

New Avalon  
by  
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INT. FORT CARSON ARMY LABORATORIES - HALLWAY - DAY

Blood spatters across a pristine white tile floor.

The body of a SCIENTIST hits the ground. Bright red liquid pours from a gaping wound in his chest.

A man in full army regalia, brandishing a shotgun, steps over the body and peers into a retinal scanner, which identifies him as GENERAL EDWARDS and unlocks a door leading to a

HIGH-TECH ELECTRONICS LABORATORY

A trio of SCIENTISTS scatter like roaches, diving for cover behind benches piled high with half-finished circuit boards.

Edwards guns them each down in turn. The last body hits the floor, his blood-soaked lab coat and mauled safety goggles mere inches from a fourth, hidden scientist, CANDACE DIXON.

Candace (late 30s) is an abashed sapphire, a woman who has scuffed her pristine facets and marred her perfectly aligned edges for fear of being sold to the highest bidder.

She listens for the sound of fresh shells being loaded into the shotgun, then bolts for the back door.

In her panic, she trips over the body of one of her colleagues, falls into the

X-RAY ROOM

and lands hard on the floor, grimacing in pain as her left knee takes the brunt of the fall.

Edwards follows her into the room, biding his time.

She crawls toward the hallway on her hands and knees.

Behind her, Edwards PUMPS the shotgun.

Candace rolls onto her back, peering at the grinning general.

GENERAL EDWARDS

Don't worry, Candy. I think we got  
'em all.

He chuckles, places the shotgun in his own mouth and blows his skull to pieces.

Candace's shaky hands wipe the general's blood from her face. The clock on the wall ticks away second after second.

She scrambles to her feet.

EXT. FORT CARSON - DAY

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JOHNATHAN GORDON (early 50s), well-dressed with a commanding presence, marches through a throng of mutilated BODIES and charred husks of military vehicles.

If there was another person the President trusted to do Gordon's job, the Secretary would be breeding horses on his ranch in Iowa. But that isn't how life works, so here he is.

Gordon passes a handful of MARINES tasked with cataloguing the carnage and heads toward a large building.

A sign out front reads "FORT CARSON ARMY LABORATORIES".

INT. FORT CARSON ARMY LABORATORIES - LOBBY - DAY

Gordon enters the spartan lobby. Two ARMY OFFICERS crouch over a dead RECEPTIONIST, lying next to a WWII-era steel desk, holding clipboards and wearing white forensics gloves.

The higher ranking officer is MAJ. FRANCIS WITMER (30s), a rugged man who would likely have been an NFL quarterback had he not joined the army.

His second in command is LT. TAWNY MADRIGAL (late 20s), a serious Hispanic woman with hair wrapped tightly in a bun. Madrigal could bring a black cloud to the sunniest of days.

SECRETARY GORDON  
Witmer! Whatcha got for me?

WITMER  
Everyone's dead and everyone's  
ours.

SECRETARY GORDON  
Timeline?

WITMER  
Base was locked down at 0800.  
Security cameras went dark shortly  
after, then the fight began.

Major Witmer stands and removes his gloves.

WITMER (CONT'D)  
Some kind of internal struggle is  
my guess, but I've yet to determine  
who fired the first shot.

SECRETARY GORDON

You're tellin' me an entire base full of tried and true American soldiers turned on each other? For no reason? With no survivors?

Witmer sighs. He knows exactly how it sounds.

WITMER

Yes, sir.

(beat)

We're still short three scientists, though. Dr. James Renhousen, neuroscientist, and two of his team. Randall Hong, Candace Dixon.

SECRETARY GORDON

Renhousen? Shit...

WITMER

It could be helpful to know what he was working on.

SECRETARY GORDON

Your clearance ain't even close for that, Major. I'll handle the fallout here. You find Renhousen.

Secretary Gordon pulls his phone from his pocket and stalks away. Witmer looks down at his clipboard. The top page has a photo and dossier for James Renhousen.

WITMER

Where are you hiding, Doctor?

INT. BELLAGIO HOTEL, LAS VEGAS - LOBBY - DAY

DR. JAMES RENHOUSEN (50s) stands at the front desk, staring at his reflection in the polished tile floor, his calm exterior masking a deep-rooted animosity.

James is flanked by his protégé, RANDALL HONG (late 20s), a small-town, doe-eyed sprite whose pulse has tripled just from being immersed in the elegance of the Bellagio.

Randy wears a ridiculous grin for the pretty young DESK CLERK working the computer.

DESK CLERK

We'll need a credit card for the suite. Is it just the two of you?

Randy nudges James, pulling him from his reverie.

JAMES

Yes, but I'd like to pay with a cash deposit.

He pulls a stack of hundreds from his jacket and sets them on the marble counter. The desk clerk BLANCHES. Even in Las Vegas, it's not a common sight. James waves it off.

JAMES (CONT'D)

The reimbursement paperwork is atrocious.

He gives her an easy, confident smile. She returns it, takes the money and asks no more questions.

RANDY

That's a delightful blouse you're wearing, miss...?

The desk clerk shoots him an overly professional smile and continues her work. She takes two hotel keycards, places them in an envelope and hands them to Renhousen.

DESK CLERK

Enjoy your stay, General Edwards.

INT. BELLAGIO HOTEL - SUITE - DAY

James and Randy haul several large black bags into the luxurious suite, barely glancing at the decor. James grabs a chair and drags it to the middle of the room.

Randy scampers to the full-length glass windows and flings open the curtains. He whistles at the amazing view of the Las Vegas strip.

RANDY

I appreciate the accommodations and all but why, exactly, did you choose this place?

James pulls out his pocket knife and slices through the back of the chair's upholstery.

JAMES

Where else could we pull the wattage we'll need without anyone batting an eyelash?

James knocks on the chair's wooden frame several times. Satisfied, he returns to his luggage and pulls out a grotesque looking helmet that looks like it should be bolted to an electric chair.

JAMES (CONT'D)

We're creating a brave new world,  
Randy. A world without crime. Or  
poverty. Where progressives can  
live without the burden of those  
who contribute nothing.

Randy pulls a laptop, along with a thick tangle of connector cables, out of his bag and sets it up on a nearby desk.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Vegas is a city without questions.  
It's a good place to hide while we  
lay the groundwork.

RANDY

I'm sorry about Candy.

James sighs, dejected. He retrieves a power drill and a pair of safety goggles from another bag.

JAMES

Yeah, well. She's a sharp kid.  
She'll come to her senses.

James puts on the goggles and fires up the drill.

EXT. HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT - STREET - DAY

BILLY SALTZMAN (30s), well-built and fashionable even in his jogging shorts, bounds up the apartment steps. He clicks his stopwatch, nods in admiration, then picks up the morning paper and heads inside.

INT. ASHLEIGH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

From behind an ornate desk lamp a worn, battered clock radio emits a timid, warbling buzz. The noise is overpowered by the television, which seems less afraid of retribution.

Billy rambles into the room and drops off a cup of hot coffee next to a pair of women's black, thin-rimmed glasses. He sits on the bed and roots beneath the covers for a body.

It GROANS.

The groggy head of his girlfriend, DR. ASHLEIGH RENHOUSEN (early 30s) peeks out from under the covers. Later in the day she'll be spunky, but she's just not a morning person.

BILLY  
Rise and shine, Ashleigh.

ASHLEIGH  
Ugh. Don't you have your own apartment to go to?

He leans down and kisses her on the cheek.

BILLY  
Yeah, but I left my clubs here.

ASHLEIGH  
What time is it?

BILLY  
7:30.

ASHLEIGH  
7:30!? If I wanted to wake up at 7:30, I'd teach high school.

She tucks herself back under her the blankets, evading the morning sun. Billy grabs a handful of the covers and drags them from the room.

ASHLEIGH (CONT'D)  
Bastard.

Ashleigh clutches her full-length pillow like it's the last thing on the planet.

INT. ASHLEIGH'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Ashleigh stumbles in with the cup of coffee, scratching her head. Billy, now wearing a pressed pinstripe suit, grabs his briefcase from the counter.

BILLY  
Hey, sleepyhead. I'm taking the afternoon off - golf with the beer guys. I thought I'd come over and make dinner. Chili cheese dogs?

She nods, pours the coffee down the sink and sets the cup atop the precarious mountain of dirty dishes. Billy kisses her forehead, grabs his golf clubs and heads out.

After he's gone, Ashleigh whips up an enormous breakfast. Bacon. Ham and cheese omelet. Bagel drenched in cream cheese. She pours half a carton of orange juice into a tall glass, then devours her meal.

EXT. HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT - ROADSIDE - DAY

IAN ZECKLER (early 30s), the very definition of computer geek, sits in the driver's seat of his three year old hybrid.

Flashing blue and red lights reflect off the windshield.

Ian hands his license and registration to a POLICEMAN, who takes down his information.

POLICEMAN

You know how fast you were going?

IAN

No, sir. I wasn't paying attention to the speedometer.

POLICEMAN

Obviously. No alcohol in that cup, is there?

IAN

Just OJ. Got it with the donuts.

POLICEMAN

Where at?

IAN

The Sugar Shack, about a half mile back on your right.

The policeman's eyes start to twitch. He drops Ian's paperwork, then grabs his head, wincing in pain.

IAN (CONT'D)

Officer, are you...?

Suddenly, the policemen snaps to attention and walks calmly back to his cruiser, ignoring Ian completely.

He gets in, closes the door and drives off.

IAN (CONT'D)

Guess he really wanted a donut.

INT. BELLAGIO HOTEL - SUITE - DAY

James sits in the modified chair, eyes closed, the helmet attached to his skull.

Wires connect the device to Randy's laptop and to a separate monitor. Thick cables stretch onto the balcony to a small satellite dish that has been recently bolted to the railing.

On the monitor, we can see the point of view of the Connecticut police officer as he leaves the scene.

JAMES  
(whispers)  
Drive to Baltimore.

On Randy's laptop screen, a host of programs are open. Vital signs, text outputs from running processes and mapping software are among the throng of windows.

RANDY  
Skeleton environment active.  
Looping successful. Breaking  
connection.

He taps a few buttons on the keyboard.

JAMES  
Alright, find me another one.

RANDY  
You sure you don't want a break?

James rolls his shoulders, stretching them a little bit.

JAMES  
Not yet.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT SCIENCE HALL - OFFICE - DAY

Ashleigh, dressed closer to the casual side of business-casual, saunters inside the cramped office space. An OFFICE ASSISTANT hands her a pile of paperwork.

OFFICE ASSISTANT  
The top page is the minutes from  
this morning's meeting. Also,  
there's someone waiting for you in  
your office.

ASHLEIGH

I swear to God, if it's another honor student complaining about a B+, I'm going to stab them in the face.

VOICE (O.S.)

Morning, grumpy. Wake up too early again?

Ashleigh turns around as Ian approaches. He hands her a cup of orange juice and a donut drenched in chocolate icing.

ASHLEIGH

Ian, you're awesome.

IAN

Tell it to the cops.

ASHLEIGH

Have a run in with the 5-0, did we? What was it? Murder I? Assault and Battery?

IAN

Speeding.

ASHLEIGH

Pffft. Liar. You can't speed in a hybrid. How much was the ticket?

IAN

Didn't get one. He saw the donuts and walked away like this--

Ian does his best impression, which looks suspiciously like "The Robot" dance.

ASHLEIGH

Well, that makes sense. Last time I got pulled over, the cop did the chicken dance and let me off with a warning.

IAN

Swear to God. I'm never driving anywhere without a dozen donuts again.

ASHLEIGH

They ARE tasty. Thanks.

IAN

It's not a gift, it's a down  
payment on our future marriage.

She smiles coyly and strides down the hall to her office,  
munching on her donut. Ian keeps pace.

IAN (CONT'D)

Seriously, though. When are you  
going to dump that Cro-Magnon?

ASHLEIGH

C'mon, now, don't be a sourpuss.

IAN

I just don't understand the  
attraction. I mean, if you want me  
to drop my IQ 120 points and become  
a drooling imbecile, I'll do it.  
Just for you.

ASHLEIGH

It's purely physical. Go do some  
push-ups.

Ashleigh stuffs the remainder of the donut in her mouth and  
opens the door to her office.

INT. SCIENCE HALL - ASHLEIGH'S OFFICE - DAY

Ashleigh sets the stack of papers and her orange juice on top  
of her already disastrous desk. She plops down in her chair  
and takes a long look at the person sitting across from her.

All levity and sarcasm evaporate from her voice.

ASHLEIGH

What the fuck are you doing here?

CANDACE

I didn't know where else to go. I  
need your help. Your father...  
he's gone over the edge.

ASHLEIGH

He went over the edge six years  
ago. He's your problem now.

CANDACE

Please. He's gone craz--

Ashleigh stands up and slams her desk, spilling orange juice all over the pile of papers.

ASHLEIGH

- I don't care, Candy! Get your ass out of my office before I beat you to death.

Candace looks hurt, but not surprised. She stands, trying to impress upon Ashleigh the seriousness of the situation.

CANDACE

The machine, it's not what it used to be. We've upgra--

Ashleigh cocks her fist and lets one fly.

Ian steps in to stop the fight at the exact wrong moment and catches Ashleigh's right hook square in the eye.

Ian drops like an anvil, hitting the floor with a THUD.

Ashleigh, seething, steps closer, backing Candace to the doorway.

CANDACE (CONT'D)

Listen, I know what your father did to yo--

ASHLEIGH

- FUCK OFF, CANDACE!

Candace flinches, mostly from the anger in Ashleigh's voice and takes the opportunity to flee the scene.

Ashleigh kneels down to help Ian, who is grimacing in pain, and holding his eye.

ASHLEIGH (CONT'D)

You OK?

IAN

Yeah, sure. No problem. I get punched all the time.

Ashleigh exhausts all her rage in a little laugh and pats him on the shoulder.

INT. SCIENCE HALL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Bored STUDENTS chatter amongst themselves. One of them, BRITTANY (19), uptight and headstrong, checks her watch.

Ashleigh races into the room and drops her binder onto her desk, next to a glass box split down the middle into two compartments, color-coded red and blue. Each compartment holds a small, white lab mouse.

ASHLEIGH  
Morning guys.

STUDENTS  
(in unison, with mock  
etiquette)  
Good morning, Ms. Renhousen.

Ashleigh smiles. The students giggle.

ASHLEIGH  
Anyone remember where we left off?

BRITTANY  
We trained the blue mouse to push a lever which releases food and water for both mice.

ASHLEIGH  
Correct. Today, for part two, we'll attach electrodes to Red and add a lever which gives him a flash of ecstasy any time he pushes it.  
(beat)  
Can anyone tell me why we didn't train Red first?

JOSH (20), obviously the class clown, answers.

JOSH  
Because he's going to keep hitting that lever until he, you know, *pleasures himself* to death.

The class erupts in a cacophony of laughter. Ashleigh smiles and waves them quiet.

ASHLEIGH  
That is essentially correct. Red's enjoyment takes precedence over eating, sleeping, exercising and whatever micey things mice do. So, we've trained Blue to provide sustenance to keep them both alive.

Ashleigh looks around and lets that sink in.

ASHLEIGH (CONT'D)

Now, the big one. Why are we doing this?

Blank stares. Some of the students look down at their desks, praying not to be called upon. Finally, Brittany speaks up.

BRITTANY

So we can torture more innocent creatures with unnecessary animal testing?

ASHLEIGH

(joking)

Brittany, you fail.

(serious)

These two mice form a society. A small society, but a society nonetheless. We've split this society into two groups. The group that has all the fun...

(indicates red mouse)

And the group that does all the work.

(indicates blue mouse)

We're showing that the division of labor, in any given society, can be ingrained upon the brains of its subjects.

BRITTANY

It's grotesque. I'm starting a petition.

ASHLEIGH

Division of labor is present in all societies, from ant colonies to human civilization. For example, it's Brittany's job to save the world...

(indicates blue mouse)

And it's my job to sit on the couch and eat chili cheese dogs.

(indicates red mouse)

Josh raises his hand.

JOSH

Will this be on the test?

ASHLEIGH

Absolutely.

INT. ENGINEERING HALL - LECTURE ROOM - DAY

Ashleigh wades through a crowd of departing students. Ian stands at the front of the room, packing away his notes. One last straggler, a FEMALE STUDENT (19) hangs around.

FEMALE STUDENT

Mr. Zeckler? What happened to your eye?

IAN

The first rule of Fight Club is you do not talk about Fight Club.

The student gives him a weird look, obviously missing the reference, then shrugs and leaves. Ashleigh raises her fists and gives her best Stallone impression.

ASHLEIGH

Adrian!

IAN

Shut up.

ASHLEIGH

How you feeling?

IAN

I'm all right.

ASHLEIGH

I think it's starting to swell.

She raises her finger to poke at it, but he smacks it away.

IAN

It's fine. Who was that woman?

ASHLEIGH

She's nobody. Let me take you out for ice cream. I'll bet some Rocky Road sounds pretty tasty right now.

IAN

You don't have to do that. Besides, I have to go home and start my regimen of push-ups today.

ASHLEIGH

Fine, I can take a hint - but I'm buying lunch tomorrow, no arguments.

Ian smiles and raises his hands, accepting defeat.

INT. ASHLEIGH'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ashleigh ambles inside and tosses the mail and her cell phone onto the counter.

There's nothing on the stove, but she spots Billy's golf clubs next to the coffee table in the living room.

ASHLEIGH  
Billy? Are you here?

BEDROOM

Billy sits on the bed, completely still, eyes glazed over, facing the doorway.

ASHLEIGH (CONT'D)  
I don't see my chili cheese dogs  
anywhere, slacker.

Billy does not acknowledge her.

ASHLEIGH (CONT'D)  
Billy?

He looks up at her, slowly, and responds in a monotone voice.

BILLY  
It is good to see you again,  
Pumpkin. You cut your hair.

ASHLEIGH  
What are you talking about?  
Wait... what did you call me?

Billy smirks. He stands up and looks her right in the eye.

BILLY  
Peek-a-boo.

Ashleigh's eyes go wide.

Billy grabs her arm and drags her, struggling, down the hallway and into the

LIVING ROOM

ASHLEIGH  
Oh, this is NOT happening...

BILLY

I'm going to take you some place  
safe. You'll stay there until--

ASHLEIGH

- Safe? Safe from what?

BILLY

The world's in bad shape, Pumpkin.  
You know it, same as I do. I can  
fix it, but there's going to be...  
casualties.

ASHLEIGH

I'm not going anywhere!

Ashleigh ELBOWS Billy in the trachea. He stumbles backward,  
releasing her from his grip.

ASHLEIGH (CONT'D)

Stay away from me!

She dives for Billy's golf bag, retrieves a nine-iron and  
holds it in front of her, menacingly.

BILLY

When the dust has settled, I'll  
come back and--

Billy lunges for her.

ASHLEIGH

- I SAID STAY AWAY FROM ME!

She SWINGS the club with all her might.

It CONNECTS with his skull and SNAPS in two.

Billy's neck whips around and he falls to the floor,  
unconscious.

Ashleigh, still holding half the club, trembles with fear.

INT. BELLAGIO HOTEL - SUITE

The vital signs on Randy's laptop leap into the red. He  
rushes to James, who is drenched in sweat. The doctor yelps  
in pain and removes the helmet. He doubles over, clutching  
his skull.

RANDY

It'll pass. I'll get some aspirin.

James lays on the floor, blinking his eyes and wincing in pain. Randy returns with pills and a glass of water. James sits up and drinks them down.

RANDY (CONT'D)  
I take it Ash was less than  
ecstatic about hearing from her old  
man again?

James just nods. Randy pats him on the shoulder.

RANDY (CONT'D)  
That's OK. We need a break anyway  
and I think you could use something  
to eat. Want to try the buffet?

JAMES  
No. I should reconnect. She might  
leave, or try to hide. I need to  
make sure she stays put.

RANDY  
You know it takes a while to clear  
the buffers and re-initialize the  
system after a sudden interruption.

James grinds his teeth. He doesn't want to acknowledge it, but Randy's right.

RANDY (CONT'D)  
Go lay down in one of those  
ridiculously expensive beds. I'll  
get us some room service.

JAMES  
No, I have to--

RANDY  
- Stop it. We have a lot to do and  
you can't afford to work yourself  
into a coma.  
(beat)  
Go. Get some rest. I'll knock  
when the food's ready.

INT. ASHLEIGH'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Witmer and Madrigal knock on Ashleigh's door.

WITMER  
Doctor Ashleigh Renhousen?

No answer. He tries the door.

Unlocked. He nods to Madrigal. They pull their firearms and, covering each other, step

INSIDE

They find Ashleigh, perched on the coffee table, a five iron in one hand, Billy's stopwatch in the other.

Billy lies on the couch, his head wrapped in bandages and propped on a pillow. The stopwatch reads nineteen minutes, twenty-two seconds and counting.

WITMER (CONT'D)  
Ashleigh Renhousen?

She scrambles to her feet, brandishing the golf club.

ASHLEIGH  
Who the fuck are you?

WITMER  
I'm Major Witmer, this is  
Lieutenant Madrigal. We're special  
investigators for the US Army.  
We're looking for your father.

She grips the five iron tighter.

WITMER (CONT'D)  
Put it down. We're not here to  
hurt you.

As a show of good faith, Witmer holsters his weapon. He motions to Madrigal toward Billy.

WITMER (CONT'D)  
Who's that on the couch?

ASHLEIGH  
My boyfriend. I guess.

WITMER  
Has he been hurting you?

ASHLEIGH  
It's complicated.

Madrigal checks Billy's pulse and does a quick pass for broken bones. She gives Witmer a thumbs-up.

WITMER  
What's with the stopwatch?

ASHLEIGH  
Seeing how long it takes him to  
reconnect.

Witmer looks confused. He wants to press the issue, but he's got a job to do.

WITMER  
Your father went missing last week.  
Has he been to see you?

Ashleigh looks at Billy's prone body.

ASHLEIGH  
Not exactly...

Ian bursts in from the hallway, gasping for breath. He takes one look at the scene and...

IAN  
Holy crap, Ash! What happened?

Witmer spins around, hands automatically going for his gun.

ASHLEIGH  
Whoa, hold on. I asked him to  
come.

IAN  
Is this about that woman?

WITMER  
What woman?

ASHLEIGH  
Candace Dixon stopped by today.

Witmer sighs.

WITMER  
Dr. Renhousen, I think you had  
better start from the top.

INT. PRINCETON NEUROSCIENCE LABORATORY - SIX YEARS AGO - DAY

A team of SCIENTISTS busy themselves around the laboratory, setting up for an experiment. Computers, monitors and oscilloscopes are connected by a vast network of cabling.

ASHLEIGH (V.O.)  
I got my doctorate working in my  
father's neuroscience lab.

In the center of the room sit two dentist's chairs modified  
with thick straps around the arms and legs. Complicated  
masses of wires and electrodes are attached to the headrests.

WITMER (V.O.)  
And Ms. Dixon?

Candace straps a GRADUATE STUDENT into one of the chairs and  
fastens the electrodes to his skull.

ASHLEIGH (V.O.)  
(bitterly)  
*Research assistant.*

CANDACE  
(to grad student)  
Just relax.

Randy runs a program on the computer, the display shows the  
student's brain activity.

ASHLEIGH (V.O.)  
We discovered a section of the  
cerebral cortex, near the  
cerebellum, which could be  
configured -

WITMER (V.O.)  
I'm sorry... configured?

ASHLEIGH (V.O.)  
Yes. Your brain is basically a  
bunch of neurons firing, which is  
an electrochemical process. The  
great thing about your brain, the  
reason you're able to mature, to  
learn, is that these neural  
connections aren't static. They're  
adaptable. By stimulating certain  
areas, you can effectively rewire  
neural pathways.

Candace straps Ashleigh into the second chair.

ASHLEIGH (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
In our case, to receive signals  
from an outside source.  
(MORE)

ASHLEIGH (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Then, a 'client' brain could  
 connect directly to a 'host' brain  
 using a series of electrodes.

CANDACE  
 Comfortable?

ASHLEIGH  
 (smiling)  
 I'm good.

RANDY  
 Configuration complete. Electrodes  
 online and reading positive. Ready  
 when you are.

JAMES  
 Make me proud, Pumpkin.

James nods to Randy, who types a command into the computer.

RANDY  
 Connection initialized.

Ashleigh's brain activity lights up Randy's screen. An old  
 printer spews out data.

Ashleigh's face CONTORTS, showing signs of strain. Her  
 appendages contract, pulling against the straps.

The student's eyes begin to twitch. He closes them, wincing  
 in pain.

Suddenly, the student's eyes fly wide open.

He shakes back and forth involuntarily, testing the limits of  
 the straps. He locks eyes with James.

GRADUATE STUDENT  
 (straining)  
 Peek... a... boo.

INT. ASHLEIGH'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Everyone sits around the table, gawking at Ashleigh.

IAN  
 That's creepy.

ASHLEIGH  
 That's what Princeton thought, too.  
 We were quietly shuffled out the  
 door.

(MORE)

ASHLEIGH (CONT'D)

Dad went shopping for a new backer  
and the Army picked up the project.  
That was six years ago.

WITMER

So, when you clocked your boy over  
there, it was really--

ASHLEIGH

- My father.

WITMER

What's the range on his machine?

Ashleigh scratches her head, then shrugs.

ASHLEIGH

Last time I saw it, the range was  
two feet and you had to be strapped  
to a chair covered in wires.

IAN

The signal must be wireless now.  
(points at Billy)  
He doesn't have any electrodes  
coming out of his skull.

As if on cue, Billy groans and attempts to sit up. Ashleigh  
hops out of her chair and rushes to him.

ASHLEIGH

Hey, sleepyhead. How's your  
noggin?

BILLY

Feels like I got shot. What  
happened? Who are all these  
people?

Ashleigh, now sure Billy is really Billy, kisses his cheek.

ASHLEIGH

I'll explain later.

Witmer turns back to Ian.

WITMER

Think you can track it?

IAN

Sure. Phones can already measure  
signal strength.

(MORE)

IAN (CONT'D)

I could whip up an app to track a different signal, but I'll need to know the carrier frequency.

Everyone looks at Ashleigh expectantly.

ASHLEIGH

It's not like I got it memorized along with my ATM PIN.

WITMER

It must be written down somewhere. Research notes, grant proposals?

ASHLEIGH

Princeton backs up their drives every six months. It might still be in the archives somewhere.

WITMER

Alright, we'll try it. You...  
 (pointing to Ian)  
 Get to work. And you...  
 (pointing to Ashleigh)  
 Pack a bag. I'm not sure how long we'll be gone.

ASHLEIGH

I'm not going anywhere. I have to take Billy to the hospital.

WITMER

It's not a request. You're the only one who knows what we're looking for. Lt. Madrigal will get Billy some medical attention.

Ashleigh and Ian head off on their assigned tasks. Witmer takes Madrigal aside and whispers to her.

WITMER (CONT'D)

Search this place from top to bottom. Take the boyfriend to the Pentagon and let the techs have at him. See if there are any residual effects we can use.

MADRIGAL

Yes, sir, but--

WITMER

- But what?

MADRIGAL

She's hiding something and, with all due respect, we don't have the luxury of waiting for her to spit it out. Let me take her too.

WITMER

No, I need her and the geek together. She's the only one her father has tried to contact and he'll need something to track.

MADRIGAL

*If his phone idea works.*

EXT. ASHLEIGH'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Witmer paces alongside a black SUV with tinted windows while talking on the phone.

WITMER

The young Dr. Renhousen claims her father contacted her using some sort of mind control device.

SECRETARY GORDON (O.S.)

Here's more bad news. The top five neuroscientists in the country committed suicide this week.

WITMER

Eradicating the competition?

SECRETARY GORDON (O.S.)

That's my guess. I don't need to tell you this is a direct threat to the US of A, Major. Fix it.

Gordon cuts the connection as Ashleigh and Ian scamper from the building. Ian grabs his laptop from a backpack in the back seat of his hybrid, then hops in the SUV.

EXT. PRINCETON UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

Witmer pulls the black SUV into a vacant parking lot. All three hop out and stretch their muscles from the trip.

Ashleigh yawns and pulls her coat closed, fending off the slight breeze skipping through the trees. The rest of campus sleeps as quiet as the stonework on the buildings.

IAN

Do you know where they keep their  
backup drives?

ASHLEIGH

Actually, six years ago, we were  
still using tape. The storage  
vault is in the basement.

They head into one of the smaller buildings, passing a plaque  
near the entrance that reads "Department of Neuroscience."

INT. NEUROSCIENCE BUILDING - BASEMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ashleigh leads them down a dimly lit corridor, makes a few  
turns and comes to a doorway in a forgotten corner of the  
building. The sign on the door reads "Tape Storage."

The window on the door has been smashed in. Recently,  
judging by the bits of shattered glass on the floor.

Sounds of rustling can be heard from inside.

Witmer motions Ashleigh and Ian to stay behind him. He pulls  
his firearm and quietly opens the door.

TAPE STORAGE ROOM

Witmer creeps inside, Ashleigh and Ian follow.

Blue light escapes from a far corner, hidden by stacks of  
boxes and rows of magnetic tape reels.

Witmer sneaks around the last row of boxes, weapon ready.

A haggard woman hunches over a small laptop hooked up to the  
server. Witmer doesn't recognize her, but Ashleigh does.

ASHLEIGH

Candy?

Candace spins around and sees Witmer pointing his gun at her.

She BOLTS for the door, tossing her chair in Witmer's path.

He kicks it out of the way, catches Candace with one arm and  
throws her up against the wall.

ASHLEIGH (CONT'D)

Major Witmer ... Candace Dixon.