

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY BY
RUDI O'MEARA

WHAT IF THE END WAS NOT THE END
HEREAFTER

THIS FILM IS NOT YET RATED

HEREAFTER

Written by

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I/E. STATION WAGON/COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

A battered silver Volvo wagon speeds along a windswept two-lane road in a heavy snow storm.

Up front, a pair of young parents (30s) stare dead ahead through the icy windshield, looking spent.

Like they've both just endured something tortuous.

A lonesome tune, Patsy Cline's "ALWAYS", burbles through static over the AM radio.

MOTHER

Oh, honey...

The woman in the passenger seat twists sideways, looks back toward a small girl seated alone in the backseat.

This is MAZZY (8).

Her flushed cheeks are glazed with hints of recent tears. And she holds a woven dog collar in her hands.

The light of the moon glints off a bone-shaped badge dangling from the collar.

Mazzy's dotting but frazzled MOTHER draws a breath, tries to find the right bundle of consoling words.

None come.

MAZZY

Did they hurt her?

Her stern but loving FATHER casts his eyes to the rear view mirror, keeps his hands at ten and two.

FATHER

Of course not, darling.

MOTHER

They just let Daisy... sleep.

Mazzy rubs her tiny thumb across the letters engraved on the badge. D-A-I-S-Y.

MAZZY

What if she wakes up and we're not there? Won't she be...

Her parents share a quick sidelong glance.

MOTHER

She isn't going to wake up,
sweetheart. We've been over--

MAZZY

We shouldn't have left her alone. I
want to get her back. Take her--

FATHER

She's not coming home, kiddo.

Mazzy clutches the collar to her heart, crumbles back to the
verge of tears again. Bereft.

MOTHER

But she'll always be with you, with
us. In our memories.

Mazzy's father studies her in the mirror a bit too long.

To his left: a steep embankment above a vast, moonlit lake.
Only the shoreline appears to be frozen. Lake Tahoe.

FATHER

That's how it works, darling. When
the people we love pass on, we get
to hold them forever in our hearts.

Mazzy's chest spasms. She tries to hold it in, put on a
brave face, be a good girl.

MOTHER

It's okay, baby. She didn't feel
anything. At all. But it's okay if
you do. It's okay to--

SQUEAL.

Mazzy's father hits a patch of unseen black ice and the car
skids sideways across the oncoming lane, smashes into the
guardrail, and rockets skyward.

Mazzy's mother braces. Her father GRIPS the wheel, tries to
turn it. But it's too late.

SPLASH!

The car SMASHES through the ice, hits the inky blue water,
tips instantly forward.

I/E. STATION WAGON/FROZEN LAKE - NIGHT

Water and ice wash over the windshield, blotting out the
moon as the car quickly sinks.

Stunned and bleeding from his forehead, Mazzy's father turns, slaps at his window with both palms. It won't budge.

Mazzy's mother, in a daze, unbuckles her seat belt, spins in her seat, reaches back to undo Mazzy's belt.

CLICK. It falls undone.

The water outside surrounds the car. Mazzy just stares, still clutching Daisy's collar.

MOTHER

Don't worry, baby. Don't worry
we're going to get--

The windshield SPLINTERS like a dropped piece of fine china. Water OOZES in, slowly at first, then faster.

MAZZY

Mama?

Mazzy's father undoes his belt, looks to the sunroof.

It too begins to buckle and crack as the car dips further and further into the depths.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Mama!

The sunroof IMPLODES, sends a torrent of water cascading down into the car.

Mazzy's mother disappears from view, thrown down by the glass to the flooded foot well.

Mazzy's father, frantic, reaches back across the seat, grabs Mazzy, PULLS her forward as the car rolls sideways.

The deluge briefly wanes.

FATHER

Hurry, baby. Hurry. Deep breath.

Mazzy, bewildered and terrified simply stares, shaking.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Deep breath!

She nods, sees her mother floating unconscious with a massive gash across her forehead.

MAZZY

Daddy?

FATHER

NOW!

All instinct, Mazzy gulps down a couple quick breaths before he roughly SHOVES her through the shattered sunroof.

EXT. FROZEN LAKE, UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Mazzy, still holding onto the dog collar, drifts out into the abyss as the car rolls again and then plunges deeper.

For the briefest of seconds, she glimpses her father's face through the driver's side window.

His expression is oddly calm. Resigned. Unable to affect the outcome. Almost content.

Mazzy lets go of the collar, begins swimming downward.

But the car is moving too fast. She can't catch it. Can't reach it. Can't save him, save them.

Her father looks away, can't bear it.

And, just like that, they're gone. Lost to the dark like a mirage, like the car was never even there.

Mazzy stops paddling, looks to the surface. It's a good twenty-five feet up.

In a frenzy, she paddles into the moonlight. The waterlogged fabric of her dress ripples with every stroke. Her woolen sweater grips her arms and chest like chain-mail.

The weight of it seems to pull her down, wills her to relent, to give in, to join her parents.

But she fights through it, continues pushing, pushing, pushing upward for the surface.

NURSE (PRE-LAP)

We're losing her.

Below Mazzy, Daisy's collar drifts lazily by.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Crashing, crashing, crashing.

Just as Young Mazzy's hands break the glassy surface, the eerie silence gives way to the frantic DIN of a bustling emergency room.

PRE-LAP: Sensors DINGING. People SHOUTING.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

A cluster of EMTs surround a gurney inside a ramshackle, clearly overused trauma center.

On the table: a GIRL (late teens). Arms extended, blouse ripped open, she's stone-still. Gone.

Above her, clutching paddles, stands another woman in rumpled scrubs and a surgical mask. Her chest heaves. But her eyes are vacant. Empty.

Elsewhere by choice.

SUPER: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

The woman, a clearly older MAZZY (now mid-30s), drops the paddles, lowers her mask.

MAZZY

Mark it.

She's hardened. Seen too much. Walled herself off. Blotted out decades of despair. Tamped it down.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Time of death...

Her eyes drift to an old-school wall clock.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Eleven forty-seven.

She turns, rips off her blue rubber gloves, steps on the handle of a nearby bin, tosses them in.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

I'll tell the parents.

On autopilot, the adrenalin waning, she pushes through a pale yellow curtain, disappears.

STELLA (PRE-LAP)

But what'd you tell him?

The constant chaos of the E.R. incongruously gives way to the CLATTER of a bustling coffee shop.

PRE-LAP: Plates CLINKING. Milk FROTHING. People LAUGHING.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Still in her turquoise scrubs and battered Crocs, but now wearing a tight-fitting gray fleece hoodie, Mazzy, looking wrecked, lifts a steaming coffee cup to her chapped lips.

MAZZY

I said I wasn't ready.

The woman across from her, STELLA (30s) eyes her up and down incredulously, not believing her answer.

Unlike Mazzy, she's dressed to the nines. Like a boss.

STELLA

Ready?

Mazzy tips her cup, swallows.

MAZZY

I just--

STELLA

Are you insane?

It's not the first time Mazzy's been asked this question.

STELLA (CONT'D)

He freaking loves you, babe.

Mazzy slowly lowers her cup to its saucer.

Her face says it all. *Everything, all the time.*

STELLA (CONT'D)

What is it?

MAZZY

What do you mean?

STELLA

With you? Right now. Same shit?

Mazzy pulls her fleece straight, crosses her legs.

MAZZY

Yeah. We just, um, well... We lost two. This morning.

Stella knows exactly what this means.

STELLA

Oh, babe.

MAZZY

Cardiac arrest. Overdose. Forty-seven. And seventeen.

STELLA

Lord knows, I'm all for blocking shit out and moving the fuck on.

A brief moment of somber silence passes between them.

Stella breaks it first, SLAPS the table with her hands.

STELLA (CONT'D)

But not with him, Maz. Learn from my shitty example. You can't find happiness if you don't let him in. Open up. Say yes.

Stella rips a hunk off her scone, plucks it between her ruby red lips, chews, tries to change the vibe:

STELLA (CONT'D)

Life's short. But it's worth it.

MAZZY

Listen to you, the Queen of Denial. Getting all woo-woo.

Stella grins sheepishly. Busted.

STELLA

Anyway, his place is, like, *infinitely* superior to yours.

Mazzy discretely looks to her wrist, checks the time.

MAZZY

Still can't figure out how to turn off the lights. So complicated.

Stella reaches for her iced coffee.

STELLA

Hugh is gonna flip out.

MAZZY

Don't tell him.

STELLA

Why not?

MAZZY

I don't wanna make a big...

Mazzy trails off, lifts her cup defensively to her chest.

STELLA
You better take that ring tonight.

Mazzy SIGHS into her steam.

Stella looks away, seems to notice someone familiar passing by down the sidewalk outside. Another attorney type.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Or I'll scream bloody murder.

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

The first lulling, low-fi, downbeat bars of an early 1970s POP SONG unfurl slowly over the sound system of a packed and dingy Chinatown Karaoke bar.

The place is long and narrow. Almost claustrophobic. Lots of neon and way too many leftover Christmas lights. Bits and pieces of paper parade dragons hang from the ceiling.

At the far end of the bar, Stella sits hunched over shots next to Mazzy.

Mazzy has traded her scrubs for a black cocktail dress, chunky boots, and a well-worn leather jacket.

Stella pounds a shot, turns toward a young man swaying on a small stage about ten feet from the end of the bar, SHOUTS:

STELLA
Go on already!

The man on-stage has a microphone in one hand and is bathed in thin shafts of light cast by a spinning disco ball.

STELLA (CONT'D)
DO it! DO it! DO it!

To her left, a bearded CTO-type in skinny jeans and a charcoal hoodie, lifts his beer, wags his head side-to-side.

This is HUGH (30s) Stella's self-serious, tech-bro, on and off again boyfriend. His eyes are on Mazzy, not Stella.

HUGH
One hundred percent not my idea.

Mazzy takes a sip of beer, tries to hide her mortification.

STELLA
Told you, babe. He's the one.

Over her shoulder, the young man on the stage, KALEB (30s) lifts the mic to his lips, SINGS:

KALEB
You know I need your love...

That's right: Gerry Rafferty's "RIGHT DOWN THE LINE".

KALEB (CONT'D)
You've got that hold over me.

Drunken RANDOS down the bar HOOT and HOLLER.

KALEB (CONT'D)
*When I wanted you to share my life,
I had no doubt in my mind.*

Mazzy's cheeks flush. She bites her lip, won't look up.

KALEB (CONT'D)
*And it's been you, woman,
Right down the line.*

Even though Mazzy won't, we can't stop looking. He's a vision. Spellbinding in his earnestness and scruffy charm.

High cheekbones. Floppy hair. Devil may care commitment.

STELLA
(to Mazzy)
Don't be an idiot.

Kaleb, his eyes locked on Mazzy's slouched profile, steps off the stage, slinks closer, ignores the monitor, SINGS with all his heart:

KALEB
*I know how much I lean on you.
Only you can see.*

Hugh looks to Stella, smirks. *This fucking guy...*

KALEB (CONT'D)
*The changes that I've been through
Have left a mark on me.*

Now Kaleb's lips are only inches from Mazzy's ears.

KALEB (CONT'D)
*You've been as constant as the
Northern Star.*

She finally turns, locks eyes with him.

KALEB (CONT'D)
The brightest light that shines.

Her face says it all: *I don't deserve you, jerk.*

Kaleb flashes her a puckish grin, grabs her arm, spins, drags her gently with him back toward the mic stand on the stage amid a swirl of spinning lights.

KALEB (CONT'D)
*It's been you, woman,
 Right down the line.*

Mazzy draws a drunken breath, tries to tamp down her nerves.

Kaleb slips the mic back into the stand, and, together, they belt out the CHORUS in total harmony:

MAZZY
*I just wanna say
 This is my way
 Of tellin' you
 Everything I could
 Never say before.*

KALEB
*I just wanna say
 This is my way
 Of tellin' you
 Everything I could
 Never say before.*

A wave of DRUNKEN APPLAUSE ripples through the space like a whirlwind. Hugh crosses his arms.

Kaleb steps back, looks to Mazzy, oddly winded, as she waveringly takes up the next REFRAIN solo:

MAZZY
*Yeah, this is my way
 Of tellin' you
 Everything I could
 Never say before.*

There is no way in hell these two shouldn't spend the rest of their long lives together. They're perfect.

Kaleb kisses her gently on the forehead, relinquishes the stage, traipses in time back to the bar.

Caught off-guard, Mazzy hesitates like a sleepwalker rudely awakened by a sudden sound.

As Kaleb takes her seat, Stella (as promised) SCREAMS:

STELLA
 GO girl!

With the song's bridge SWELLING behind Mazzy, Kaleb downs what's left of her beer.

No one else on Earth could love Mazzy more.

On cue, he lifts one hand, points her way.

She doesn't even bother with the monitor, knows the lyrics entirely by heart:

MAZZY

*'Cause you believed in me
Through my darkest night.*

STELLA

Woo-hoo!

MAZZY

*Put something better inside of me.
You brought me into the light.*

Kaleb spins on his stool, eyes her proudly. *That's my girl.*

MAZZY (CONT'D)

*I threw away
All those crazy dreams.
I put them all behind.*

She lifts her gaze to his.

It's as if there's no one else in the neon-lit space but the two of them. Eternally bonded.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

*And it was you, boy,
Right down the line.*

Mic drop.

FEEDBACK. CHEERING. CLINKING GLASSES.

SLOW FADE TO:

INT. DONUT SHOP - NIGHT

Mazzy, Kaleb, Stella, and Hugh sit clustered tightly around a tiny table inside a garishly lit all-night donut shop doing their best to soak up the alcohol.

The place looks like a cheap Edward Hopper painting. A glowing glass box jutting out into the rain slicked streets.

HUGH

(slurring slightly)
See, now that's where you're wrong.

Hugh takes a ferocious bite out of a bear claw, washes it down with a huge gulp of milk from a red and white carton.

HUGH (CONT'D)

(to Kaleb)

With enough input, enough data, our model could *totally* replicate every aspect of a person's conversational style with almost perfect fidelity.

Across from him, Kaleb and Mazzy hold hands beneath the table. Both look like they'd very much rather be anywhere else but here, together (alone).

HUGH (CONT'D)

Let people leave behind a digital avatar of themselves so that their family has a lasting entity that they can interact with forever.

STELLA

Do you *have* to talk shop right now?

HUGH

Listen, I'm just sayin'...

He wolfs down another gargantuan bite.

HUGH (CONT'D)

(mouth full)

We ship that app and we'd *never* run out of fucking runway.

Stella, mortified and bored (and already far too sober for her liking) just glares at the oaf.

STELLA

(to Hugh)

God, give it a rest already.

Mazzy continues gazing dreamily at Kaleb. It's the calmest, least guarded we've seen her. Enraptured.

Hugh soldiers on, tries to break the spell:

HUGH

(to Kaleb)

Your dad... He gets it, man. Sees where this could go. Said we needed resources. I thought he meant bandwidth. More compute...

Hugh trails off, cuts himself off. Looks like he's already said too much. Nobody seems to notice.

Kaleb pinches up a donut hole, lazily plunks it into Mazzy mouth, looks like all he wants to do is kiss her.

MAZZY
 (chewing)
 Speaking of, when do I get to meet
 Herr Maier?

STELLA
 You still haven't met his father?

Kaleb doesn't break eye contact with Mazzy.

KALEB
 He's a very busy man.
 (toward Hugh)
 And, FYI, I've already given it a
 shot. On the side.

Hugh suddenly looks full-tilt sober. Shocked.

HUGH
 Wait. You *asked* him to invest?

KALEB
 Please. He hates tech. Thinks AI is
 the devil itself.
 (dreamy deep breath)
 I built a beta. Trained it on
 myself. Didn't work.

Hugh's reaction shifts from shock to fear verging on panic.

Kaleb, oblivious, picks up a carton of milk with his free hand, passes it to Mazzy like it's a waxy container of the finest champagne.

KALEB (CONT'D)
 Even with a hundred and eighty
 billion parameters and my entire
 chat history plus every known
 snippet of audio and video of me
 dating back to before I can
 remember: home movies, school
 plays, podcast appearances, even
 that disaster at CES.

Mazzy empties the milk carton, wags her head discretely toward the door. *Let's go, pretty boy.*

KALEB (CONT'D)
 It just wasn't the same.

Hugh narrows his eyes, purses his lips. As if to restrain the truth of a deep disloyalty. His own sinister secret.

Kaleb doesn't clock it at all. Instead, he eagerly SCOOTs his chair out, stands, doesn't let go of Mazzy's hand.

Hugh glares at their firm embrace. A hint of jealousy. Envy.

KALEB (CONT'D)

(dreamily)

Absence may make the heart grow fonder. But presence is what makes it beat.

A tiny hint of a COUGH rattles his chest. He thinks nothing of it, guides Mazzy up and away from the table.

MAZZY

(drunkenly)

Bless you, fine sir.

As they tumble toward the door, wound tightly together, Hugh and Stella just watch.

STELLA

Put a ring on it!

DING. DING.

The old-school bell on the door rings. And Mazzy flashes Stella her bare middle finger behind her back as she and Kaleb dance their way over the threshold and out.

Hugh, looking stung, pushes the bear claw slowly away.

HUGH

This is a billion dollar idea.

(beat)

And he's wrong. It fucking works.

And his dad knows it. Wants to--

Stella, looking ill, puts a napkin over the mauled donut as if she's covering a corpse.

STELLA

C'mon, mister money man. I've got a deposition at nine-thirty.

SCREECH. She stands, wobbles, heads for the door.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Mazzy and Kaleb paw at each other as they trip and twirl through Kaleb's massive penthouse apartment.

The place is spectacularly posh. Floor-to-ceiling glass. Velvet. Marble. Unimaginably expensive modern art.

But none of that matters. Not now anyway.

Instead, breathless, almost feral kisses land on lips and necks and cheeks and earlobes as bits of clothing fall.

KALEB

Well?

MAZZY

Well what?

Kaleb glides the zipper of her dress down her spine: ZIPPPP.

KALEB

You said you'd think about it.

Her dress collapses at her feet.

MAZZY

I'm still thinking.

She pulls his shirt up over his head, tosses it away.

KALEB

And that's why I love you.

He bites her bare shoulder.

KALEB (CONT'D)

Always thinking. But...

She tugs his belt free.

MAZZY

But what?

His jeans drop.

KALEB

What am I going to have to do to convince you?

She smiles, runs her hands over his bare chest.

MAZZY

Well, for starters, introduce me to your dad.

Another faint COUGH ripples his torso.

Her face shifts from eager anticipation to clinical curiosity. Then vodka-muddied concern.

INT. PENTHOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kaleb TWISTS her around backward, guides her toward the bed.

It's enormous. And the cream-colored upholstered headboard runs nearly the entire width of the room.

Above it: a Basquiat. Because, of course.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Or at least let me bring that pink chair you made me put into storage.

KALEB

That thing you found on the street?

Mazzy fake punches him.

KALEB (CONT'D)

(to the ceiling)

Bedroom lights to ten percent.

Every light dims.

MAZZY

Oh, that's how it works.

She spins him back around to face her again. Their lips are only inches apart.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

I just need to know you don't have any skeletons in the closet.

KALEB

Which one? There are so many to choose from.

MAZZY

How can you afford this dump again?

KALEB

Ask Hugh. He's the money side of the company. I'm just the brains.

Mazzy rolls her eyes as she pulls him down onto the bed and slowly out of frame.

Out the window, the lights of The Bay Bridge flicker like precious gemstones glinting on black satin.

SLOW FADE TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE, BEDROOM - DAWN

Mazzy and Kaleb lie wrapped around each other in a tangle of white sheets as the sun slowly rises outside.

Fifty plus stories below, the fog-shrouded city gleams.

MAZZY

Well, for starters, introduce me to your dad already. Or are you ashamed I'm an orphan.

KALEB

Ashamed?

MAZZY

I just... never got that. A family.

Something shifts in Mazzy's expression. A hint of sadness, grief. But she quickly tamps it down, pushes it away.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

You know my childhood. I need to know yours. Hear some 'oh my god you won't believe what he wore to junior prom' stories. See some fucked-up photos. Get some dirt.

KALEB

Well, you won't get that from my dad, that's for sure. Or my sister.

She pushes back, studies him intently. Shocked.

MAZZY

Wait. You have a sister?

KALEB

Yeah. Twin sister. We don't talk.

This is definitely news. It changes the mood entirely.

Kaleb reaches up, touches a small, convex, mirror-polished silver pendant attached to a chain around his neck.

KALEB (CONT'D)

She made me this, at camp.

MAZZY

Oh, I thought it--

KALEB
 Seventh grade. A *hexenspiegel*.
 Meant to ward off evil spirits.

He clears his throat. His chest rises and falls.

KALEB (CONT'D)
 We were inseparable, as kids. But
 then she went off the deep end
 after Mom died.

Kaleb draws a shallow breath, COUGHS again. This time
 louder, harsher. Raspier.

MAZZY
 How long have you had that--

KALEB
 It's just allergies.

He tries to pull her closer. She stiffens. Clinical.

MAZZY
 Doesn't sound like--

He cuts her off, changes the subject:

KALEB
 Mom died. Dad moved out, gave her
 the house. Up in Marin.
 (cough, cough)
 And she's been living there like a
 shut-in crazy cat lady ever since.

He runs a hand over her exposed shoulder, looks like he
 wants to say more, doesn't.

KALEB (CONT'D)
 There. That's my skeleton in the
 closet. The only one.

Beat.

MAZZY
 What else have you been hiding from
 me? First that app thing last
 night. Then the big reveal that you
 have a sister this morning...

Kaleb draws a breath. Looks suddenly winded and pale.

KALEB
 Damn app doesn't work anyway.

MAZZY

And you made it because you, like,
missed your mom?

He nods, inhales again, looks like he can't get enough air.

KALEB

(straining slightly)
I just wanted to ask her...
(slow exhale)
...what kind of woman I should
marry. Who to be with.
(deep breath)
But now I know that answer to that.

Mazzy bites her lip. Moved beyond words.

KALEB (CONT'D)

She would've thought you were
perfect, Maz.

Kaleb slowly swivels away, stands.

KALEB (CONT'D)

Totally perfect.

He crosses the room toward his shirt on the floor. Oddly,
now he limps ever so slightly.

Mazzy clocks it immediately, looks to his right calf.

It seems strangely swollen.

MAZZY

Wait, what's wrong with your--

Kaleb wobbles, ignores this.

KALEB

Even with your unarguably terrible
singing voice.

As he bends to pick up his shirt, he GROANS. In pain.

KALEB (CONT'D)

Your total commitment to helping
the least of us first.

He lifts his shirt, slides both arms in. Every movement
seems to require herculean effort.

Mazzy sits up in bed, equal parts alarmed and hung-over.

KALEB (CONT'D)
Your complete inability to just
relax and smell the roses.

He turns to face her, pale as a ghost.

KALEB (CONT'D)
To love and be loved.
(slow inhale)
Unconditionally. By someone who--

KA-THUMP!

He instantaneously crumples to the floor like a puppet whose strings have been unceremoniously cut.

MAZZY
K?

She pushes herself to her feet, frantic.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
Kaleb!

On his back on the ground, Kaleb MOANS lightly. She rushes to his side, skids across the parquet.

KALEB
(disoriented)
I can't... see?

All-business, she rapidly checks his pulse, lowers her ear to his lips, checks his airway, looks up.

MAZZY
Where's your phone? Where's your--

KALEB
What?

She sees his jeans, strains to grab them, slides them over.

MAZZY
You just passed out. We need to get
you to the hospital, now.

She flips his jeans over. Something small falls out of a pocket. It's a black velvet box. A ring box. For her.

KALEB
Maz?

MAZZY
I'm here, baby. I'm here.

She drops the box, thrusts her hand into another pocket in his jeans, finds his phone, fishes it out.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
What's the code? For your phone?

KALEB
(slurring)
Twelve, twelve, six, five. Mom's--

She rapidly stabs at the screen. It unlocks. She dials 911.

MAZZY
(into the phone)
I need an ambulance. 181 Fremont,
San Francisco. Unit 57B. Top floor.
Possible code gray. Difficulty
breathing. Persistent cough.
Swollen right calf. No sign of
apparent bruising or--
(beat)
Have the E.R. at C.P.M.C. Van Ness
ready immediate tPA--
(beat)
What? No. I'm staff. Yes. Yes.
Please hurry.

She hangs up, clocks the time. *We need to go.*

Mazzy's eyes drift to the box on the floor.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
It's okay, baby. We're gonna take
good care of you.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - MORNING

Back in her (rumpled) black dress again and still sporting matted hair and last night's make-up, Mazzy rushes through hospital hallways flanked by burly EMTs.

Kaleb, on oxygen, is strapped beneath a blanket to a rolling gurney. An INTAKE NURSE with a clipboard takes his vitals.

MAZZY
Run an ultrasound ASAP.

BANG! They bust through a pair of doors and into a crowded space partitioned by canary yellow curtains.

Every passing STAFF MEMBER regards Mazzy with concern.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
Possible DVT. We have to hurry.

INTAKE NURSE

Maz?

MAZZY

Check his lungs. Get him on
anticoagulants within the--

The nurse WHOOSHES a barely conscious Kaleb into one of the
curtained spaces.

INTAKE NURSE

DNR?

The nurse loudly WHIPS the curtain behind them closed.

MAZZY

I don't... I don't know.

INTAKE NURSE

Do you have Power of Attorney?

MAZZY

(slurring slightly)
What? No. I...

INTAKE NURSE

We need you to notify his family.

Mazzy shakes her head to sober up.

MAZZY

But I'm his... fiancée.

The nurse narrows her eyes, leans in close, sniffs.

INTAKE NURSE

(under her breath)
Are you... *drunk*?

MAZZY

No, no. No, I...

The nurse averts her eyes, mortified.

INTAKE NURSE

I need you to call whoever you can
and get cleaned up. You smell like
a distillery and look like shit.

Mazzy, busted, nods, slowly pulls out Kaleb's phone.

The nurse eyes her up and down, used to steely competence
from Mazzy, not glassy-eyed hungover panic.

INTAKE NURSE (CONT'D)
Get yourself together. We'll keep
him stable.

Mazzy looks to the phone, then to her feet. Ashamed.

The nurse quickly withdraws without another word.

KALEB
(weak smile)
Power of Attorney? You don't need
that shit. You're my fiancée.

Mazzy's normal reserve, her armor, melts.

KALEB (CONT'D)
And fuck her. You're fine.

Still clutching his phone, she collapses to his chest, then
kisses him lightly on the cheek.

MAZZY
Don't worry.

KALEB
I'm not worried. I'm engaged.

MAZZY
I'll call your dad.

KALEB
Grrreat.

MAZZY
Hey. At least now we'll meet.

Kaleb's face stiffens at the thought.

KALEB
So, not allergies, huh?

It looks almost as though Mazzy might cry. But she won't.
Can't. Not now.

EXT. LABYRINTH - MORNING

As the morning fog melts off, Mazzy speed-walks the stone
labyrinth just outside the hulking gray concrete walls of
the hospital lobby.

She clutches Kaleb's phone in one hand and the little black
ring box in the other.

MAZZY

He's gonna be... You have to save him. It's your fucking job.

She slows, lifts the box, cracks it open. A surprisingly sizable diamond glints in the pale light.

She GASPS, closes the box.

Finally a tear falls. And with the tear, a memory:

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Mazzy's parents' car plunges slowly deeper and deeper into the inky black darkness of the frozen lake.

And, as it goes, we see her father's oddly calm face again.

Mysteriously content, he peers back at us through the driver's side window.

A young man full of love taken too soon.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. LABYRINTH - MORNING

Mazzy pockets the ring box, roughly wipes the tear from her cheek, lifts Kaleb's phone, unlocks it.

On screen, a contact card reading: DAD.

She closes her eyes, draws a quick breath, lifts her own phone, dials the number on-screen.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

Having not changed, still a bleary-eyed, hungover mess, Mazzy stands at Kaleb's bedside with one hand clutching Kaleb's shoulder.

Desperately holding onto him. Afraid to let go.

Opposite her stands an imposing and imperious, well-dressed man with silver hair and chiseled features.

This is VICTOR MAIER (60s) Kaleb's father.

Instead of looking to the sunken figure of his now alarmingly frail son, he regards Mazzy condescendingly.

VICTOR

Occluded?

MAZZY
Blocked.

VICTOR
I know the term.

MAZZY
A single massive blood clot.

She looks to him to make sure he's following. He nods.

VICTOR
Thus the sedation?

MAZZY
Thus the sedation. Until we can--

KALEB
(faintly)
Father?

Victor doesn't break eye-contact with Mazzy.

VICTOR
I'm here, my dear boy.

WHOOSH!

The curtain behind her ripples open to reveal a winded and frantic Stella and Hugh.

STELLA
We came as quick as we--

HUGH
Oh, Mister Maier. I didn't--

Victor stares at them blankly. Like a shark.

MAZZY
Stella, Hugh. Victor, Kaleb's...

KALEB
(delirious)
...keeper.

Hugh thrusts a hand out. There's some sort of history here.

Victor shakes Hugh's hand dismissively.

Stella wraps one arm around Mazzy, pulls her close.

STELLA
How is he?

MAZZY

Stable. But his lungs are, well...

She trails off, not knowing how to spin it.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

They're gonna run some heavy blood thinners through his veins.

Hugh finally looks to his barely conscious friend and business partner on the gurney, doesn't like what he sees.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

We're still waiting on timing. When the surgeon can...

Mazzy pulls away from Stella, looks back to Kaleb.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

I need to get cleaned up, go to the car grab a few things. I don't want to be gone too--

STELLA

What else can we do?

HUGH

I can stay with him.

Victor steps forward. Imperiously.

VICTOR

I will stay with my son.

Mazzy looks to him, hesitates.

MAZZY

Okay, I just...

Her voice cracks. Stella notices, wraps her up in her arms again. But Mazzy pulls away again, bends to kiss Kaleb.

STELLA

Oh, babe.

Mazzy does her best to wall herself back off again.

From the gurney, Kaleb MUMBLES again, faintly:

KALEB

(sarcastic)

We don't get to choose how long we have, only how we spend it.

(MORE)

KALEB (CONT'D)
 (weak breath)
 Isn't that right, Father?

His words send a shiver down everyone's spine but Victor's.

VICTOR
 Go. I'll be right here.

Mazzy kisses Kaleb on the forehead again, turns to go.

MAZZY
 I love you. Be right back.
 (aiming for confidence)
 It's gonna be fine.

Stella slowly guides Mazzy through the curtain. Hugh hesitates for a brief moment, then follows them out.

Finally Victor looks to his son, crosses his arms.

After a brief moment, the curtain to his right swirls open again. And two SHADOWY FIGURES enter.

We can't see their faces.

Victor looks up. His face is as blank as the wall behind him is white. A cypher.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
 Prep him.

INT. HOSPITAL, GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Mazzy rummages frantically through her car. Pulls out a phone cable. A lipstick. A pack of gum.

STELLA
 Are you sure we can't--

CHIRP. CHIRP.

Mazzy's phone buzzes.

She stiffens, rips the phone out of her pocket.

On the screen, four letters:

C.P.M.C.

Perplexed, she hurriedly picks up. We don't hear the other end of the conversation.

MAZZY
Hello? This is. Yes. Yes.

Silence. Her face shifts. It looks as though she's had the wind knocked out of her.

A sudden, irrevocable shock.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
What? No, no. I was just--

Mazzy's lower lip quivers.

STELLA
Babe?

MAZZY
(into her phone)
You can't... That can't--

Hugh protectively pulls Stella closer.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
I just-- When?

Long, deathly silence. Mazzy just nods.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
I... I... I...

Heavy tears fall. She can't stop them. Can't even feel them.

Both Stella and Hugh finally understand.

He's gone.

INT. HOSPITAL, HALLWAY - LATER

Mazzy, having walled herself off entirely again, chases a bearded ADMINISTRATOR (50s) down another nondescript hall.

Stella and Hugh are nowhere to be found.

MAZZY
What do you *fucking* mean it's protocol? I can't see his body?!

ADMINISTRATOR
Maz. You know as well as I do.
Family only. In the morgue.

The word hits Mazzy like a slap in the face.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)
Kaleb's father is handling
everything now.

MAZZY
Where is he? I need to speak with
him *right* now.

She reaches out, forcibly SPINS him back around.

ADMINISTRATOR
He's gone. Making the arrangements.

MAZZY
Arrangements?!

ADMINISTRATOR
Kaleb's will stipulates that his
body be cremated.

MAZZY
His will? Cremated? I need to see
him! To say... *goodbye*.

Mazzy loses her shit. Sinks. Collapses in on herself.

ADMINISTRATOR
Mr. Maier is Kaleb's trustee. And
he's in charge now. There's nothing
you or I can do about it.

The administrator, as if following standard training, lifts
his hand to her shoulder. A mask of false concern.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Maz. Truly, I am.

They share a brief, wordless look.

Healing is their business. Death is the day-by-day downside.
The only thing to do is to keep it as far at a distance as
possible for as long as you can.

Mazzy's face hardens. Then the light leaves her eyes.

EXT. FINANCIAL DISTRICT - DAY

Mazzy walks alone in crushing silence through cold stone
canyons of silvery skyscrapers as FACELESS STRANGERS sweep
by all around her like passing phantoms. Like ghosts.

Crystalline tears wash down her face. But her expression is
frozen. Desolate. Vacant. Forsaken. Lost.

INT. PENTHOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Inside Kaleb's ridiculously ostentatious apartment, Mazzy HOWLS into her phone:

MAZZY

You heartless *fucking* prick. I deserve an ANSWER! And explanation. To see his body. To have you at least pick up the *fucking* phone.

No response from the side. Just deathly silence.

CLICK. Mazzy hangs up, her chest heaving.

SUPER: THREE WEEKS LATER

There's barely a light on in the place. But we see her reflection bouncing off of every angular pane of glass.

Behind her: the jutting tip of the Transamerica Building. A small red light atop the spire blinks like a heartbeat.

Anger melting back to crushing despair, she tosses her phone to the curved white leather couch, looks to the ceiling.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Lights fifty percent.

Nothing happens.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

FUCK!

Silence.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Lights in the *living room* fifty percent.

Recessed lights in the ceiling slowly swell, emit a soothing amber glow.

But instead of being becalmed, Mazzy breaks down entirely.

Deep, guttural SOBBING.

The WAIL of the abandoned, of decades and decades of sorrow, loneliness, and defeat.

Not even bothering to wipe the tears away, she staggers off toward the darkened bedroom, to the closet.

INT. PENTHOUSE, CLOSET - NIGHT

There on the dresser is Kaleb's phone again. Still dead.

Mazzy, still weeping, looks from the phone to Kaleb's clothes hung in neat rows on the opposite wall.

She falls into them as if searching for him there. Inhales deeply. Pauses. Pulls a chunky wool sweater from a shelf.

Slips her shuddering frame into it, staggers away.

INT. PENTHOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Trying to keep it together, Mazzy pours whiskey into a crystal rocks glass, lifts it to her lips, swallows ravenously. Desperate to numb her grief.

Behind her, a marble-clad wine cellar with glass doors glows like a neatly organized crypt.

Feeling the burn, Mazzy looks around, contemplates fleeing. Heading anywhere but here.

BUZZ. BUZZ.

Her phone rings. She grabs the bottle, rushes back toward the light, toward the living room.

INT. PENTHOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Clutching the bottle and her nearly empty glass, Mazzy stares down at her phone on the couch.

It's Stella, not Victor.

Mazzy hesitates, picks up.

MAZZY

Stel.

STELLA (V.O.)

Jesus. There you are. I've been calling and calling and--

MAZZY

I'm not ready to talk.

STELLA (V.O.)

It's okay. I just--

Stony silence from Mazzy.

STELLA (V.O.)
I'm sorry, babe. We're... We're
here for--

MAZZY
All I want is him back.

CLICK.

Mazzy cuts the connection, tops off her glass, turns around, walks down a wide hallway toward an office.

Tall shelves full of curated curios and monographs.

INT. PENTHOUSE, OFFICE - NIGHT

Mazzy steps into the office, catches sight of a framed photo of her and Kaleb in blue helmets in the Redwoods.

She downs the last of her whiskey, sets the glass and bottle down, looks to the ceiling.

MAZZY
Lights in the office, ten percent.

Just like clockwork, they glow.

Mazzy lifts the photo, studies it. Tears flow.

In the dim light from above, we can make out a monitor and keyboard to her right.

She sets the photo down, reaches toward the back of the monitor, turns it on.

Stuck to one corner of the monitor: a pink Post-It note reading: PRACTICE "DOWN THE LINE".

A login screen paints her tear-streaked face with color.

Mazzy guesses. Types in the same code from his phone.

It works.

She pulls up a browser. Types. And the screen fills with images of Victor. She scrolls, clicks.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
You fucking son of a...

A fast-moving shadow passes behind Mazzy. She drunkenly clocks it, turns.

There's nothing there.

She looks back to the screen, scrolls again.

A river of type washes by, occasionally interspersed with posed photos of Victor standing before a vast, modernist campus. A research facility nestled high in the hills.

She pauses, scrolls back up to a bolded pull quote, reads:

MAZZY (CONT'D)

The purpose of The Institute is to eliminate grief by breaking down the barriers between temporal awareness and the eternal, life-giving collective consciousness.

She takes another heavy pull from the bottle, swallows.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Bullshit.

Mazzy scrolls further to what appears to be a video thumbnail. She clicks play.

Over glossy, ethereal footage of well-dressed GRAY HAired COUPLES holding hands, clutching shoulders, kissing we hear the lulling British VOICE:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

During initial on-boarding, your compatibility for the program will be assessed. Then, via our proprietary combination of and Dimethyltryptamine, Ketamine, and Psilocybin, EEG receptivity is vastly amplified. And a deep, indelible connection is established between you and your departed loved one via a matched member of our volunteer panel of highly sensitive conduits to the afterlife.

Mazzy stares into the flickering glow in a drunken state of stunned disbelief.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Imagine that the brain is a radio. And our conduits, antennas...

Suddenly, we hear what sounds like the first few bars of an old-time COUNTRY SONG echoing plaintively from ceiling speakers somewhere out in the living room.

Mazzy hits pause, nearly drops the bottle, stands.

We recognize the song. It's "ALWAYS" by Patsy Cline again, the same song playing when her parents' car hit the ice.

Mazzy grips the bottle like a knife, turns, moves slowly back toward the hallway, toward the sound.

Over the speakers:

PATSY CLINE (V.O.)
Always, always, always.

INT. PENTHOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mazzy cautiously rounds the corner from the office, continues slowly toward the glass and stone fireplace that separates the living room from the dining room.

INT. PENTHOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Still gripping the bottle, she scans every surface, every object as Patsy Cline CROONS:

PATSY CLINE (V.O.)
*I'll be loving you, always,
With a love that's true, always.*

Through the glass of the fireplace, we see what appears to be a lone figure turn and walk toward the dining room.

Mazzy slows, rubs her eyes with her free hand.

The figure, a man it appears, slows, looks back.

PATSY CLINE (CONT'D)
*When the things you plan
Need a helping hand.*

Mazzy blinks hard. Recognizes him immediately.

MAZZY
K?

The man turns, disappears into the dining room.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
K!

Mazzy sprints after him.

PATSY CLINE (V.O.)
*I will understand, always.
Always.*

INT. PENTHOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Bleary-eyed and breathless, Mazzy runs into the dimly lit dining room only to find it empty. She's entirely alone.

PATSY CLINE (V.O.)
Days may not be fair, always.
That's when I'll be there, always.

The reflection of a swiftly moving solitary figure ripples across the floor-to-ceiling glass beyond the kitchen.

Mazzy runs full-out.

EXT. PENTHOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

She SKIDS to a stop at the marble island where she poured her first glass, spins around.

PATSY CLINE (V.O.)
Not for just an hour,
Not for just a day.

She spins, runs down a long passage back toward the bedroom.

INT. PENTHOUSE, PASSAGE - NIGHT

More fleeting reflections in the distance.

It's definitely him.

PATSY CLINE (CONT'D)
Not just for a year, but--

Mazzy looks to the ceiling, her heart pounding, SHOUTS:

MAZZY
 Music, pause!

It does.

She turns, catches sight of her own reflection. Just a lone woman clutching a bottle of whiskey with her chest heaving and lines of dried tears streaked down her cheeks.

MAZZY
 Fuck. I must be--

BUZZ. BUZZ.

The sound of a phone ringing again. Her phone?

She turns, looks toward the living room.

BUZZ. BUZZ.

The sound is not coming from there. It's coming from dead ahead. From the bedroom.

She lifts the bottle again, starts off down the hall - slowly at first, then faster.

BUZZ. BUZZ.

INT. PENTHOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

She steps into the same bedroom from earlier, pauses, looks to her left.

BUZZ. BUZZ.

The sound is coming from the closet.

She RUSHES toward it.

INT. PENTHOUSE, CLOSET - NIGHT

Atop the dresser, there again is Kaleb's phone. Somehow, it's curiously plugged in now, fully-charged.

She lifts it. The screen lights up. On it, two words:

KALEB MAIER

She drops the bottle. It shatters: SMASH!

The phone rings one more time.

BUZZ. BUZZ.

She thrusts a hand out, grabs it, STABS in the code to unlock it, lifts it to her ear.

MAZZY

K?

In the silence we can hear BREATHING. Faint at first, then louder. Then, a pained VOICE echoes over the line:

KALEB (V.O.)

Absence may make the heart grow fonder.

Mazzy's face drains of all color.

KALEB (V.O.)

But presence is what makes it beat.

And, just like that, she crumples to the floor.

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - NIGHT [DREAM SEQUENCE]

Back in the depths of the frozen lake, the silhouette of a single man floats above us.

His arms are extended. And his lifeless legs ebb and flow with the windblown waters.

His eyes are open but milky. His face, gaunt and ghostly.

It's Kaleb again, dressed precisely as he was when he passed out and dropped to the floor.

Behind him, the light of the moon ripples across the surface. But there's no way to reach it. No way past.

He's blocking our way. Holding us down. Holding us back.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

INT. PENTHOUSE, BATHROOM - MORNING

Mazzy twitches awake, sprawled out face-down on the cold stone of a vast marble bathroom.

The intact but empty bottle of whiskey sits on its side next to the freestanding, pill-shaped tub.

She pushes herself up off the floor, winces, turns, does her best not to look at herself in the mirror.

Instead, she rushes back toward the closet.

INT. PENTHOUSE, CLOSET - MORNING

Back inside the ravaged closet, amid scattered hangers, empty shelves, and open drawers, there's Kaleb's phone.

Now though, it's not plugged in.

She tries to unlock the screen. But it's dead again.

A powerless black mirror, just as it was before.

She plugs it back in, steps back like it's a bomb, searches her whiskey-seared brain for some semblance of sense.

MAZZY
(to the ceiling)
Music, play.

After a brief, breathless second, MUSIC does indeed echo down from unseen speakers.

But it's not "ALWAYS". It's not Patsy Cline.

It's the (now particularly eerie) opening guitar licks of "STRAIGHT DOWN THE LINE" once again.

Kaleb's karaoke play list on studious repeat.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Music, pause.

Mazzy rushes, her head splitting, for the office.

INT. PENTHOUSE, OFFICE - MORNING

Mazzy skids to a stop at the desk, rapidly SMASHES the space bar on the keyboard.

The screen illuminates again, prompts her to login again.

She does, eyes on the Post-It to practice.

And we're suddenly back on the same article, the same pull quote from earlier.

Without even sitting down, Mazzy grabs the mouse, closes the window, types.

And a Google Maps listing pops up for:

THE IMMER INSTITUTE

INT. PENTHOUSE, ENTRANCE - MORNING

Hastily dressed and running on a blend of fear, grief, and adrenaline, Mazzy rushes down the hall to the closed front door clutching Kaleb's phone in one hand.

Her keys are in her other hand and she has her leather messenger bag slung over one shoulder.

A thought occurs. She SKIDS to a stop.

Lifts his phone, now charged, unlocks it, stabs at an app, scrolls and scrolls. Pauses.

Draws a deep breath. Hits a button. Lifts the phone.

Someone on the other end picks up. Doesn't say anything.

MAZZY
 (into the phone)
 I, um, this is--

A WOMAN'S VOICE finally answers back, muffled:

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 I know who you are.

Mazzy yanks the phone from her ear, stares at the screen.

On it we see one name glowing: **KASI**.

Kaleb's twin sister.

KASI (V.O.)
 41 Halcyon Way. San Rafael. Make
 sure you're not followed.

CLICK. She hangs up.

WHOOSH.

An oversized envelope slides in under the front door to Kaleb's apartment.

Mazzy lowers Kaleb's phone, bends to pick up the envelope, thumbs it open, pulls out a sheaf of paper.

It's some sort of legal document. Lots of small print. And, at the top of the page, the words:

EVICTIION NOTICE

Mazzy SLAMS the papers in her bag, throws open the door.

There's no one there.

I/E. CAR/BRIDGE - DAY

Mazzy speeds her rust-dotted gold 1990s BMW through slow-moving traffic on the fogbound Golden Gate Bridge.

Her face is full of fury. And she's wearing Kaleb's ring on her ring finger.

The diamond sparkles faintly in the eerily low light.

She looks back, blinks, no one's there.

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - NIGHT [DREAM SEQUENCE]

And we FLASH to the obsidian depths of the frozen lake.

Above us, bathed in rippling moonlight, Kaleb's body floats again, arms extended. Savior-like.

His eyes SNAP open. His body JOLTS. A gale of silver bubbles flows from his lips. A rigor mortis scream.

KALEB
(barely discernible)
Save me.

PRE-LAP: Car horns BLARE.

END FLASHBACK.

I/E. CAR/BRIDGE - DAY

Mazzy, jolted, yanks the wheel hard left, barely misses three cars, almost hits the median.

MAZZY
Jesus fucking Christ.

Wheels SCREECH. More horns HONK.

Mazzy guns the gas as the dull red north tower of the bridge rips by above, still partially obscured by milky fog.

I/E. CAR/NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

The haze has given way to bright blue, cloudless skies as Mazzy pilots her car through an impossibly idyllic neighborhood full of well-tended mid-century homes.

Behind each peaked roof and minimalist façade: dun colored hills dotted with Live Oak and Bay Laurel trees.

Mazzy drives slowly, gripping the wheel with her left hand. The ring on her finger fills the car with dazzling light.

The backseat of the car is nearly covered with abandoned detritus. Clothes. Shoes. Books. Empty to-go cups. Wrappers.

Up ahead on the right: the only house in seeming disrepair. The grooved siding has been painted a deep blue black. The yard is overgrown with dead poppies.

The place is the picture of perpetual mourning.

A ghost house.

Mazzy slows, looks to her phone, confirms the address. Then she passes the house, continues on, doesn't stop.

MAZZY

Fuck me.

She looks to the eviction papers on the passenger seat, changes her mind, guns the gas again.

EXT. THE INSTITUTE, PARKING LOT - DAY

Mazzy stands outside her car, staring at a massive, bright white, multi-story architectural masterpiece nestled incongruously at the crest of a bucolic hilltop.

The place is all gentle curves and sharp angles. White stone cladding. Triangular skylights. Cantilevered steel stairs. A vast, glassed-in lobby dotted with mature trees.

All of the other cars in the lot are upper echelon. Mercedes. Range Rover. Maserati. Porsche.

Mazzy takes deep breath, tightens her grip on the envelope full of papers, slides her satchel around to the back, and walks across the lot toward the lobby.

Full of purpose. And dread.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, LOBBY - DAY

Mazzy crosses the palatial, sunlit lobby toward a marble reception desk.

Behind the desk: a video wall playing a slickly produced marketing video full of ethereal imagery.

Good-looking people reuniting with angelic lost loves in wind-swept fields of wheat at dawn as the same narrator ECHOES in lilting Queen's English:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

(from the video wall)

What if the end wasn't the end?

What if it's only the beginning?

(beat)

At The Immer Institute, now it is.

Mazzy charges across the space toward a lone RECEPTIONIST (20s) seated behind the marble desk.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Imagine being able to reconvene
with your dearly departed.

Mazzy slows, perplexed and alarmed.

In the distance, high-net-worth MEN AND WOMEN of all ages walk side-by-side with MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS in white lab coats. Some are crying. Some look beatific.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Relive old memories. Form new ones.
 Say goodbye on your own terms. At
 the time of your choosing.

Loads of Loro Piana and Eileen Fisher. A lot of black. The recently bereft. All of means.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 With our proprietary blend of
 powerful mind-altering substances,
 it's finally possible to break the
 bonds of temporal existence.

Above, a vast semi-circular glass oculus fills the space with bright sunshine and razor-sharp shadows.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 And bathe once again in the
 collective consciousness.

It's like a spa, research lab, and hospital combined.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 The unifying force that animates
 all life in the universe.

Mazzy shakes her head. *Fucking woo-woo Marin bullshit.*

The receptionist looks up, smiles coldly.

As Mazzy barrels toward her, the video wall dissolves to a slow-motion aerial shot of puffy white clouds at sunrise.

A fake CG heaven with the Institute's logo floating over it.

RECEPTIONIST
 Welcome to the Immer Institute. How
 can I help you?

Mazzy SLAMS the papers on the desk.

MAZZY
 I need to talk to Victor Maier.

The receptionist looks to her right.

In the distance, two glaringly over-armed SECURITY GUARDS stand beside a pair of security scanner gates.

They nod slowly her way.

The receptionist looks down, types on what appears to be a virtual keyboard projected onto the marble before her.

RECEPTIONIST
Is Doctor Maier expecting you?

MAZZY
He sure as hell better be.

RECEPTIONIST
Your name?

MAZZY
Mazzy Walker. Sorry.
(beat)
Maier.

The receptionist looks up, perplexed.

Mazzy looks to the ring on her finger.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
I'm his son's--

From her left, a VOICE:

VICTOR (O.S.)
Fiancée.

Like a summoned spirit, Victor materializes, strides silently across the space, throws his arms around Mazzy.

VICTOR
I'm so sorry, my dear. I've been trying to contact you. Desperately.

Mazzy seems entirely taken aback by his sudden show of deep compassion and concern.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
But I'm afraid my poor boy and I hadn't had the most open lines of communication, of late.

Mazzy tries to wriggle free, can't.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
When it happened, I just...

He trails off, seeming entirely overcome.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Such a beautiful boy. Taken too
soon. Just like his beloved mother.

Real tears gather in the corners of his eyes.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Why would he do that to the both of
us? To the ones who loved him most?

The receptionist looks away.

Behind her, the video starts again.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
What if the end wasn't the end?

Mazzy blocks it out, slips free of Victor's grasp.

MAZZY
I'm sorry? Do what?

VICTOR
Disallow us to mourn him properly.

Victor looks to the receptionist, then back to Mazzy.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
You don't know?

No answer from Mazzy. Only stunned silence and the DULCET
VOICE of the narrator.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
...it's finally possible to break
the bonds of temporal...

Victor ushers her away, across the lobby, through the maze
of monied patients, toward the stone-faced security guards.

Everyone she passes seems entirely out of it. Glassy eyed
and on the verge of incapacitation. Benumbed.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
His will dictated. No ceremony. No
funeral. Immediate cremation.

Victor, again overcome, just stares at the gleaming floor.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry, my dear.

MAZZY

I just need to know what happened
to him. Where is he? His body...

Victor guides her wordlessly past the guards, through the
scanners, and toward a bank of elevators.

In the distance, hints of what appears to be some sort of
vast meditation space.

VICTOR

I know, dear. Come.

He pauses at one of the elevator doors, scans a key card
attached to his belt, presses a button.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Allow me to--

A pair of silver doors WHOOSH open.

The guards behind them stare into the lobby, saying nothing.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, ELEVATOR - DAY

Victor guides Mazzy, deeply wary, inside a glass elevator.

MAZZY

What is this... place?

The doors close. The elevator ascends. Floor after floor of
vast modern office space and high-tech labs flash by.

VICTOR

A means to never lose anyone again.

WHOOSH. The doors open again.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, WALKWAY - DAY

Victor ushers Mazzy out onto a long white perforated steel
walkway suspended just beneath the glass oculus.

VICTOR

A place to see beyond our limited
understanding of existence. Our
narrow minded fears.

Down below, more patients continue their slow, guided
procession to who knows where.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

I know what it means. How it feels.
(MORE)

VICTOR (CONT'D)

(beat)

This place can take away that pain.

Mazzy, her guard up, simply stares.

VICTOR

They said they did all they could?
I could have kept him here.

MAZZY

Hold on. Hold on. Hold on.

He notices the legal documents crumpled in her fist, SIGHS.

VICTOR

Poor boy always *was* terrible at
living within his means.

MAZZY

What?!

Victor slows, looks out over his ethereal domain. Then his gaze drifts to the ring on her finger.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Pity, time.

Mazzy tightens her grip on the papers in her fist.

MAZZY

Who did this? Evicted me?

He smiles devilishly.

VICTOR

I have no idea.

She pulls away from him, steps backward.

MAZZY

I don't have anywhere else to--

VICTOR

Please, I can help you. Bring him
back. Stay with him.

Mazzy slows briefly.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Always.

She hesitates at the word. But then she speeds back up toward the elevators.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
It doesn't have to be this way.

Mazzy takes off running.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I can help you heal.

HARD CUT TO:

I/E. CAR/HOUSE - LATER

Mazzy pulls up to the same jet black mid-century house from earlier, kills the engine, rolls down her window.

MAZZY
The fuck. The fuck. The--

Suddenly, the front door SWINGS open. And out steps a statuesque young woman with long, flowing hair and spellbinding almond eyes.

She's wearing a gauzy white dress and an elegant, mid-length woven gray shawl. And she's got a lit joint dangling from her paint-speckled fingers.

Meet: KASI MAIER (30s) Kaleb's mysterious twin sister.

She's the stunning, sharp-edged mirror image of her brother. Their eyes, identical. The same thin lips. The same high cheekbones. Impossibly similar in all ways but one.

Inside the car, Mazzy reflexively GASPS at the sight of her, stunned speechless by the intense and absolutely unmissable resemblance. She's his carbon copy.

Kasi lifts the joint, takes a draw, blows smoke.

KASI
You've seen him.

Mazzy STAMMERS, looking paralyzed. Petrified.

KASI (CONT'D)
It's okay. I won't bite.

Kasi turns, steps back through the door and into the atrium open to the sky, gestures for Mazzy to follow.

INT. HOUSE - DUSK

As the sun sets over the hills behind the house and a gauzy, low-lying mist slowly returns, Mazzy sits opposite Kasi inside her ramshackle mid-century house.

A fire CRACKLES in the brick fireplace. The walls are lined with expressionist charcoal sketches and old photographs.

All of the furniture seems to have been scavenged. Threadbare and ravaged. But lived-in.

So completely the opposite of Kaleb's perfectly curated but airless penthouse.

KASI

Whole place is just a glorified
Ketamine clinic for the fucking
billionaire class. Chemically-
induced Ouji Board 19th century
fake-ass Spiritualism bullshit.
Bunch of voodoo.

There's a blue glass ashtray full of smoked-out roaches next Mazzy's legal documents on the low coffee table before them.

KASI (CONT'D)

Country club 'afterlife' seances
for the one-percent.

Kasi takes another draw, offers the joint to Mazzy.

Mazzy declines, guard up.

Kasi's gaze drifts to Mazzy's abdomen briefly.

KASI (CONT'D)

Yeah. Good call.

MAZZY

I'm sorry?

KASI

You're pregnant.

Mazzy jolts backward.

MAZZY

What?!

Her hand unconsciously drifts to her belly. A flicker of hope. And then total devastation.

KASI

Thirteen weeks.

MAZZY

The fuck are you even--

KASI
The eighteenth. After Thai, I
think. At that place on...

MAZZY
(panicking)
How the hell do you--

KASI
Just test, yeah?
(deep drag)
Certainly complicates Father's...
(long exhale)
...glorious master plan.

Mazzy shoves herself to her feet.

MAZZY
This was a mistake. I must be
losing my *fucking* mind.

Kasi lazily doffs her ash, points to the stack of legal
papers on the coffee table.

KASI
Listen and listen close.

MAZZY
That's enough.

Mazzy roughly SNATCHES the documents up, turns to go.

KASI
Father is a monster.

Kasi STABS out what's left of the joint. Mazzy hesitates.

KASI (CONT'D)
Consumed by his own grief.

Long beat. Both women stare at each other, Mazzy still
spinning out and yet bumping on her resemblance.

It's like being with him again. Seeing him again.

KASI (CONT'D)
K didn't tell you. About us. Did
he? What we... *share*.

The use of the present tense bumps Mazzy briefly.

Kasi stands, looks to the drawings taped to the brick
fireplace. They're all terrifying. Scenes of violence.

KASI (CONT'D)
 Second sight. A form of telepathy
 common among twins.

Mazzy grips the papers, looks to the sliding glass doors,
 incredulous, and ready to bolt.

Kasi turns, RIPS a drawing down from the fireplace, studies
 it remorsefully.

KASI (CONT'D)
 I could see his thoughts. He could
 see mine. Even if we were kept
 miles and miles apart.

Mazzy parts her lips to speak. No words come.

KASI (CONT'D)
 While Father performed his tests.

Kasi looks to the wall of windows to her right. They're
 impossibly dirty. But we can still make out the ever
 encroaching fog.

KASI (CONT'D)
 Until Mother couldn't take it
 anymore, the torture. And, well...

She trails off, drops the drawing.

It appears to be of a woman in a nightgown hanging by the
 neck from a rope tied to a hook in one of the beams, above.

Mazzy looks to it, paralyzed, petrified.

KASI (CONT'D)
 Kaleb escaped to boarding school.
 Father locked me up at The Immer.
 Made me his first test subject.
 Until I failed and he ditched me
 like a piece of fucking trash.

MAZZY
 Hold on, hold--

KASI
 K could probably feel everything I
 felt. See what Father was doing to
 me. So he walled himself off. Cut
 me out. Tried to break the signal.

Kasi returns her laser-like gaze to Mazzy.

KASI (CONT'D)
 Father saw him as competition.

MAZZY
 What?!

KASI
 His stupid fucking app. It works.
 For a glitchy, lame-ass simulation.

Mazzy's face says it all. *What the fuck are you--*

KASI (CONT'D)
 That's why he bought out what's his
 name. K's douche bag partner.

MAZZY
 I'm sorry?

KASI
 Just to bury the stupid thing. How
 fucking ironic is that?

Kasi strolls past Mazzy.

KASI (CONT'D)
 But what K didn't know is that our
 connection, the circuit, it's still
 open. Always has been.
 (beat)
 C'mon.

Kasi leaves a deeply perplexed Mazzy in her wake, passes the
 wall of glass separating the atrium from the house.

KASI (CONT'D)
 See for yourself.

Through the open atrium, we can see fog slowly beginning to
 blot out the stars.

Mazzy looks again to the door, to the exit. Hesitates.

MAZZY
 (under her breath)
 Fuck, fuck, fuck.

INT. HOUSE, BEDROOM - EVENING

Mazzy stands, gobsmacked, at the center of Kaleb's teenage
 bedroom. Everything she'd once hoped to see is here. Awkward
 photos, trophies, posters of long broken-up bands.

A single bed covered in faded sheets leans against one wall.

And, across the entire wall opposite: tacked and taped drawings layers and layers deep. They're all as frenetic and violently expressive as those in the living room.

But, from what we can make out, they depict more mundane, almost bucolic scenes from a simple life well-lived.

Mazzy's life, with Kaleb.

Dates. Brunch. Dinners. Drunken nights out on the town.

Zip lining through tall trees. Holding hands on the beach.

KASI

The more he lived, just lived, the more I... Tried to kill myself twice. Chickened out.

Kasi reaches out, slides one of the closet doors open.

KASI (CONT'D)

And then, three weeks ago...

The entire inside of the closet is papered with hundreds of quickly-rendered, nearly identical drawings.

KASI (CONT'D)

...this.

Mazzy leans in, squints, finally sees that every drawing depicts a solitary figure floating with their arms extended below the surface of a ink-black body of water.

She GASPS, jumps back. Everything goes dark.

INT. HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mazzy, terrified, turns to see that the glassed-in atrium at the center of the house is now swiftly filling with water.

Thousands of gallons a second rush from above, just like it did inside her parents' car when she was a girl.

Mazzy looks to Kasi. From the shadows, Kasi just nods.

Mazzy turns, SPRINTS away.

HALLWAY:

Mazzy STREAKS down the narrow hall, SKIDS to a stop next to a floor-to-ceiling window.

The water is nearly to the top.

ENTRANCE:

Mazzy RUNS past pane after pane of glass. Behind her, the walls seem to bleed water.

Through the atrium, Mazzy spies another set of glass doors.

She DASHES for them.

FAMILY ROOM:

She SKIDS to a stop before the doors.

Tries to scream, can't.

Then she see it.

In the water floats a man, Kaleb, in exactly the same pose.

Frantic, she YANKS at the door handles with all her might.

KALEB (O.C.)
(from behind her)
Be careful.

Mazzy WHEELS around to find herself face-to-face with a grotesquely ravaged Kaleb.

Bone exposed between open wounds. Tattered, waterlogged clothing. Milky eyes full of pain.

She SCREAMS, spins, finds herself confronted by another even more decrepit Kaleb.

KALEB
Of Father.

She pushes his body away, tumbles backward, turns, lands in the rotting arms of yet another cadaver-like Kaleb.

KALEB (CONT'D)
He did this. To me.

Her chest heaving and her eyes wide, Mazzy STUMBLES away from him, THUDS into another ghostly figure.

But it's Kasi.

Her skin is intact and luminous in the moonlight.

KASI
You need to let him go.

Mazzy stumbles backward.

KASI (CONT'D)
Let him... pass.

Mazzy, in a panic, finally bolts.

I/E. CAR/BRIDGE - NIGHT

All alone in her car, eyes full of fright, Mazzy speeds back across the mist blanketed bridge with the legal docs in pile on the seat beside her.

MAZZY
The fuck are you doing?!

She SLAMS both palms on the steering wheel.

The car SQUEALS across an empty lane, alarmingly close to the median.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
Pregnant? That crazy *fucking* bitch.

Mazzy grips the wheel, centers her lane, tries and fails to regain her composure.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
I just...

Her anger swiftly melts into deep sorrow.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry baby. I'm so...

A huge tear rolls down one cheek. She roughly wipes it away.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
I should've said yes.

BUZZ. BUZZ.

The sound of a phone on vibrate JOLTS Mazzy. She looks to the console, sees it's Stella again, decides to pick up.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
Hey.

STELLA (V.O.)
There you are.

MAZZY
I'm sorry.

STELLA (V.O.)

I know you said you needed to be alone. But I need to see you. If you won't let me come over, just meet us at the taqueria. I won't make you talk. You can leave when you want. I just need to see you.

Mazzy hesitates briefly, her head still spinning.

MAZZY

Okay.

STELLA (V.O.)

Great. Seven thirty. See you--

CLICK.

Mazzy hangs up, instantly regrets saying yes.

EXT. LA TAQUERIA - NIGHT

Mazzy, Hugh, and Stella sit under the white arches outside this landmark Mission taco joint.

Beers and burritos litter the table. Mazzy hasn't touched her food. Instead, she downs her third Modelo, turns toward Hugh, full of rage.

MAZZY

You were the money man. Why the hell am I getting evicted?!

STELLA

Evicted?

MAZZY

What are you fucking hiding?

HUGH

Maz, it's okay to be...

MAZZY

Don't tell me how to fucking be. Nothing's okay. Nothing will ever be okay...

Mazzy trails off as a passing stranger in a black hoodie catches her eye.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

...again.

She leaps to her feet, knocks her bottle off the table. It hits the concrete with a loud: SMASH.

The sound drags her eyes downward toward the sea of broken glass at her feet. She looks up, steps over it: CRUNCH.

STELLA

Maz? Let us help you.

The figure on the sidewalk is gone. But still, she tumbles off after it. After him. Like a woman in a trance.

HUGH

Mazzy, please.

Mazzy hurries off down the crowded sidewalk.

MAZZY

Fuck you. You built the coffin.

EXT. MISSION STREET - NIGHT

As Mazzy bobs and weaves through the crowd, no sign of the hooded figure. He's vanished like a passing phantom.

But Mazzy still sprints desperately down the sidewalk.

He's got to be here. Somewhere. Anywhere.

But he isn't, never will be.

Nearing the end of the block, winded and crushed, Mazzy slows, bends at the waist, gives up.

More tears fall.

Passing pedestrians cut her a wide berth.

I/E. CAR/GARAGE - NIGHT

Mazzy pulls into an open spot inside the subterranean parking garage below Kaleb's building, kills the engine.

Still an emotional wreck, she just sits there in silence for a few seconds, staring at the concrete wall ahead of her.

Her tear-streaked face is bathed in a sickly green light from the BUZZING fluorescent lights of the garage.

She finally pulls the keys from the ignition, looks to a small paper bag on top of the twisted pile of documents on the passenger seat.

Out of nowhere: CRACK!

Mazzy, jolted, looks quickly to the sunroof.

It instantly SPLINTERS just like the windshield in her parents' car did when she was a girl.

Inexplicably, the entire garage is now totally submerged.

Through the water outside, luxury sedans float upside down as the green lights continue to flicker.

In a panic, Mazzy drops the keys, THRUSTS her palms to the glass above her.

Through the splintering web, water seeps in.

MAZZY

No, no, no!

The car's roof loudly buckles. CRUNCH!

Metal-on-metal GRINDING under immense pressure.

Mazzy, GASPING, lowers a hand, SMACKS desperately at the buckle on her seat belt.

Outside her window, the same grisly vision.

A man, clearly a ravaged and wasted Kaleb, drifts hauntingly with both arms, again, extended.

KALEB (V.O.)

Let... Me... Go.

With that last word, everything jarringly returns to normal.

No water. No cracked glass. No buckled roof.

Mazzy, her heart racing and her mind melting, swivels in her seat in shocked disbelief.

Then her eyes fall to the bag on the seat next to her.

In a frenzy, she quickly snatches it up, throws her door open, sprints for the elevators.

INT. PENTHOUSE, KITCHEN - LATER

Mazzy, still in a panic, paces around the kitchen island in Kaleb's apartment with her arms wrapped around her elbows.

On the island: the paper bag and another unopened bottle of very expensive whiskey.

She hesitates for half a second, then she snatches up the bottle, turns, doesn't even bother with a glass.

INT. PENTHOUSE, BEDROOM - LATER

Mazzy sits alone in a tangle of sheets at the center of Kaleb's massive, still unmade bed.

Wearing nothing but a wrinkled camisole and a pair of panties, she swigs from the now half-empty bottle as the light of her phone dances across her face.

From the phone: tinny VOICES and WIND.

KALEB (V.O.)
(on-screen, not visible)
Just do it already.

MAZZY (V.O.)
(on-screen, visible)
I can't!

Eventually, we can barely make out that she's watching a video apparently shot from a GoPro mounted to Kaleb's helmet as they stand on a circular platform high in the redwoods.

Wind bends the nearby trees. A thick metal cable arcs from just above their heads gracefully down into the forest.

Wearing a helmet and leather gloves, Mazzy grips the cable that tethers her to the treetop with all her might.

KALEB (V.O.)
All this time I thought you were
full-tilt fearless.

A fearsome GUST rocks the tree.

MAZZY (V.O.)
Jesus fucking CHRIST!

Even though we can't see his face, Kaleb clearly seems to be eating this up. Reveling in her paranoid freakout.

KALEB (V.O.)
Fine. Chicken.

Back in the bed, Mazzy lifts the bottle again, guzzles.

Her eyes are glassy. Empty. Spent.

Tranquilized by the alcohol and the video. By her memories.

The view on-screen shifts to Kaleb as he shimmies past, unclips, clips back into a metal trolley with two handles.

MAZZY (V.O.)
Please be careful.

KALEB (V.O.)
Bah.

Our view TILTS downward.

Beyond and below the platform, we can barely make out that the ground is nearly three hundred feet down below.

KALEB (V.O.)
See you on the on the other side.

Kaleb looks up, pushes off, ROARS down the zip line at an alarmingly high rate of speed.

All we see are his bare crossed legs and his worn desert boots rocketing through the treetops.

ZZZZIIIIIPPPPP.

Mazzy scrolls the video backward with one finger.

KALEB (V.O.)
See you on the on the other--

Mazzy scrolls backward again.

KALEB (V.O.)
See you on--

She backs it up yet again.

KALEB (V.O.)
See you--

Swipe.

KALEB (V.O.)
See you--

Swipe.

KALEB (V.O.)
...on the other side.

CLICK.

She turns her phone off, tosses it away, doesn't cry.

Instead, her face is a study in blotted-out pain. Emotion squelched by sheer force of will. And alcohol.

Like a snake handler having taken the venom by choice.

MAZZY (PRE-LAP)
(zero emotion)
I'm fine.

INT. HOSPITAL, HALLWAY - DAY

Mazzy walks side-by-side down a harshly-lit, grim hallway with the same intake nurse that busted her for being drunk.

They're both in matching scrubs.

INTAKE NURSE
But shouldn't you--

MAZZY
(irritated)
It's okay.

Mazzy slows. The intake nurse stops dead.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
I need this. To get my shit back together. To...

She trails off, doesn't want to say too much.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
Plus, I used up all my time off.

The nurse looks her up and down like she's trying to suss out how to disarm a grenade.

INTAKE NURSE
Mazzy?

Mazzy, exasperated, looks away. *What?!*

INTAKE NURSE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

Mazzy continues walking, tries to tune her out.

The nurse follows.

MAZZY
For what?

INTAKE NURSE
Telling you to go home.

MAZZY
You were just... Doing your job.

Mazzy bends left, heads toward the Emergency Room.

INTAKE NURSE
I just feel so--

MAZZY
How long have you worked here?

The nurse, on the move, cocks her head.

INTAKE NURSE
Um...

Mazzy slows again, stabs her badge at a sensor. Two automatic doors open to the DIN of the Emergency Room.

The sounds is like a tonic to Mazzy. A welcome distraction.

Mazzy wades into it, drinks it in.

MAZZY
Not having to feel is what makes
this place work.

PATIENT (PRE-LAP)
Oh, god. Oh god!

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

Inside one of the canary yellow curtained Emergency Room bays, Mazzy quickly, deftly cleans a deep gash in the forearm of young male PATIENT (20s).

Blood and iodine ooze from the wound.

PATIENT
Fucking hurts!

Calm, cool, and collected once again, Mazzy works with a self-assured mastery. She's back in her element.

Her gloved hands move like a concert pianist's.

MAZZY
Just stay with me.

As the patient looks away, grits his teeth, she reaches across herself for a wad of gauze.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
 We gotta get this wound nice and
 clean before we--

WHOOSH.

The curtain beyond the gurney rustles partly open.
 And we catch the faintest hint of a FAMILIAR FIGURE passing.
 Mazzy stops dead. Blood oozes.
 The figure outside disappears.
 Like a phantom. Like an illusion.
 Mazzy drops the gauze, stands.

PATIENT
 What is it?

MAZZY
 Be right back. Keep pressure on it.

In a trance, Mazzy steps toward the curtain, pushes it open.
 There's no one there.

PATIENT (O.S.)
 Doc?

A pair of automatic doors in the distance WHIR closed.
 Saying nothing, Mazzy rushes toward the sound, skids to a
 stop, swipes her badge. The sensor flashes green.
 The doors begin to open again.
 Mazzy roughly SHOVES herself through and back into --

INT. HOSPITAL, HALLWAY - SAME TIME

The same silhouette swiftly disappears around a bend ahead
 as Mazzy threads her way into the hallway.

MAZZY
 Wait. Stop.

No answer.

In an all-out frenzy, Mazzy races down the hallway, takes
 the same bend, skids again to a stop.

The same vague figure veers right, steps into an open elevator as other STAFF and ADMINISTRATORS wordlessly go about their daily grind.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Hold that--

She runs like a maniac as the doors slowly trundle closed.

Spooked co-workers part ways, lift their hands, regard her with a mix of fear and pity.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Shit. Shit.

She rapidly STABS at the call button for the next elevator, watches the display for the one descending.

The same administrator from earlier catches sight of Mazzy from a distance, CALLS OUT:

ADMINISTRATOR

Mazzy?

MAZZY

C'mon. C'mon. C'mon.

The descending elevator stops at LL1 - Lower Level One.

ADMINISTRATOR

Weren't you gonna take a little time to--

The elevator doors before her slowly open.

MAZZY

Sorry. Can't talk.

A JANITOR with a huge supply cart pushes his way out.

She YANKS at the cart, JAMS her way past him, HAMMERS the LL1 button, then the CLOSE DOORS button.

From outside, the administrator just watches, his face full of confusion and (condescending) concern.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Mazzy BURSTS back through the partially open elevator doors to find herself in a windowless, subterranean space somewhere deep in the bowels of the hospital.

No one's there. She's entirely alone.

MAZZY

Hello?

Her VOICE echoes slightly. No answer.

The doors behind her RUMBLE slowly closed.

FLASH!

A blindingly white burst of light fills the space as another set of doors opposite Mazzy DING open.

And, to her stunned disbelief, a lone figure on a gurney draped in a white sheet is wheeled from the elevator by two VAGUELY FAMILIAR MEN (30s) in matching scrubs.

Neither of them even seem to notice Mazzy standing there as they swing the gurney toward another pair of doors.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Where are...

No answer from either man as one of them swipes a key card.

Mazzy is about to call out again when a third figure emerges from the elevator.

It's Victor. Dressed exactly as he was the day Kaleb died.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

YOU!

Victor doesn't respond. Doesn't seem to hear her.

Unperturbed, he calmly turns, follows the men with the gurney through the doors and down the hall.

Mazzy just stands there staring, her heart THUNDERING in her chest. *What the fuck is going on?*

Victor and the two men round another corner and disappear as the double doors CLICK and begin to close.

But, before they do, Mazzy, in a daze, RUSHES through them.

INT. BASEMENT, PASSAGEWAY - SECONDS LATER

Mazzy SKIDS around a corner in hot pursuit, only to find the hallway eerily abandoned.

No sign of Victor, the men, or the body on the gurney.

MAZZY

K?

A light BLINKS through the glass panel in a door down the hall. She rushes for it.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Kaleb!

INT. BASEMENT, MORGUE - SECONDS LATER

Mazzy BURSTS through the door to find herself inside a vast, sterile, harshly clinical space.

Cold steel autopsy tables sit empty beneath surgery lights on white armatures. More florescent lights BUZZ.

Along one wall: a floor-to-ceiling bank of refrigerated silver mortuary cabinets.

Cream colored tile lines the walls and floor. Drains.

And, at the center of it all stands the wheeled gurney with the body draped in white.

Just a lone body on a slab.

His profile, even draped in white, is unmistakable.

Mazzy, winded and terrified, slowly advances, saying nothing. Pausing before the gurney, she reaches a trembling hand out for the corner of the sheet, grips it.

WHOOSH!

She YANKS the sheet away - only to find the gurney empty. It's not him. There's no one there. Just an empty gurney.

And her, alone, in the hospital morgue.

Suddenly, the space slowly begins to fill with icy water. Just like in the lake.

In a rage, Mazzy turns, RUSHES through the water, THROWS open one heavy steel cabinet door at a time, YANKS each wheeled body rack out.

Men. Women. Young. Old. All naked. All dead.

MAZZY

Where are you? Where--

Breathless, she pulls the last cabinet open, reaches for the rail, pulls with all her might.

But, it's not him. It's the dead girl from three weeks ago.

Then, from off:

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)

Maz?

Mazzy WHEELS around. The water is gone.

Her face shifts from frantic desperation to deep denial and then to total mortification.

A single tear rolls down her cheek. She can't help it.

INT. ELEVATOR - LATER

An obliterated wreck, Mazzy steps into the elevator back at Kaleb's building, reaches for the keypad, still trembling.

Instead of pressing the top floor, she thumbs the LOBBY key.

The doors slide silently shut.

INT. LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Still in her scrubs and her hair a total mess, Mazzy shambles like a sleepwalker through the vast, glass-clad and art filled lobby, toward a pair of revolving doors.

A few STYLISH RESIDENTS (30s) watch with concern, MUTTERING under their breath.

But she doesn't hear them. Can't see them. Doesn't care.

Instead, she pushes her way through the revolving doors and out into the early evening light.

EXT. CHINATOWN, SIDEWALK - DUSK

As the sun slowly sets, Mazzy shuffles down a crowded sidewalk past butcher shops and bakeries.

Strands of illuminated red paper lanterns sway above her as she walks, again in a paranoid daze.

The scene is festive and bustling. But, to her, it's nothing but a blur. A world not worth living in.

EXT. CHINATOWN, ALLEY - SAME TIME

She turns, winds her way through the crowd and into a narrow, graffiti-covered pedestrian alley.

Somehow now, her stride seems more purposeful. More intentional. Like she knows where she's going.

Toward the end of the alley, she slows.

From across the street up ahead: a faint blue glow.

Neon.

At the sight of it, she stops dead, draws a breath.

Her chin quivers.

And then she soldiers on toward the light.

EXT. KARAOKE BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Beneath the BUZZING and BLINKING blue neon, Mazzy stands on the sidewalk, staring into the grimy windows of the same tiny karaoke bar from before.

It's almost as though we can hear Kaleb singing his heart out for her once again.

But instead, through the windows, all she can see is a sad line of middle-aged DAY DRINKERS (50s) trying to numb themselves into oblivion.

Just like her.

MAZZY
(to herself)
What is *happening* to me?

A familiar reflection WASHES across the glass before her.

Inside the bar, one the nearest drinkers looks up, spins on his stool, locks Mazzy in his gaze, gestures.

Go get him, already.

Mazzy slowly turns to see Kaleb walking away from her with his hands in his pockets, toward a busy intersection.

She looks back into the bar.

But it's empty now. Not even open. A rusted metal safety grate blocks the blackened windows.

She looks back down the street. Kaleb's gone.

Time races. The world tilts on its axis.

And she takes off on a dead sprint.

EXT. INTERSECTION - SECONDS LATER

Mazzy stops, turns, sees him again - this time already across six lanes of traffic.

MAZZY
Stop! Stop!

He doesn't. Doesn't even turn. Just keeps on walking.

Mazzy dashes diagonally across the street, is almost hit by four separate cars.

Wheels SCREECH. Horns BLARE. People SHOUT.

Mazzy barely reacts, just runs.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DUSK

Weaving through tight packs of TOURISTS, Mazzy races past gaudy strip clubs and crowded bars.

Blinking lights and harsh neon slashes across her face as she tries to keep up, tries to catch him.

But at every gap in pedestrians, he seems impossibly far off. Like he, too, is running all-out.

But he's not. He's just walking, calmly.

Peacefully.

MAZZY
Kaleb, please! Wait for me!

No response.

Instead, he takes a sharp left, disappears around a corner.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DUSK

Mazzy, her lungs burning, rounds the same corner only to be presented with an impossibly steep, narrow side street.

Even the sidewalks are stepped.

And, at its crest: Kaleb again.

MAZZY
Don't do this! Stop! Talk to me!

Nope.

He summits the last stair, turns right, disappears again.

Mazzy summons all her strength, follows him up.

EXT. STEEP STREET - EVENING

At the top of the stairs, sucking down air, Mazzy turns, looks, sees him again, tries to shout.

But he vanishes again, leading her on.

She charges off after him.

EXT. DEAD END - MOMENTS LATER

Mazzy finds herself alone in a small horseshoe shaped dead end surrounded by a ring of trees full of wind-born garbage.

MAZZY

Please.

She lowers her hands to her knees, bends at the waist, can't go on, can't keep up.

But then she lifts her gaze to a flight of stone stairs.

Above them looms Coit Tower.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Stop.

Mazzy staggers toward the stairs, starts up them two at a time in the deepening darkness.

EXT. STAIRS - NIGHT

As Mazzy zigzags up a narrow, twisting, overgrown pathway, thorny vines tear at her face and arms.

But higher and higher she climbs, running on desperation.

She can't call out for him, can barely breathe.

EXT. COIT TOWER - NIGHT

Mazzy finally emerges from the trees at the top of the stairs to see the Art Deco entrance to Coit Tower.

Strangely, one of the doors is wide open.

Gasping for air, Mazzy tumbles across the plaza, up the exterior stairs, through the door, and into the tall, cylindrical concrete structure.

INT. COIT TOWER, ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Once inside, Mazzy looks around wildly. Breathlessly.

There's no one to be seen. No Park Rangers. No ticket takers. No tourists. Just her.

And no Kaleb.

As if she knows the space well, Mazzy runs for the stairs.

INT. COIT TOWER, STAIRWELL - NIGHT

In total darkness, Mazzy winds her way up the narrow, claustrophobic stairwell with the last of her strength.

WPA-era murals wash by as she climbs.

Normally vibrantly colored, vivid, and optimistic, now they seem desperate and haunted. Spectral. Eerie.

INT. COIT TOWER, OBSERVATION DECK - NIGHT

Mazzy emerges into a large circular cathedral-like space open to the sky and lined with arched windows.

Through every window, the city sparkles.

And, at the center of it all: Kaleb.

He stands with his back to us. And he doesn't seem winded in the slightest. Instead, he's oddly calm.

KALEB

Lame, right?

Mazzy, too hoarse to speak, takes a tentative step forward.

KALEB (CONT'D)

For a first date.

She can't believe her eyes. It's really him.

Mazzy tries again to say his name. Can't.

KALEB (CONT'D)

Yeah, I know.

He finally turns around, luminous. Almost lit from within.

KALEB (CONT'D)

Still...

He reaches out, takes her in his arms, kisses her deeply.
And then he gently lets her go.

KALEB (CONT'D)

There. Now I can die a happy man.

Mazzy, dumbfounded, staggers backward.

Only to find that he's gone. She's all alone.

As if he was never there in the first place.

All the color leaves her face as hope crumbles into anger
once again. Fearsome, inescapable rage.

Mazzy spins away, HOWLS.

The sound bounces off the concrete, ripples back at her in
scorching, obliterating waves.

INT. COIT TOWER, STAIRWELL - LATER

Mazzy lurches down the stairs in the dark.

Again, haunting, ghastly faces wash by step after step.

It's as if she's trudging through a sea of lost souls. The
left behind. The forgotten.

Just like her.

But then: CLINK. CLINK.

A light somewhere further down the stairs illuminates, fills
the claustrophobic space with hints of color.

Mazzy continues her slow decent only to arrive at a section
of mural lit (seemingly purposefully) by a single bulb.

At the center of the composition: a young mother in a blue
dress... clutching a baby.

A baby.

Mazzy nearly collapses.

INT. PENTHOUSE, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mazzy sits in the bathroom with her panties down around her
ankles and the paper bag from earlier torn open on the tile
floor before her.

In her hands: a white plastic pregnancy test.

Two stripes. Double vertical lines.

Positive.

STELLA (PRE-LAP)
Wait. WHAT?!

I/E. CAR/NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

Mazzy, her head splitting, sits parked a good distance down the street from Kasi's crumbling mid-century house.

She's got her phone pressed to her ear.

MAZZY
The fucking place is like a goddam post-death resort for the rich and famous! Privatized immortality for the lucky few! He's in there! I know it. I can feel it!

STELLA (V.O.)
(over her phone)
Babe, it's okay. It's alright to just let yourself mourn.

MAZZY
No, you don't understand.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LAW OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Stella, in another smart looking pants suit, sits at her sizable, overly orderly desk.

STELLA
He's dead, Maz. Kaleb is *dead*.

MAZZY
He kissed me. I felt it. I saw him. Heard him. Plain as *fucking* day.

STELLA
Where?

MAZZY
Coit Tower.

STELLA
That's just... I need you to get your shit back together.

MAZZY

Where we...

A hint of a grim realization washes across Mazzy's face.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Our first kiss.

She nearly drops her phone.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

That's what he said. To me. That
night. Every single word. Verbatim.
(deep breath)
Said he could die a happy man.

Stella looks to her phone, alarmed.

STELLA

Tell me where you are. I'll come
get you. We can help you.

Mazzy looks toward Kasi's house.

STELLA (CONT'D)

It's just grief, Maz. It fucking
happens. Denial, anger, bargaining,
depression. Deal with it and move--

MAZZY

25 Rubicon Court, San Rafael.

STELLA

What?

MAZZY

I need you to come, be my backup.

STELLA

Backup?

MAZZY

His sister's place. Kasi. Up in
Marin. She knows, I think.

STELLA

Sister?

MAZZY

Twin sister, yeah.

Mazzy shifts hands, pulls her keys from the ignition.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
If you don't hear from me in thirty minutes, that's where I'll be.

STELLA
Wait one fucking--

MAZZY
Just get here as fast as you can.

Stella is stunned speechless. For once.

STELLA
The fuck are you even--

Mazzy reaches to the backseat for her satchel. From the floor she grabs a blouse, a pair of jeans, and some boots.

MAZZY
Oh, and I'm pregnant.

More breathless silence from Stella.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
There, I buried the lede.

CLICK. She hangs up, starts changing.

Back in her office, Stella just stares blankly ahead.

INT. HOUSE, ATRIUM - LATER

Kasi sits in a sun-bleached butterfly chair inside the open atrium nursing yet another joint as Mazzy frantically paces.

KASI
No, no, no. No fucking way.

MAZZY
Please. Please! I need your--

KASI
I'm never going back there. Ever.

MAZZY
I swear. I feel it, I see it. I saw him. I *felt* him.

KASI
Duh. That's how it works.

MAZZY
How what works?!

She taps her temple with the fingers clutching the joint. Then she points up to Mazzy's head.

KASI

The whole deal. Father's elitist psychic mash-up.

(beat)

Kaleb was always the best antenna. He wasn't just a vessel. He was fucking lighthouse.

Mazzy spins away.

MAZZY

I don't understand what you're--

KASI

You want answers. That makes sense. But they won't, the answers.

She doffs her ash, crosses her legs.

Again, the resemblance is shocking. Traumatizing.

KASI (CONT'D)

Daddy's little shtick? His trapped menagerie of telepathics? Griefbots telecasting simulated memories to the highest bidder. He bought K's LLM to vacuum up all the genomic and psych data needed to predict a dead person's responses and deliver 'em as a "thoughts" to users in a drug-induced haze.

Mazzy leans forward, hands on her knees again, looks like all the wind has been knocked out of her. Plummeting.

KASI (CONT'D)

What you saw in the hospital, in the morgue. That wasn't you hallucinating. It was him. Modeling his last memories as his mind died.

MAZZY

Stop it. Please.

Kasi won't. Doesn't want to.

KASI

Before he got stuck in Father's cage like a rat on a wheel unable to die. Just like I was.

She lazily rummages around in her sweater for her lighter as her joint sputters.

MAZZY

He's in there? At that place?

KASI

Well, his body is. Yeah.

FLICK. WHOOSH. PUFF. PUFF.

KASI (CONT'D)

Helping father's doped-up clientele
cosplay at eternal life.

(slow exhale)

But it's all a sham. There is no
afterlife. Trust me. I've been
there. And I'm not going back.

MAZZY

How do... How do you *know* all this?

KASI

I was his prototype. Until I lost
the gift. Fucked it all up.

Kasi inhales deeply. Her joint FLARES.

KASI (CONT'D)

And Father disowned me.

Kasi holds the smoke in. Like interior armor.

MAZZY

I need to get him out.

Kasi wags her head side-to-side, still holding the smoke.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

I need your help.

Kasi finally exhales, leans forward, stabs out the joint.

KASI

He's dead. They all are.

She stands, steps toward Mazzy, grabs her by the shoulders.

KASI (CONT'D)

Can't bring 'em back.

Mazzy just stares into her eyes, pleadingly.

MAZZY
Please. I'm begging you.

Kasi looks away first.

KASI
They don't deserve to suffer.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
Fine. Fuck you, you fucking coward.

Mazzy spins, heads for the door.

KASI
Wait.

Mazzy ignores this, stabs a hand into her pocket.

EXT. HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - SAME TIME

As Kasi stands frozen in the atrium behind her, Mazzy speeds down the driveway, texting.

KASI
Father will kill you just like he
killed K.

Mazzy ignores this, hits send. WHOOSH.

Now Kasi paces, her stoned-out veneer of steely resignation slowly giving way to a deeply traumatized fragility.

KASI (CONT'D)
Goddammit. Listen to me!

Mazzy shuts off her phone, pockets it as she steamrolls her way toward her car.

KASI (CONT'D)
This isn't about just you anymore.

I/E. CAR/DRIVEWAY - DUSK

Mazzy wordlessly pilots her car up the steep private drive to The Immer Institute with a visibly anxious Kasi in the passenger seat beside her.

KASI
(speed-talking)
I tried going to the press. Of course, everyone thought I was fucking nuts. Telepathy? Psychedelics? Please.

Mazzy nods, looks to the rear view mirror.

In it, she sees a hint of a silhouetted figure in the seat directly behind her.

It's a ravaged and wasted Kaleb yet again. Waterlogged, waxy, shredded skin. Empty eyes, and jutting bone.

Necrotic.

KALEB

Stop.

Mazzy SHRIEKS, spins.

The car nearly barrels off the narrow, winding road.

But there's no one there. The backseat is empty.

Kasi reaches out, grabs the wheel, rights the car.

KASI

Maybe Father's not the one keeping
him stuck here.

Mazzy, hyperventilating, just stares.

KASI (CONT'D)

Maybe it's you.

Kasi lets go of the wheel, reaches a hand inside her sweater, adjusts something heavy in one of her pockets.

Mazzy, STAMMERING, grips the wheel again.

And, as she does, a pair of headlights approach from behind.

Kasi swivels her gaze toward the headlights.

Disappointed but not surprised.

In the car behind them we can barely make out Stella's silhouette. And Hugh's.

MAZZY

That fucker. He knew? About all of
it? How it worked?

Kasi shrugs her shoulders, looks nervously toward the looming silhouette of The Institute.

KASI

Not really. But he took the fucking
money. That's for damn sure.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Having abandoned both cars, Mazzy, Stella, and Hugh chase Kasi uphill through knee-high grass and dense oak trees in the silvery moonlight.

STELLA
Babe. Stop. Stop!

HUGH
It's probably just his stupid AI
hallucinating! Fucking with you.

Stella's eyes drift to Mazzy's ring again. Her face falls.

STELLA
Oh, sweetie.

In the distance downhill, we can catch faint glimpses of the bright white, modern complex behind them.

MAZZY
He's in there, I know it. She knows
it. We can *feel* it.

STELLA
Feel it?! Maz? Maz!

Stella grabs her, spins her around.

STELLA (CONT'D)
He's not. He's gone. He's--

Ignoring them, Kasi keeps moving. Something heavy bounces up and down in her sweater pocket.

STELLA (CONT'D)
(to Hugh)
Do something.

Hugh hesitates, nervous eyes on Kasi.

HUGH
Please, Maz. I miss him too.

MAZZY
No you don't. You fucking traitor.

HUGH
What? No, I was just trying to make
his dream a reality. We needed the
money, Maz. We couldn't move
without it. Couldn't--

MAZZY

So you took that fucker's money? I want to hear you say it. You sold Kaleb out!

Hugh STAMMERS, runs his hands through his beard.

STELLA

What the hell is this, Hugh?

HUGH

Yes. Fuck. Yes! I did it. I took the money. That's how business...

In the distance, Kasi disappears from view.

Mazzy looks to Stella, exasperated.

STELLA

Hugh, what is she talking about?

MAZZY

You stupid bastard.

HUGH

I didn't know! I swear. I just thought he wanted in. Access to our tech stack. To join forces.

Stella's gaze ping-pongs back and forth between them.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Synergy.

Mazzy loudly SLAPS him in the face. Even Stella GASPS.

HUGH (CONT'D)

We were hemorrhaging money. It was either him or Series D. And our AI, our LLM, it just couldn't stop hallucinating. We needed cash. Needed more runway. How was I supposed to know all he wanted to do was sit on it? Bury everything K ever built?

STELLA

Hold on. You sold that prick--

HUGH

All of my shares, yeah. It was the only way to--

In the distance: BANG! A single gunshot.

Mazzy turns, sprints uphill.

EXT. HILLTOP, HATCH - NIGHT

Kasi stands in a clearing clutching a small handgun. At her feet: a concrete slab housing a rusted metal door with a now shattered brass lock dangling from it.

KASI
Fucking wannabe billionaires.

She bends, throws open the hatch: CRRRREEEAK. SMASH!

Mazzy, winded, steps up behind her with her right hand unconsciously shielding her belly. Her womb.

KASI (CONT'D)
Down the stairs. Through the
tunnel. Under the building and in.

Kasi pockets the pistol, pulls out her lighter, lights it.

KASI (CONT'D)
And tell them to shut it.

She steps inside, starts down a rusted circular staircase.

KASI (CONT'D)
Their mouths, not the hatch.

Reluctantly, Stella and Hugh enter the clearing just as Mazzy follows Kasi down (with one finger to her lips).

INT. TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Mazzy chases Kasi through a long, waterlogged concrete tunnel. The only light comes from Kasi's flickering lighter.

Along one wall: a corroded steel pipe nearly five feet in diameter. On the opposite wall: strands of disused cable and another pipe marked "DIETHYL ETHER - FLAMMABLE".

KASI
Father turns the water into super-cooled saline. To keep them all in an ether-induced a cryogenic coma.

Kasi reaches a hand forward, pushes her way through a thick spiderweb that spans nearly the entire tunnel.

Behind Mazzy, Stella and Hugh struggle to keep up.

KASI (CONT'D)
Keeps the telepathics like K in a
state of terminal lucidity.

She takes a bend to the left, starts down a gradual stepped
decent. Moisture trickles down the cement.

KASI (CONT'D)
That little blast of mental clarity
just before you--

SLAP.

Mazzy walks face-first into what seems to be a thin,
translucent membrane of some sort.

SMACK.

A second panel of clear material snaps taut behind her,
lifts her, silently screaming, into the air.

WHOOSH.

The two panels suck together, trapping Mazzy mid-stride,
arms out, face to one side, feet airborne.

HISS.

The space around Mazzy floods with a viscous, churning
liquid brimming with tiny translucent bubbles.

Mazzy struggles violently to get free until:

KASI (PRE-LAP)
Shit.

Mazzy, no longer trapped, stumbles forward, GASPING.

KASI
He's still in your head.

Stella and Hugh just stare. *The fuck just happened?*

KASI (CONT'D)
That's good. C'mon.

INT. TUNNEL, ACCESS DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Having made it to the source of the faint light at the end
of the tunnel, Kasi CLICKS her lighter closed, pockets it.

A massive, battered steel door with a grime-clouded porthole
and six rusted levers stands before them. It looks as though
it could take a nuclear blast.

MAZZY

What's...

KASI

On the other side?

Kasi bends to grab one of the levers, HEAVES it up. The GRINDING of metal-on-metal reverberates down the tunnel.

KASI (CONT'D)

Like I said.

She reaches for the next lever, pulls it up.

KASI (CONT'D)

Not much.

Behind Mazzy, Stella and Hugh share another nervous look.

STELLA

Hold on. Hold on. This is insanity.
Mazzy. Maz! Think about this!

MAZZY

I'm done thinking.

Kasi nods, reaches for the upper levers, cranks them both, one after the other.

KA-THUMP. The door jolts slightly inward. Warm air courses through the seal, brings an eerie HOWL.

KASI

Now, close your eyes.

MAZZY

What?

Kasi lifts her wrist, looks to her watch.

KASI

We'll have ten minutes, max.
(forcefully)
Close your eyes.

MAZZY

Why?

KASI

Think of him. Tell me what you see.

STELLA

Jesus, is this really--

KASI

Do it now.

Mazzy EXHALES, reluctantly stitches her eyelids together.

INSERT MONTAGE:

A quick series of blindingly fast FLASH CUTS:

-- The lights of a bright white passage WHIP by--

-- Two huge glass doors WHOOSH open automatically --

-- Gloved hands FILL a long silver syringe --

-- Triangular panes of glass SPIN high above --

-- Everything slows, brightens, SLIPS out of focus --

-- A blizzard of silver bubbles SWIRLS all around us --

END MONTAGE.

INT. TUNNEL, ACCESS DOOR - SAME TIME

Mazzy opens her eyes, looks to Kasi.

MAZZY

It's some sort of... lab.

KASI

The ceiling?

MAZZY

Glass. Like a spiderweb. A circle full of triangles.

Kasi nods, knows exactly where to go.

KASI

Seventh floor.

She looks to a confused Stella and a petrified Hugh.

KASI (CONT'D)

Cryo lab. Used to be where they kept the primates.

She palms Mazzy a battered white key card covered in faded stickers of rainbows and unicorns.

KASI (CONT'D)

Mine, back in the day.

She turns, grips the circular handle below the porthole.

KASI (CONT'D)
Father never changes the code.
Always hoped I'd come home.

MAZZY
Wait--

KASI
Once you make it to the lab, find
him, say goodbye. Unless...

MAZZY
Unless what?

Kasi turns back to Mazzy, impatient.

KASI
You won't have time for a full
transfusion.

MAZZY
Transfusion?

KASI
To flush the saline and ether out
of his system. Raise his body
temperature. Jump start his heart.

MAZZY
Thought you said--

KASI
There's a chance. But it's slim.
(off Mazzy's confusion)
Listen to him. He'll tell you what
to do... if he wants you to.

MAZZY
I don't--

Kasi reaches into her sweater, pulls out the pistol again,
wags it toward Mazzy.

KASI
Take it. Use it if you have to.

MAZZY
What?

Hugh reaches in, grabs the gun. Mazzy YANKS it back.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
 (to Hugh)

No.

Kasi grins.

KASI
 They see you, every exit locks
 instantly from the outside. No way
 out. So, get in. Get out. Or end up
 another one of Father's psychic lab
 rats.

Kasi spins back to the door, PUSHES it open.

MAZZY
 Where are you going?

KASI
 To set the rest free.

Kasi steps in over the threshold.

KASI (CONT'D)
 Once and for all.

She wags a tiny stainless steel thumb drive back toward
 Mazzy, disappears inside.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, PASSAGEWAYS - CONTINUOUS

From the damp darkness of the tunnel, we slowly emerge into
 an immaculate series of curvilinear passageways.

Everything is bright white and windowless. Harshly bright.

Up ahead, moving fast, Kasi veers left, gestures right.

Mazzy, clumsily clutching the pistol, nods, swerves right,
 hugs the wall as she moves.

Stella and Hugh, leaving muddy footprints, follow her
 closely, saying nothing.

Mazzy slows at an intersection, looks left, then right. She
 blinks, narrows her eyes, nods to herself, continues on.

Stella and Hugh chase her as fluorescent lights BUZZ from
 above. It's the only sound we hear.

Then, slowing again, Mazzy turns, sees a familiar door. An
 elevator door. The one she rode previously.

She lunges across the hall, sprints for the door, skids to a stop, sweeps the badge across the sensor.

The light flashes green.

Mazzy looks to the ceiling, sees a small camera mounted high up. It's pointed away, the opposite direction.

She looks back to Stella and Hugh, gestures for them to mirror her movements. They do.

WHOOSH.

The elevator doors glide open. She leaps inside, looks to the keypad, presses seven. Nothing happens.

She swipes the key card, presses again. It lights up. And the doors trundle closed behind all three of them.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

The subterranean floors flash by. Then the vast lobby from earlier. It's eerily abandoned.

The elevator slows at seven.

Mazzy looks to Stella, then to Hugh.

Hugh draws a breath to speak. She glares. The doors open.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, SEVENTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Stella and Mazzy step out of the elevator, look both ways.

At the far end of the hall are a pair of tall glass doors that we've seen before. The same doors Mazzy saw.

She instantly sets off toward them.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, CRYO LAB ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

Mazzy steps up to the sensor by the doors, swipes the key card. The light flashes green. The doors BUZZ open.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, OFFICE - SAME TIME

Inside what appears to be her father's vast, minimalist office, Kasi crouches in front of a hulking curved monitor with the thumb drive plugged into its side.

As the drive FLASHES, uploading files, Kasi's face is painted by the glow of a FLICKERING VIDEO playing on-screen.

It's of her, as a girl, unconscious on a gurney with a primitive early cranial rig wrapped around her head and multiple IVs attached to both arms.

A YOUNGER VICTOR steps up behind her in a white lab coat.

YOUNGER VICTOR (V.O.)
(on-screen)
Terminal lucidity achieved.

The darkened silhouette of a man steps up behind Kasi.

She barely reacts, lifts a hand to the drive, obscures it from view. Out of sight but still connected.

KASI
It's over, Father.

VICTOR
(from the shadows)
Nothing ends until I say it ends.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, CRYO LAB - SAME TIME

Mazzy and Stella surge into the cramped lab only to be confronted by a gruesome, terrifying sight.

Suspended from the ceiling, fifty or more GHASTLY FIGURES hover sandwiched between rigid, vacuum-packed vertical sheets of thick, semi-opaque plasticine.

Victor's Conduits to the afterlife. Comatose telepathics.

Their arms and legs are gruesomely splayed. Their contorted bodies are wrapped in sheer white tunics and are fully enveloped in a thick, viscous, nearly frozen liquid.

Tubing and wires jut from their arms, chests, and legs. Black ventilator tubes hold their mouths in silent screams.

Men. Women. Old. Young. Every race. All catatonic.

And each one bears a flashing cranial rig.

Below each plastic panel: a clear plinth with a thin digital display full of flashing telemetry data.

And, high above, a massive steel pipe matching the one in the tunnel wraps around a slanted glass oculus.

STELLA
I never should've doubted you.

MAZZY

He's in here. I know it. I saw it.

STELLA

I can't fucking believe--

MAZZY

Just go. Find him! Find K!

All three of them take off running, SKIDDING to a stop at each twisted, pale, vacuum-packed body.

Their faces are distorted, ghoulish-like. Empty eyes. Bloodless lips locked around black tubing.

Mazzy slides to a stop, rushes to the foot of one of the volumes, squints. It's not him. It's a woman twice his age.

She turns, runs for the next and the next.

Hugh stands stone still.

HUGH

This is all my fault. I sold out the one person who actually cared about me. For fucking seed money.

Mazzy and Stella swivel their gazes his way. Stunned.

He points to one of the taut plastic panels in the distance.

HUGH (CONT'D)

I never thought it'd lead to--

Both women rush past Hugh, toward the panel.

There he is, in nearly the same position he's been in in all of Mazzy's horrifying visions.

Dead eyes open. Arms out. Savior-like. A thin, crown-like band of flashing sensors wrapped around his temples.

Abruptly, every light in the entire space switches from steady white to FLASHING RED.

From unseen speakers: the ALARM BLARE of klaxons.

The doors behind them BOLT loudly. They've been spotted.

Mazzy bends to one knee, frantically swipes through a series of screens trying to find the info she needs.

MAZZY

Where is it? Where is it? Where--

She pauses on an EKG that's nearly fully flat-lined. And an EEG that's firing like an electrical storm.

STELLA
Wait. That doesn't...

Mazzy, still clutching the gun, quickly swivels digital dials, pushes up graphs comprised of glowing pixels.

The red lights strobe. The alarm DRONES on.

MAZZY
Induced therapeutic hypothermia. To maintain brain function after...

It's not working. Nothing's changing.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
C'mon. C'mon. C'mon.

But then the semi-opaque liquid all around Kaleb's body begins to slowly shift in hue. Gets clearer.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
Please, baby. Please.

She steps back, stares breathlessly.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
Come back to me.

Stella's eyes dart to Kaleb's cranial rig. It strobes red.

STELLA
I don't think that's--

HUGH
Shoot it.

Mazzy wheels around toward him, bathed in red light.

MAZZY
WHAT?!

HUGH
The plastic. Shoot it!

Mazzy STAMMERS.

STELLA
I think we're losing him!

Hugh YANKS the pistol away from Mazzy, takes aim.

MAZZY

Wait!

The EKG on the display behind her has fully flat-lined.

BANG.

Hugh fires once. The bullet barely pierces the material. It seems to seal around itself, miraculously self-healing.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

STOP!

BANG. BANG. BANG.

Three more shots. Gaps finally open. Fluid oozes out.

Mazzy LUNGES closer as the pouch buckles, collapses in on itself, releases Kaleb's motionless body.

She catches him, falls to the ground, wraps him in her arms, cradles him tight, SHOUTS:

MAZZY (CONT'D)

(to Stella)

Hit that button! On the screen!

Stella does a stunned double-take.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

NOW!

Stella smashes the button. Electricity floods the room. Mazzy and Kaleb convulse together, one body of pain.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

Again.

Stella hesitates. The graph is still flat.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

(to Kaleb, in pain)

Please come back. Please--

Stella hits it again. Mazzy and Kaleb thrash.

The KLAXONS suddenly cease.

But lights continue flashing a violent red.

HUGH

(to Stella)

Stop it. You'll kill them BOTH!

From behind Hugh, a VOICE:

VICTOR (O.S.)
And we wouldn't want that.

Stella and Hugh wheel around to see Victor standing directly behind them, clutching a bloodied and beaten Kasi.

He holds a silver scalpel to her bulging jugular.

VICTOR
(toward Mazzy)
Would we now?

Hugh reflexively lifts the pistol, takes shaky aim as Victor slowly advances toward them.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
(still to Mazzy)
You know it, my dear. You feel it.
Your loss, your trauma, makes you
an *ideal* receiver.

Hugh's finger grips the trigger. It's almost as though Victor doesn't even see him, doesn't care.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
We both want the same thing. An end
to suffering and grief. I can give
you that. Forever.

Every light still pulses: RED, RED, RED.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
You let him pass, you close a
bridge that can never be reopened.

Mazzy clutches Kaleb's motionless body, stares helplessly into his eyes.

MAZZY
He doesn't want this. Not this way.
You're *using* him. All of them.

Victor drags Kasi with him toward a circle of black marble at the the center of the space.

VICTOR
But you know you want this.

Kasi, her eyelids fluttering, can barely hold herself up.

KASI
It's a sham. An echo of an echo.

Victor presses the blade further into her neck.

VICTOR
What would you rather? A hologram?

MAZZY
Let her go.

He slows at the center of the circle of black marble.

VICTOR
A simulation?

HUGH
Victor, think about this.

VICTOR
What I'm offering is *real*.

Hugh's hand trembles. The barrel shakes.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Tangible. Visceral.

Victor tightens his grip on Kasi.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I couldn't just let you all take
that away from him. From us.

Hugh seems to waver. His hand quivers.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
This is reality.

He gestures to the sickly collection of suspended cadavers.

Blood seeps from just below the blade pressed into the
Kasi's thumping jugular.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Actual intelligence.

Hugh exhales, slowly lowers the quaking gun.

STELLA
(toward Hugh)
Hugh?

HUGH
What if he's right? What if it
really...
(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)

(beat)

Maz saw it. She felt it. It's
fucking real.

Victor nods slowly.

VICTOR

(toward Mazzy)

No spouse should have to endure
what we've endured.

Stella charges toward Hugh, goes for the gun.

They tussle briefly. The gun goes off twice.

BANG. Glass falls from the ceiling.

BANG. A bullet hits the massive steel pipe near the oculus.

And, from the pipe, a GEYSER OF WATER erupts, rushes down.

Hugh finally gets the gun back, tumbles toward Victor.

STELLA

HUGH...

VICTOR

What have you done?

Hugh flips the gun over in his hand, lifts it toward Victor,
butt-end first, wades toward him as the space swiftly fills.

It's already nearly waist-deep.

STELLA

(to Hugh)

Don't you *fucking*--

HUGH

Sorry, Stel.

He hands the gun to Victor as the water rises.

HUGH

This is business.

VICTOR

Quite.

Victor turns the pistol over, aims, fires: BANG!

The shot clips Hugh in the shoulder, spins him, splashing
backward into Stella's arms.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
And thank you for bringing my
prodigal daughter back to me. She
shall come in handy.

BANG!

He fires again. Hits Hugh below the surface, in the thigh.

The circle of marble Victor and Kasi are standing on
revolves a few degrees, begins to slowly lower.

Water courses through the open seam all around it.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Again.

The disc of marble disappears downward and another disc
rotates into it's place, seals tight.

Above, the massive steel pipe circling the slanted glass
oculus bursts in three more spots: BOOM. BOOM. BOOM.

STELLA
Hugh?! MAZ!

Already floating in the frigid water, Mazzy struggles to
keep Kaleb's limp body close.

The cramped space is filling, filling, filling. Too fast.

Stella grabs Hugh by the collar, drags him toward Mazzy.

STELLA (CONT'D)
You gotta let him go! That's not
Kaleb. He's not here. He's not--

Kaleb's body jolts, slips from Mazzy's grasp, tethered by
his telemetry and ventilator.

Mazzy, in a frenzy, ducks her head under the roiling waters,
tries to keep her eyes on Kaleb.

Stella reaches out, snags her, pulls her back up.

Behind her, Hugh is fading. Slipping into shock.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Kaleb is gone! You've gotta--

MAZZY
No, no. I can...

Stella pulls her closer. They're nearly to the glass oculus.

All of the sheer plastic volumes below glow contentedly.

STELLA

It's over!

Stella lets go of Hugh, spins around, pounds at the glass, notices a bullet hole.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Help me!

She spins around again, feels for the hole, SMASHES the butt end of her fist into it. BAM. BAM. BAM.

Small cracks begin to spiderweb and spread.

Mazzy looks down again. Through the turgid water, we can barely make out Kaleb floating ten feet down. Still trapped.

Stella PUNCHES again. The glass SHATTERS. We see stars.

Stella, teeth chattering, grabs Hugh, SHOVES him toward the gap. There's just enough room to squeeze out.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Babe. NOW.

Mazzy wags her head briefly side-to-side, rakes in a deep breath, and dives.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, CRYO LAB, UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

Just like she did as a girl, Mazzy frantically paddles downward deeper and deeper as beams of light from above ripple and surge.

Nearly twenty feet down, she finally reaches Kaleb, grasps one arm, then the other, pulls herself around to face him.

For a second it looks almost as if they're wound together in some sort of elaborate, slow-motion waltz.

His sheer white tunic and her gauzy floral blouse ebb and flow with every undulation, every ripple.

His silver mirrored pendant floats below his chin.

Mazzy gently reaches up, draws the ventilator from his lips, removes the crown of flashing lights from his head, rips off every sensor, every IV, every lead.

Silence.

Just the two of them face-to-face, submerged.

She gently caresses his face with one hand. Then, his neck, his forehead, his chin, his cheeks.

Suddenly, his eyes open.

But they're no longer milky. No longer dead. Instead, they're full of life. Brimming with love.

He thrusts a hand forward, lightly places his splayed fingers on her belly, smiles.

He knows.

Mazzy's face flashes from shock to adoration to profound, irrevocable loss. Unfathomable heartbreak.

But his smile doesn't fade. Instead, he dips his head slightly to catch her gaze again.

KALEB (V.O.)

No, no.

Mazzy looks to him. His lips don't move.

But his face says it all:

KALEB (V.O.)

It's okay.

Mazzy wants to scream, cry out. Can't.

His eyes placidly study her like he's trying to commit every aspect of her form to memory, forever.

KALEB (V.O.)

This is my time.

She wags her head vigorously side-to-side. *NO!*

KALEB (V.O.)

Thank you.

From above, the moonlight rains down in heavenly bands.

KALEB (V.O.)

For letting me go.

Mazzy tries to protest again. He just smiles, catches sight of her ring, nods slowly.

More pride than sadness. Fulfillment.

He begins to slowly sink, less buoyant than she is. Drawn to a different fate.

KALEB (V.O.)
Remember...

In one last flourish, he, like a magician, miraculously produces Kasi's stainless steel drive, floats it her way.

KALEB (V.O.)
...always.

And, with that, he disappears into the deep just like her father did so many years ago.

Alone, Mazzy grips the drive, turns, paddles with all her might toward the surface.

Through the pulsing red. Toward the moonlight.

As she goes, Kaleb's flashing crown of sensors drifts by just like Daisy's collar did, blinks twice.

Goes dead.

Seconds later, all of the other pods below flicker and go dark. Taken offline. Set free at last.

Kasi's handiwork. Her final gesture.

EXT. THE INSTITUTE, ROOF - NIGHT

Mazzy, breathless, BURSTS upward through the water coursing through the smashed panes of glass, pulls herself out, rolls over onto her back, GAGS out saltwater, shivers violently.

Ahead of her, Stella cradles Hugh. He's bleeding out. Pale.

Mazzy rolls away from the gap, lies face-up amid the cascade of freezing liquid, silently sobs.

Her chest heaves. Tears stream down her drenched cheeks. But she doesn't make a sound.

An entire lifetime of misery, loss, and abandonment.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Mazzy and Kaleb huddle over a tiny corner table inside a bustling Thai restaurant.

Over the CLATTER and DIN, Kaleb clears his throat, thinks briefly, smiles.

KALEB
Actually, no.
(MORE)

KALEB (CONT'D)

(beat)

What I'd want is, like, a chance to finally understand all of the little things you said to me over our, say, six decades that I'd somehow missed or didn't hear right. Know what I mean?

Mazzy, radiant, rolls her eyes slightly, twirls a fork though the cluster of noodles on her plate.

MAZZY

Uh, yeah. No.

KALEB

Like, that moment when you realize you've been singing the wrong lyrics to your favorite song for, like, your entire life.

She takes a bite, nods. *Tell me more, kook.*

KALEB (CONT'D)

Well, I'd love for *that* to be my eternity. My great hereafter.

He pulls his napkin from his lap, reaches a hand into his pocket, pulls something out of it.

KALEB (CONT'D)

Just discovering the *actual* lyrics. The real words. To your song.

He backs his chair out, bends to one knee.

The night of his first proposal.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. THE INSTITUTE, ROOF - NIGHT

Mazzy GASPS, body trembling, water sluicing down the glass all around her.

MAZZY

That *fucking* bastard.

She sits up, looks to Stella and Hugh.

MAZZY (CONT'D)

(to Hugh, coldly)

And you...

She looks right. Sees a shaft of red light pulsing up through a nearby, smaller, pyramidal skylight.

RIP!

She tears off one sleeve of her soaked blouse, stands, rushes over toward Stella and Hugh, kneels again, wraps the fabric around Hugh's bloody leg.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
You *deserve* to bleed out.

But then she CINCHES the tourniquet tight. A caregiver.

Hugh barely flinches, can't control his body.

HUGH
(shivering, breathless)
Wait. I'm so... Maz. I... There's a flaw. A flaw in his firewall. I can fix this. Get in. Take it all--

Mazzy YANKS the tourniquet again. Angry and resigned.

MAZZY
I need to get back in there.
(to Stella)
Get Kaleb's body.

Stella looks past her, sees a motorized window washing basket attached to two articulated arms across the roof.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
I can't leave him here.

Stella nods, finally understands. Feels Mazzy's grief.

STELLA
You were right. I was in denial.
But not anymore.

Both women ditch Hugh, take off running across the roof.

EXT. THE INSTITUTE, ROOF - MOMENTS LATER

Mazzy stands at the edge of the skylight, looking up at the heavy metal window washing basket hovering just above it.

The flashing red light from below washes across her face.

At the edge of the roof, Stella, throws a lever.

And the whole contraption falls, hits the glass, instantly SHATTERS it, plunges sideways into the building, stops.

Glass and bits of steel shower down into the bright white, multi-story zigzagging, triangular stairwell below.

Stella bounds back over, all-adrenalin.

STELLA
You sure about this?

Mazzy looks to her, steels herself. Doesn't answer.

MAZZY
Get as far away as you can. Get a signal. Call for help.

Stella nods.

Mazzy sprints back across the gravel, skids to a stop.

HUGH
Listen, I can take the system down. Fuck with his--

Instead of being angry, Mazzy shoves one arm around Hugh, DRAGS him back across the roof, toward the skylight.

MAZZY
Too late, asshole.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

BANG!

Hugh, covered in blood, lands on the metal grate of the basket, winces in pain.

Mazzy and Stella catch him.

MAZZY
Hold tight.

Mazzy checks to make sure he's steady. Stella nods.

The red flashing lights still strobe as Mazzy reaches for the control panel on the basket, pushes a lever.

And the whole thing rapidly free-falls before, SCREECH, she hits the brakes and the basket stops dead, bouncing only inches from the glass covered terrazzo.

Mazzy throws a tubular steel gate open, steps out.

CRUNCH.

She wheels around, points.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
 (hushed)
 The lobby. Smash the doors.

Stella nods, YANKS Hugh out. He's weak but conscious.

STELLA
 I'm sorry, Maz.

Mazzy spins on her heels, takes off running.

MAZZY
 It's alright. GO.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Victor violently DRAGS a nearly comatose Kasi across the empty lobby clutching a phone to his ear with his free hand.

VICTOR
 (into the phone)
 I said NOW. And Scramble live
 monitoring. I want *no* record.

He veers toward a hulking pair of doors in the distance.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
 Repeat, no record.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Mazzy rushes past a series of closed glass doors down a long corridor leading away from the stairwell.

Each room she passes looks like some sort of dimly lit laboratory. Beakers and benches. Sequencers. Microscopes.

She swerves across the hall, skids to a stop in front of what appears to be an operating room.

Bingo.

Mazzy swipes the key card. Miraculously it works.

The panel FLASHES green and she ducks inside.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, OPERATING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mazzy makes a beeline for a tall glass container lined with labeled vials full of liquid and boxes full of equipment.

Syringes. Scalpels. Saws. Vials. Surgical tubing. Bandages.

In a deft flurry of movement, she pulls precisely what she needs, shoves what she can into her waterlogged pockets, turns back around, peers out the door.

The coast is clear.

She silently ducks back out, clutching a massive syringe in one hand like a knife.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Mazzy edges her way silently up to the same bank of elevators from before.

She peers around the corner, sees two heavily-armed security guards step in through the smashed front doors.

Mazzy ducks back into the shadows, thrusts her free hand inside her bag, pulls out another syringe, uncaps the both with her teeth, spits out the caps.

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)
You take the cryo lab, I'll--

In a daring flurry of action, Mazzy leaps out, JABS one needle into the nearest guard's neck.

MAZZY
Sorry about this...

The other guard fumbles for his sidearm.

But it's too late.

Mazzy spins his way, empties the second syringe into the man's burly thigh.

THUMP. THUMP.

Both men fall like meaty dominoes.

Mazzy wheels back around toward the empty lobby. There's no sign of Victor. Anywhere.

MAZZY
(under her breath)
Okay, K. Show me the--

FLASH TO:

INT. THE INSTITUTE, OPERATING THEATER - SAME TIME

We catch a brief glimpse of what appears to be an empty amphitheater of sorts, seen from the stage.

Row after row of steeply raked seating in two half circles. The lights in the space also flash red.

And, over the mesmerizing scarlet pulsations, Victor's disembodied VOICE:

VICTOR (O.C.)
As you can now see, the subject's
heart rate is nearly imperceptible.

The scene before us dissolves. Disappears. Vanishes.

BACK TO:

INT. THE INSTITUTE, LOBBY - SAME TIME

Mazzy looks to see, across the lobby, the same pair of tall double doors Victor just fled toward.

MAZZY
Thank you, baby.

She takes off running.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, OPERATING THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Mazzy quietly enters a darkened anteroom as we hear, again, Victor NARRATING for an apparently absent audience:

VICTOR
As with all things, energy is
required for transmission. Very
little is required for receipt.

Mazzy slowly steps through an open archway.

To her right and left, identical curving pathways wrap around the back of a horseshoe shaped set of sleek risers.

Dead ahead: a direct path down toward a bullpen-like operating theater.

It's like a futuristic rendition of a macabre 18th century teaching college dissection hall.

At the center, on a gurney, lies an unconscious Kasi. Above her, Victor towers in a white lab coat.

He clutches a bloody scalpel in one gloved hand. And his other hand rests on the black oxygen mask over her mouth.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
The concordance of their thoughts
was unparalleled in my experience.

Mazzy decides to veer right, moves silently through the darkness behind the risers.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
But the fidelity of his signal far eclipsed hers.

Mazzy slows nearing the end of the risers.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
His skills were vastly superior.

As Mazzy edges into the light, we can see Victor to her left, down on the stage.

Above and around him: row after row of empty seats bathed in blasts of red.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Until he abandoned his calling, squandered his gift.

Is he talking to himself? Or to her?

Victor lets go of the mask around Kasi's mouth, steadies the scalpel in his hand.

Mazzy tightens her grip on the stolen syringe.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
You should have told me, my dear.

From this vantage point, we can see that a section of Kasi's head has been shaved and prepped for surgery.

It's lined with blue paper. And an overhead lamp projects a fine grid of lines and tiny numbers across her bare scalp.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Your pregnancy changes everything.

Mazzy freezes.

Victor caresses his daughter's skin, prepares to cut.

Next to him, a waiting crown-like cranial rig FLASHES.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
He's still with you. Isn't he?

Victor's blade touches Kasi's skin, slices.

Mazzy leaps out into the light with a hand behind her back.

The hand with the syringe.

MAZZY
Stop it. Stop!

Victor pauses, lifts the scalpel, turns her way.

VICTOR
Pitiful little ingrate. Thinks she
can stop my progress?

Victor turns back toward his daughter.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
With her, I can bring him back.

MAZZY
Let her GO!

Victor pauses again with the blade.

Blood runs in rivulets down Kasi's shaved head.

VICTOR
That's rich coming from you.

Mazzy continues her cautious advance. Victor tightens his grip on the blade.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
The more you lose--

MAZZY
I LOVED him.

VICTOR
And I his mother.

He turns, calmly gets back to the task at hand.

MAZZY
You killed her, you sick fuck!

Without another thought, without another word, with zero hesitation, Mazzy CHARGES up onto the stage.

Victor, impatiently turns back around to face her.

But she's on him before he can even react.

She lets loose a guttural, gut-wrenching, furious YOWL and then sinks a hefty syringe into his neck.

With her free hand she SLAMS the plunger down.

In goes 50cc of Midazolam.

VICTOR
Stop. You don't know what--

She YANKS the syringe out, steps back, full of rage.

MAZZY
She's your daughter, not some
fucking test subject!

Victor drops the scalpel, staggers backward.

VICTOR
You'll see... We can all live
forever now.

MAZZY
No.

His knees buckle. He tumbles sideways, sees the pistol on a silver surgical table, thrusts a hand out for it, misses, hits the floor with a meaty THUD.

Mazzy just watches, ice cold.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
The end is just the end.

From the ground, Victor GURGLES.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
All the more reason...

Mazzy drops the syringe, looks to Kasi's body, reaches a hand into her pocket, pulls out a small clear vial labeled "ADRENALIN" and another empty syringe.

MAZZY (CONT'D)
(her voice breaking)
...to just live.

SMASH TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: The MELANCHOLY FALSETTO of Roy Orbison.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
*A candy-colored clown
They call the Sandman
Tiptoes into my room
Every night.
Just to sprinkle stardust
And to whisper
Go to sleep,
(MORE)*

ROY ORBISON (CONT'D)
Everything is alright.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. THE INSTITUTE, LOBBY - TWILIGHT

Mazzy and a limping Kasi cross the shimmering lobby in-time with the swelling, familiar 4/4 BALLAD:

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
*I close my eyes,
Then I drift away.*

Mazzy tosses Kasi the key card. She catches it deftly.

And the two women slowly part ways: Mazzy toward the exit and Kasi toward the glimmering hallway deeper inside.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
*Into the magic night,
I softly say.*

Mazzy continues toward the unconscious security guards.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
*A silent prayer,
Like dreamers do.*

As Kasi disappears, Mazzy bends, grabs the nearest guard by his wrists, drags him backward across the floor.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
*Then I fall asleep to dream
My dreams of you.*

INT. THE INSTITUTE, PASSAGEWAY - SAME TIME

Kasi SWIPES the key card, punches a glowing red button next to the glass door to the cryo lab.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
In dreams, I walk with you.

The frigid water inside rapidly drains away.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

Mazzy kicks the exit doors open, drags the unconscious guard out into the pale blue, predawn light.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
In dreams, I talk with you.

She pulls him across the grass, away from the building.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, CRYO LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Kasi pulls the doors open with all her might.

Red strobes slice the flooding dark.

Screens flash: SIGNAL LOSS - CRYO FAILURE - SYSTEM OVERRIDE.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
*In dreams, you're mine
All of the time.*

She fights her way in against the tide.

EXT. HILLSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Also in SLOW MOTION, Mazzy turns and sprints through the tall grass away from the bodies of both guards.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
*We're together in dream,
In dreams.*

The sky above is a cloudless pale purple.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, CRYO LAB - SAME TIME

Kasi slows before Kaleb's frail body, laid out on the floor face-up and lit from above by the first hints of dawn.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
But just before the dawn.

EXT. HILLTOP, HATCH - SAME TIME

Mazzy throws open the hatch at the top of the hill, makes her way swiftly back down into the tunnel.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
I awake and find you gone.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, CRYO LAB - SAME TIME

Kasi bends, gently pulls the necklace from Kaleb's neck, clenches it tightly in her palm.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
I can't help it.

Then, she hefts her brother's body up from the floor.

INT. TUNNEL - SAME TIME

Mazzy furiously saws at the pipe marked DIETHYL ETHER with a stolen dissection saw.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
I can't help it.

She gets through the pipe. Gas GUSTS.

INT. THE INSTITUTE, PASSAGEWAY - SAME TIME

Kasi lug's Kaleb's body toward the elevator doors.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
If I cry.

EXT. HILLTOP, HATCH - MOMENTS LATER

Both women stand side-by-side with Kaleb's body between them above the open hatch as the sun continues to color the sky.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
*I remember
That you said
Goodbye.*

Mazzy wordlessly pulls Kasi's lighter from her pocket, flicks the lid open.

Kasi nods.

Mazzy lights the lighter, tosses it down into the tunnel.

And both women turn in unison to depart.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
Too bad that all these things.

The ground shakes. The hatch slams shut.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
Can only happen in my dreams.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAWN

Mazzy and Kasi slowly shoulder Kaleb's slumped body downhill through the grass as golden sunshine paints the hilltops.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
Only in dreams.

Kasi hands Mazzy her brother's silver necklace.

She takes it just as the entire Institute is engulfed in a massive explosion.

Glass, steel, and stone go flying in every direction. A billowing fireball blots out the dawn.

ROY ORBISON (V.O.)
In beautiful dreams.

It is actually beautiful.

But neither woman notices in the slightest.

Instead, they gently usher Kaleb's lifeless body to freedom as the SONG'S CRESCENDO wafts into the ether.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: The STATIC of a car radio switching stations.

I/E. CAR/LAKE - DAY

A slightly older Mazzy (early 40s) is back at the wheel again. But this time inside a newer car. A safer car.

Something practical.

Outside, Lake Tahoe speeds by again. But it's no longer nighttime, no longer winter.

Instead, it's summer. An impossibly sunny, blue sky day.

Mazzy finally finds a hint of a station on the radio, lets go of the dial. The song is familiar. Patsy Cline again.

"ALWAYS" again, this time through STATIC. Like it's coming in from another era, another time. Another world.

Mazzy hesitates, lets her eyes drift from the windshield to the rear view mirror.

Draped around her neck: Kaleb's silver pendant.

In the backseat, safely buckled in, a YOUNG GIRL (8) gazes contentedly out at the lake speeding by.

Her face is a perfect blend of Mazzy's and Kaleb's.

Unmistakably theirs.

She marvels at the beauty of the lake as if it's a vast, remote sea of tiny diamonds perfectly reflecting the cloudless cerulean skies above.

Mazzy bites her lip, looks back to the road, grips the steering wheel firmly. Not out of fear. Out of love.

As the SONG fades away, overcome by more STATIC, Mazzy reaches back for the dash, continues her search.

From the steering wheel, Mazzy's ring casts brilliant, scintillating points of light across the roof of the car.

Almost exactly like the disco ball did way back in the dingy little Chinatown karaoke bar.

And behind Mazzy, the little girl, her daughter, reaches her tiny hand across the seat.

She absentmindedly pets a sleeping puppy curled up on the leather next to her.

It dozes soundly in a pool of light.

Not a care in the world. Safe and sound.

Together.

CUT TO BLACK.

ROLL END CREDITS --

To "EVERLASTING ARMS" by Vampire Weekend.

THE END