

TOM
(a flare of anger)
That's right. You were made. Cooked up
in a centrifuge like a fucking boiled
egg. Every thought running through your
head, every word coming out of your
mouth, all of it, manufactured, made...

Lincoln frowns, trying to assimilate. Too much to process.

LINCOLN
You... you're the one who made me?

TOM

No.

LINCOLN

Who made me?

TOM

I signed a contract. I can show you.

He gestures to a mirror on the wall. Lincoln steps back but his eyes are unremitting. Tom rises, cautious, crossing to the wall. He opens the mirror to reveal a wall safe. His trembling fingers tap the keypad and the safe hisses open. He draws out a contract folder embossed with a crosshatch. Then offers it to his agnate-

TOM

It's all right there. Who, why...

Lincoln takes the contract folder and starts flipping the pages, reading. A pendulous silence falls. Tom stands watching, smoking nervously. Ester stands by the door, trying to take all this in.

TOM

Look you've got what you wanted. Now why don't you just get out of here?

LINCOLN

(pause, looks at him)

There are men out there, looking for us. I want you to make them stop.

TOM

I can't...

Lincoln sets down the contract and brings up the knife again.

TOM

I *can't*. Look, I'm a lawyer, I know how it works. The contract, everything, it's all laced with confidentiality clauses. It means they don't want this to get out. It means whatever I do, they're not going to stop. You understand?

Lincoln pauses, assimilating. His double's expression indicates that he's telling the truth. Maybe try a more practical request-

LINCOLN

Do you have transport?

TOM

Transport, yes... yes, parked downstairs... Bay 53... Take it...

LINCOLN
And then you'll call security?

Lincoln steps closer, pointing the knife. Tom tries to stay deadpan. The lawyer kicking in. Look them in the eye when you lie-

TOM
I'm not going to call security. I'm
not going to call anybody, okay?

Lincoln looks at his double, reason now yielding to anger. Deep, roiling. Tom looks at his agnate, fear welling, deadpan cracking-

TOM
Look, maybe there's something... maybe
there's a way to cancel the contract...

Lincoln presses the tip of the blade to his double's cheek.

TOM
For Christ's sake! It's not my fault!

Lincoln inches the blade deeper into the trembling face, drawing blood. The anger urging, hungry for more blood. Then suddenly-

ESTER
Lincoln! No!

Lincoln looks at her, the anger interrupted, the knife still in place. He pauses. Then returns to his double. The dreading eyes, the trickle of blood down the face. *His eyes. His face.* A long, foreboding moment. Then suddenly Lincoln lashes out. His fist sends his double flying, falling in a flurry of contract pages. Lincoln stands over him, looking down, like a dominant species. His double is unmoving, unconscious. Lincoln abruptly spins away.

146 INT. ELEVATOR - DESCENDING

The light panel flashes. Lincoln stands grimly, head lowered, trying to fathom the anger roiling within. Ester stares at him, wanly. Both held in the dark tableau. And the elevator descends.

147 INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - DAY

The vehicle parked in bay 53 is a hybrid of sportscar and speedboat, a two-seater known as a "skiff". Lincoln and Ester climb in. Lincoln reviews the drive console, the controls, all of it, meaningless. His eyes cross an orb set in the steering wheel.

The orb seems to blink and suddenly the drive console lights up. Lincoln reviews it. A screen in front of him is flashing: "PILOTING: MANUAL/AUTO?". He assimilates. Then ventures-

LINCOLN

Auto...

The interface processes, then asks: "DESTINATION: NAME/ADDRESS?"

LINCOLN

Out of state... West...

The interface processes, then reports "UNDOCKING". Lincoln and Ester jolt as the skiff shunts forward. Lode-poles pulsing ahead of them, the skiff moves out, as if pulled by a phantom tugboat.

148 EXT. STREET - DAY

The skiff buckets off the ramp into a street inlet. Then stops rocking a little. The interface reports: "ESTABLISHING UPLINK". On another screen, a road map appears. A red dot plants at their point of origin then bleeds into a red line, plotting a course.

The autopilot scans for traffic, then nudges forward on the throttle. The resistors drone, the steering wheel turns and the skiff noses onto the street. Finding its lane, it drops to cruise speed. Lincoln studies the interplay of steering wheel, throttle and brake. Then glances at Ester. She's plunged in thought, staring off. She turns to him with a haggard frown-

ESTER

The man back there... who looked like you... does it mean I have someone too?

Lincoln looks at her blankly, unknowing. Ester stares off again, her brow knotting with unanswered questions. But Lincoln's gaze lingers. Her pale skin, her limpid eyes, her hair fluttering in the breeze. It's the first time he's really seen Ester's beauty.

149 EXT. PHOENIX SKYLINE - DAY

The domes and spires glint in the sunlight. We isolate a glass steeple. A crosshatch insignia. A legend "Sanger Industries".

150 INT. CROWNE'S OFFICE - SANGER INDUSTRIES TOWER - DAY

A corner office with a panoramic view of the city. Crowne sits at a console desk, reviewing some data on a holoframe screen. A knock on the door and HER SECRETARY enters, looking unsettled-

SECRETARY

I just thought I should warn you. I have a sponsor holding. His name's Thomas Lincoln. He sounded... angry.

151 EXT. STREET TUNNEL - DAY

The skiff plunges into the shadow of an underpass. The interface flashes: "UPLINK INTERRUPT... AUTOPILOT DISENGAGING". Lincoln sits up, confused. The skiff is now slowing, drifting as if cut loose. He studies the controls again. Positions one hand on the steering wheel, the other on the throttle. Then he nudges it.

The skiff lurches, veering out of its lane. Another vehicle zips narrowly past, rocking them with its invisible backwash. Ester looks at Lincoln, suddenly alarmed. Lincoln tries again, firm on the wheel, gentle on the throttle. And the skiff eases forward.

152 EXT. MOTEL - DOWNTOWN PHOENIX - LATE AFTERNOON

Dismal. The kind of place that precedes a life on the street. We push in on a window, cracked glass, the drapes closed within.

153 INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Gloomy, musty. A "holovision" plays some type of NFL recap. But Scheer is not watching it. He is lying on the bed, staring at the ceiling, motionless. Off a beeping sound, he stirs. He taps a holocom on the nightstand. A holoframe appears, resolving:

MERRICK (ON HOLOCOM)
Karl, there's been a complication.

154 EXT. INTERSTATE - SUNSET

The sunset melts gold across the horizon as the skiff cruises westward. Eight lanes of lodeway rake through the salt flats. Lincoln is driving more confidently now. Ester is huddled asleep beside him. Suddenly the skiff starts to slow again. Lincoln reviews the controls. Throttle, forward, foot, off the brake. The interface flashes: "REMOTE LOCKDOWN ENGAGING". The skiff is steering itself onto the hard shoulder. It now pulls to a dead halt. Ester is woken by the sudden inertia. She opens her eyes and looks around. They've stopped in the middle of nowhere.

155 EXT. THE SALT FLATS - SUNSET

The sun sinks in a slow pink haze. Lincoln and Ester walk across the salt flats. Visible in the distance is a walled settlement.

156 EXT. THE HERITAGE PARK - SUNSET

An adobe wall culminates at an arched wooden gateway. Lincoln and Ester approach. They haven't walked far but Ester is already short of breath. As they near the gateway a holoserve appears, like a sentry - Native American, buckskins, feathered headdress and facepaint. His voice seems as old as the wind-

THE INDIAN HOLOGRAM

Welcome to Salt River Heritage Park,
home to the Hohokam Nation for over two
thousand years. The park is now closed.
Please come back during opening hours,
9am to 5pm, Monday through Saturday...

Ester steps closer. With the sun hazing through, the holoserve
seems angelic or ghostly. She's examining his striped facepaint-

ESTER

He has marks on his face like us.

She turns to Lincoln with a flowering smile. Then rushes up to
the gateway, suddenly galvanized, squeezing through a gap.

157 EXT. THE HERITAGE PARK - SUNSET

A ring of Native American pueblos. Pithouses and coursed adobes,
recreations and preserved ruins. Ester rushes around the ring,
looking into the pueblos as if expecting to find them inhabited.
She ducks into one of the pithouses. Lincoln follows her inside.

158 INT. PITHOUSE - SUNSET

The mud walls show a skeleton of saguaro ribs, cholla branches.
It's cosy in here, dim. The living area, recreated with mats and
pottery. Lincoln finds Ester looking around, between excitement
and confusion. She turns to him, her voice wavering, wheezing-

ESTER

Is this... is this place The Island?

Lincoln answers with a softly negating look. Ester's face slowly
falls, the energy draining from her eyes. She lowers onto one of
the mats and lies down, huddling. She looks up to him, wheezing-

ESTER

I'm tired. Let me rest for a while.

159 EXT. PITHOUSE - NIGHT

Silence prevails but for the faint rattle of Ester's breathing.
Lincoln sits on low stool, in sentinel over her as she sleeps.
In his eyes, we see the weight of foreboding. He doesn't know
what they'll do when she wakes. Of a moaning sound he looks at
Ester. Then realizes it isn't coming from her. The sound is far
off, a rhythmic moaning. Now discernible as the chant of voices.

160 EXT. THE PLATFORM MOUND - NIGHT

A blazing fire. Figures in silhouette, moving around, chanting.

The platform mound is situated just beyond the heritage park. An ancient ceremonial site, stepped in ruins, dusted with caliche. Pima and Maricopa, descendants of the Hohokam, are congregated for a solstice ceremony. Off to the side, a group of horses are tethered, shuffling, snorting. Lincoln approaches, cautiously, but somehow like a moth to the flame. He stops at a distance, watching. The curiosity of congruent sound and movement.

VOICE (O.S.)

You look a little lost, my friend.

Lincoln turns to a figure emerging from the night. A tall man - swarthy skin, mist-colored eyes. His tribal name is GREY DOVE-

GREY DOVE (cont'd)

Or did you come here for a reason?

Lincoln examines the tall man. The face seems as deep and gentle as the voice. His sense of danger, unshattering, he concedes-

LINCOLN

I was looking for water.

GREY DOVE

Not the best place to look.

LINCOLN

My transport... it stopped working.

GREY DOVE

I see. And where were you going?

LINCOLN

Out of state...

Lincoln sighs, the destination seeming very far away. Grey Dove considers him. This bruised, weary outsider is somehow childlike.

161 EXT. THE CEREMONY - LATER

The fire blazes across the face of a shaman. Old, gnarled, and dry as the salt flats. With a sacred mutter, he slips a peyote button onto his tongue. Then flings back his head, casting his eyes to the stars. When he lowers his head again, we see his pupils dilating. He rises, chanting, moving in ceremonial steps around the fire. Tribespeople sit in a ring, joining the chant.

Beyond the ring, others are dining at a roasting pit. Roast rabbit. Cornflour bread. The food is as it might be two thousand years ago. Only the sight of plastic water gallons breaks the illusion. Lincoln stands apart with Grey Dove, eating ravenously, gulping from a water gallon. He looks around-

LINCOLN
What is this place?

GREY DOVE
It is a sacred place. My people come
here to commune with their spirits.

Lincoln looks at him, puzzled. Grey Dove smiles tolerantly.

GREY DOVE
Not easy to understand perhaps. For us,
the spirit is like the shadow on the
rock. Sometimes close, sometimes far
away, sometimes the sky clouds and the
shadow fades. We come here to ask our
spirits to return to us. The man...
(gestures to the shaman)
He speaks to The Grandfather from whom
all spirits are born. The Great Spirit
who binds every living thing. He has no
name. But he is everywhere. In the sun
and the moon, the wind and the rain...

The shaman's chanting grows louder, more insistent. His circuit
around the fire becoming faster, building in religious fervor.

GREY DOVE
Now he asks for the gift of vision that
he may see through to the spirit shape
of things. To find the spirits of the
lost. To bring them into the light...

The shaman's chanting suddenly stops. He is looking directly at
Lincoln, pointing. His face, contorting with what might be anger
or fear. He starts babbling in dialect, ardently. Lincoln frowns
in confusion. Grey Dove quietly draws him away from the mound.

162 INT. PITHOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Ester stirs from slumber. On the ground beside her, she finds a
bowl of food and a water gallon. Now through the gloom, she sees
Lincoln, sitting on the stool like he never left, keeping vigil.
Something seems different about him as he turns, registering her-

LINCOLN
Are you alright?

ESTER
I feel better after I sleep.

Lincoln nods absently and stares off out of the doorway. Ester
moves closer, sensing something. He speaks as if from far away-

LINCOLN

The man out there... he said
everything has a spirit... every
living thing... but not...

His voice cuts off. Ester looks at him, recognizing his pain. She doesn't understand what it is or what caused it. It's pain and it evokes a response in her. A feeling, taking her over. Her hand reaches out and strokes his hair. Lincoln looks up at her, questioning. With supreme knowing, Ester leans down and kisses him. At the touch of her lips, Lincoln pauses. The first kiss for both of them but Ester takes it in her stride. The calm ballet of nature. Fluidly peeling off her shirt, breasts steeping with moonlight. Lincoln rising to face her, feeling her proximity, her radiant heat. His fingers touching her breasts. Ester trembling, her lips once more finding his. Lincoln closing his eyes, the rush of sensation, overwhelming. He yields to it, returning the kiss, with hunger, with passion... with spirit.

163 EXT. THE INTERSTATE - DAWN

The sun rises in the east, depicting the traffic in silhouette. A vehicle arcs from the fast lane onto the hard shoulder where the skiff sits abandoned. The grey cutter pulls to a halt.

164 EXT. HARD SHOULDER - DAWN

Diggs and Burdon move up on the skiff, cover positions, weapons levelled. Burdon spins in to the driver side, snapping aim with the thunderbolt. But the skiff is empty. The only sign of life is the interface, flashing red: "REMOTE LOCATOR TRANSMITTING".

Burdon exchanges a look with Diggs. No dice. Diggs reaches in his pocket and pulls out what looks like an electronic telescope. He puts it to his eye and pans the salt flats. Burdon crouches at the roadside, looking for tracks. Then Diggs fixes on something-

DIGGS

I got thermals.

165 EXT. PLATFORM MOUND - SUNRISE

The fire is now reduced to a heap of embers. The tribespeople are asleep around the mound, wrapped in ethnic blankets. Diggs and Burdon move up stealthily, weapons at the ready. The horses bristle and snort, betraying their approach. The tribespeople, stirred by the noise, awake. Diggs and Burdon swing aim around the ring as faces rise and stare at them. None of the faces have white skin. Diggs lowers his weapon and addresses the gathering-

DIGGS

I'm looking for two bond runners. They
ditched near here last night.

DIGGS (cont'd)
 One man, one woman. Tattoos on the
 forehead...
 (nothing, just silent stares)
 Anyone's seen them, I got fifty green.
 (still nothing, aggravated)
 What the fuck are you? Deaf and dumb?

The tribal faces just keep staring. Diggs scowls. Then suddenly swings aim with the rainmaker and fires. -BOOM- hitting one of the horses in the haunch. It rears up, whinnying, setting off the rest of the horses. Diggs turns back to the gathering-

DIGGS
 Somebody start talking.

He scans around the ring. Then fixes on one of the women. She lifts a trembling finger to a man nearby. Grey Dove stiffens.

166 EXT. SALT MOUNTAINS - SUNRISE

The sunrise depicts two silhouettes, moving across the ridge. Lincoln and Ester clamber over the calcified rocks. Ester now stops to catch her breath. She is wheezing again, fighting for air. As Lincoln looks on with concern, she musters a brave smile-

ESTER
 I can make it.

167 EXT. SALT CANYON - EARLY MORNING

A freight barge whooshes through the canyon, trailing a chain of low, arched containers, capacious in width rather than height. The conveyance is similar to a lodeway but wider, deeper, known as a "lode-canal". At each end of the canyon, it intersects with other lode-canal, converging to use the same passage, a system of signals and lockgates controlling the flow of freight traffic. High above, on the south rim of the canyon, we find Lincoln and Ester. Ester is no longer wheezing but rasping. She looks down at the passing vessel, daunted. Lincoln offers her small comfort-

LINCOLN
 Don't worry. The one we want goes the
 other way. He said it goes slower.

They exchange a smile. The chain of containers tailing off, the barge leaving the canyon with a blast of its resonant claxon.

168 EXT. THE SOUTH FACE - MORNING

Lincoln and Ester descend the rocky slope toward the lode-canal. Ester stops, having to catch her breath every few steps. Lincoln tries to hide his concern, looking away towards the sunrise. The westbound vessel will be coming soon.

They just need to get out of state... Now he frowns, sensing something. Faint but growing. His jaw clenches. His face tightens. His pupils start to dilate.

169 EXT. THE NORTH RIDGE - MORNING

The north ridge is evidently threaded by a lodeway as we see the grey cutter pulling up. Diggs and Burdon get out and look down into the canyon. Diggs pulls out his scope and starts panning. Burdon peels off his jacket. It's early but it's already getting hot. Diggs now pauses, handing him the scope for his opinion-

DIGGS

Up there in the rocks. Three o'clock.
I'm not sure... it could be ambient.

170 EXT. THE SOUTH FACE - MORNING

Lincoln and Ester hide in the shadow of a rock. Ester is muffling her breaths as best she can. Lincoln now hazards a look over the top. Two figures are climbing down the far side of the canyon, now pointing in their direction. He ducks back, assimilating. Hiding, no longer an option. Nor running, at least for Ester. His face sets in a grimace of conviction. His eyes glow darkly.

171 EXT. THE NORTH FACE - MORNING

Diggs and Burdon reach the foot of the rocks. Neither speaks, communicating in hand-signals. Diggs slips into the lode-canal. Burdon covers, sweeping the thunderbolt across the south face.

Diggs emerges from the far side of the lode-canal. He stays low, moving up into the rocks. Then, from above, a rock dislodges, rattling down. Diggs reacts instantly, targeting, opening fire-

-BOOM-BOOM- The shots from the rainmaker swathe across the rock. The thunderbolt now adding to the barrage, Burdon firing from the far side - SHOTS, BOLTS, KICKING UP A STORM OF DUST --

SUDDENLY HOLDING FIRE, waiting for the dust to clear, reloading. No sign of movement. Just a slide of rubble. Fading echoes.

DIGGS STEALS ONWARDS UP THE ROCKS - into the fog of dust - the sunlight and shadow playing tricks on his eyes - then suddenly-

LINCOLN BURSTS OUT OF THE DUST - from the left - tackling the pale man - both of them toppling - tumbling down the slope --

THUDDING TO A HALT at the lip of the lode-canal - the rainmaker lost in the fall - the impact throwing up a billow of dust --

THE DUSTCLOUD - Diggs and Lincoln struggling, clawing, punching - Lincoln, with surprise on his side, gaining with the upper hand--

DIGGS' CLAWING FINGERS discover Lincoln's knife - tugging it from his jacket - Lincoln grabbing his wrist, fighting for control -

THE KNIFE MOVING BETWEEN THEM - Diggs with better leverage - the blade inching towards Lincoln's face - pressing into his cheek--

LINCOLN'S EYES - welling black, almost inhuman - the sense of danger screaming in his ears - he grabs the pale man's throat -

DIGGS' EYES - bulging as he strains to push the knife home - oxygen draining - conscious ebbing - he slumps back -

LINCOLN REGAINS THE KNIFE - the pale man seems to be out cold - but he's not sure - he pauses holding the blade over him, then--

-BOOM- THE KNIFE FLIES FROM HIS GRIP IN A BURST OF DISCHARGE -

BURDON SNAPS AIM FOR ANOTHER SHOT - beading - his target moving now - dropping out of the firing line - into the lode-canal--

BURDON INCHES TOWARD THE EDGE - thunderbolt angling downward - into the trench - then suddenly he's GRABBED BY THE ANKLES -

LINCOLN STRAINING to overbalance the giant - feet up against the wall - like trying to topple a tree - finally winning some give--

BURDON TOPPLES INTO THE TRENCH - his ankles clamped by his quarry - both men meeting the concrete with a bone-shaking-

-THUD- LINCOLN IS CRUSHED BENEATH THE MASSIVE WEIGHT - the giant already recovering from the fall - now dragging him upright--

-THUD- BURDON THROWS A PUNCH - mightily - hurling his quarry across the trench - moving in quickly, following up with a kick--

-THUD- LINCOLN CRUMPLES as the boot smacks into him - then another kick - then another - the world starts blurring --

BURDON TURNS AWAY - his quarry disabled for now - he recovers his thunderbolt - turns back to administer the coup de grace--

LINCOLN LOOKS UP - the giant looming - the muzzle of his weapon thrumming with energy - the rivets on his denims start rattling--

BURDON SPINS ROUND - the thunderbolt suddenly ripped from his grasp - there, in the distance - AN EASTBOUND BARGE IS COMING -

LINCOLN SCRAMBLES UP THE WALL OF THE TRENCH - muscles straining, feet slipping on the concrete - escaping the imminent vessel --

DIGGS COMING TO - now seeing his quarry a short distance away - emerging from the lode-canal - he looks around for a weapon, then-

BURDON (O.S.)
Diggs! Get me outta here!

BURDON STRUGGLING TO CLIMB OUT OF THE TRENCH - with one arm, it's almost impossible - fighting against his own weight--

DIGGS REACHING THE EDGE - seeing the eastbound barge coming - grabbing his partner's outreached hand - pulling him upward -

BURDON'S PANIC - his other arm flinging away - HIS METAL BRACE SNARED BY THE LODESTREAM - the force shuddering his entire body-

DIGGS PULLING WITH ALL HIS MIGHT - feet slipping - locked in a tug of war with the lodestream - THE BARGE IS CLOSING FAST--

BURDON'S HORROR - now suspended between the two forces - feet kicking - THE BARGE IS ALMOST UPON HIM - he screams agonized--

BURDON
Help me! HELP MEEEEEE!

THE SCREAM IS INSTANTLY LOST in the whoosh of the barge. Diggs, stunned, just looks at his hands, empty, spattered with blood.

DIGGS
Burdie...?

THE SHADOW OF THE ROCK - Lincoln rejoins Ester - casting a look back - the eastbound barge now plummeting into the distance--

DIGGS STOOPING AT THE EDGE OF THE TRENCH - looking down - all that remains of his partner is a smear of blood at the concrete--

LINCOLN AND ESTER REACHING THE FOOT OF THE ROCKS - seeing THE WESTBOUND BARGE against the sunrise - snaking into the passage--

DIGGS PULLING UPRIGHT - spotting his quarry - fire in his eyes - drawing out a boot-knife - slipping it between his teeth--

THE WESTBOUND BARGE pulling through the canyon - lode-poles pulsing ahead of it - polarity thrumming in opposing flow--

LINCOLN AND ESTER start running as the barge comes towards them - Lincoln pulling Ester along - struggling to match the pace--

A SOUND LIKE A BEATING TYMPANY COMING TOWARDS THEM - they look round to see - A SHADOW RUNNING ALONG THE TOP OF THE BARGE--

DIGGS FLINGING HIMSELF OFF THE BARGE - the blade in his teeth - arms spread - for an instant, like a vulture against the sun--

LINCOLN IS SUDDENLY CRUSHED by the weight of his landing - ESTER IS HURLED SIDEWAYS - into a ditch - lost in a cloud of dust--

DIGGS PULLING HIMSELF UP, astride of Lincoln - snatching the knife from his clenched teeth - the sound, like a whetstone--

LINCOLN SPITTING DIRT - suddenly grabbed by the scalp and tugged sideways - twisted partways onto his back, forced to look up at--

A BLACK SPOT AGAINST THE SUN - Diggs' face set in a murderous sneer - he wants to see this fucker's eyes - the torment--

LINCOLN DAZZLED BY THE SUNLIGHT - but suddenly knowing the face of death - now catching the brief glint of the knife as --

DIGGS PLUNGES THE BLADE DOWN - slicing into his quarry's hand as he throws it up in defense - his quarry YOWLING WITH PAIN--

LINCOLN FEELING THE STAB - his deepest instinct suddenly awoken - every impulse, every fiber brought into alignment - survival--

DIGGS IS HURLED INTO THE AIR as Lincoln surges upward - he tumbles backward into the dust - losing hold of the boot-knife--

LINCOLN PUSHES HIMSELF UPRIGHT - only makes it half-way - scrambling towards the pale man - all fours, like an animal--

DIGGS CLAWING AROUND IN THE DUST - fingers finding metal - the boot-knife - he brings it up - slashing at his imminent quarry--

LINCOLN RECOILING - the blade nicking his face - sudden rage - grabbing the pale man by the arm - swinging him round into--

-BOOM- THE MOVING WALL OF FREIGHT CONTAINERS - as the westbound barge passes - Diggs bounces off - stumbling to keep balance--

LINCOLN ON THE RETREAT - the pale man coming at him with the knife - another nick - seeing a gap now, shoving him backwards--

-BOOM- THE MOVING WALL RESOUNDS - Diggs howls - snagged by a bolt - hurt, his fury becomes incandescent - he strikes madly--

LINCOLN STUMBLING BACK - the pale man coming at him - the blade flashing to and fro - frenzied - like a threshing machine--

FORCING HIM UP AGAINST THE ROCKS - the knife almost upon him - he grits his teeth and lunges forward - charging like a bull --

DIGGS CAREENS BACKWARD, still swiping the blade - digging into his quarry - headlong towards the moving wall - hitting with--

-WHUMP- no resonant boom - no bouncing back - Diggs has hit a gap between the containers and HIS HEAD HAS BEEN LOPPED OFF -

LINCOLN STANDS HORRIFIED - as the headless body is spun by the moving wall - dropping into the trench as the barge tails off-

The westbound barge gains speed, leaving the canyon. But there is Ester, running after it, vainly, coughing and sputtering.

LINCOLN
Ester! Stop! It's no use!

ESTER
We have to... get to... The Island...

LINCOLN
It's going too fast!

ESTER
We have to... get to...

Ester staggers a few more steps, then collapses to her knees, rasping for breath. As Lincoln reaches her, she slumps back into his arms. Her head lolling, eyes rolled back to white, a drool of blood spilling from her lips. Then the blast of a claxon cuts the air as the westbound barge disappears into the distance.

FADE TO BLACK.

172 EXT. SEDONA - LATE AFTERNOON

A ranch home in the middle of nowhere. Long shadows.

173 INT. STUDIO - RANCH HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

Late golden sunlight through a mist of sawdust. Abstract wood sculptures are visible. Juniper wood, carved along the bias of the grain, polished to accentuate the curves of natural growth. AN OLDER WOMAN runs a sander over a work in progress - 60's, in coveralls, gray her tied back, her face shielded by goggles and a bandana. She pauses to review her work, shutting down the sander, slipping off her goggles and bandana. Her face is eerily familiar. Her name is KATHERINE. She now moves to the window, catching sight of something outside. Curiously, she watches a vehicle coming down the long driveway. A dusty, grey cutter.

174 EXT. FRONT PORCH - RANCH HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

Katherine opens the front door. The cutter is now docked in the port and a stranger is staggering towards her. In his arms, is an unconscious woman. Now Katherine can see the face - younger, but unmistakable even so. Her voice comes in a chilled whisper-

KATHERINE
Oh, God... Oh, my God...

175 EXT. PHOENIX - LATE AFTERNOON

A whisper cuts across the glistening skyline towards The Sanger Industries Tower. It circles in to land on a rooftop helipad.

176 INT. CROWNE'S OFFICE - SANGER INDUSTRIES TOWER

Silence. Crowne sits at her desk. Merrick sits across from her. Waiting. The air stirs as the secretary ushers Dr. Sanger into the office. No greetings are exchanged. Sanger just lowers into a chair, a little unsettled to find Merrick has preceded him.

CROWNE

I take it you've heard the news.

DR. SANGER

The bond agents. Yes. Unfortunate.

CROWNE

Unfortunate?

(pauses, lights a cigarette)

We're way past unfortunate, Henry.

DR. SANGER

I thought we'd covered ourselves.

CROWNE

The police won't connect the bond agents to us. But that's not the problem. It's the sponsor.

DR. SANGER

What are you talking about?

MERRICK

The male agnate tracked him down.

CROWNE

His name's Thomas Lincoln. It seems they had a genetic reunion. Not a happy one. It was all I could do to stop him going to the authorities.

DR. SANGER

I still don't see the problem.

CROWNE

He may not want a police involvement but he's already threatened to file suit. And he's one of the biggest litigation attorneys in the city.

DR. SANGER

That's why we have you, Ellen.

CROWNE

That's why I asked Bernard to come out here. To find out how it happened.

MERRICK

I told her, Henry. About synesthesia.

Sanger casts a betrayed look at Merrick. Then returns to Crowne-

DR. SANGER

It was a marginal problem. And it was under control - according to Bernard.

CROWNE

That's not the point. Whether or not it's a factor in this instance, it puts us in breach of the clone laws.

DR. SANGER

It doesn't even touch their genetics.

CROWNE

I'm talking about self-awareness. The virtual humanity statutes require us to give them consciousness to the level of functionality. But not beyond.

This gives Sanger pause. Crowne drags her cigarette acutely.

CROWNE

Legally, we are naked on every level. Federal legislature, state licensing, sponsorship contract... But even if we did manage to weather the legal storm, we'd never survive the public scrutiny.

Sanger absorbs this, calmly shaking a pill from his pill bottle.

DR. SANGER

I've spent my entire career facing down naysayers, Ellen. Don't think for a second I'm afraid of facing them now.

CROWNE

You remember cryogenics? At the outset, people dismissed it as a rich man's folly. Eccentric millionaires freezing their brains, hoping to wake up in a new body.

CROWNE (cont'd)

Even when cloning showed signs of making it feasible, it wasn't moral affront that caused the backlash. It was the scope. The scope, Henry. When the size of the customer base was exposed, it screamed inequality - one medicine for the rich and one for the poor. The pressure for accessible cryogenics as good as buried the industry.

(a pause for emphasis)

Our graves are being dug as we speak, gentlemen. Every passing second, they get deeper. If we're going to survive, we have to act swiftly and decisively.

DR. SANGER

Alright. What do you suggest?

Sanger dry swallows the pill. Ellen opens a contract folder.

CROWNE

Our security chief - I've been looking at his file. Ex-marine, served in South China - do we think he still has it in him?

DR. SANGER

(realizing, suddenly harsh)

Are you insane?

Their eyes deadlock. Crowne gives Merrick a sideways glance.

CROWNE

'You ever wondered why Henry takes those pills, Bernard? Why he doesn't avail himself of his own technology?

DR. SANGER

An agnate could give me a new heart but to get it to function mentally...

CROWNE

Bullshit, Henry. Bullshit. You don't want to deal with reality. Only with concept. I may not have been there at the start but I heard the stories. You wanted in on every aspect of construction, from environmental design right down to the classical playlists. It wasn't enough just to make it work, was it? No, you wanted your own little utopia.

CROWNE (cont'd)
Swanning around in your mountain
retreat like some self-appointed
deity. But when it comes to getting
your hands dirty...

DR. SANGER
Are you quite finished?

CROWNE
Even God has blood on his hands, Henry.
Are you going to watch it all go up in
flames or are you going to deal with it?

Sanger crosses to the window, looking down onto the city.

DR. SANGER
You see that street down there...?
Running east from the stadium. My
father used to take me to church on
that street. An old Spanish church.

CROWNE
What's your point?

DR. SANGER
I didn't know they'd torn it down.

177 INT. GUEST BEDROOM - KATHERINE'S HOUSE - EVENING

A floral bedroom. Ester lies in bed, wheezing, semi-conscious.
Katherine slips a pill between her lips and tips in some water.
Lincoln stands watching. Katherine ushers him out of the room.

178 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen is arrayed with modern technology but softened with
paintings and craftwork. Art marginally overwhelming science.
Katherine starts making some herb tea in the traditional manner.

LINCOLN
What did you give her?

KATHERINE
Just something to help her sleep. I
think she has a bronchial infection.
But I'm not sure I should give her an
antibiotic in case it effects the baby.

LINCOLN
So you know about the baby...

Katherine pauses, reality sinking its claws. She looks at him-

KATHERINE

Isn't that why you came here?

LINCOLN

I found your name in the listings. I wasn't sure. You don't look like her.

KATHERINE

They have a plan... For women like me.

LINCOLN

So you're the one who takes her baby.

Katherine winces at him. It's uttered so matter-of-factly. She pauses, hanging her head, searching within herself.

KATHERINE

You know when you're young? How you run around thinking you're immortal?

Lincoln's look says he has no idea. She seems not to notice.

KATHERINE

There was a lodeway accident. I was... damaged. After that, I thought no man would ever want me. I was wrong. His name was John. He said he married me for my eyes. Ocean eyes, he called them. He always loved the ocean. Up there on the wall, that's John's boat.

Off her gesture, Lincoln glances at the wall. A watercolor of a yacht. Meaningless to him but Katherine gazes it at, fondly-

KATHERINE

But I think there was always an unspoken regret between us. When we heard about the technology, it was like... forgiveness, like a second chance. A child of our own, part of *both of us*. Sailing trips, fishing trips, so many plans...
(a flat beat)

John got cancer a year ago. He died.

Her eyes mist, distant and bittersweet, talking to herself now.

KATHERINE

Ironic. That the same technology could have saved his life. And now the baby is the only part of him I have left. And the boat. I still have the boat.

Lincoln looks discomfited. There's more to this than he thought.

179 INT. MOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Scheer opens the door. Merrick stands at the threshold with an attache case. Scheer, seemingly unsurprised, brings him inside.

SCHEER

I told you we shouldn't have gone to outside personnel. They were cowboys.

MERRICK

We had no choice, Karl. We had to keep this away from The Institute.

SCHEER

And now?

Merrick lowers in a chair, grim and leaden. He opens his attache and pulls out a contract folder. He hands it to Scheer.

SCHEER

What's this?

MERRICK

Your resignation papers. Maybe 'early retirement' would be more accurate...

Scheer leans forward, frowning, curious.

MERRICK

Ten platinum bounty - if you sign the papers, their loss becomes your gain.

SCHEER

A parachute... So there's a jump?

MERRICK

You understand that whatever happens, The Institute must be able to deny it.

Scheer says nothing. Merrick reaches in the attache and pulls out a case. Inside are a row of ampules and a pressure syringe-gun.

MERRICK

We use a chemical to dispose of waste product. It's called di-halcyonate. It reacts on a molecular level to start a process of internal combustion. The subject is incinerated from the inside out. In post-mortem application it's done its job before rigor mortis. In a live subject, well... you can imagine.

SCHээр
You want to dispose of your products.

MERRICK
It's a little more complicated than
that. We have to be very... thorough.
If you still have it in you, that is.

Scheer gives him a sideways look. Then displays the USMC ring.

SCHээр
Why do you think I still wear this?

MERRICK
I don't know.

SCHээр
I was discharged from the marines for
insubordination. If you asked anyone
in my unit, they'd call it heroism. I
disobeyed an order to fall back. I took
out a bunker complex single-handed.

MERRICK
So you wear it is a badge of honor?

SCHээр
No. It wasn't bravery. I wasn't afraid
of dying. I just didn't care. You see,
I suddenly realized I was just a sack
of flesh with a heartbeat. Life, death,
I just couldn't see the point anymore.

Merrick allows a respectful pause, then-

MERRICK
You'll find a vehicle parked outside.
It's unregistered, difficult to trace.
I take it we have an agreement...?

180 INT. KATHERINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A slant of light falls across Ester, writhing in her sleep,
rasping. Katherine and Lincoln peer in through the doorway,
checking on her. Then Katherine quietly closes the door.

181 INT. KATHERINE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lincoln paces around, feeling useless. Katherine considers him-

KATHERINE
What do I call you?

LINCOLN
Lincoln. My name's Lincoln.

KATHERINE
Lincoln, I think she needs professional help. I think she needs to see a doctor.

LINCOLN
No. They'll find her. They'll take her.

KATHERINE
Not if I don't want them to.

LINCOLN
You don't understand. They don't want people to know about her. Either of us.

KATHERINE
The doctor I'm thinking of, he's an old friend. He look after John in the final stages. I trust him.

LINCOLN
Why? So you can take her baby?

KATHERINE
No. No, that's not what I want.

Off Lincoln's blunt look, she sighs, lowering into a chair.

KATHERINE
Maybe I didn't realize she'd be so...
(cuts off, a deep pause)
Maybe I just didn't want to. Either way, I was wrong. I want you to know that. I was wrong... And I'm sorry.

A heavy lull. Lincoln hangs his head, remembering.

LINCOLN
They make you believe there's a place called The Island. Then they take you upstairs and put you to sleep. They cut you open. They take pieces of you.

Katherine looks at him, intuiting. She allows a pause, then-

KATHERINE
Even if I had taken her baby, I swear to you, I'd never have... They give you a choice, you see, to extend the sponsorship after... after delivery.

LINCOLN

No. I saw a lot of us go to The Island.
But I never saw anyone come back.

KATHERINE

You mean... Even if I had extended the
sponsorship, they'd have... and kept
taking the money? But that's inhuman.

LINCOLN

(beat, a lost look)

Is it? I wouldn't know.

182 INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - EVENING

A sleek low vehicle known as a "straker" pulls down the ramp.

183 INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

The orbs on the doors eyeball Scheer, moving up the corridor. He
stops at a doorway. Rings the bell. Tom Lincoln opens the door-

TOM

Yes?

SCHEER

I'm from the Sanger Institute.

TOM

I've given you people enough of my
time already.

SCHEER

It's just a formality. I need to see
your sponsorship contract.

Tom pauses then lets Scheer inside. He crosses to the wall safe,
taps the keys. Then pulls out the contract folder. He offers it.

SCHEER

Is this the only copy?

TOM

Why would I make copies? Do you think
I want anyone else to know about this?

Scheer accepts the folder. As Tom turns to close the safe, he
sets it down. And grabs Tom from behind, by the scalp, pressing
the syringe-gun into his jugular. A HISS. Tom clutches his throat
like it's on fire. With a boiling gurgle, he staggers forward.
Sweating, collapsing. Convulsing, belching steam. Then falling
slack. His skin starts to smolder. Scheer pauses, then tosses
the contract folder on top of him, leaving it to burn with him.

184 EXT. NEW GAZA HOSPITAL - PHOENIX - NIGHT

Establishing. A clean facade of white steel and glass. A hatchback vehicle known as a "corsair" pulls down the parking ramp.

185 INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - NEW GAZA HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The corsair pulls up at the ER entrance, Lincoln at the wheel. Katherine gets out of the passenger side. A doctor is waiting - 50's, caring face. His name is DR. ABRAMS. He looks curiously at the man at the wheel. Then greets Katherine with a hug -

DR. ABRAMS

Katherine... It's good to see you. I haven't seen you since John's funeral.

KATHERINE

Well I've been keeping busy. Trying to. Thanks for coming down to meet me.

DR. ABRAMS

Your call was a little cryptic. What is it exactly that's wrong with you?

KATHERINE

It's not me... Not exactly.

She opens the rear door of the corsair. Ester is lying on the back seat. Dr. Abrams frowns as he notices the resemblance.

186 EXT. THE RANCH HOUSE - SEDONA - NIGHT

The straker pulls up into the port.

187 INT. THE STUDIO / MAIN HOUSE - SEDONA - NIGHT

The shadow of Scheer moving outside the windows, looking for a point of entry. He inspects the studio door for alarms. Then elbows the glass. Reaching inside, turning the lock. He enters the studio, glancing at the sculptures. Moving through the home.

Silently, systematically, checking the rooms. He reaches the guest bedroom, looks around. Something catches his eye. Spots of blood of the linens. Eyes honing, he moves on into the kitchen.

He discovers a holocom keypad on the counter. Taps some keys. The holoframe flashes "REDIALLING". The holoframe snows with static. Then a receptionist's face appears-

RECEPTIONIST (ON HOLOCOM)

New Gaza Hospital, how may I help you?

188 INT. WAITING ROOM - NEW GAZA HOSPITAL - NIGHT - LATER

Lincoln stands waiting. There are chairs but he's too tense to sit. Katherine and Dr. Abrams now enter. Lincoln looks at them, expectantly. There's a pause. Then Dr. Abrams speaks-

DR. ABRAMS

Your friend... she has pneumonia. At a very advanced stage. Its progress has been unchecked by her immune system.

LINCOLN

Can you help her?

DR. ABRAMS

We have two options... One is a super-biotic. But there's the risk her immune system might bow out of the fight. The other is a nodal transfusion. Katherine has agreed to be the donor. But the new antibodies may not conform fully. They may decide to attack the baby...

LINCOLN

I don't understand any of this.

KATHERINE

He means that by trying to help her, we could lose her. Or lose the baby.

DR. ABRAMS

Or, if we do nothing, both. Her immune system is... remarkably unstable. If we don't act, the infection will take over.

Lincoln lowers into a chair. He feels a pain somewhere. He can't quite pin down where. Or what caused it. Or why it hurts so bad.

189 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Ester lies in bed, dozing, looking more relaxed. Her oxygen mask makes breathing easier. Lincoln enters and sits beside her. She stirs, meeting his eye with a faint smile. Lincoln returns it-

LINCOLN

Hello, stranger.

ESTER

You look tired, Lincoln.

LINCOLN

Ester...

ESTER

It's okay. I know. Katherine told me.

She sits up, lowering her mask. Her hand finding his.

ESTER

She told me a lot of things. About how they used a tiny part of her to make me. She said it wasn't so very different.

LINCOLN

What do you mean?

ESTER

(touching her belly)

From this... From having a baby.

Lincoln nods. A pause. Ester continues, more troubled, wheezing-

ESTER

She told me how they use us... And I keep thinking... about the others... the ones we left behind, about how they'll never know... how they'll...

Ester's out of breath again, coughing. Lincoln helps her put the oxygen mask back over her mouth. Ester slumps back, relaxing. Off Lincoln's worried look, she smiles at him with her eyes-

ESTER

I'm going to be okay, Lincoln.

LINCOLN

I know.

But even to his own ears, the affirmation sounds hollow.

190 INT. MEN'S ROOM - HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The stream of water gushes into Lincoln's hands. He splashes his face. Then looks at himself in the mirror. He looks sallow from sleeplessness. The facial hair makes him look like a shadow of his former self. For an instant he tenses at a light blinking in the glass. Blue light. Like etherscreen. Then he sees it's just a humidifier on the far wall. Tension ebbing, he splashes some more water. When he looks up again, he sees his pupils are dilating. The sense of danger. His voice comes in a cold whisper-

LINCOLN

No...

191 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Lincoln emerges from the restroom, scanning for the danger's source. Figures flash past in scrubs, white coats. Then he sees it. The figure emerging from the elevator. The face of Scheer...

192 INT. PREP ROOM - NIGHT

A flurry of disturbance from the nurses as someone barges into the room. Dr. Abrams is prepping Katherine for the transfusion. Off the ruckus, he looks up. Lincoln comes up to them, urgently-

LINCOLN

We have to go. We have to get her out.

KATHERINE

What are you talking about?

LINCOLN

He's come for her. For us.

DR. ABRAMS

Whatever this is about, we can't move her. She's already under sedation.

Lincoln look to see Ester, asleep on the OR table beyond.

LINCOLN

How long before she wakes up?

DR. ABRAMS

The procedure takes three hours but...

LINCOLN

(to Katherine, emphatic)

You'll take care of it, won't you? Take her somewhere they can't find her...

Katherine, understanding, simply nods. Lincoln takes a last look at Ester, then departs. Dr. Abrams, bemused, turns to Katherine-

DR. ABRAMS

Katherine, what the hell's going on?

193 EXT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Lincoln moves up the corridor, purpose in his stride. His black gaze fixed on Scheer, making an inquiry at the nurse's station. Lincoln doesn't even break stride. He GRABS SCHEER FROM BEHIND--

HURLING HIM ACROSS THE NURSE STATION - INSTANT CONFUSION - NURSES RUNNING - PEOPLE SHOUTING - Lincoln takes off at a run--

SCHEER RECOVERING - seeing his quarry through the confusion - no time for subtlety - he leaps over the nurse's station - pursuing-

LINCOLN pauses at the emergency exit - checking to see his enemy is following - then pushing on through the doors into--

194 INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

LINCOLN HAMMERS DOWN THE STEPS - an alarm sounding - shouting from beyond - FOOTFALLS BEHIND HIM - deeper into the gloom-

SCHEER VAULTING THE RAIL - shortcutting the flights of steps - catching sight of his quarry as he pushes through a door into--

195 INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - NIGHT

LINCOLN BURSTS OUT INTO THE PARKING LOT - flashes of light - vehicles pulling in and out - off across the parking docks -

SCHEER BURSTS OUT IN HIS WAKE - his quarry temporarily lost - now spotting him across the lot - leaping into a vehicle -

LINCOLN FIRES UP THE CORSAIR - resistors droning - jamming the throttle - lurching out - NARROWLY MISSING ANOTHER VEHICLE -

SCHEER SPINNING ROUND as the corsair blurs past - it's heading for the exit ramp - he launches towards the straker -

196 EXT. EXIT RAMP - THE HOSPITAL - NIGHT

THE CORSAIR BURNS UP the parking ramp - SMASHING THE GATE ARM - plunging out into the street - bouncing across the lodestream -

THE STRAKER HURTLES UP close behind - into the snarl of traffic - steering expertly through - picking up the tail of the corsair -

197 EXT. STREETS OF PHOENIX - NIGHT

THE CORSAIR PLOUGHS UP THE STREET - TRAFFIC SWERVING out of its path - BUOYS CLANGING as it lurches from one lane to the next -

LINCOLN JAMS THE THROTTLE - the resistors buzzing, growling with energy - he has one goal - draw his enemy away from Ester -

SCHEER COOLLY INTENT at the controls of the straker - keeping a certain distance - waiting for his quarry to make a mistake --

A METRO PD OFFICER PULLS OUT - mounted on a hybrid of motorbike and jetski known as a "lode-runner" - SOUNDING THE SIREN--

SCHEER REACTING - the PD lode-runner pulling ahead of him - he can't allow a police intervention - he slips in behind --

THE METRO PD OFFICER - darting looks back - headlamps blinding his rear-view - another vehicle is coming up behind him fast -

-CLANG- THE STRAKER IMPACTS - glancing the PD lode-runner which wobbles, corrects - the straker drops back for a longer run up--

THE METRO PD OFFICER - yelling into his headset - inaudible over the siren - the headlamps again - the vehicle coming up behind--

-CRASH- THE PD LODE-RUNNER fishtails - its resistors suddenly clash with the prevailing polarity - A HUGE JOLT OF INERTIA-

CATAPULTING THE METRO PD OFFICER through the air - plummeting down into obscurity - THE STRAKER WHOOSHING OVER HIS HEAD -

THE PD LODE-RUNNER LEFT SPINNING behind - resistors vying with the polarity - the drive system melting down - FUSING, SPARKING--

-BOOM- THE PD LODE-RUNNER EXPLODES IN A FLASH OF ELECTRICAL FIRE-

SCHEER watches the fireball in his rear-view - there will be more police soon - he jams the throttle - he has to end this.

LINCOLN SEEING THE STRAKER ZOOMING UP BEHIND - veering round another corner - the chassis tilting - A STEEP BANKING TURN -

THE CORSAIR HULL RUNNERS THUDDING across the buffers - recoil sending the chassis up against the concrete - SPARKS FLYING--

SCHEER TURNING THE CORNER - the windshield suddenly sprayed with sparks - jerking back on the throttle to avoid a collision -

LINCOLN FIGHTING TO CORRECT THE STEERING - seeing the straker dropping back - a chance to gain distance - JAMMING THE THROTTLE-

AN INTERSECTION APPROACHING - Lincoln can't correct his steering in time - the corsair careens at full res over the intersection--

CRASHING THROUGH A GATE ARM - the ground dropping away into a steep ramp - suddenly the corsair is flying through the air--

CRASHING - SQUEALING ONWARDS - SCUDDING ACROSS VEHICLE ROOFS, finally nose-diving into an empty bay with a DEAFENING CRUNCH-

198 EXT. ENTRANCE - HOLSPAR STADIUM - NIGHT

The straker pulls up at the smashed gate arm. In the booth, a holoserve parking attendant greets the arrival with a smile-

PARKING ATTENDANT

Welcome to Holspar Stadium, home of the Phoenix Admirals, parking is fifteen currency units...

Scheer gets out of the straker. He looks down at the crashsite below. The parking lot, like a marina, is filled to capacity. A game is in progress. A corona of light coming from the stadium. Hoots, music, the roaring crowd. Over which, sirens can now be heard. Scheer draws the syringe-gun and heads down the ramp.

199 EXT. PARKING LOT - HOLSPAR STADIUM - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

Dust blooms from the crashsite. Scheer crouches, peering down at the wrecked corsair. The burst windshield, the dangling driver side door shows his quarry has escaped the wreckage. He rises and scans around. On the concrete, a trail of blood is visible.

200 INT. STORAGE AREA - HOLSPAR STADIUM - MINUTES LATER

The blood trail leads down a gloomy stairwell. The game is just audible overhead. Lincoln stumbles down the steps, clutching his bleeding arm. Between pain and concussion, he loses his footing and falls. He tumbles down the remaining steps to the bottom.

In the gloom we see groundskeeping equipment, supplies - edgers, aerators, spray rigs, drums of insecticides, herbicides. For a moment, Lincoln lies stunned. Then hears a noise and rolls over. He looks up the stairwell. A shadow is descending towards him.

With painful effort, Lincoln starts crawling across the floor, eyes fixed on the shadow. Tensing as A HANDGUN noses out of the darkness. Then A STADIUM SECURITY GUARD steps into the light -

SECURITY GUARD

You, what are you doing down here?

Now he sees Lincoln more closely - injured, his arm bleeding.

SECURITY GUARD

Oh, Jesus... Are you okay, son?

Lincoln eases a little as he sees the security guard lower his weapon. Then suddenly the guard is JERKED BACK BY THE SCALP.

A HISS. Now suddenly the guard jettisons the handgun, clutching his throat like it's on fire. With a boiling gurgle, he staggers forward. Streaming with sweat. Toppling across a herbicide drum. Convulsing, belching steam. Then suddenly his body falls slack.

Scheer is at the foot of the steps, discarding the spent ampule from the syringe-gun. Now screwing a fresh ampule into place.

Lincoln turns to him, realizing what he's just witnessed is a glimpse of his own fate. He pushes himself upright, bracing.

Scheer looks at him. Clutching his bloody arm, barely able to stay upright, but still ready to fight for life. He half-smiles-

SCHээр

I'm jealous of you. You have a reason to live. I can't say I've ever had that...

Lincoln holds his gaze, looking deep in his eyes. Then, as if scared by what he sees there, starts inching away, glancing at--

THE GUARD'S BODY SMOLDERING - lowering, melting through the drum-

SCHээр MOVING FORWARD, the smile leaving his face. A mask of hollowness as he moves in on his quarry, the syringe-gun poised.

LINCOLN STUMBLING - collapsing to his knees - hanging his head as if in surrender... then suddenly his hand flies up-

-BOOM- A FLASH OF LIGHT as he fires THE HANDGUN - recovered from the ground - AN ENERGY PULSE impacting the wall, fizzling out--

SCHээр KEEPS COMING, syringe-gun ready, blank-faced, unflinching-

THE GUARD'S BODY CRACKLING INTO FLAME - the drum splitting open--

-BOOM- ANOTHER FLASH - Lincoln fires again - clipping his enemy--

SCHээр KEEPS COMING, a charred wound in his shoulder, relentless-

THE GUARD'S BODY BURNING - sliding into the sands of herbicide -

-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM- LINCOLN KEEPS FIRING - more hits than misses--

SCHээр KEEPS COMING, blank faced, his body PITTING WITH IMPACTS--

A BLINDING FLARE OF LIGHT - THE HERBICIDE IGNITING - THE DRUM EXPLODING - STARTING A CHAIN REACTION - OTHER DRUMS IGNITING - EXPLODING - FIRE - SMOKE - ENGULFING ALL IN A BLAZING INFERNO...

DISSOLVING TO:

201 INT. TOP OF STAIRWELL - NIGHT - MUCH LATER

A cacophony of sirens can be heard outside. A thick grey smoke gulches up from the stairwell. Shadows are visible. The sound of extinguishers. A FIREMAN climbs up, emerging from the smoke, he pulls off his breathing mask to address a waiting PD officer-

THE FIREMAN

Nothing... If there was anyone down there, they're a pile of ashes now.

FADE TO BLACK.

202 EXT. CEMETERY - SOME DAYS LATER

Peace. Sunlight. A bell tolling in the background. We make out Katherine, dressed in black, standing at a grave. The headstone reads simply: "Here Lies Ester & Her Unborn Son - May They Rest In Peace". There are no dates. Katherine lays down some flowers then looks across at Dr. Abrams. As he escorts her away, we see Crowne crossing towards them. She introduces herself delicately-

CROWNE

Mrs. Ester? My name is Ellen Crowne.

203 INT. CEO'S OFFICE - THE SANGER INDUSTRIES TOWER - DAY

A celestial penthouse office. Katherine enters with Crowne. Merrick and Dr. Sanger rise to greet her. Strained solemnity.

DR. SANGER

My name is Henry Sanger. I'd like to offer my deepest condolences.

His insincerity is transparent. Katherine just nods stiffly.

DR. SANGER

This is Bernard Merrick our facility director. He knew Ester personally.

MERRICK

And it's a terrible loss.

More insincerity. Katherine nods again. Then settles in a chair. Crowne allows a respectful pause. Then begins with due delicacy-

CROWNE

Legal issues must seem trivial at this time. But the sponsorship agreement has certain conditions relating to confidentiality. Despite this *tragic* turn of events, those conditions remain binding. We want to be sure you understand that.

KATHERINE

I see.

CROWNE

That said, The Institute is likewise bound by the terms of sponsorship and while we reserve every right...

KATHERINE

You can stop there. I know why I'm here. You wanted to know if I'm going to sue you for breach of contract.

DR. SANGER

Nothing so devious, Mrs. Ester. We simply wanted to find some way to heal the wounds from this incident.

KATHERINE

I don't want restitution, Dr. Sanger. The reason I agreed to this meeting was to have the chance to talk to you.

DR. SANGER

Of course. Please...

KATHERINE

I never got to meet you when I visited The Institute. It was one of your salesmen who led the tour. I remember how he described the agnates as if they were some kind of mindless organisms. More like livestock than humanity...

CROWNE

Legally, human rights don't apply.

DR. SANGER

Don't interrupt, Ellen.

KATHERINE

I remember how eager I was to believe him. But when I saw what I'd created, in flesh and blood, when I touched her, it was I who felt less than human.

DR. SANGER

I understand.

He looks at her expressively. Perhaps he really does understand.

KATHERINE

Ester's life was my responsibility and her death is my cross to bear alone. So I'm not going to sue you, Dr. Sanger...

(beat, a sudden ominous tone)

But I am going to *blame* you. Until the day I die, I will silently *curse your name*. That's what I wanted you to know.

She drives it home with a horrible look. Sanger accepts it with due gravity. There's an ugly pause. Katherine gets to her feet.

KATHERINE

And now I'd like to leave, please.

CROWNE

We do have other issues to discuss...

DR. SANGER

No, Ellen, that's enough. I think Mrs. Ester has said all there is to say.

204 EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE THE SANGER INDUSTRIES TOWER - DAY

Katherine descends the steps from the entrance. She crosses to a black funeral sedan, parked kerbside. Dr. Abrams stands waiting-

DR. ABRAMS

I hope you know what you're doing.

KATHERINE

I don't think they suspected anything.

DR. ABRAMS

Just understand that I've put a lot on the line for you, Katherine.

KATHERINE

I know... But it felt *good*. It felt like something John would have done.

205 INT. ROOFTOP FLIGHTPAD - THE SANGER INDUSTRIES TOWER

Crowne escorts Sanger and Merrick to the waiting whisper.

CROWNE

Well, I don't know about the two of you but I'd say we got off lightly.

DR. SANGER

Did we?

CROWNE

Don't start getting maudlin, Henry. It's a little too late in the game.

She shakes their hands as they climb into the whisper. Then watches it take off, ascending into the blinding sunlight.

DISSOLVE TO:

206 EXT. THE SANGER INSTITUTE - SOME WEEKS LATER

Air blasts up from the giant funnel. Widening, we re-establish the huge ring, the processing plant, the giant appendages of ducting, the immutable red rocks. The shot sequence, reprising. From the processing plant, over the main complex. From the front of the complex, to the dock.

Following the lodeway out to the perimeter wall. The gateway now gliding open to disclose a view of the shimmering desert. Out in the distance, the institute liner emerging from the shimmer. The crosshatch insignia.

207 INT. ENTRANCE HALL - THE SANGER INSTITUTE - DAY

Through the polarized glass we see the liner has docked. A TOUR GROUP is disembarking. Another parade of plutocracy, aging bloated men and brittle young women. They filter inside to be greeted by the courtesy staff, led by the ever-perky LYDIA.

LYDIA

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Lydia and on behalf of our staff, I'd like to welcome you to The Sanger Institute. Before we start the tour, we'll be serving refreshments in the visitor center and circulating our standard discretion agreements. I should add that today you are all very lucky because our CEO and founder, Dr. Henry Sanger, is with us and will be leading the tour personally.

208 INT. VISITOR CENTER - THE SANGER INSTITUTE - DAY

The tour group pick and mingle at a buffet. We isolate a casually dressed man, lightly bearded, in a Phoenix Admirals cap, crossing to Lydia. She turns to greet him with a smile-

LYDIA

Yes... Mr. Thomas, isn't it?

The man tilts up to reveal his face. We see he is LINCOLN...

LINCOLN

I can't find my sunglasses. I think I left them on the shuttle.

LYDIA

Well we're about to start the tour. But I can have someone check for you.

LINCOLN

Don't worry. I'll catch up.

209 EXT. PROCESSING PLANT - DAY

Lincoln moves quickly along the wall towards the back of the complex. Hugging the shadows, scanning for onlookers. There is the processing plant and there, the ring of funnels. The sight brings a sudden rush of memories, painful memories, horrors.

Lincoln steels himself, then breaks from shadow and races for the nearest funnel. He makes a running lap. His fingers grab the lip of the funnel and he pulls himself up. Reaching the lip, he finds the funnel mouth has been gridded over. Then he hears-

A VOICE (O.S.)

Sir, this is a restricted area...

Lincoln lowers back to the ground. He finds himself facing A TECHNICIAN in a hardhat. His uniform reads "Air Processing".

210 INT. ELEVATOR - PROCESSING PLANT

The doors slide open and the technician enters, stiffly. Then suddenly topples forward, pistol whipped from behind. Lincoln enters the elevator, a familiar handgun clenched in his fist.

211 INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT

Looking up an elevator shaft. The red pulse of the lode-poles, rippling downward as the elevator descends from the surface.

212 INT. ELEVATOR - DESCENDING

Lincoln is now wearing the technician's uniform. He watches the panel lights flashing down. "Level 3: Harvest" "Level 5: Labor Decon", "Level 7: Labor Quarters". His pupils are dilating but his face is set with determination. He knows what he must do. His gaze drifts down to "Level Twenty: Agnate Containment".

213 INT. THE ETHER GRID

The holographic rendering of containment spins in the vaulted chamber like a giant geometrical phantom. The ether blinks with blue dots in their hundreds as the agnates go about their day.

214 INT. ETHER CONTROL ROOM

Overlooking the ether, Ethercon sits at his console. The hiss of an opening door as someone enters. Ethercon looks round. He greets the technician's arrival with an inquisitive look. Then the technician takes off his hardhat. A crosshatch on his brow. Ethercon reacts almost instantly, reaching for the console. Then instantly freezes as Lincoln presses the handgun to his skull.

215 INT. CORRIDOR - LEVEL TWENTY SEVEN

Pale blue light. Ethercon leads the way down a silent corridor. Lincoln follows him, the handgun firmly levelled on his head.

216 INT. CHAMBER - LEVEL TWENTY SEVEN

The pale blue light sustains. The chamber is reminiscent of the foundation chambers. The walls lined with tanks. But instead of amber fluid, these contain blocks of ice. Beside each tank is a grid of bio-monitors. Ethercon stumbles into frame, prodded by Lincoln. Then, with a trembling finger points to one of the tanks. Lincoln holds aim on him and considers the glass facet. He wipes the condensation off the glass. Suspended in the block of ice is a shadow. A human figure. A device is attached to his stomach. Lincoln looks at the bio-monitors. A screen reads:

"PRODUCT ID: STARKWEATHER/ FOUNDATION: II/ GENERATION: DELTA".

Lincoln looks across the EKG, the cardiograph, indications that Starkweather is still alive. Then he fixes on the RFI monitor. A resonant image of the brain. The shifting aura showing a level of consciousness. What thoughts must be going through that mind? The fate of the agnates spared from expiration. To be kept on ice for future harvest. With a haggard look, Lincoln rests his hand on the glass where Starkweather hangs frozen. Connecting.

217 INT. SALES HALL - THE INSTITUTE - DAY

An embryo in mutated effigy hangs suspended in the amber fluid. Dr. Sanger stands at the wall of display tanks, mid-way through his sales pitch. He delivers it now with noticeably less gusto-

DR. SANGER

Case in point, the clone. Back in the beginning, the mapping of the human genome was declared a historic landmark- to break the curse of heredity, to correct congenital defect... genetic engineering became the brave new world of medical science. A bright future that led to a dark age and much of...

(an abrupt pause, a frown)

...legislation we know today. But while the clone laws may have narrowed the field, science marches on. Only to...

(another abrupt pause)

I'm sorry, I'm f...

Suddenly he clutches his arm, emitting a guttural gasp.

LYDIA

Dr. Sanger?

Sanger just looks at her. Then jolts from a spasm, clawing at his chest. His knees buckling, he topples against a display case. Pawing at the glass, he slides dreadfully to the ground.

LYDIA

He's having a heart attack! A doctor!
Somebody get a doctor in here!

The tour group keeps their distance, unsettled by the face of mortality. Sanger is now lying in contortion on the floor, his gaping eyes fixed on the display tank. The embryo in mutated effigy, rocking about in the amber fluid. The sight of this little human monster is one that will follow him to the grave.

218 INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - CONTAINMENT

The glass wall looks down on the avenue and the agnates milling beneath. Merrick sits at his console. Business as usual. Off a buzz, he taps a button. The door opens and A CENSOR bursts in-

CENSOR

Sir, I've been trying to contact you.
It's the ether... Something's wrong.

Merrick taps another button and the glass wall frosts over. It pixellates onto an image of his own face. A recorded playback-

MERRICK (P/B ON ETHERSCREEN)

Well, Starkweather, if you're watching
on etherscreen - your time has come, my
friend! You're going to The Island!

P/B JUMP CUT TO: STARKWEATHER RUNNING IN AN ULTRAVIOLET HAZE,
MEETING WHITE UNIFORMS, ZIGZAGGING OVER CROSSWALKS, DOWN RAMPS.

MERRICK

(stabs at a key on his console)
Ethercon! Ether control, come in!

P/B JUMP CUT TO: STARKWEATHER RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE, LURCHING
FROM IMPACTS, HOOKHEADS BITING INTO HIS BACK, SPRAYING BLOOD-

MERRICK

Anyone! Somebody pick up!

P/B JUMP CUT TO: STARKWEATHER DANGLING IN MID-AIR LIKE A FISH ON
A HOOK -- SCHEER LOOKING UP AT HIM LIKE A CURIOUS ZOO EXHIBIT.

CENSOR

That's what I mean. We can't get
through. The circuits are locked.

P/B JUMP CUT TO: STARKWEATHER CLUMPING DOWN A CORRIDOR,
CLUTCHING HIS OPEN STOMACH, BLOOD STREAMING DOWN HIS LEGS.

MERRICK

How wide is this going?

P/B JUMP CUT TO: CENSORS SHROUDING STARKWEATHER'S FACE WITH A WHITE HOOD -- BINDING HIS WRISTS AND ANKLES IN PLASTIC CUFFS --

CENSOR
Community-wide, sir. Everywhere.

P/B JUMP CUT TO: CENSORS DRAGGING STARKWEATHER AWAY. THE LOOP OF INTESTINE PLUMPING FROM HIS BELLY. THE BLOODSMEAR ON THE FLOOR.

219 INT. CONTAINMENT

INTERCUTTING: Agnates at workstations watching on visors. In the subway watching on platform banner. In the plaza watching on the glass wall. An agnate in an apartment, watching on a wall panel.

P/B JUMP CUT TO: A STILL IMAGE OF STARKWEATHER'S STORAGE TANK. THE BLINKING GRID OF BIO-MONITORS. THE SHADOW IN THE BLOCK OF ICE.

We are still in the apartment when the playback cuts out. The agnate looks around as every piece of glass dissolves to transparency. The mirror panels, the frosted walls, the window, which now shows no view at all. Just the gleam of a holographic lens.

220 INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Merrick looks down from the glass wall at the agnates massed in the avenue beneath. They are all looking directly up at him.

221 INT. ETHER CONTROL ROOM

Alarms sounding. The ether grid blinking with red dots. Ethercon sitting frozen at the console, the handgun pressed to his head. Lincoln stands over him. His face cast in a chill of vengeance.

222 INT. RESIDENTIAL BLOCK - DAY

A glass facade. A noise from within. A primal, guttural noise, building to a roar. Now warping as we drop to slow motion. The glass webbing, bursting open from within, the facade exploding in a GLITTERING SHOWER OF SHARDS...

SLOW FADE TO BLACK.

223 INT. BASEMENT - A YEAR LATER

No windows. No clue of where we may be. A safehouse somewhere. The passage of time is marked on Lincoln's face, careworn, long hair, a full beard. He sits in front of a data tablet, his image recorded on its screen. His voice also seems older as he speaks-

LINCOLN

It's been a year since the breakout. A year in hiding, waiting for things to quiet down. I don't know how many made it out or how many who did, survived. I know there are people called politicians trying to say it never happened. That's why I've kept this journal. To keep the truth alive. Alive... I've learned what that means but it still confuses me. In functional terms, I've been alive for ten years. In human terms, more than thirty. Human... I'm not sure about that one either. They say I'm not human because I have no mother or father. I guess I have more to learn. But one word I do understand is hope. So maybe this journal will give hope - to those like me, who may be out there. To know they're not alone. My name is Lincoln Six-Echo and this is my testament...

He sits back, contemplating the screen with an air of closure. Then he stirs at a sound. At first just a gurgle. Then a moan. Becoming the sound of A BABY CRYING. Lincoln crosses to a cot. He lifts up a baby boy, 6 months old, bawling and squirming.

A WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Is he hungry again? I just fed him.

Ester steps into the room, sleep-mussed, her beauty deepened by maternity. The baby reaches out for her. Lincoln hands him over-

LINCOLN

Lincoln Junior, huh? It still doesn't sound right. That name.

ESTER

It's the name of his father.

She lovingly kisses him. Lincoln smiles at her, then the baby, sweeping the hair from the forehead. Unscarred, blemishless.

LINCOLN

We should finish packing.

224 EXT. JETTY - THE PACIFIC COAST - DAWN

A private jetty stretches out to a pile of supply canisters. A yacht is moored. We recognized it as John's boat. And we recognize Katherine, holding the baby as Lincoln and Ester finish loading. The last canister stowed, Lincoln comes up to her. He smiles at the sight of her with the baby. Then prompts her gently-

LINCOLN
Time to go.

Katherine hesitates, part of her unwilling to let the baby go. Then she plants a lingering kiss on his downy hair and lets Ester take him. Lincoln presents her with the data tablet-

LINCOLN
You'll make sure this gets out?

KATHERINE
Yes. There are people sympathetic to the cause. I'm going to get it to them.

LINCOLN
Thank you, Katherine. For everything.

He smiles. Katherine points to a canister left on the dock.

KATHERINE
Don't forget that. It has the operating manuals for the boat.

LINCOLN
I've been looking at them for months.

KATHERINE
But the maps, the charts...

LINCOLN
(beat; a meaningful look)
I don't need them either.

Katherine nods, understanding. Nothing more to say, she hugs him. Then turns to Ester with the baby. She folds them in a yearning, almost maternal embrace. Tears well in her eyes. Then the sorrow turns to laughter as the baby starts tugging at her gray hair.

225 EXT. THE PACIFIC - DAWN

The sun rises in the east, casting the coastline in silhouette. The light glows across Lincoln's face, at the helm of the yacht, staring back to the shore. He looks at Ester sitting beside him, the baby swaddled in a blanket at her breast. Then he looks out to the west, to the soft reach of dawn and the boundless horizon of sea. There never was an island. But perhaps there will be...

THE END