

MIND BLOWN

Written by

Paul Jarnagin

milehiscribe@gmail.com
(303)396-9504

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is
indistinguishable from magic."

--Arthur C. Clarke

FADE IN:

On a green, X-ray image of a HUMAN BRAIN.

REVEAL a business tech logo:

V~Wave

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

FLOATING ABOVE the bay, the Transamerica Pyramid and skyline:

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

GREG KNIGHT, 28, opens his eyes. Grins widely.

A crowded rooftop party in action:

DANCING WOMEN around a shimmering pool.

BARTENDERS in bikinis pour unlimited drinks for their host, the only male in attendance.

FEMALE BARTENDERS
(in unison)
Enjoy, Greg!

Greg throws back a shot.

GREG
Greg will--and often.

Hyped up on manic energy, Greg grooves his way through the all-female crowd--his fantasy now a vivid, lifelike reality.

A PIERCING COMPUTER TONE reverberates.

Greg's face drops.

GREG (CONT'D)
Not now!

He stops in his tracks. Looks around with concern.

GREG (CONT'D)
It's not over till I say!

Back to--

THE REAL WORLD

A VR-powered ENEXONE HEADSET automatically disconnects.

Greg's all alone on the nondescript roof...

Let down.

No music, no pool. And certainly no women, or wet bar.

Greg takes in the panoramic view of the skyline and bay.

His demeanor changes. Tenses his body and jawline.

Fights an intangible URGE that's taking him over, to no avail.

In a wide-eyed trance, he walks several paces...

Off the ledge.

Greg drops several floors.

His body strikes a construction CRANE...

Swinging and tipping, the crane's extended arm careens downward--

A deadly chain reaction:

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Concrete CRUMBLES. Girders SNAP.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

A VALET and his shack descends through the wreckage, comes to a loud halt on the marble tile. RESIDENTS scatter.

Stunned, the valet's frozen reaction is short-lived. Looks upwards at the gaping hole.

Luxury cars TEETER...HEAVE...

And drop!

The valet escapes by inches before a Mercedes and a Ferrari obliterate the shack behind him.

EXT. BAY AREA - DAY

Crystal blue waters. Painted ladies on steep hills.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

JAMIE GUZMAN, 13, piercings and a blue streak in her wavy brown hair, exits the front porch to a government vehicle.

A grudging wave from ex-husband, CHRISTOPHER, 42, with his GIRLFRIEND, 22, wearing skimpy lingerie and smoking a joint.

INT. GUZMAN'S CAR - DAY

AGENT LILY GUZMAN, 34, French-braided hair and a hard-edged front to mask her inner turmoil, hugs her daughter.

JAMIE

Dad's new girlfriend. She's a "free spirit."

GUZMAN

Uh, huh. Her spirit's the only thing that's free.

Guzman puts the car in reverse.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Guzman and Jamie walk among the specialty stores, bags in hand.

They come upon slick VR DISPLAYS in the center aisle and move inside a group of captivated OBSERVERS.

Kids in black visors move in sync to a digital program on monitors. They're skateboarding in zig-zag patterns on:

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA.

Skating precariously on the ledges, a long drop below Lifelike Chinese PASSERSBY dodge and yell at them.

GUZMAN

When did they put those in?

JAMIE

A while ago. Need to keep up, Mom.

Jamie admires the display case, filled with sleek black modules.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Get me an eNexOne?

GUZMAN
What is that?

JAMIE
The latest VR gadget: Electric
Nexus. You get dizzy after, but
it's fun.

GUZMAN
That's fun? Spin yourself in a
circle for free.

JAMIE
No, it's like Space Mountain at
Disneyland--if someone like me
could never make it down there.

She gets the hint. And the tone.

GUZMAN
I promised you we'd go, didn't I?
My new career has to come first.
It's called Realityland.

JAMIE
Take time off.

GUZMAN
I can't right now.

JAMIE
Can't or won't?

GUZMAN
If this works out, we can vacation
wherever you want. Okay?

Jamie isn't convinced. Guzman looks at the eNexOne display.
Back at Jamie's pleading face.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
How much?

Jamie smiles.

INT. GUZMAN'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Guzman and Jamie return from shopping. Both part ways.

INT. GUZMAN'S TOWNHOUSE - JAMIE'S ROOM

Typical tween décor: posters of boy bands, and new dolls and toys to replace the old ones.

Jamie sets down her eNexOne module on the shelf to admire. She's tempted to open and play with it. Decides otherwise.

INT. GUZMAN'S TOWNHOUSE - OFFICE

Guzman peeks into her office to see a blinking ERROR LOGO on her computer screen.

Realizing what it is--

GUZMAN

Shit, no!

Jamie enters and sees her mother despondent, with her face in her hands.

JAMIE

Mom? What's the matter?

Jamie looks over at the frozen computer screen.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

You were hacked? For what?

GUZMAN

I don't bring my work home with me.
It's all personal: school,
military, baby pictures.

JAMIE

Did you try a hard reboot?

GUZMAN

Too late. Information's already
gone.

JAMIE

Who did it?

Guzman just shakes her head.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Golden Gate Bridge, leading into downtown.

EXT. HOMELAND SECURITY BUILDING - DAY

Agent Guzman enters a guarded checkpoint. Presents her biometric data for access. She carries a bag with her.

INT. CYBER SECURITY DIVISION - GUZMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Glass-enclosed office. Agent Guzman at her multi-screen workstation checking her voluminous email inbox.

The bag next to her contains a hard drive and motherboard.

A VIRTUAL SECRETARY appears on all screens.

VIRTUAL SECRETARY
Meeting in five minutes, Agent
Guzman.

Guzman clicks through. The image disappears. Then re-appears.

VIRTUAL SECRETARY (CONT'D)
Maddie Stone from Cryptography has
left her seventh message in two
business days.

Guzman logs off. Through the glass, she sees a familiar face waiting for her.

INT. CYBER SECURITY DIVISION - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

Guzman moves through the maze of cubicles.

A short, emo-centric woman in glasses and a polka dot dress tries to keep up with her. It's MADDIE STONE, 24.

GUZMAN
On my way to a meeting, Maddie.

MADDIE
Later?

GUZMAN
You have to be more assertive,
Maddie. I can't read your mind.

MADDIE
Oh, okay. Any cool projects right
now? Need any help?

GUZMAN
Maybe.

Maddie's square heel breaks off and she stumbles. Gets right back up.

MADDIE

Sorry.

GUZMAN

I got hacked yesterday. Whoever did it was a pro. See if you can track the origin IP. The hard drive's at my desk.

MADDIE

Thank you! I won't let you down.

Maddie departs, a little too excited.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

DR. BILL PIERCE, 58, in a wheelchair, laser-focused, leads the meeting of CYBER-SECURITY AGENTS, including Guzman.

DR. PIERCE

A recent GAO report flagged mission-critical cyber vulnerabilities in most of our military's weapon systems. Poor encryption. Negligent password management. It's systemic. Preliminary test teams accessed military computer systems within nine seconds and gained full control in hours without being detected...

This reality sinks in. Silence and disbelief.

DR. PIERCE (CONT'D)

We've been assigned all of our West Coast bases to upgrade and debug their online systems--as quietly as possible. If this went public, it would be a P.R. nightmare.

GUZMAN

I'm in.

Agents exchange dubious looks. Pierce shakes his head.

DR. PIERCE

I've got another assignment for you, Lily.

GUZMAN

What could be more important than this?

DR. PIERCE

A virtual reality bill is up for a vote in Congress this fall. They want an independent study.

Guzman furrows her brow. *Is this a joke?*

DR. PIERCE (CONT'D)

This assignment is within your skill set.

GUZMAN

Why now?

DR. PIERCE

Congress wants to know if VR should be regulated for the public. For potential side effects...or misuses.

GUZMAN

Waste of time and resources.

DR. PIERCE

We don't set the agenda, Lily, we follow orders. V-Wave is making headlines with their boy wonder, and they own the biggest VR market share. Silicon Valley says they could be the next Apple.

GUZMAN

I'll believe it when I see it.

DR. PIERCE

And when will that be? Your medical leave is over. Time to get back in the field.

Guzman has mixed emotions. Her colleagues aren't sympathetic.

DR. PIERCE (CONT'D)

They're already expecting you in Palo Alto.

EXT. SILICON VALLEY - DAY

America's technology hub, spread out for miles.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Guzman's car on a private road, lined by trees.

INT. GUZMAN'S CAR - DAY

On the car's high-tech dash, Guzman half-watches a NEWS VIDEO. The distressed VOICE of a crying child is heard.

ON THE SCREEN

The child is revealed to be much older: BENJAMIN VAUGHN, 17, talking into a iPhone camera, hostage-style.

BENJAMIN (ON VIDEO)

I didn't ask for this and I don't deserve this kind of life. These greedy assholes are exploiting my talents. They turned me into a digital slave! I want my emancipation. My lawyers have already filed and it will happen before you know it. I'm done with this!

On a talk show, the interviewee is EDWARD ROSENTHAL, 70, a sophisticated businessman with a polite demeanor.

ROSENTHAL (ON VIDEO)

I understand Benjamin wants his freedom. He'll be getting it soon and a substantial fortune when he turns eighteen this year. Until then, his parents entrusted me with his company and his guardianship until he's ready. As an adult, Benjamin will have his coming out party and it will be marvelous.

GUZMAN

reacts, shaking her head.

GUZMAN

Poor baby.

EXT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - PALO ALTO, CA - DAY

Guzman arrives at a black five-story fortress with tinted windows.

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - DAY

Teeming with Gen Z and Millennial alphas and betas, hurrying to their destinations.

A FEMALE STAFFER escorts Guzman, who takes in the futuristic décor with an international flavor.

FEMALE STAFFER
This way, Agent Guzman.

Guzman follows.

UV PORTAL

Guzman and the staffer walk through, bathed in purple and black rays.

GUZMAN
What's this?

FEMALE STAFFER
Super-concentrated wavelengths of ultra-violet radiation. Kills germs on contact. V-Wave has a patent pending.

Germs FLUORESCENCE on their clothes, zapping like bugs, and disintegrate.

GUZMAN
Could be useful someday.

INT. V-WAVE TESTING AREA - DAY

Spacious tech lab.

V-Wave's public relations mouthpiece GUY NICHOLS, 28, oozing with smarmy charm, leads a small entourage.

NICHOLS
The eNexOne made the competition obsolete the moment it was released. The paradigm shifted and everyone's trying to keep up.

GUZMAN
What's Electric Nexus mean?

South Korean VR tech designer, TIMOTHY JEONG, 27, in a white lab coat, speaks up.

JEONG

Virtual reality forming a nexus in our daily intersecting lives.

GUZMAN

That clears things up.

JEONG

All you need to know is we'll be owning "prime mental real estate" for the next millennium.

GUZMAN

Do you acknowledge that your eNexOne causes dizziness, headaches, or a hallucinatory effect, like drugs?

Junior exec JARED SKINNER, 28, wearing a three piece suit and a scowl, interjects.

SKINNER

You've just described the side effects of thousands of legal products.

GUZMAN

Just this one. Did Gregory Knight use it before his suicide? He worked in security here, right?

Skinner and Nichols exchange annoyed looks.

SKINNER

All V-Wave employees have their own eNexOne. One of the perks.

NICHOLS

And Mister Knight's tragedy was brought on by himself: product misuse. Too much of anything can be self-destructive.

GUZMAN

Any way I can talk to the inventor, Benjamin Vaughn?

SKINNER

Mr. Vaughn is a busy man--I mean, person.

GUZMAN

He has the free will to talk on his own, right?

A VOICE booms over the INTERCOM. Guzman jolts.

INTERCOM VOICE
Jared Skinner, please report to the
Media Center. Jared Skinner.

SKINNER
Excuse me.

Unsettled, Skinner leaves.

NICHOLS
Benjamin's "hostage crisis" has
been mischaracterized in the press.
He's a genius who happens to be an
impatient teenager. But his medical
condition excludes him from most of
life's activities.

GUZMAN
Immunodeficiency? I thought there
were medical advances in that area?

NICHOLS
Advances, no cure. Mr. Jeong, the
main event, please?

JEONG
This way.

They end up at an upright eNexOne console, surrounded by
computers and sensor arrays.

A unique black headset with a tinted visor rests in a
detachable module.

JEONG (CONT'D)
We enhanced the algorithms with
advanced motion tracking schemes
into the GPU. Once we solved the
motion parallax, we can now acquire
and compress multiple views,
generated in real-time.

GUZMAN
Translation?

JEONG
Limited seasickness.

NICHOLS
Who wants to go first? Agent
Guzman?

GUZMAN

Negative. I'll observe.

NICHOLS

You have experience in the world of virtual gaming. Didn't your drone pilots bomb the enemy from thousands of miles away?

GUZMAN

It wasn't a game, it was war--

NICHOLS

Out of curiosity: Did they ever find those "WMDs" in Iraq? That was one expensive scavenger hunt.

Guzman stares daggers. Nichols' grin fades.

NICHOLS (CONT'D)

Come on, Agent Guzman, you came all this way! What are you made of? Are you the type of person who observes life or experiences it?

Guzman stares at the eNexOne, then at the judging faces around her.

Sighs, relents.

INT. V~WAVE TESTING AREA - LATER

Guzman steps up to the eNex Circle and places the visor over her eyes.

A moment later, two black metallic tendrils emerge from inside the headset and lock into position against her skull.

VIDEO SCREENS pop to life with lifelike computer graphics in the user's head: a vivid, first-person perspective.

Surfing in the ocean.

The board glides through a TUNNEL WAVE.

Guzman's reaction: wide-eyed surprise.

The V~Wave team watches, exchanging furtive glances.

The obstacles escalate:

BUOYS with flashing lights, surfing around them at the last second.

MOTORBOATS speed towards her, then break away at the last second.

A GREAT WHITE SHARK lurches out of the water, snapping its jaws at Guzman, who darts out the way by inches.

GUZMAN

Whoa!

The program changes to:

A ROCKET FUSELAGE.

Guzman, in astronaut gear and strapped into a cockpit BLASTS OFF into the stratosphere.

The vibrations and g-forces contort Guzman's face and body.

It feels excruciatingly REAL.

She turns her head to the view port.

She's in space, orbiting the earth.

Peaceful tranquility.

WARNING ALARMS.

Violent turbulence.

A CRACK in the hull.

The deadly fissure expands, bisecting the fuselage.

Gravity yanks Guzman out of her seat and through a debris field and--

INTO SPACE

Guzman succumbs to gyro forces which rip her into the vastness of the stars, away from the planet.

Silent SCREAM.

THE REAL WORLD

Suddenly the eNexOne disconnects and retracts.

JEONG

Time's up.

Regaining her breath, she touches her face and clothes. Stands in frozen silence, mystified and exhilarated.

She looks over to Nichols, who wears a shit-eating grin.

NICHOLS
Did we just blow your mind?

INT. V-WAVE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

ON A BANK OF MONITORS: Guzman leaves the premises, shell-shocked but lucid.

EXT. V-WAVE PARKING LOT - DAY

At her car, Guzman composes herself, processing what just happened.

A VOYEURISTIC MAN in a ball cap and dark shades watches her leave through a camera's telephoto lens.

THROUGH THE LENS

Squeezes off a few pics, unnoticed.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

Guzman walks Jamie to the entrance. She's nervous, clutching onto her backpack.

GUZMAN
Everything copacetic?

JAMIE
I hate that word. It sounds like
funky mouthwash.

GUZMAN
Are you going to fit in, or bug out
this year?

JAMIE
We'll see. I can always set myself
on fire to stand out.

GUZMAN
Don't joke about that.

JAMIE
I wasn't.

GUZMAN

I was the new kid, too. Saw a lot of exciting places. So, did you, remember? Alaska, Kuwait, Vegas.

JAMIE

That was such a blast...when are we going to settle down like normal people?

GUZMAN

I'm working on it.

JAMIE

Right.

GUZMAN

You can always file for emancipation like Benjamin Vaughn, be your own boss.

JAMIE

Yeah, that guy's rich, though. I'm not a computer genius.

GUZMAN

You could work your way up in the fast food arts. Never know. Live where you want. Pay your own bills.

JAMIE

Where's the fun in that?

GUZMAN

Exactly. You trying out for the volleyball team this year?

JAMIE

Maybe. I'll think about it. Bye, Mom.

Jamie sighs and walks aimlessly to the entrance.

Guzman watches, aware of the peer pressure dynamic. She smiles and waves when Jamie looks back. Turns away.

After her mother leaves, Jamie ducks behind a wall. Lights up a cigarette.

INT. GYM - DAY

Guzman works out her demons, punching and kickboxing a bag with merciless blows.

GYM MEMBERS gawk and steer clear.

INT. GUZMAN'S TOWNHOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

After a shower, Guzman heads to her computer workstation. She's on a research binge, compiling a dossier.

ON THE SCREEN

YouTube news footage of GAMERS, of all ages and genders, waiting in long lines and pitched tents outside computer stores.

VIDEO NARRATOR

The eNexOne, the new cultural phenomenon, is the brainchild of Palo Alto teen and V-Wave founder Benjamin Vaughn--

ON A SECOND SCREEN: She scours through photos and articles on Benjamin Vaughn.

A DIGITAL PHOTO shows a SIX-YEAR-OLD BENJAMIN VAUGHN behind a plastic bubble structure with medical equipment, looking out with a haunted expression.

Another photo: VAUGHN'S PARENTS, both in Army uniforms. A young Benjamin, wearing an oxygen mask, stands between them.

GUZMAN

Military kid, huh? Welcome to the club.

PLANE WRECKAGE footage. His parents' fate.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)

Now he's alone...

An idea sparks--

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - BALLROOM - DAY

One-person presentation on a giant video screen before a crowd of THOUSANDS.

The young cult of personality plays out in real-time: on laptops, watches, and the digital panels of slow-moving robots.

There's no human on the stage.

Agent Guzman watches with her skeptical gaze, takes notes.

She hears the puberty-stunted voice of a YOUNG MALE, who sounds like a Muppet on Ambien.

BENJAMIN (O.S.)
 Virtual reality is no longer a game: it's an all-encompassing, life-like experience. Doctors now use it to prepare for invasive surgery, pilots use it before missions and students use it to expand their fields of endeavor. No, virtual reality will do more than empower the individual...

The speaker's face is revealed:

Benjamin Vaughn, wearing a sweater and jeans, unblinking doe eyes through designer glasses.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
 ...it will empower humanity itself.

DEAFENING applause.

Benjamin forces a robotic smile.

Guzman spots a MAN in a ball cap staring at her, three rows over. Caught, he averts his eyes.

Stuffs a yellow Peeps chick in his mouth. Claps along with the crowd.

Guzman looks away, unimpressed.

EXT. PALO ALTO STREETS - NIGHT

The man from the rally--and with the camera outside V-Wave headquarters earlier--follows Guzman's car.

She spots the tail in her rear-view mirror. Pulls into a fast-food drive-thru. He follows.

EXT. FAST-FOOD DRIVE-THRU - NIGHT

Guzman's car is ahead in line. Another car pulls in the lane from behind, boxing him in.

The man looks ahead at Guzman's car, which is EMPTY.

He turns to see a leveled gun at his ear.

GUZMAN

Hi, Homeland Security. Show me your hands.

DETECTIVE SCOTT TREADWELL, 35, doesn't flinch, presents his badge.

TREADWELL

Palo Alto Police. Show me yours.

Guzman rolls her eyes, lowers her weapon.

INT. FAST FOOD LOBBY - NIGHT

At a booth, Treadwell eyes his surroundings. Guzman eats a hamburger.

GUZMAN

Five minutes. Or as long as it takes me to eat this burger.

TREADWELL

What's Homeland's interest in V-Wave? Why were you there?

GUZMAN

Your lips are yellow.

TREADWELL

Oh, yeah: Peeps. What some?

GUZMAN

Not my thing.

TREADWELL

More for me. These chicks are like yellow crack.

GUZMAN

You were saying?

TREADWELL

I've been investigating V-Wave for the past three months. There's been some shady activity going down over there.

GUZMAN

Shady?

TREADWELL
Haven't you noticed how big
V-Wave's gotten in just two
years?

GUZMAN
In Silicon Valley? Billionaires are
made overnight.

Treadwell produces his smart phone, taps his images file.

TREADWELL
This happen all the time?

Shows her PHOTOS of charred bodies. She stops eating.

GUZMAN
Really?

TREADWELL
Mysterious employee deaths.
Thirteen total.

GUZMAN
Thirteen? Over what time period?

TREADWELL
A year. All by electrocution,
except for one. Lower level
employees, game designers, I.T.,
coders, construction. They were
explained away as "operational
accidents," part of the trade...

GUZMAN
Let me guess: a cover-up?

TREADWELL
These weren't accidents and they
weren't suicide.

Guzman produces her own smart phone.

GUZMAN
Hold on, I have to answer this.

TREADWELL
I didn't hear anything.

GUZMAN
It was on vibrate.

ON GUZMAN'S PHONE: She touches an icon and a FACIAL
RECOGNITION APP analyzes Treadwell's features.

In seconds, Treadwell's detailed personal information is listed:

PALO ALTO POLICE RECORDS: On indefinite suspension, pending psychiatric evaluation.

DOCTOR'S PRESCRIPTIONS: Xanax, Prozac.

Guzman puts away her phone. Maintains a poker face.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)

You said "except one"?

TREADWELL

A security guard from V-Wave suddenly got a Superman Complex off a building in San Francisco.

GUZMAN

Gregory Knight?

TREADWELL

That's right. You heard about it?

GUZMAN

He chose a rooftop instead of the Golden Gate. So what?

TREADWELL

He wasn't suicidal...until he worked at V-Wave...Knight discovered a lot of these other bodies.

Guzman finishes her burger. Stands up.

GUZMAN

Three months, huh? Let me know when the investigation starts.

TREADWELL

You didn't tell me why you were there.

GUZMAN

Research.

TREADWELL

What kind of --?

GUZMAN

Sorry.

TREADWELL

Fine, consider this professional courtesy. You don't want to share now, but when the weird shit starts going down, you'll know why.

GUZMAN

It's going down now. Good night, "detective."

Guzman leaves. Treadwell stares out the window.

INT. GUZMAN'S TOWNHOUSE - JAMIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

With wide-eyed anticipation, Jamie unpacks the eNexOne module.

Slowly places the black visor over her head and eyes.

Jamie pushes a side button and the apparatus locks into place.

Activates with a JOLT.

OVER BLACK

The HIGH-PITCHED WHINE of an approaching projectile.

WARNING SIREN.

EXPLOSIVE IMPACT.

CUT TO:

INT. GUZMAN'S TOWNHOUSE - MORNING

Guzman awakens on the couch from a vivid nightmare.

Her iPad and research files tumble to the floor.

Looks at her watch. Reacts.

INT./EXT. GUZMAN'S CAR - EN ROUTE - MORNING

Guzman drives at normal speed, wearing her seat belt.

She rubs her temple, a strange sensation in her head.

Approaches the intersection.

She looks up at:

The TRAFFIC LIGHT, which (her POV) is GREEN.

But something is amiss.

The green light is on top.

The light BLURS. A *glitch*?

As Guzman is distracted, a supply van T-bones her.

Jolts around in an explosion of glass and metal.

Above the accident, the traffic light is now back to normal:

RED.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Guzman, bandaged with lacerations, stares ahead, in a daze.

ORDERLIES wheel in a gunshot VICTIM on a gurney.

Guzman's attention shifts to the victim's bloody clothes. She reacts when he sees:

The color of the victim's blood is GREEN!

Guzman hard-focuses her eyes. Looks again.

The victim's blood is RED again.

The temporary color-blindness has vanished.

GUZMAN

The hell?

Guzman shakes her head, not believing her own eyes.

INT. HOSPITAL MRI ROOM - DAY

Guzman, on a hydraulic table, enters an MRI tunnel head first.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A FEMALE DOCTOR shows Guzman her MRI results.

FEMALE DOCTOR
No concussion from the accident.
Scan looks good. Interesting...

GUZMAN
What?

FEMALE DOCTOR
You have some interference in your
dorsal nexus region. See this
cloudy part, right here?

GUZMAN
Which region?

FEMALE DOCTOR
The dorsal nexus within the
prefrontal cortex. It's for
cognitive functions such as
behavior and manipulation of
information.

Guzman stares at the X-ray image.

FEMALE DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Wouldn't worry about it. The brain
has an amazing self-defense system,
no matter what the trauma. It's the
most complex computer ever created.

Guzman processes this, still woozy.

On the doctor's face: a fleeting MOTION BLUR.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Jamie Guzman, at her desk, stares blankly ahead.

The MALE TEACHER notices, singles her out.

MALE TEACHER
Jamie, since you've been paying
attention this whole time, could
you give us your view of the
Industrial Revolution?

Jamie zones out, not hearing him.

MALE TEACHER (CONT'D)
Hello, Jamie? Are you in this
universe?

Jamie snaps out of it. CLASSMATES laugh.

MALE TEACHER (CONT'D)
Welcome back to earth.

JAMIE
Need the bathroom.

MALE TEACHER
Okay, go then.

Jamie leaves.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Jamie heads for the bathroom.

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS re-model the walls and ceiling. Plastic sheets block off the area.

Two-by-four boards rest against the wall.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

The BELL rings.

Kids grab their backpacks and file out, laughing and gossiping.

Jamie returns, her expression still blank. The room is empty.

She hides something behind her back as she approaches the teacher's desk. He doesn't look up until:

TEACHER'S POV: Jamie swings the two-by-four like a bat, directly into the man's face with a SWAT!

BLACKOUT.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER - OUTSIDE VISITATION ROOM - DAY

Guzman arrives, desperate for information.

Her father, Christopher, still wearing his lawyer suit, waits, fuming.

CHRISTOPHER
About time you got here.

GUZMAN
I got into an accident.

CHRISTOPHER
If you're going to lie, make up
something believable.

GUZMAN
Think I'm wearing these bandages
for fun?

CHRISTOPHER
What bandages?

GUZMAN
The ones on my--

Christopher points to her wall reflection.

No bandages. Not a scratch. She touches her face,
disoriented.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
What's...going on?

CHRISTOPHER
With you? Good question. With
Jamie: she attacked her teacher at
school.

GUZMAN
Why would she do that?

CHRISTOPHER
You're asking me? You're the one
with custody. What have you been
doing?

GUZMAN
Not being a judgmental asshole. How
about you?

CHRISTOPHER
You didn't tell me she was having
problems. Or you.

GUZMAN
She wasn't, until now. Where is
she?

CHRISTOPHER
Locked up. They won't just let her
go home. We have to wait for a
hearing. And a psychological exam.

GUZMAN
How long?

CHRISTOPHER
I'll take care of it. You've done
enough.

Guzman paces, tuning him out.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Are you two using the same drugs?
They must be really powerful.

Guzman suddenly focuses with clarity. She leaves.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Where the hell you going?

INT. GUZMAN'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Guzman opens the door and hurries to a back hallway door.

INT. GUZMAN'S TOWNHOUSE - JAMIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Guzman searches her daughter's room.

She locates the black module on Jamie's dresser.

The eNexOne.

Hesitates with fear, staring at it from a safe distance.

Guzman snaps, grabbing and stomping on the VR headset,
crushing all its components into little bits.

She sits on the bed. Sobs quietly.

Guzman comes to a realization. Looks up with a determined
gaze.

INT. CYBER SECURITY DIVISION - MADDIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Maddie Stone at her customized work station, surrounded by
plants. Her own private garden.

Her computer is connected to Agent Guzman's pilfered hard
drive. The monitor is bordered by flowers.

ON THE SCREEN

World Map grid.

A specialized program runs a diagnostic on the hack
intruder's source.

MADDIE

waits patiently, spraying a plant with a water bottle.

ON THE SCREEN

A line originates from an IP source in China.

Through Ukraine and into Europe.

MADDIE

eats yogurt, watching.

MADDIE

Where are you hiding? Show me.

ON THE SCREEN

The line moves into the United States--

Into the state of California.

MADDIE

leans forward, captivated.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

No way.

ON THE SCREEN

The line stops at a building in--

MADDIE

reacts in disbelief.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Palo Alto...?

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Benjamin Vaughn, his eyes hidden behind sunglasses, sunbathes on a beach towel.

But there's something off--

No waves BREAKING in the surf.

No seagulls CAWING.

A MAN'S FACE, a 3-D pixilated image, expands and intrudes into this virtual world. This is GERBER.

GERBER

You're late for a board meeting,
sir.

Benjamin ignores the virtual aide, his attention focused on the horizon.

REVEAL an apocalyptic tableau:

The ocean drained, dry for miles, container and navy ships moored in the sand. The sky is orange and red, a permanent radioactive sunset.

SONIC ENGINE WHINES, getting louder.

It's a battalion of ALIEN WARSHIPS, closing in on his position.

Benjamin produces a laser weapon and arms it for battle. Activates a shield around his sand bunker.

The ships and Benjamin's weapon fire in unison, creating massive clouds of fire and dust, which SLAM INTO FRAME --

INT. V-WAVE TESTING AREA - DAY

Benjamin emerges from the eNex meditation pod, removing his visor and body sensors.

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - BOARDROOM - DAY

Benjamin at the end of a mahogany table, flanked by the business execs. He half-listens to the conversation.

At the other end of the table is Benjamin's legal guardian and V-Wave CEO Edward Rosenthal.

EXECUTIVE #1

The third-quarter earnings are astronomical. There's more demand than supply chains.

EXECUTIVE #2

We need to move now on the IPO,
while we still have the heat.

Junior exec Skinner has a nose bandage and bruised eye, very self-conscious about it. Averts eye contact.

ROSENTHAL
Underground fight clubbing again,
Jared?

SKINNER
Clumsy...accident.

LAUGHTER at Skinner's expense.

ROSENTHAL
I'd join you, but the pacemaker
couldn't handle it.

Rosenthal taps his chest.

ROSENTHAL (CONT'D)
How many shares do we project for
the offering?

SKINNER
Four to five hundred million range.

The execs react, gobsmacked.

ROSENTHAL
That's Facebook and Google
territory.

SKINNER
If we wait too long to file, the
window could close. Or the price
may be devalued.

ROSENTHAL
Well, Benji? Should we go for it?

Everyone looks at Benjamin.

BENJAMIN
I'll think about it.

Benjamin rises from his chair. Skinner winces.

ROSENTHAL
That's all for today.

Benjamin is the first to leave, backpack in tow.

INT. V~WAVE HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - DAY

A TOUR GUIDE shepherds a wide-eyed GROUP of tech groupies and college students into the building.

A WOMAN, a bulky librarian type in glasses and uncomfortable shoes, looks around with the passive stare of familiarity.

CLOSER LOOK: it's Guzman in prosthetic makeup.

A FEMALE STUDENT observes a memorial BUST of a distinguished, wealthy man.

FEMALE STUDENT

Who's this?

TOUR GUIDE

A "super angel." His name was Julian Stalworth. V-Wave's first big investor. He's no longer with us.

FEMALE STUDENT

What happened?

TOUR GUIDE

Plane crash. Tragic--but his legacy lives on here.

The group moves on.

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - SALES FLOOR

The group tests out the eNexOne product line as the tour guide's spiel continues.

Guzman's interest is elsewhere.

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - SERVER ROOM

The tour guide leads the group into the V-Wave brain center: long rows of RAID server racks and myriad blinking lights.

In the dark and glowing room, Guzman lets her hand drop to her side.

A dime-sized MAGNETIC DRIVE curves mid-air and latches onto a computer bank, unseen.

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAYS

The men and women of the tour group split up, heading into opposite bathrooms.

TWO CHAPERONES wait.

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - WOMEN'S BATHROOM

Guzman ducks inside a stall. She removes her undetected smart phone, opens a special app.

INT. SERVER ROOM

The tiny magnetic drive Guzman dropped earlier comes alive --

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM

Guzman downloads a file pack, heavily-encrypted. She considers her next move.

INT. HALLWAYS

The female chaperone starts a preliminary head count.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM

Guzman scrolls to a contact icon with the Crypt Keeper puppet from "Tales of the Crypt."

GUZMAN
(to herself)
Really?

Hesitates. Uploads the encrypted file.

INT. HALLWAYS

The chaperone furrows her brow. She's missing someone.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM

Guzman removes her wig and her latex face. Changes clothes.

INT. HALLWAYS

The female chaperone takes a glance at her watch, then the bathroom door.

Her patience expires. She bangs on the bathroom door. Listens for movement.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM

Guzman presses a button on her smart phone.

INT. SERVER ROOM

The tiny magnetic drive inserts malicious code into the digital mix.

An I.T. SUPERVISOR scrambles to analyze the system failure.

INT. HALLWAYS

Power bump. Total darkness.

CHAPERONE

What?

The generator lights kick in, at half capacity.

INT. HALLWAYS

A SCUTTLE prompt appears on Guzman's phone. She hits the button and drops it on the floor.

It ELECTRIFIES, frying the circuits and SIM card.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM

The chaperone checks her own cellphone. No signal.

CHAPERONE

This is not happening!

Her high heels ECHO down the hallway.

Guzman emerges from the women's bathroom in cat-burglar mode, dressed in black with hoodie.

GUZMAN

Yes, it is.

She makes her way into the heart of V-Wave.

INT. TESTING AREA

The biometric controls and video cameras disabled, Guzman moves inside the room she'd been in before.

Now exploring solo.

On the far side of the room, Guzman notices the wall's curved architecture. She examines the panel's stability.

Discovers a hydraulic track.

Guzman finds a manual control lever and pulls it.

The wall slides open to reveal:

INT. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AREA - CONTINUOUS

Under the dim lights, Guzman observes a complex design:

Upright mobile carriers on hydraulics. A computer-generated obstacle course with unique hazards.

Guzman spots a different configuration of the eNexOne console than before, possibly a prototype.

The imprint stamp reads: EPEIUS NEXUS ONE.

Before Guzman can investigate further, she stops...

...feels wobbly and light-headed.

Guzman's eyes roll back and her body falls backward, the room going blurry and dark.

The background CHANGES to:

INT. OPEN BANK VAULT - CONTINUOUS

Guzman wakes up on her back to ALARMS BLARING.

She focuses on her new, chaotic surroundings:

In a pile of money. A shotgun in her hand.

GUZMAN

The hell?

URGENT VOICES in the distance, getting closer.

Guzman peeks around the corner. Sees:

INT. ARMORED CAR DEPOSITORY - CONTINUOUS

A DOZEN ARMED GUARDS, converging on her position.

EMPLOYEES in red shirts scatter from their cash sorting cubicles.

Gunfire explodes all around her.

Rattled, Guzman doesn't want to fire back. She desperately seeks a quick exit.

Guzman spots a fire alarm and the ceiling sprinklers. Aims and shoots.

The fire alarm overcomes the security alarm, raising the din. Sprinklers douse the room.

Guzman bolts through the cash room, dodging gun blasts. Drops the shotgun to the floor.

INT. HALLWAYS

Guzman rounds a corner and comes eye to eye with a SHOTGUN BARREL.

A MUSTACHED GUARD aims with precision.

Guzman raises her hands, caught.

The guard's expression softens with a wink.

MUSTACHED GUARD

Go.

The guard lowers his shotgun. Motions to an exit door.

MUSTACHED GUARD (CONT'D)

Go now.

Bewildered, Guzman heads for the exit.

The friendly guard watches her leave.

EXT. DOCK OUTSIDE DEPOSITORY - NIGHT

Guzman makes her escape, still discombobulated.

She spots a COMPACT CAR, engine idling, headlights on. Unoccupied.

The driver's door OPEN.

Not believing her luck, Guzman slides into the driver's seat.

IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR, she sees the guards reaching the dock, preparing to open fire.

GUZMAN
Shit, shit!

The guards fire upon on the compact car.

Guzman speeds away.

INT. CYBER SECURITY DIVISION - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

HIGH-PITCHED LAUGHING emits from a cubicle's computer.

MADDIE
Incoming!

Maddie Stone bowls over a MALE PROGRAMMER, spilling her lunch over him, to get to her desk.

Maddie enters her long admin password and the Crypt Keeper puppet appears.

CRYPT KEEPER (ON SCREEN)
Hello, Miss Stone, you have one message and un-scanned file from Lily Guzman.

MADDIE
Yes!

Maddie downloads Guzman's file. Examines the unreadable CIPHERTEXT.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Is this a test? No, it's a case. It has to be. Thank you, Lily. I won't let you down. Hopefully, not. Just shut up and do it!

INT. BART SUBWAY CAR - EN ROUTE - DAY

Guzman, incognito in a baseball cap and dark shades, watches the other riders. All are distracted by digital products.

A homeless STREET KID with a brown bandana and tat sleeves, pleads with outstretched arms for handouts. Nobody acknowledges him.

STREET KID

Who got some *dinero*? Wanna help a bro get over the humpty hump? Hey, I'm not invisible here!

GUZMAN

Some other time.

STREET KID

Aw, snap!

She moves on. Constantly scans her environment.

Guzman sits down, comes to a realization.

GUZMAN

(to herself)

Within my skill set.

Guzman simmers with anger. Gets off at the next stop.

The street kid follows close behind.

INT. DR. PIERCE'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Pierce listens to Guzman on his desk phone.

GUZMAN (ON SPEAKER)

You knew before you sent me in there! Why?

DR. PIERCE

Lily, you had to go in blind. We didn't know what V-Wave was fully capable of. All we knew that employees were dying off.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CIVIC CENTER BART AND MUNI STATION - PLATFORM - DAY

Guzman talks urgently into a flip phone.

GUZMAN

What about Jamie? You could have warned me!

DR. PIERCE

She was one of many, already affected. Why do you think this investigation was so important?

(MORE)

DR. PIERCE (CONT'D)
We needed hard evidence. What did
you find so far?

A PASSERBY bumps her shoulder. Her sunglasses dislodge from
her face.

TWO TRANSIT COPS spot Guzman.

GUZMAN
I can't tell you.

DR. PIERCE
Come back for a debriefing. You'll
be protected here.

GUZMAN
No. I'll take my chances off the
grid.

Guzman chucks her disposable phone into the tunnel.

SPARKS fly as it bounces off the tracks.

Out of her peripheral, Guzman spots the transit cops pursuing
her, yelling into their radios.

She bolts.

Guzman fights the flow of the crowd, which pushes her back
into the fray.

Guzman twists a transit cop's arm until the gun falls out of
his hand. Tosses him to the ground with a dizzying flip.

She kicks the gun out of another cop's hand, follows through
into his partner's face. Both go down.

Guzman disengages, heads for a stairway.

More transit cops. Changes course.

Guzman sprints up a ramp. Hits a blind corner.

Moments later, the group of transit cops have their suspect
pinned to the ground.

They roll over the cuffed suspect.

It's the street kid from the train, wearing Guzman's ball cap
and jacket.

STREET KID
What's up, bros?

His grinning face MOTION BLURS.

EXT. S.F. STREETS - DAY

Guzman removes a blanket from her head. She's in the middle of a homeless encampment.

Scanning the faces around her, she distances herself from the seedy and dangerous location.

She comes full stop when she sees:

A DARK OBJECT rising from the asphalt. Hovers.

This is a CAMOUFLAGE DRONE, or CAMO-drone.

BLARES deafening sound waves.

Guzman covers her ears, the sound overpowering her senses.

Car windows SHATTER.

Homeless people scatter in fear.

A car SCREECHES around the corner, comes short of hitting Guzman. Pulls up beside her.

Detective Treadwell lunges out of the driver's seat and yanks a distracted Guzman inside the car.

INT. TREADWELL'S CAR - MOVING

Guzman regains her senses. Looks over at her rescuer with surprise.

GUZMAN

What are you doing here?

TREADWELL

You can thank me later. Hang on!

Treadwell hits the accelerator, blasts LOUD HEAVY METAL MUSIC.

EXT. S.F. STREETS

The camo-drone stalks Treadwell's car into busy traffic.

INT. TREADWELL'S CAR - MOVING

Guzman tracks the drone, which is gaining speed behind them.

TREADWELL
So, what's new?

GUZMAN
I believe you now! Turn that shit
off!

TREADWELL
Not a fan?

EXT. S.F. STREETS

Treadwell's car weaves in and out of lanes, can't shake the
camo-drone.

INT. TREADWELL'S CAR - MOVING

The drone keeps catching up, buzzing his rear-view mirror.
Guzman ducks down in her seat.

GUZMAN
What is that thing?

TREADWELL
Hell if I know! I was about to ask
you!

EXT. S.F. STREETS

Treadwell drives into a tunnel entrance. The camo-drone
follows.

INT. TUNNEL

Treadwell's car speeds ahead, weaves in-between cars and
lanes, narrowly missing oncoming traffic.

The advancing camo-drone lunges ahead. Banks around.

Attaches to vehicles. Turns multiple colors to conceal
itself.

INT. TREADWELL'S CAR - MOVING

Guzman looks around, can't spot the drone.

GUZMAN
Where is it?

INT. TUNNEL

The camo-drone emerges, veering in and out of lanes and cars, smashing multiple windows in a zig-zag pattern.

Cars are internally damaged. Engines ignite. Undercarriages spark. Drivers are blown out of their seats.

Treadwell produces his gun and shoots several rounds at the moving target, which careens off the tunnel walls, creating a trail of sparks.

The camo-drone soars overhead, in front of their car. Re-acquires its target.

Treadwell pumps the brakes.

The car skids into a 180 pattern. Guzman hangs on.

Treadwell aims at the drone, ready to fire.

Before he can pull the trigger--

The camo-drone self-destructs and scatters into a heap of smoking parts.

Treadwell corrects his skidding and veers back into his lane.

EXT. TUNNEL

Treadwell and Guzman escape out the other side, an explosion of fire and debris behind them.

EXT. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

Establishing. Space and missile testing center near the California coast.

INT. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE - BARRACKS BATHROOM - DAY

Two mission controllers--KAUFMAN, 27, tall and lanky, sandy-cropped hair and VARGAS, 24, short and pumped, shaved head--are hung-over and changing into their uniforms.

VARGAS

What if the C.O. finds out where we were? We didn't have authorization to leave.

KAUFMAN

Stop worrying about it. Nobody needs to know. It stays in Vegas. Except for that stripper's perfume! We brought that back.

Opened-mouth giddy laugh. Vargas holds his head.

VARGAS

How many drinks did we have?

KAUFMAN

Lost count after the first night.

A SERGEANT emerges through the bathroom door.

SERGEANT

Kaufman! Vargas! Report to Bogart Bay, ASAP.

The Sergeant departs.

Kaufman and Vargas share concerned looks.

INT. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE - BOGART BAY - DAY

KAUFMAN and VARGAS stand at attention, awaiting their orders.

A SIMULATOR INSTRUCTOR stands in front of an ominous black module with two-man capacity. The V-Wave brain logo is within view.

SIMULATOR INSTRUCTOR

Gentlemen, you are the first beta-testers of the new eNexOne Virtual Simulator. This is the future of training exercises, with zero chance of fatalities. General Mathis told me you eagerly volunteered for this assignment.

Kaufman and Vargas exchange resigned looks. *Busted.*

SIMULATOR INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

I hope your schedules are clear the next few days...we've got a lot of glitches to isolate and eliminate. Time for lift-off, boys.

Reluctantly, Kaufman and Vargas occupy the simulator's TWO PROTRUDING SEATS from the black module.

Seatbelts automatically secure them in place. VR headsets descend and lock.

The instructor operates a control panel, still consulting the start-up manual.

SIMULATOR INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
Phase One should only take
approximately sixteen hours.

Kaufman swears under his breath, steeling himself. Vargas panics, tries to disconnect, to no avail.

SIMULATOR INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
Sit back and enjoy the ride.

Two module doors open, sliding the involuntary guinea pigs inside and swallowing them up.

The simulator doors SEAL SHUT, cutting off their VOICES.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Treadwell enters a six digit code on a keypad, heads inside the door. Guzman follows.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - NIGHT

Guzman checks out the penthouse suite's digs: kitchen, bedrooms, large living room.

Through the tinted windows: a high-rise, San Francisco cityscape.

GUZMAN
Witness protection?

TREADWELL
Just you for now.

GUZMAN
It'll do. What kind of drone was that?

TREADWELL
Government, private. Maybe both.

GUZMAN

Clears things up. Good thing you shot it down.

TREADWELL

I didn't. It self-destructed.

GUZMAN

Why?

TREADWELL

Could be a prototype. Someone didn't want it out there. Now, sit down.

GUZMAN

Are you asking or telling me?

TREADWELL

Please take a seat, will you?

GUZMAN

Only because I want to. I'm tired.

TREADWELL

Fine.

Guzman sits on a couch, still wound up.

TREADWELL (CONT'D)

The eNexOne: tell me you haven't used it.

Guzman hesitates. Averts her eyes.

TREADWELL (CONT'D)

You should have told me earlier.

GUZMAN

I didn't know you earlier! I thought you were a conspiracy freak.

TREADWELL

What do you think now?

GUZMAN

You didn't help your cause. Why were you suspended from your job?

TREADWELL

How do you know that?

GUZMAN

Where do I work? Tell me why.

TREADWELL

I told you already: investigating V-Wave. I got too close.

GUZMAN

Too close to whom?

TREADWELL

Or what...I think you just found out the hard way. About time to start trusting me.

GUZMAN

Jamie...

Disconsolate, she puts her head into her hands.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)

This is all my fault.

TREADWELL

Who's Jamie?

GUZMAN

My daughter. She's in juvenile detention now. What am I going to do?

TREADWELL

She used the eNex, too?

GUZMAN

...yes.

TREADWELL

So it is all your fault.

GUZMAN

Thanks for the pep talk. I must be wanted by now.

TREADWELL

For what?

GUZMAN

Last thing I remember I was inside V-Wave, then I woke up in a bank vault.

TREADWELL

Which was real?

Guzman doesn't know.

INT. FBI OFFICES - DAY

An unsmiling man in a suit, FBI AGENT TURNER, 52, talking to his FIELD AGENTS.

AGENT TURNER

Go back in Agent Guzman's files,
military and civilian: learn who
she knows, who she trusted. We need
to find her before he does.

The agents disperse.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER - OUTSIDE JAMIE'S CELL - NIGHT

Jamie on a cot in the darkness.

She can't sleep, staring at the ceiling.

She looks over:

The door is wide open.

Jamie stands, peeks out the doorway.

Glances outside, checks both ways.

Enters the hallway.

INT. CYBER SECURITY DIVISION - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

HOMELAND AGENTS scour Guzman's office, gathering evidence.

At her cubicle, Maddie Stone watches, fluctuating between angst, dread and an adrenaline rush.

She goes back to work on her secret project.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Rosenthal talks to Benjamin, who wears a customized mask filter under his hoodie.

It's a one-way conversation: an awkward soliloquy.

ROSENTHAL

You know what I tell them?
Benji wasn't like kids his own age.

(MORE)

ROSENTHAL (CONT'D)

He graduated early, leaving everyone else behind -- as well as the teachers. He's been accepted to every Ivy League college in the country, including right here at Stanford. But Benji is too busy for such trivial things. He's changing the world: one eNex at a time.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER - HALLWAYS - DAY

Jamie sprints down an empty hallway, looking for an exit.

JAMIE

(to herself)

This is not copacetic.

STAFF MEMBERS round a corner, spot her.

Jamie backtracks, runs down the opposite hall.

She notes the signage and follows a yellow line on the floor to its destination.

An ORDERLY with an fixed gaze spots Jamie, follows close behind.

FLASHBACK - INT. AIR FORCE COMMUNICATIONS TENT - NIGHT

Graveyard crew, less than a dozen TECHS at their posts.

Airman First Class Lily Guzman, 23, in uniform at her controller station, monitoring intelligence data.

She looks at her watch.

Uptight and edgy, she's compelled to leave.

FLASHBACK - EXT. AIR FORCE BASE - IRAQ - CONTINUOUS

Guzman exits the large tent with a hot sand breeze in her face.

She walks to a mess tent with a soda machine in front. Makes a selection. The can dispenses.

CHAD PHILLIPS, 25, obligatory high and tight haircut, on his way to the latrine. Sees Guzman and intercepts.

GUZMAN

Not now, Chad.

CHAD
What did I do?

GUZMAN
I told you, that was a temporary
thing. I'm still married.

CHAD
Over here, nobody knows or cares.

GUZMAN
I'll know.

CHAD
From what you've told me of this
Christopher guy, it's not going to
last anyways. So...why not?

GUZMAN
That's the attitude I don't--do you
hear that?

The HIGH-PITCHED WHINE of an approaching projectile.

Guzman freezes with dread.

CHAD
Shit! Incoming!

Both look up to see a light streak in the sky.

WARNING SIREN.

The soda can DROPS at her feet.

Chad bolts for the latrine doors.

A MORTAR ROCKET hits the communications tent dead center.

A BLAST OF LIGHT AND DUST blows Guzman backward.

BACK TO PRESENT - INT. SAFE HOUSE - DAY

Guzman wakes up on the couch. She's sweating, breathing
heavily.

Treadwell stands over her. She recoils.

TREADWELL
How long?

GUZMAN
What?

TREADWELL
How long have you had it?

GUZMAN
Bad dreams?

TREADWELL
No, PTSD.

Guzman clams up.

TREADWELL (CONT'D)
I've seen it before. You're here
but your mind's really back there.

GUZMAN
Not always. Sometimes I have
triggers...relapses. What about
your anxiety problem?

TREADWELL
That's not anxiety, it's my
personality. And there's no
medication that can fix it.

GUZMAN
Oh. Sorry.

TREADWELL
Right.

GUZMAN
And I do appreciate your help.

TREADWELL
Glad to hear it.

GUZMAN
Can I see those pictures again?

TREADWELL
Pictures?

GUZMAN
The employees that fried
themselves.

TREADWELL
Don't you mean the ones that got
fried?

GUZMAN
Show me again. I'm not eating this
time.

Treadwell pulls up the images on his phone. Hands it to Guzman. She studies them closer.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
So you believe these were
programmed electrocutions?

TREADWELL
Easily. No longer useful? Bye-bye.

GUZMAN
These game designers were high-tech
nerds: Stanford, MIT. You'd think
they'd have the expertise not to
blow themselves up. Right?

TREADWELL
Sure, you'd think so.

GUZMAN
Maybe it was...survival.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER - HALLWAYS - DAY

Jamie follows the yellow line, searching for an exit.

The orderly ambushes her, slamming Jamie to the floor.

JAMIE
Get off me!

The orderly's hands try to restrain her. She fights him off.

His eyes are filled with rage and he grabs her by the hair.
She kicks him in the groin and he releases his grip.

Jamie elbows him in the face, knees him in the head.

While the man is down, Jamie runs down another hallway until
her attacker is out of view.

Jamie discovers the line has been CURVED.

She's gone in a complete circle.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
What...

Jamie has lost her sense of direction. No lines or sign
markers.

HER POV: The walls and doors are DISTORTED.

She feels dizzy, swaying.

The orderly bursts through a door behind Jamie, yanks her inside.

INT. PSYCHE WARD - DAY

The orderly heaves Jamie over a table, overpowering her. His hands grip her throat, trying to choke her out.

Losing consciousness, Jamie feels wires hooked up to an unfamiliar machine.

She spots a CONTROL PANEL.

Jamie pounds buttons on the panel and the table shifts, loosening the orderly's grip.

She kicks him in the face and he doubles over at the headrest of the machine where the wires and cords intersect.

Jamie presses the ON button and the headrest electrifies!

The orderly screams and writhes as the currents flow through his body.

Jamie hits the OFF button and the orderly stops convulsing. His mouth is bloody.

Both collapse on the floor, exhausted and out of breath.

ORDERLY

What did you do to me?

JAMIE

You got shocked.

ORDERLY

What happened...after that?

JAMIE

Good question. It must've reversed what was controlling you. Hard re-boot.

ORDERLY

Thank you...where did you learn that?

Jamie smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. JUVENILE DENTENTION CENTER - JAMIE'S CELL - DAY

Jamie emerges from a trance, sees her father standing over her with STAFF.

CHRISTOPHER

Jamie. Let's go.

Disoriented, she leaves.

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Employees assemble eNexOne modules from scratch on a moving conveyor belt.

On the line, red-haired TANYA SCHMIDT, 23, reaches into her back pocket for her vibrating phone (Hello Kitty case).

The text message:

JOIN ME TONIGHT.

Below is an ERGON SYMBOL, an eye with a globe as pupil.

Surprised, Tanya glances up at a surveillance camera.

UV PORTAL

Tanya walks though, bathed in purple and black rays.

Minimal spots of germs disappear.

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - BENJAMIN'S PERSONAL QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Tanya advances into the dark room. It's filled with mirrors and illuminated borders.

The door closes shut, sealing her inside with a PNEUMATIC HISS.

TANYA

Hello?

She spots Benjamin Vaughn sitting across the room, in a meditative state.

TANYA (CONT'D)

Oh, it's you. I'm not used to seeing you this...life-sized.

BENJAMIN

Most prefer the larger-than-life version. Unfortunately, it's a necessity.

She moves closer. Benjamin puts up his hand. She freezes.

TANYA

What's wrong?

Benjamin quickly covers his nose and mouth with his customized filter.

BENJAMIN

Your perfume.

TANYA

Sorry. You don't like it?

Benjamin coughs, turning away.

TANYA (CONT'D)

What do you want me to do?

BENJAMIN

The room to your left! Go inside.

TANYA

Over here?

Tanya shrugs and moves into the small room, an air pressure chamber.

Suddenly, she's engulfed in steam and compressed air. Reacts with elated surprise.

Tanya returns to the living room, her endorphins stimulated.

TANYA (CONT'D)

"Jetsons" fan?

BENJAMIN

What's that?

TANYA

You know, the old cartoon?

BENJAMIN

I wasn't allowed to watch TV.

TANYA

Strict parents?

BENJAMIN
They only let me watch the news.

TANYA
All the death and destruction in
the world compressed into thirty
minutes? Sounds like child abuse.

BENJAMIN
Hard to see though the plastic
anyway.

Tanya gapes, unable to react.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
Bubble boy joke.

TANYA
Oh.

Stress-release laughter.

Tanya sits beside him, noticing a large group of PRESCRIPTION
BOTTLES on a table.

TANYA (CONT'D)
You take all of those?

BENJAMIN
Every day.

TANYA
Why did you choose me?

BENJAMIN
Your attendance record. You never
call off sick.

TANYA
I can't remember the last time for
either.

BENJAMIN
Exactly.

TANYA
Personal question?

BENJAMIN
I'll be the judge.

TANYA

There's a running bet at work what your real IQ is. Nichols said it's one-eighty. Over or under?

BENJAMIN

Over.

TANYA

Yes! I knew it.

BENJAMIN

One-eighty-two.

Tanya observes a small VIDEO STUDIO, a safe place to conduct meetings and rallies.

She produces her smart phone, shows him the display.

TANYA

What's this drawing?

BENJAMIN

Ergon. Alchemy symbol. An eye into the soul.

TANYA

What does it mean?

He hesitates, then smiles.

BENJAMIN

Purifying humanity through works of change.

TANYA

Change?

BENJAMIN

Change can be incremental, or catastrophic. What some might consider disruption, others will find innovative and groundbreaking. The possibilities are...infinite.

TANYA

Deep.

She sets her phone down.

Out of her view, Benjamin's message dissolves into PIXEL DUST...

Like it never existed.

He stares at her. She smiles back.

TANYA (CONT'D)
 Thanks for the invite, Benjamin.
 But I have to get up for work early
 tomorrow.

Tanya turns to leave.

TANYA (CONT'D)
 Do you have to buzz me out?

Benjamin utters a CRYPTIC PHRASE, in an INDISTINCT LANGUAGE.

She freezes, turns back.

Tanya's expression transforms to amorous lust. She throws herself at him.

Benjamin's not surprised. And doesn't resist.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - DAY

Treadwell on his way out.

TREADWELL
 You going after Jamie will be their
 first play. So don't fall into that
 trap.

GUZMAN
 I won't.

TREADWELL
 Do not leave.

GUZMAN
 I swear. Girl Scout's honor.

Treadwell shoots her a look. Leaves.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - LATER

Guzman on an iPad, researching.

FLASH TO--Guzman at the eNexOne console in V-Wave's R & D area. The imprint stamp reads: EPEIUS NEXUS ONE.

BACK TO--Guzman, obsessively searching.

GUZMAN
EPEIUS...what are you? What does it
mean?

She types in the mystery phrase.

A TROJAN HORSE.

The original, from Greek mythology.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
Master troll.

A MESSAGE BUBBLE pops up with a face from the past: an older
Chad Phillips, last seen in Iraq.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
Chad?

Lil, how've you been? Let's catch up: happy hour @ Vesuvio

GUZMAN

While processing this, her hands freeze in mid-air.

She realizes she has no computer. No iPad.

It was all in her head!

She FREAKS, stumbling to her feet.

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - BALLROOM - DAY

Victory party. Upbeat music and catered dinner.

Guests, including SENATORS, LOBBYISTS, and LAW ENFORCEMENT,
drink and celebrate.

ADULT USERS at eNexOne module stations react and contort to
V-Wave's programming.

Benjamin Vaughn's distorted Orwellian face appears on HUGE
VIDEO SCREENS.

BENJAMIN (ON SCREENS)
For everyone involved in defeating
the VR regulation bill, your
efforts and talents have been
invaluable, not only to V-Wave, but
to the future advancement of
technology. V-Wave's market share
is number one in North America and
will soon be international.

(MORE)

BENJAMIN (ON SCREENS) (CONT'D)
As an agent of transformational
change, I honor and salute you!
Enjoy the party, people!

Wild APPLAUSE.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - DAY

Treadwell returns with a grocery bag. Pops a Peeps chick into his mouth.

Checks the couch. All of the rooms.

Guzman is gone.

TREADWELL
Girl Scout, my ass!

Treadwell searches Guzman's personal belongings.

Finds scratch paper where Guzman was last sitting.

Recognizes the destination.

INT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - ROSENTHAL'S OFFICE - DAY

CEO Rosenthal at his desk.

His attention diverts to his computer screen.

Static interference.

The room lights FLICKER.

Look of concern...slowly changes to resignation.

ROSENTHAL
Smart boy.

SPARKS shoot out of Rosenthal's chest.

VOLTAGE OVERLOAD.

His pacemaker fails.

Rosenthal collapses on the floor, killed instantly.

INT. DR. PIERCE'S OFFICE - DAY

A reluctant Maddie Stone sits before her boss's desk.

DR. PIERCE
What is it, Maddie?

MADDIE
Where's Agent Guzman?

DR. PIERCE
On assignment.

MADDIE
Why were investigators going
through her office?

DR. PIERCE
At this time: not enough
information to make a judgment.

MADDIE
I'm having the opposite problem.

Dr. Pierce wheels to the door, gestures for her to follow.

MADDIE (CONT'D)
What?

Dr. Pierce silences her with a finger to his mouth.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Dr. Pierce and Maddie enter and the door seals behind them.

DR. PIERCE
Now we're soundproof. Lily trusted
me and so can you.

Maddie nods, loosening up.

DR. PIERCE (CONT'D)
Tell me what you know.

INT. VESUVIO BAR - DAY

Chad Philips enters, looking for someone.

Guzman meets him. He goes in for the hug and she blocks him
for a hand shake. Complicated history.

GUZMAN
Thanks for coming.

CHAD

What did you get yourself into this time, Lil?

GUZMAN

When I figure it out, I'll let you know.

CHAD

Order yet?

GUZMAN

You heard of V-Wave? Benjamin Vaughn?

CHAD

Who?

GUZMAN

Nice try.

Chad's demeanor changes. Gestures to the BAR STAFF. They ignore him.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)

Remember you used to talk about DARPA all the time? Mostly bragging to impress me.

CHAD

That was just talk.

GUZMAN

You sure? I thought that was a big goal of yours: working on all those cool top secret government projects?

CHAD

Pipe dream. Never happened. I have low-level clearance. Sorry. Why are you asking about--

GUZMAN

Benjamin Vaughn's parents: They were both bio-scientists. Spent time with the Army Medical Research Institute at Fort Detrick. Made weapons inspection trips to Iraq back in the day.

CHAD

Fascinating. Why should I care again?

GUZMAN

Their last stint was DARPA at the Pentagon. Any idea what they were working on?

Chad shakes his head, resolute.

CHAD

No clearance, no idea. Why don't you go ask them?

GUZMAN

I would, if they were still alive.

CHAD

Maybe you should take a hint.

GUZMAN

I like my threats in detail, Chad.

Tense beat. Chad grins.

CHAD

Okay, want some good advice, Lil? Let this one go.

GUZMAN

You know I can't do that.

Chad shakes his head. He gestures again--not to the bartender.

CHAD

Wish you wouldn't have said that.

MILITARY POLICE emerge from the shadows and block the exits.

The MPs apprehend Guzman.

Leave Chad untouched.

Guzman shakes her head at her ex-friend's betrayal.

EXT. S.F. STREETS - DAY

The military police escort a handcuffed Guzman to unmarked vehicles.

Through his car windshield, Treadwell watches. He swears to himself, unsure of his next move.

The government escort leaves.

Treadwell decides against following them.

Bounds out of his car, pacing the sidewalk.

TREADWELL
(to himself)
Are you just going to let them take
her? What's wrong with you?

Treadwell paces some more, makes a decision.

INT. TREADWELL'S CAR

Treadwell gets back in his car, wavers for a few seconds,
then finds a new resolve.

He cranks up HEAVY METAL MUSIC on his radio and accelerates.

EXT. BAY BRIDGE - DAY

Rush hour traffic.

A government caravan with tinted windows heads to its
destination.

A mile behind, Treadwell's car speeds in-between lanes,
trying to catch up to them.

INT. TREADWELL'S CAR - SPEEDING

Treadwell spots the caravan, five car lengths ahead.

TREADWELL
Here we go.

Takes a long breath, all in--

EXT. BAY BRIDGE - DAY

Treadwell pursues Guzman and her captors with crazy
diligence.

RAMS the back car in the caravan.

BUMPS AND GRINDS it into the railings.

Shower of SPARKS.

INT. MIDDLE GOVERNMENT CAR - BAY BRIDGE

Guzman and Chad: Both turn their heads to the mayhem.

CHAD
Who is that?

GUZMAN
You don't want to know.

EXT. BAY BRIDGE - DAY

The government cars surround and counter-attack against Treadwell, boxing him in.

Treadwell's car spins backward, out of control and into oncoming traffic.

Multi-car PILE-UP.

In the smoking remains, Treadwell squirms out of his totaled car. He climbs to the roof to watch the caravan's getaway.

ROTOR BLADES divert his attention to a military helicopter, rising above the bridge.

SOLDIERS near the open side door aim their weapons at Treadwell.

Nowhere to go, Treadwell raises his hands.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Guzman's eyes focus to the dim light.

FBI Agent Turner sits across the table, next to Chad.

CHAD
Warned you, Lil. You didn't listen.

GUZMAN
Where's Scott Treadwell?

TURNER
Detective Burnout doesn't have the clearance to be in this room. You barely qualify. He's lucky not to be in jail right now.

GUZMAN
He thought you were kidnappers.

Turner scoffs. He produces a folder and opens it to Guzman.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
What's this?

TURNER
Benjamin Vaughn's FBI file, first opened when he was twelve years old. That's when he hacked into the FBI's mainframe and stole classified data. Same with the CIA.

GUZMAN
What kind of classified data?

TURNER
Whatever he wanted--just to prove he could. No details, but he was a minor, so he wasn't prosecuted to avoid embarrassment.

GUZMAN
To him or you?

TURNER
Both. We thought--we hoped--it would be an isolated incident. We were mistaken.

Turner nods to an educated man in research: DR. WEISBERG.

TURNER (CONT'D)
Go ahead, Doctor.

DR. WEISBERG
I was Project Manager during the Vaughns' tenure at DARPA. They worked under me for two years.

GUZMAN
What were they working on?

Guzman eyes Chad, who maintains silence.

Dr. Weinberg looks over at Turner for permission.

TURNER
Tell her.

After a measured pause:

DR. WEISBERG
Neurotronic technology. Computer-brain interfacing.

(MORE)

DR. WEISBERG (CONT'D)
Utilized by soldiers on the
battlefield to remote-access
weapons with neural function
commands.

Guzman pieces it all together.

DR. WEISBERG (CONT'D)
That's how it started, but when its
final application was achieved...

GUZMAN
Mind control.

Dr. Weisberg nods.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
The Pentagon's wet dream: the mind-
programmed soldier. Doesn't
question orders, doesn't go AWOL.
Will complete any mission, no
matter if it's legal or not.
Getting warm?

Uneasy stare-down between all parties.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
So, Benji's parents knew he stole
their project data and incorporated
it into his eNexOne?

TURNER
They suspected. As well as their
business partner, Julian Stalworth.

GUZMAN
And when they tried to stop him,
the evil bubble boy took down their
plane. Probably with one of his
sound waves.

TURNER
We wanted confirmation of our worst
case scenario. What's done is done.
Now we need your help to stop him
before it's too late.

GUZMAN
Why me?

TURNER
He's obsessed with you: the only
reason you're still alive.

GUZMAN

Why is that?

TURNER

You do have similar military backgrounds. And he tested his weapon on you to find out your strengths and weaknesses. Maybe you're part of his game, an involuntary player.

GUZMAN

He hacked my home computer to learn about my past.

TURNER

Either way, you're compromised. Remember V-Wave's CEO Rosenthal? He was found dead in his office today. "Sudden heart failure caused by a freak pacemaker malfunction."

GUZMAN

Benji's been controlling everything the whole time. Rosenthal was just another puppet, programmed on command. Like his other employees, they served their purpose.

TURNER

And he turns eighteen tomorrow.

GUZMAN

The timing makes sense. He's consolidating his power before he becomes an adult. But for what?

TURNER

In the last six months, V-Wave has raised over a billion dollars from Silicon Valley. They think they're investing in a video game, a toy.

GUZMAN

They're clueless.

TURNER

And now V-Wave is going public on the stock market. You know what that means? Worldwide eNexOne distribution.

The reality sinks in.

TURNER (CONT'D)

A warrant on V-Wave Headquarters is being served tomorrow. You and Detective Treadwell will be there.

GUZMAN

Why Scott?

TURNER

Because he's only one of two investigators who's been deep inside the V-Wave complex. You're the other. If he cooperates, he may get his job back.

GUZMAN

And my daughter's case?

TURNER

All the more reason for you to make things right.

GUZMAN

And if I refuse?

TURNER

You still work for us. This is a domestic threat you took an oath to defend. You can help us take down V-Wave, or face termination from and concurrent prison sentences. What will it be, Agent Guzman?

EXT. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE - COURTYARD - DAY

The two beta-testers of the V-Wave Simulator are now free:

Kaufman's big frame moves though a group of passing soldiers. His affable personality has soured, gazing into the void.

He doesn't move aside, bumping two men out of his way.

SOLDIER #1

Watch it, man!

SOLDIER #2

Excuse you!

Kaufman keeps on walking.

INT. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE - BARRACKS - DAY

In his bunk, Vargas experiences deep REMs. His eyes dart back and forth under their lids.

Trembling turns to convulsions.

Around him, the room is empty.

No witness in sight.

EXT. L.A. FREEWAYS - DAY

Jamie and her father are stuck in rush hour traffic.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S CAR - EN ROUTE - DAY

Christopher drives, assessing Jamie's mental condition.

CHRISTOPHER
Up for a weekend adventure?

JAMIE
I don't know.

CHRISTOPHER
It'll get your mind off things.

JAMIE
That's the problem.

CHRISTOPHER
So, back to this weekend: How does Disneyland sound?

JAMIE
Now?

Jamie has mixed emotions.

CHRISTOPHER
Didn't you always want to go there, Jamie? Now's your chance.

Jamie's face brightens.

JAMIE
Of course.

CHRISTOPHER
We're making it a reality this time.

Jamie laughs, excited.

JAMIE

I can't believe we're doing this!

INT. ENEXONE MEDITATION POD - DAY

Serene mountain environment.

Rolling green hills.

A sparkling azure lake.

Benjamin Vaughn, eyes closed, meditating.

REVEAL Benjamin in medieval armor, covered in blood, and wielding an Excalibur sword.

Benjamin raises a decapitated head inside a helmet.

BENJAMIN

Don't look at me like that!

He giggles and tosses it into a large pile of other heads.

He looks out across a battlefield full of vanquished, headless warriors.

Empowered and ready to inflict more damage.

Ready for war.

Benjamin's composure reacts to something in the distance:

An approaching STORM, dead ahead.

BLACK OMINOUS CLOUDS, portending doom.

The face of Benjamin's aide cuts through the virtual plane.

GERBER

They know. They're coming.

Benjamin is unafraid.

BENJAMIN

I know. I'll be waiting.

EXT. V-WAVE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A LAWYER and a POLICE ESCORT approach the security entrance.

TWO V~WAVE GUARDS greet them.

In the parking lot, Treadwell watches and waits in a group of vehicles with local police.

In another car, Agent Turner and the Feds.

Guzman squirms in her seat with a foreboding chill.

INT. V~WAVE H.Q. - SURVEILLANCE HUB

SOMEONE sits alone, watching.

EXT. SECURITY ENTRANCE

The V~Wave guards stall, one of them making a phone call.

The lawyer and cops persist.

OFFICER-IN-CHARGE
Open this gate!

INT. SURVEILLANCE HUB

A CAMERA ZOOMS IN on the unwanted visitors.

EXT. SECURITY ENTRANCE

The V~Wave guards unleash their weapons on the lawyer and police escort. All are cut down.

EXT. V~WAVE HEADQUARTERS

Treadwell and Guzman react, not believing their eyes.

INT. SURVEILLANCE HUB

Benjamin Vaughn at the monitors. Watches the chaos outside.

BENJAMIN
You've been served.

EXT. V~WAVE PARKING LOT - COMMAND POST - NIGHT

FBI agents, a SWAT team and Palo Alto Police have erected a staging area, fortifying a perimeter around the building.

Agent Turner is present, dispensing orders. Treadwell confers with colleagues.

The SWAT LEADER approaches.

SWAT LEADER

We're still waiting on the building plans. You've been inside. What intel can you give us?

TREADWELL

All rooms and floors are monitored with cameras and biometric entry.

SWAT LEADER

And we're dealing with a teenager, right?

TREADWELL

An evil genius. With unlimited resources.

SWAT LEADER

From what I've heard, we could kill this kid with a germ.

TREADWELL

That's his personal fortress. He designed it to prevent that. You'll never get that close to him.

SWAT LEADER

Negative. You're about to see what happens when brain power meets firepower.

TREADWELL

Where's Lily--Agent Guzman?

SWAT LEADER

She'll have a front row seat.

The SWAT Leader gestures to Homeland agents escorting Guzman to a trailer.

INT. TRAILER

Guzman left inside. The door slams and locks.

INT. SURVEILLANCE HUB

With a dispassionate stare, Benjamin watches the mass of law enforcement converging on his building.

His probing camera homes in on Guzman's trailer in the lot. Sees her in the window, watching the operation unfold.

A knowing smirk.

EXT. COMMAND POST

The SWAT Leader strategizes with FBI Agent Turner. Both eye the trailer.

SWAT LEADER

We don't need her.

TURNER

We always need bait.

INT. TRAILER

Treadwell moves past the Homeland guards. Closes the door behind him.

GUZMAN

Tell me you're not going in with them.

TREADWELL

You know why: they need someone who's been inside.

GUZMAN

I have been: twice. And you're willingly heading into an ambush?

TREADWELL

Their on my turf now. Goes with the job.

GUZMAN

I wish they'd let me do mine. They're underestimating the kid, just like we did.

TREADWELL

I'm not.

Treadwell taps on his Kevlar vest.

TREADWELL (CONT'D)
You'll be safer out here.

GUZMAN
You're the only one who cares.

Treadwell kisses her goodbye, winks.

TREADWELL
Don't forget it.

He turns to leave.

TREADWELL (CONT'D)
Were you ever a Girl Scout?

GUZMAN
Been camping a few times. Does that count?

TREADWELL
Oh, definitely.

She watches him go, worried.

EXT. V-WAVE PERIMETER - NIGHT

The SWAT team and law enforcement breach the entrance.

INT. SURVEILLANCE HUB

Benjamin views this with amusement.

INT. TRAILER

Resigned, Guzman watches.

INT. V-WAVE CORRIDORS

The SWAT team, Treadwell and a DOZEN OFFICERS, advance.

INT. SURVEILLANCE HUB

Benjamin hits a button on the panel.

INT. V-WAVE CORRIDORS

Deadly fumes HISS, emanating from ceiling valves.

Caught by surprise, the SWAT team fumbles for their oxygen masks.

Treadwell coughs, barely securing his own mask before taking cover.

Small EXPLOSIVE DEVICES eject from portals, attracted to body heat signatures. Roll to their targets.

INT. TRAILER

Guzman tries to glimpse the action through the window, but her view is obstructed.

EXT. COMMAND POST

SCREAMS and PANIC. Smoke and fire visuals.

The assault team incurs multiple casualties.

The SWAT leader watches the monitors in disbelief.

SWAT LEADER
Get outta there!

INT. TRAILER

Guzman paces, brainstorming her next move.

GUNSHOTS outside her door.

She cautiously approaches the unlocked door. Pushes it open.

EXT. COMMAND POST

Guzman peeks outside the door to see her Homeland escort has been ambushed. All lay dead.

A notification CHIME jars her back to reality.

On the trailer steps, a PHONE'S DISPLAY SCREEN lights up.

Guzman looks closer at the incoming text:

GREETINGS, LILY PAD!

Cautious, Guzman slowly acquires the foreign phone.

Across the lot, a DARK FIGURE walks out into the light.

It's Guy Nichols, V-Wave's missing PR man. His eyes are fixed in a hypnotic state.

Heads turn to the last-minute mediator.

SWAT LEADER
Who's this guy?

Guns are aimed at Nichols, who puts up his hands in a conciliatory gesture.

NICHOLS
I am honored to deliver a message to you from The Great One. You have five minutes to leave his property or you will be destroyed.

Guzman hears a familiar BUZZING SOUND.

From above.

She glances up to the dark sky with dread.

INT. SURVEILLANCE HUB

Benjamin operates customized REMOTE CONTROLS with deft skill.

EXT. COMMAND POST

Guzman backs up, worried.

More incoming texts:

THE FIRE EXIT DOOR: THIRTY YARDS @ 10 0' CLOCK

Guzman spots the building's door.

Doesn't move, conflicted.

EXT. NIGHT SKY

TWO CAMO-DRONES, pitch black and weaponized with miniature projectiles, on a downward trajectory.

EXT. COMMAND POST

Nichols' tone turns grave, raising his arms in a cultish manner.

NICHOLS

You will not stop The Great One from achieving his objective! He is smarter than all of us! You will submit. He will conquer the next millennium!

Last warning text:

RUN NOW IF YOU WANT TO LIVE!!! GO NOW, LILY PAD, GO!!

She peers down to the dead Homeland agent escort.

Grabs the agent's semi-auto pistol.

EXT. NIGHT SKY

The camo-drones nose dive.

EXT. V-WAVE PARKING LOT

The FBI and police open fire on the stealth drones, firing blind.

Nichols spreads his arms wide to welcome the attack. Eyes wide with a weird grin.

NICHOLS

You all deserve to die!

Manic LAUGHTER.

Guzman BOLTS--

EXT. V-WAVE PERIMETER

Guzman sprints across the lot and reaches the designated exit door.

It opens by remote entry.

Cranes her neck as--

EXT. COMMAND POST

The drone missiles LEVEL the parking lot.

Vehicles, including Guzman's trailer, are OBLITERATED in balls of flame.

Bodies SCATTER like rag dolls in the concussive SHOCK WAVE.
Nichols' laughter is cut off by explosive force.

INT. V-WAVE CORRIDORS

Guzman ducks inside the exit door, which locks behind her, dodging flaming debris.

Regains her breath. Observes the empty, spooky halls.

Guzman advances through the building, pistol drawn.

Steel doors close automatically behind her.

She's being guided, like a rodent in a maze, until she reaches a predetermined location:

UV PORTAL

Guzman cautiously moves through the purple rays, feeling a negative vibe. Germs sizzle and zap.

INT. WAREHOUSE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Guzman stops, sensing she's being watched.

She looks up to see:

Benjamin.

Wearing a black hoodie, he stares down on her from a shipping dock platform.

BENJAMIN

Hello, Lily Pad. Sorry about your people outside. You were invited-- they weren't.

GUZMAN

Your secret's out, Benjamin. Your eNex won't be worth much now.

BENJAMIN

Minds change. Some unwittingly.

GUZMAN

Surrender right now and I'll make sure you get out alive. I promise.

BENJAMIN

That's very nice—a you, Lily Pad.
But that's a promise you can't
make. Or keep. But this is my
house: I make the rules.

Alive, but injured, Treadwell emerges from a dark catwalk,
approaching their position.

TREADWELL

Hold it, right there!

Benjamin giggles, mockingly holds up his hands.

BENJAMIN

OMG!

Then he puts them down with an evil smirk.

TREADWELL

Hands up! Your toy doesn't work on
me, boy!

BENJAMIN

You're right.

Benjamin grins, looks over at Guzman.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

It doesn't.

Benjamin enunciates in a foreign language: a mind-control
activation phrase.

Guzman raises her pistol and points it at Treadwell.

Her hand shakes, fighting off Benjamin's power over her.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Swahili dialect. Cool, huh?

TREADWELL

Put the gun down, Lily!

BENJAMIN

Do it!

TREADWELL

Shut up!

BENJAMIN

Shoot him now!

Treadwell points his gun at Guzman, then Benjamin.

Then Guzman.

Who's the bigger threat?

TREADWELL

Don't say another word!

Benjamin repeats the phrase with forceful precision.

A tear runs down Guzman's cheek.

Guzman fires!

Shot in the chest, Treadwell drops several feet into boxes.

Guzman recoils, not believing what she just did.

BENJAMIN

Damn, Lily Pad! How does it feel to
be a walking hand puppet?

Guzman advances on Benjamin with rage until another verbal activation phrase freezes her momentum.

Against her will, Guzman's hand rises...

SLAPS herself across the face with her palm.

Once. Twice.

Benjamin smirks, enjoying the twisted display.

Guzman's other hand--with the gun--reverses course, pointing at her own head.

Her hand TREMBLES as she fights it.

In a swift movement, Guzman knocks herself out with the gun butt.

INT. CYBER SECURITY DIVISION - WAR ROOM - NIGHT

Maddie Stone and CRYPTO EXPERTS, all male, have been working for hours, mentally and physically exhausted.

An ALERT on her computer.

MADDIE

About time!

ON THE SCREEN

She downloads Benjamin Vaughn's FBI file. Reads the contents.

MADDIE

reacts to the info.

MATT and JEFF, both asleep. She shakes them with vigor.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

Wake up!

She throws a drink in one face and slaps the other. They bounce up, wide-eyed and attentive.

MATT

Aah!

JEFF

What?

MADDIE

Look at this: the kid hacked into the FBI and CIA when he was twelve. Under NSA, it says inconclusive.

MATT

Yeah, so?

MADDIE

Why would he stop there? Why not go for the trifecta? I know I would.

JEFF

Nothing is inconclusive with the NSA. Sounds like a whitewash.

MATT

He broke in and stole something?

MADDIE

Hello? What was the name of their mass decryption program on SSL and VPN protocol?

MATT

Um, that's classified.

MADDIE

Then how the hell do I know about it? It was an animal's name...what was it?

MATT

BULLRUN--named after the first battle of the Civil War.

MADDIE

That's it! That's the one.

JEFF

You're wasting your time. They'll never give us access. And they'll deny it exists.

MADDIE

There's only one way to crack his code--go to the source. And don't ask for permission. They never do.

The cryptos exchange looks. *Is she crazy?*

JEFF

We're not.

MADDIE

We are.

MATT

We are?

MADDIE

Do it!

MATT/JEFF

We're doing it!

INT. V-WAVE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TESTING AREA - NIGHT

Guzman wakes up, her ankles and wrists locked into an upright steel transport.

Benjamin at a computer panel, making last-minute adjustments.

GUZMAN

What's up, Benji?

BENJAMIN

Don't call me that.

GUZMAN

What did you do to me?

BENJAMIN

Now or before?

GUZMAN

The first time.

BENJAMIN

Oh, that. Brain waves have unique algorithms, like a digital fingerprint. At first, I wanted to monetize it: every dependent consumer psychologically attuned to buy my products, with their endless updates and billions of dollars in passive revenue streams.

Benjamin pulls up a computer screen to demonstrate brain scans and profiles of multiple eNexOne users.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Everyone who ever used the eNexOne: My unwitting employees, gamers, cops, politicians. Tween daughters with a rebel streak...Jamie really lived up to her potential, didn't she? All she needed was a little direction.

Guzman's yanks on her restraints with anger.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Don't bother, Lily Pad. You're only alive right now because I allowed it. Just like I allowed you into my domain -- for the third and final time.

GUZMAN

What do you want from me?

BENJAMIN

Hacking into computers gets boring. But hacking into minds...is the ultimate jack.

INT. WAREHOUSE AREA

Alive, but sore, Treadwell recovers, checking his Kevlar vest for entry wound penetrations.

INT. R & D TESTING AREA

Benjamin starts a digital countdown, initiating computers.

GUZMAN

What is this? Your new toy?

BENJAMIN

The Virtual Nexus Battle Grid, Beta Phase two point zero. You're one of my involuntary guinea pigs. All were unworthy. Brain aneurysms were an unfortunate glitch.

GUZMAN

Were your parents unworthy?

Touching a nerve, Benjamin goes face-to-face with Guzman.

BENJAMIN

No, unlucky.

FLASH TO--GULFSTREAM JET IN FLIGHT

Angel investor/business partner JULIAN STALWORTH, 56, pilots solo. Perfect cloudless weather.

BENJAMIN'S PARENTS are in the passenger seats.

Guzman is locked into an aisle seat, an unwilling witness and participant. She tries to undo her seatbelt, to no avail

Stalworth receives an incoming audio message...

A DEAD COMPUTER TONE.

After listening, Stalworth's expression changes.

Stoic, determined.

On virtual auto-pilot, Stalworth veers off course --

Steers the plane's nose directly into --

The precipice of a mountain.

The Vaughns look at each other, knowing it's the end and why.

Guzman braces for the pending crash, white-knuckles the arms rests.

Fire and debris explode through the cockpit windshield --

BACK TO--R & D TESTING AREA

Guzman recovers from the vivid mental experience.

BENJAMIN

You think I got this way by chance?
A genetic anomaly? Think about
it...

GUZMAN

...you were exposed.

BENJAMIN

They were first. Quick philosophy
question: Whatya you call a society
that dies from its own weapons of
mass destruction? Is that
Darwinism? Or karma?

The battle grid equipment initiates.

GUZMAN

What have you done?

Benjamin enters his own grid transport, with a customized
oxygen module.

BENJAMIN

You'll find out--or maybe you
won't. We'll see who has the bigger
brain.

An ALARM CHIME on the console. Benjamin sees Treadwell on a
security cam.

INT. WAREHOUSE AREA

Treadwell slowly recovers.

He retraces his steps, unable to find his pistol in the maze
of boxes and debris.

INT. R & D TESTING AREA

Benjamin hits a button on the console and quickly leaves.

BENJAMIN

Have to bring in reinforcements
early...shoulda aimed for the head,
Lily Pad.

Guzman is confused. She realizes it's Treadwell.

INT. WAREHOUSE AREA

An ALARM sounds, followed by a mind-control SOUND WAVE.

A DOZEN V-WAVE EMPLOYEES stream into the area from every direction, armed with guns, knives and axes. Skinner and Jeong are among them.

Treadwell can't believe it.

TREADWELL

Where'd these idiots come from?

INT. R & D TESTING AREA

The headgear drops down on Benjamin and Guzman, automatically locking in place.

BENJAMIN

Hold onto your ass, this is gonna get real!

Guzman closes her eyes and braces herself as the hydraulic transports launch into the:

INT. VNEX BATTLE GRID

The transports slide on intersecting tracks into the first phase: a strobing, smoke-filled room.

VIRTUAL WORLD

Guzman opens her eyes to a futuristic landscape with scorched earth and wreckage.

In this environment, she's not restrained.

She cocks her head to hear:

MECHANIZED WALKING, getting louder.

A military exoskeleton suit arrives.

Revealed in the helmet mask visor: Benjamin's face. He grins before--

Machine guns emerge from shoulder packs, followed by laser targeting beams, and strafe the ground in front of Guzman.

She bolts across the landscape, looking for cover.

INT. WAREHOUSE AREA

Treadwell finds his pistol under a broken crate, fights back against the mind-zombie mob.

They swarm the moving target.

INT. VNEX BATTLE GRID

The mobile transports bank and dip, simulating the virtual world's actions.

Fire sprays out of the walls. Dirt shoots out of cannons.

VIRTUAL WORLD

Jet propulsion fires up in Benjamin's exo-suit.

He takes flight, launching gunfire and grenade explosions in Guzman's direction.

Guzman maneuvers in and out of a maze of wreckage, one step away from incineration.

INT. VNEX BATTLE GRID

The mobile transports jerk and glide.

Guzman's motion sickness takes over and she loses control.

VIRTUAL WORLD

Guzman kneels on the scarred ground, vomiting.

Benjamin flies around her, taunting.

BENJAMIN

Dizzy, Lily Pad? Get you a
Dramamine?

Guzman fights off the sickness, her anger rising.

A MT-4 rocket launcher materializes in her hands. Guzman reacts.

Benjamin nose-dives toward her.

Guzman shoulders the MT-4 and fires anti-armor projectiles at her attacker.

Benjamin stops in mid-air. PULSATING SHIELDS activate around him.

The grenades explode harmlessly.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
Wow, you already tapped into your
subconscious. Beginner's luck.

Benjamin unleashes a futuristic laser cannon and levels Guzman's location with deadly shock waves.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
Too bad I'm the master.

Guzman goes airborne in the fiery maelstrom.

EXT. V-WAVE BUILDING PERIMETER

New FBI agents and NATIONAL GUARD soldiers prepare for a second-wave counterattack on the tech headquarters.

INT. WAREHOUSE AREA

Treadwell shoots his last round, the mob still converging from all directions.

He bolts around a corner and into two opposite forces: Jeong and Skinner. They raise their automatic weapons.

Treadwell drops to the floor and both groups unload into an unwitting circular firing squad.

Amazed he's still alive and unscathed, Treadwell exhales.

VIRTUAL WORLD

Guzman falls earthward in a spiral of fire and dust.

She lands on his back, making a cratered body impression in the surface. Trapped in the toxic mud, she can't move.

Out of the virtual sky, Benjamin circles, then disappears.

Guzman takes a deep breath, relieved.

Like a light switch--

The world goes pitch black.

The blackness slowly closes in, like a contracting prison cell.

A glowing RED FACE.

Benjamin, resembling the devil, glares down at his victim.

BENJAMIN
(evil baritone)
Time to die, Lily Pad. This world
was not for you.

Claustrophobic terror as she's swallowed by darkness.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
In here, only the smartest survive.
You didn't measure up. Bye, bye.

Guzman snaps out of her terror, long enough to concentrate.

A grenade appears in her hand.

The other hand is trapped by the darkness.

Guzman struggles, then yanks it free to pull out the grenade's pin.

As her body disappears into the void, there is an explosion.

Guzman jettisons out of the dark prison and back into the apocalyptic tableau.

Benjamin lands fifty yards away from Guzman's position, on her back, in wreckage.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
Done playing.

GUZMAN
Just shut up and get it over with,
you little nut job.

The exoskeleton suit BREAKS APART to reveal:

An eight-foot-tall creature, an irradiated humanoid with red eyes and dinosaur teeth, emerges with a bloodthirsty roar. Leaves the super soldier suit in pieces, stepping over it.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
Shit.

The creature charges, the ground heaving with tremors.

Guzman runs for it.

Too late.

The creature grabs Guzman by the ankles and pounds her back and forth on the ground like a toy.

The creature laughs hysterically with Benjamin's voice.

Helpless in the onslaught, Guzman cannot escape from the dizzying attack.

The creature tosses Guzman into a nasty pond of toxic waste.

INT. VNEX BATTLE GRID

Guzman's mobile transport submerges her into a water tank.

Unable to escape her steel transport and bound arms and legs, Guzman faces death by drowning.

Guzman struggles to escape her steel constraints before her lungs explode.

VIRTUAL WORLD

FLOATING SKELETONS and the murky after-effects of an environmental disaster.

MUTANT EELS converge on Guzman's position, squeezing their appendages around her body.

INT. WAREHOUSE AREA

Treadwell approaches the R & D testing area's steel door. Checks out the biometric security console.

He observes the mortally wounded Jeong and Skinner on the floor. Turns back to the door.

TREADWELL

Which one of you numb-nuts have all-access? Eeny, miny, moe...

Treadwell drags Jeong's semi-conscious body to the steel door with one hand and an automatic weapon in the other.

He pries open Jeong's eyelid to register a bio-scan on the entry console. Slaps down his handprint.

The door slides open!

TREADWELL (CONT'D)
Oh, congrats.

Treadwell heads inside, trying to locate Guzman.

INT. V-WAVE CORRIDORS

The Feds and National Guard advance past the booby traps and bodies.

INT. R & D TESTING AREA

Treadwell sees the battle grid on the opposite side and concentrates on the controller panels.

There are hundreds of buttons and levers.

NO CLUE.

VIRTUAL WORLD

The mutant eels snap at Guzman's head with their razor teeth.

INT. VNEX BATTLE GRID

Moments from drowning in the real world, Guzman goes limp, blacking out.

BENJAMIN (V.O.)
No, not yet!

VIRTUAL WORLD

The creature's muscled arm reaches inside the pond and yanks out Guzman.

INT. VNEX BATTLE GRID

The transport mimics the virtual world and hydraulically extracts Guzman from the tank.

She chokes and expels water.

VIRTUAL WORLD

The creature hurtles Guzman into the void.

INT. R & D TESTING AREA

Overwhelmed, Treadwell forgoes the computer panels and checks the walls and floors.

TREADWELL

Power source! Where are you?

He pinpoints and follows a trail of fiber optic cables.

TREADWELL (CONT'D)

Maybe?

VIRTUAL WORLD

The creature moves in for the kill with loud powerful stomps. Guzman doesn't move, exhausted and resigned to her fate.

INT. R & D TESTING AREA

Treadwell follows the maze of cables to an electrical hub. Gets an idea, scans the room.

VIRTUAL WORLD

The creature hovers over Guzman's position, its barbed tail slicing through the air.

It impales Guzman's leg. She screams.

INT. WAREHOUSE AREA

The Feds and National Guard hasten their advance.

VIRTUAL WORLD

The creature's rows of endless teeth descend on its prey.

INT. R & D TESTING AREA

Treadwell aims his weapon and opens fire on the battle grid's power source.

BULLETS and SPARKS ricochet off the controller panels.

VIRTUAL WORLD

Benjamin's creature moves in for the kill.

Guzman braces for impact.

INT. R & D TESTING AREA

The power source EXPLODES in a shower of sparks.

The FBI and National Guard advance through the thick layer of smoke surround him, gawking at the fireworks display.

Treadwell's weapon drops to his side. Displays his badge.

The mobile transports have been disabled.

Guzman is alive, but physically spent and disoriented.

She spots the rescue party approaching. Sees Treadwell and smiles.

Treadwell removes Guzman's restraints, helping her out of the transport vehicle.

All turn and stare at Benjamin's unconscious figure, trapped within his own creation.

EXT. V-WAVE PARKING LOT - MORNING

Treadwell and Guzman leave the smoking building with a National Guard escort.

More law enforcement vehicles advance through the debris.

TREADWELL

This was all about a game?

GUZMAN

No...he's planning something else.

TREADWELL

Are you positive?

Guzman shakes her head. Muddled thoughts. Tries to focus.

Two familiar faces emerge from the sirens and smoke:

It's Dr. Pierce and Maddie Stone, approaching Guzman with urgency.

MADDIE

Lily! I didn't let you down. Thank you for trusting me.

Guzman stares at her with confusion. *Who is this?*

DR. PIERCE

Miss Stone decrypted the V-Wave file you sent us.

MADDIE

Don't ask me how. I'm sworn to secrecy. Until my book deal.

GUZMAN

...the file?

Guzman looks at Treadwell for help. He shrugs.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)

Okay, show me.

Maddie produces a tablet for the data presentation.

MADDIE

We discovered Benjamin Vaughn's technical blueprints for the eNexOne and future projects. But this was under the heaviest 1024-bit of encryption: a geographical layout of Vandenberg Air Force Base near Lompoc, California. Missile testing logs and military personnel files.

DR. PIERCE

He was probing for vulnerabilities. Our intel was correct.

This sparks Guzman's memory.

TREADWELL

What is it?

Guzman remembers lucidly.

GUZMAN

He wants revenge. In real life. The game isn't over...

EXT. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

A long-range missile with a booster rocket on a platform, ready for launch.

INT. VANDENBERG AFB - CONTROL ROOM

A bank of radar and guidance CONTROLLERS make last minute adjustments.

Air Force Lieutenant GENERAL MATHIS, 62, watches with confidence.

EXT. LAUNCH PAD

The missile launches into the sky, emerging from a large plume of exhaust and fire.

EXT. CALIFORNIA COAST

The missile arcs into the horizon.

EXT. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE

Several helicopters advance over the compound.

INT. HELICOPTER - EN ROUTE

Guzman and Treadwell ride along with government agents. They watch the missile's trajectory with concern.

TREADWELL
We're too late.

Guzman on a cell phone: waits impatiently for several rings.

GUZMAN
Answer, damn it!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOUSE - FOYER

Christopher answers his land-line, loosens his tie.

CHRISTOPHER
Hello?

GUZMAN

Is Jamie there? I need to talk to her.

CHRISTOPHER

She's not here.

GUZMAN

Where is she?

CHRISTOPHER

Where do you think? Back at the detention center. Something wrong?

EXT. DISNEYLAND ENTRANCE

Jamie and her father walk through the turnstiles with a giddy family crowd.

Oblivious, the masses file into the park.

EXT. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE

The helicopters land.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Large view screens track the missile's flight path.

All eyes shift to the party crashers.

Guzman and Treadwell enter, looking at the staff, then the monitors.

TREADWELL

This is bat shit crazy.

General Mathis intercedes.

GENERAL MATHIS

What is this? You're not authorized to be here.

GUZMAN

Where's that missile heading?

GENERAL MATHIS

That's classified. Who the hell are you?

GUZMAN
Homeland Security. We have reason
to believe your missile test has
been sabotaged.

GENERAL MATHIS
Sabotaged? By whom?

GUZMAN
Self-destruct the missile, while
you have the chance.

GENERAL MATHIS
I don't take orders from you!

GUZMAN
You're wasting time!

GENERAL MATHIS
(to MPs)
Get them out of here.

Soldiers form a circle around the Feds, weapons ready.

The Feds draw their own. Deadly impasse.

GENERAL MATHIS (CONT'D)
You are making a big mistake.

TREADWELL
You're going to stand there and
listen.

Guzman scans the faces in the room, including a pissed
General Mathis.

TREADWELL (CONT'D)
Anything yet?

She shakes her head.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN

Suddenly, the missile radically changes course.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

All eyes go to the view-screens: the missile's trajectory.

Stunned silence. Confusion.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN

The missile arcs into a 180 degree maneuver.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Controlled chaos. The rattled HEAD CONTROLLER examines the hijacked guidance systems.

GENERAL MATHIS
What's happening?

HEAD CONTROLLER
The missile changed course. It's heading back inland.

GENERAL MATHIS
Self-destruct now.

HEAD CONTROLLER
We're locked out of the system!

GENERAL MATHIS
Override it!

HEAD CONTROLLER
The admin password has been changed! We can't access the codes.

Guzman's eyes lock on a Mission Flight Control Officer (MFCO) who also eyeballs her in an unusual manner.

It's Kaufman, one of the eNexOne simulator beta testers.

GUZMAN
Scott.

Treadwell turns to see the controller slowly backing away from his console.

Kaufman, sweats abnormally, eyes bulging.

GENERAL MATHIS
Return to your post, Kaufman!
That's an order.

Kaufman's partner, Vargas, is at the same bank, monitoring the situation.

The MPs guns waver between the feds and Kaufman.

While they're distracted, Vargas opens fire with his sidearm.

Guzman and Treadwell take cover. The MPs return fire.

GUZMAN
There's two of them!

The MPs shoot Kaufman in the chest and he drops to the floor.

Treadwell checks his vitals. Dead.

TREADWELL
Not anymore.

Vargas escapes into the hallways, dodging gunfire. Guzman follows.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN

The missile straightens out to its new destination.

INT. VANDENBERG AFB - CORRIDORS

MPs pursue Vargas through a maze of halls. Guzman is close behind.

GUZMAN
Shoot to wound! We need him!

INT. CONTROL ROOM

All eyes on the view screen.

HEAD CONTROLLER
Still heading inland!

GENERAL MATHIS
My God...what's the new trajectory?

The radar system charts the missile's new vector: a populous area.

HEAD CONTROLLER
Los Angeles Basin. Ten million people.

Treadwell confronts General Mathis.

TREADWELL
General, level with us: Why would Vaughn be interested in a test missile? What's the real payload?

General Mathis hesitates, not wanting to answer. *It's bad.*

INT. CORRIDORS

Firefight between Vargas the and MPs.

Two soldiers are down. Guzman takes cover.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

General Mathis slowly sits down, avoiding the view-screen.

GENERAL MATHIS

It's a new airborne biological weapon. We are competing with Russia and North Korea, who are both still active in testing. The target was a non-human ecosystem in the Pacific--a deserted chain of islands. The results would be kept top secret for further research.

Treadwell shakes his head, aghast.

TREADWELL

Won't be secret much longer, will it?

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN

The missile's velocity parts the waves.

INT. CORRIDORS

Treadwell enters the fray, joining up with Guzman.

TREADWELL

It's a bio-missile, heading for L.A.

Guzman nods with little surprise. It all fits.

GUZMAN

Benji's final revenge on the world he felt wronged him. He didn't want to be liked. He wanted everyone to be like him.

After the new reality sinks in--

TREADWELL

Lily, listen to me: their guidance system is locked. This guy is our only chance of getting back in. We need him alive to stop this.

GUZMAN

What if his brain is scrambled?
It's a long shot...

TREADWELL

Jamie.

Guzman's fear turns to determination, eyes the target down the hall.

Vargas opens fire--

The MPs are down. Treadwell and Guzman advance closer to Vargas's position.

Treadwell takes a bullet to the leg and goes down.

Guzman goes to his aid, assessing the wound. She makes a tourniquet.

When she turns back to the hall, Vargas has fled.

More military police and a MEDIC reach Treadwell and Guzman.

M.P.

Where did he go?

GUZMAN

Stairwell.

Rifles drawn, the soldiers head into the stairwell.

The medic examines Treadwell's leg wound.

MEDIC

The bullet missed your femoral artery. Are you all right?

TREADWELL

It hurts like hell, but yeah.

GUZMAN

I'm sorry, Scott. I have to go.

TREADWELL

Stop wasting time. GO GET HIM.

Guzman nods, resolute.

EXT. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE

Vargas shoots a GUARD outside a fortified building and takes shelter.

The sign above is marked: FUEL DEPOT.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN

The missile speeds towards the coastline.

EXT. DISNEYLAND - MAIN STREET U.S.A.

Jamie and Christopher head into the park.

CHRISTOPHER
Which ride first?

JAMIE
You know which one.

CHRISTOPHER
I forgot.

Jamie stops, in disbelief.

JAMIE
It was Pirates.

CHRISTOPHER
That's right. Let's go.

JAMIE
No, it's not.

Christopher stops, turns around. Sees Jamie's concerned face.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
Space Mountain.

Christopher's affect disappears. His frame dissolves, revealing Benjamin Vaughn.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
Who are you?

BENJAMIN
In real-life, our dreams can become nightmares. You will soon know the pain of dying alone.

Benjamin's image disappears, leaving a bewildered Jamie behind.

WARNING SIRENS blast through the park.

Attendees stand around, puzzled.

Familiar FUR CHARACTERS in suits stop and scan with their limited peripheral vision.

LOUDSPEAKER

This is not a drill. Incoming
missile threat. Evacuate now!

Confusion turns to mass chaos.

EXT. VANDENBERG AFB - OUTSIDE FUEL DEPOT

Guzman and a DOZEN SOLDIERS stop at the entrance.

GUZMAN

Who's going in with me?

The men stare at the fuel depot building, spooked.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)

It's now or never! Move your asses!

THREE SOLDIERS are gung-ho, the rest fall back, guarding the entry.

INT. FUEL DEPOT

Huge, imposing CYLINDERS of rocket and jet fuel, under half-generator lights.

Guzman and her military escort advance, scanning every dark corner and crevice.

All they hear is their own BREATHING and an eerie METALLIC HUM.

SOLDIER #1

One wrong ricochet and everything
blows.

SOLDIER #2

As long as nothing leaks, we're
good.

GUZMAN

Thanks for clearing that up.

Vargas hides on a catwalk above. He wipes the sweat from his paranoid eyes.

When the group turns a corner--

MUZZLE FLARES from above, freezing their positions. The soldiers return fire.

More bullets WHIZ past their heads and they take cover.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN

The missile passes islands, heading for the West Coast.

EXT. DISNEYLAND

Jamie evacuates with the panicked crowd.

Scared humans inside fur suits bolt and strip out of their costumes.

Attendees are trampled.

A furry character's head strikes a group from behind, bowling them over.

Jamie makes her way through the maze of downed bodies.

INT. FUEL DEPOT

Guzman and the soldiers converge on their target's location.

Vargas acts like he's surrendering. Holds up his hands.

When they try to arrest him, Vargas's hand grabs a hydraulic lever.

A FUEL DRUM separates from its moorings and rolls in their direction.

Guzman dives out of the way. One soldier is unconscious, the other CRUSHED under the drum.

Vargas jumps Guzman. They wrestle and struggle.

Guzman pummels him with punches and kicks.

She applies a devastating arm bar vise on Vargas's throat.

Vargas closes his eyes, goes limp.

GUZMAN
Dammit! Wake up!

Guzman backs off, relieves the pressure on Vargas's throat.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
Help unlock the guidance system!
Millions don't have to die. You're
our last chance to--

Playing possum, Vargas counter-attacks with an elbow to Guzman's head and a kick to the stomach.

Guzman drops to the floor.

Passes in and out of consciousness.

EXT. DISNEYLAND - PARKING LOT

Jamie runs into the packed lot along with a frantic crowd.

They look out at --

THOUSANDS OF VEHICLES.

The ADJACENT HIGHWAY is jammed for miles in both directions.

Everyone is trapped.

Jamie drops to her knees, resigned.

INT. FUEL DEPOT

Vargas looks for a weapon with which to finish her off.

Above her, damaged valves and hoses spray DEADLY FUMES.

Guzman's weakened eyes trail over to a downed soldier.

A TASER on his belt.

Guzman's memory is jarred:

FLASH TO--TREADWELL showing GUZMAN the phone images of charred bodies (V-Wave employees).

TREADWELL
These weren't accidents and they
weren't suicide.

GUZMAN
Maybe it was...survival.

BACK TO--GUZMAN's flicker of enlightenment:

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Hard re-boot.

In her peripheral, Guzman sees Vargas charging her with a long pipe.

She wills herself to move.

Choking from the fumes, Guzman hurries over and grabs the taser. Activates it.

Guzman shoots Vargas with the taser wire.

Vargas freezes as the electrical current RIPS through his body and the pipe. He convulses and drops to the ground.

Overcome by the fumes, Guzman also drops, unable to breathe.

MPs in gas masks storm the fuel depot and drag out the unconscious Guzman, Vargas and the injured soldiers.

EXT. VANDENBERG AFB - FUEL DEPOT

Medics strap oxygen masks on the victims. Guzman slowly returns to consciousness.

A medic furiously applies chest compressions to Vargas to revive him.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN

The missile parts the waves.

SAILBOATS in its path are upended.

The shoreline is within range--

EXT. FUEL DEPOT

More chest compressions on Vargas, harder than before.

Suddenly his throat clears in a loud GASP.

MP
Take him to the control room!

The soldiers lift Vargas and frantically carry him to the adjacent building.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Uniforms part, clearing a path.

Soldiers deliver Vargas, now lucid, to his work station.

Gen. Mathis and his men hover over him.

GENERAL MATHIS

Unlock it!

Vargas closes his eyes to concentrate, his brain still foggy.

His hesitant fingers linger over the keyboard.

EXT. MARINA DEL REY

BOATERS hear a distinct WHINING ROAR.

They stand up from their vessels to see the incoming missile.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Vargas's fingers glide across the keys. His memory slowly returns.

GENERAL MATHIS

Do it! Now!

Vargas makes several password attempts, fails each time.

GENERAL MATHIS (CONT'D)

Remember, damn you!

VARGAS

Wait!

Vargas unlocks the system with his unique password, restoring the guidance system.

HEAD CONTROLLER

We're back in!

GENERAL MATHIS

Relay the codes!

The head controller takes over, quickly enters the codes into the system.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN

The missile's bio-payload cone DETACHES with a parachute, whipping backward into the sea.

Before landfall, the missile SELF-DESTRUCTS.

EXT. MARINA DEL REY

The missile fragments take out the docks, boats and surrounding buildings, causing a WAVE OF DEBRIS. People scatter.

The flaming debris mows down a block of palm trees and skids to a stop on the highway, blocking traffic in an epic display.

Amazed drivers gape. Jaded locals HONK and CURSE.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Loud CHEERS and APPLAUSE.

Gen. Mathis closes his eyes with relief.

Vargas blinks heavily, looks around. *What's the big deal?*

EXT. DISNEYLAND - PARKING LOT

The wailing sirens have stopped.

Everyone freezes, listening to the loudspeaker announcement.

LOUDSPEAKER

The threat is over. All clear.

Repeat: the threat is over. All
CLEAR.

Jamie's fear subsides. She LAUGHS through tears.

INT. VANDENBERG AFB - CORRIDORS

Treadwell on the floor, his wounded leg bandaged and stabilized. PARAMEDICS load him on a gurney.

They hear the celebration.

PARAEDIC

What just happened?

Treadwell smiles, knows the answer.

TREADWELL
She did it. That's what happened.

EXT. FUEL DEPOT

Guzman, exhausted, on her back and grinning at the blue, cloudless sky.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

View behind Alcatraz. Transamerica building in the distance.

INT. HOMELAND SECURITY BUILDING - HALLWAYS - DAY

Agent Guzman follows Dr. Pierce's wheelchair.

GUZMAN
You could have told me everything
was connected.

DR. PIERCE
Only the mastermind knew.

GUZMAN
Where is he?

DR. PIERCE
In a prison of his own making.

GUZMAN
Where did they take him?

DR. PIERCE
That's classified.

GUZMAN
No, that's damage control. The
military doesn't want anyone to
know they created a monster. And
their own blowback.

DR. PIERCE
And, fittingly, he's their problem
now, not ours.

Guzman remains skeptical.

DR. PIERCE (CONT'D)
 I'll expect you back at the office
 on Monday, Agent Guzman. The
 world's bad actors don't take a
 vacation.

Guzman hesitates, wondering she's up to the task.

GUZMAN
 Yes, sir.

Dr. Pierce nods, wheels away.

Guzman spots Det. Treadwell waiting for her. He's trying to
 keep his balance on crutches.

TREADWELL
 Ready?

Treadwell produces a single red rose from behind his back.
 Almost takes a spill.

She catches him. He gives her the rose.

TREADWELL (CONT'D)
 Too old-fashioned?

She smells the rose, shakes her head.

GUZMAN
 Works for me.

She smiles. They leave.

EXT. COMPUTER STORE - DAY

Store EMPLOYEES clear eNexOne boxes off their shelves. Load
 them into waiting trucks.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - BEACH - DAY

Guzman and Jamie play volleyball with other TEENS.
 Treadwell's on the sideline, whistling them on.

Jamie spikes the ball at the net and wins the point and
 match.

Guzman embraces Jamie in celebration. The hug lasts longer
 than usual.

EXT. CITY LANDFILL - DAY

A bulldozer pushes a mangled stack of eNexOne modules into a miles-wide swath of garbage.

Extending into the far horizon.

INT. UNKNOWN MILITARY INFIRMARY - NIGHT

Low-key activity by the nurse's station.

At the end of the hall, a single MP guards a door to the:

INT. ICU - NIGHT

Benjamin Vaughn is attached to life-support machines, unconscious.

Full circle, he's back behind the plastic bubble structure.

CLOSING IN ON his unmoving face.

His left eye TWITCHES.

CUT TO BLACK