SCORPION

Written by

Nick Santora

Based on the true life stories of Walter O'Brien

Network Draft
2/3/14

TEASER

EXT. SMALL FARM - DAY

... And we're SOARING over rolling hills, proverbial Irish Heather, as we super: "***Callan, Ireland.***" DESCENDING on a FARM, we see a rugged FARMER tending to goats and chickens. The image is a portrait of peace and stillness... and THEN:

An MH-60 BLACKHAWK RIPS IT TO SHREDS. Animals SCATTER as the copter descends, deploying MEN IN TACTICAL GEAR who race toward a FARMHOUSE. The stunned FARMER tries to process what's happening -- and it HITS HIM:

FARMER
Walter --

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - SECONDS LATER

BOOM! The door's KICKED OPEN as the TACTICAL TEAM POURS IN, a startled WOMAN (**Mom**) SHRIEKS and drops her pan, TERRIFIED:

WOMAN
What's-- what's happening?! WHO THE HELL ARE YOU PEOPLE?!

TEAM LEADER
United States Government Cyber Joint Task Force, stand aside --

The men head toward a CLOSED DOOR at the end of the hall:

INT. YOUNG BOY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- again: **BOOM!** The door's KICKED OPEN to find... AN 11-YEAR-OLD BOY, young **WALTER O'NEIL.** Standing there expectantly. Waiting.

Behind him, a HOME MADE COMPUTER fabricated from spare parts and Mickey Mouse speaker ears -- the walls are PLASTERED with BLUEPRINTS FOR THE SPACE SHUTTLE, watermarked "Classified." The team STOPS SHORT, stunned to find their target is a child, as Walter holds up a typed PIECE OF PAPER. With an IRISH LILT, swallowing fear:

YOUNG WALTER
Immunity Agreement and Extradition Waiver. Sign them and I tell you how I hacked into NASA.

The men trade looks. Team Leader keys his headset:

TEAM LEADER
Crossbow to Command: We have "Scorpion." He's... just a kid.

The SNAP-SNAP of HANDCUFFS on Walter's wrists takes us to:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DUSK

The armed men lead the boy out the front door:

WALTER
Before you lock me in a room, please tell the shuttle designers that the shape of the nose cone tiles create a single point of failure -- people will die burning up on re-entry.

Team Leader doesn't respond as they slow near the chopper, where Walter's parents have been sidelined, as heartbroken as they are furious. Mom's quietly crying into dad's shoulder. The boy's eyes go down... fear + regret...

WALTER (CONT'D)
I... just wanted the blueprints for my wall.

But we see it in his father's face: this was the last straw. Finally, he looks at Team Leader, quietly broken:

FARMER/DAD
Don't bother bringing him back.

HOLD: their last, painful moment as a family, as --

EXT. HILLSIDE ABOVE HOUSE - DAY

A 14 YEAR-OLD RED-HEAD GIRL appears cresting the hill. STOPS in shock, sees Walter being strapped into the chopper. He looks up. MEETS HER EYES with a small, helpless wave and...

The girl BREAKS INTO A RUN -- desperate -- too late -- as the chopper RISES INTO THE SKY --

INT. BLACKHAWK - RISING - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON WALTER'S FACE, looking out the window as he sees the REDHEADED GIRL below in the wind-whipped wildflowers, looking up at him in tears and calling out his name -- SURREAL ECHO --

REDHEADED GIRL
Walter! *WALTER!!!*

And from Young Walter's face we **MATCH CUT TO:**

ADULT WALTER, 36 years old, staring out a window, as if lost in this memory -- the Redheaded Girl's desperate "Walter" has TRANSITIONED to a WOMAN'S VOICE also saying:

WOMAN'S VOICE
Walter? Are you listening?

He turns, jarred from his reverie -- we are:

INT. DINER - LOS ANGELES - 22 YEARS LATER

In case you haven't guessed yet, Walter's a genius, which may begin to explain his t-shirt: "***Intelli-Gents.***" The slogan: "***Extraordinary heroes for ordinary problems.***"

22 years have passed since Ireland -- years that have scarred Walter in ways we'll soon understand. Now, he's in the middle of breaking up with JANICE, attractive, 30s. He does this with no malice, just factualness born of the certainty he's always right. Gone is any trace of that Irish brogue:

WALTER
Yes, you said "I didn't see this coming at all."

JANICE
I can't believe you're breaking up with me...

Not surprised to hear that, he pulls out a TYPED DOCUMENT:

WALTER
Here, I thought this might help: you've accused me -- correctly -- of not being able to connect with you and your emotional states. So to best recognize your feelings, I've mapped a chart of what I anticipate you'll experience during the next 2 to 3 minutes.

JANICE
You wrote a document... to connect with me emotionally?

She SNATCHES the paper from him, anger building. Walter's actually trying to be kind, to make this gentler for her. As **NEMOS**, 50's, the greek DINER OWNER, rushes past:

NEMOS
Hey: I'm paying you to fix wireless, not talk!

WALTER
Almost done here.

JANICE
(beat: are you kidding?!)
You scheduled our breakup... on a job?

WALTER
Well I needed 18 minutes to download the patch. That gives us a buffer of at least 2 or 3 minutes after you showed up 4 minutes late -- your normal, on average -- then we'd have 45 seconds of small talk before we got to the point, which is where we are now.

JANICE
(flips pages, angrily)
"*Our relationship's run its course of usefulness*" -- "*Walter's pragmatic tips for optimized joy*" What the hell are these? How long is this thing?

WALTER
That topsheet is page one, what follows is a decision tree.
(her look: a what?)
Strategic options for a potential path to your happiness.

Furious, she starts grabbing her things --

JANICE
Hey, guess what: you can take your "decision tree?" And shove it up your ass. The only part of me that needs to be fixed is the part that thought it was a good idea to go out with a human robot! Actually, I'm wrong about the human part -- that's the one thing you don't know anything about. And as hard as you try? You're never gonna get that right. Never.

-- she THROWS HER WATER at him, but Walter HOLDS UP his laminated menu to BLOCK IT. A beat: insult to injury...

JANICE (CONT'D)
You knew I'd do that...

WALTER
(quietly, not wanting to twist the knife)
If you look at page 2, you'll see "irrational behavior" and "predictability" as two of your points of vulnerability.

She STORMS OUT. Walter drops the wet menu, checks his watch:

WALTER (CONT'D)
One minute to spare.

INT. DINER - CORNER BEHIND THE COUNTER - SHORT WHILE LATER

Walter works on the wireless -- a task so beneath him he does it without looking; instead, his eyes land on a KID at the counter playing with salt and pepper shakers. This is **RALPH**, he's 7, an introvert, and there's something about him that ignites a spark in...

... WALTER, as we PUSH IN ON HIM watching the kid, the sounds in the diner begin to ECHO and AMPLIFY... We're moving into the world as Walter often sees it: the odd puzzle geometry of objects and shapes takes on a pointillist, sun-bleached hue. Everything starts to SLOW DOWN, EXCEPT WALTER. Why? Because his mind moves at speeds so far ahead of everyone else's the world around him seems eternally slow...

Everyone, that is, EXCEPT RALPH, who's moving those salt and Pepper shakers around at WALTER SPEED. Soon, we'll understand why. Suddenly, we're SNAPPED BACK to normal as:

NEMOS
(heavy Greek accent)
No making a mess! *Paige*. Again your boy is all over with the shakers!

And in rushes **PAIGE DEATS:** 30's, waitress, real pretty. She's everything we want in a hero: capable and strong-willed, damaged but proud, and nobody's fool:

PAIGE
Sorry, Nemos--

DINER OWNER
-- This is business, not day care.

PAIGE
-- IknowIknow, he's just having trouble adjusting to school. He'll be back there next week, promise.

Nemos grumbles off. Paige takes Ralph's hands, smiles:

PAIGE (CONT'D)
It's ok, Honey: Mr. Gianakos just doesn't want a mess. Doesn't mean there's something wrong with you; you just have to think about some of the things you do, okay?

Finally, Ralph nods. Paige kisses his head, moves on... all of which has been WITNESSED BY WALTER, who clocks how effectively Paige just calmed Ralph. A beat, then Walter gets up and APPROACHES the kid. Ralph looks up. Something UNSPOKEN seems to pass between them.

And then... Walter MOVES A SALT SHAKER TWO INCHES. Ralph studies Walter... then moves a PEPPER.

Then Walter moves a salt. Ralph moves a pepper. Pace quickens -- *back and forth* -- shakers bang down with authority. Until... they stop.

WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT JUST HAPPENED, but one thing is certain: Ralph's eyes have LIT UP, as Paige sees this weird man with her boy and rushes in protectively:

PAIGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Excuse me, can I help you?

WALTER
No... but you should help *him*.

Paige doesn't hear that as Walter intends it, rather as yet another hurtful snap judgment about her "problem child":

PAIGE
He's just fine. If you're done here? The door's over there.

Beat: Walter grabs his things and heads off. At the door, he stops by Nemos at the register:

WALTER
Wireless is up. It's Novell -- old software, you need an upgrade.
(then)
Don't yell at the kid.

And he's out. Off Nemos, as **"I'M BROKE" by Black Joe Louis & The Honeybears** KICKS IN **--**

EXT./INT. WALTER'S 1989 NISSAN 300ZX - DAY

ON A WORN TIRE cruising down the road. Might still be worth more than the car it's attached to. Walter drives...

RADIO DJ (OVER RADIO)
Okay, for $104.7 dollars... which month has 28 days?

WALTER
All of 'em.

CONTESTANT (OVER RADIO)
February.

RADIO DJ (OVER RADIO)
That's right! You're a winner!

WALTER
Idiots.

Then he hits a BUMP and coffee spills on him.

As he slows to park, we BOOM UP to reveal a run-down, prototypically North Hollywood warehouse on its last legs:

INT. LOW-RENT INTELLI-GENTS GARAGE-LIKE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

SYLVESTER POTTS: 35, Black, Statistics Guru, neurotic genius, works an algorithm on a blackboard. We notice his chalk is lined up PERFECTLY in size order (can you say "OCD?"):

SYLVESTER
If my math's right, and it is, we can siphon 700kW a month through the Fall before anyone notices...

He turns to **HAPPY QUINN**, standing on a ladder wearing a tool belt: 28, emotionally guarded, Happy can fabricate anything. She's working on a TRANSFORMER BOX, jerry-rigging WIRES to run out the window:

HAPPY
Dammit, these're all frayed --

SYLVESTER
Careful, more than 30,000 shock-related accidents happen a year.

HAPPY
... Please. I got this.

And on cue, SPARKS FLY. Lights flicker, STAY OUT -- just as Walter walks in, sees Happy, and does the math:

WALTER
Are you... stealing electricity?

HAPPY
No. I'm borrowing it until they turn our power back on.

Walter, instantly concerned, rushes to a COOLER APPARATUS:

HAPPY (CONT'D)
Don't worry, I hooked up your cooler to a car battery. Your mouse brain's safe.

He carefully removes a dish with a grey substance -- yep, it's a brain. Notes numbers on the cooler's readout, jots them in a GREEN FILE labeled "**IMMORTALITY PROJECT.**" To Sylvester:

WALTER
I thought you were paying the bills after the Credit Nationale job?

SYLVESTER
(nervous, guilty)
I was, I mean, I worked 3 days on a loss algorithm for credit risk. They loved it, Walt, really loved it --

WALTER
(putting it together)
You got lost in the numbers again and forgot to pay the electric bill...

HAPPY
And the water bill. And our rent.

SYLVESTER
Not so much "*forgot*" as "*couldn't*": they wanted me to analyze their Mexico operation, you know I don't do Mexico -- the stats on foreigner kidnappings? They think we're a nation of Lindbergh babies.

WALTER
(a sigh)
How long's it been since you ate?

SYLVESTER
You mean, like, food?

Walter chucks him an APPLE -- among geniuses, he's their shield. Happy senses Sylvester's shame, tries to cover:

HAPPY
It's cool, I finished the Lynwood job. Doc's picking up the fee now.

WALTER
Why'd Toby go get it?

HAPPY
I built the contractor an automated conveyance system and he called me Sugar.
(simply)
So I hit him in the mouth.

Walter SIGHS again: of course she did. As we PRE-LAP **DEVIL IN ME by 22-20's** and HARD CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - SAME TIME

TIGHT ON Chuck Taylors, SPRINTING, as **TOBY BISSEL** (30's, genius behaviorist, can "read" anybody and has fun with it) runs for his life!

20 yards behind a car CHASES, slaloming garbage cans Toby purposefully topples in his wake. The car screeches to a stop; 2 THUGS jump out as Toby races into...

INT. LOW-RENT INTELLI-GENTS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Toby LOCKS the door, the thugs **POUNDING** on the other side:

THUG #1 (THROUGH DOOR)
Get out here, Cheat!

TOBY (THROUGH DOOR)
I don't *have* to *cheat: y*ou get a good hand and your pupils dilate like the Fat Kid when the piñata opens.

HAPPY
(descending ladder)
Do not tell me you gambled away my money --

TOBY
Hey, it's only gambling if you can't read the table -- I merely used my talents to raise our coffers.

WALTER
Where. Is. It.

TOBY
When a man called The Gooch pulls a bat you don't stick around to gather your chips, that's just common sense...

OUTSIDE the pounding STOPS as the thugs move off to a dumpster and starts searching for something...

INSIDE, Walter tosses his laptop bag on the couch with the certainty that their prospects are, in fact, fucked:

WALTER
The motto says "*Extraordinary heroes for ordinary problems...*"
Our combined IQ's almost 800 and we can't even make our bills.

SYLVESTER
(getting nervous)
Look, we-we-we had a bad day--

WALTER
-- it's been a bad *two years*. This was supposed to be a first step to something greater, not the only step --

This conversation's igniting Sylvester's OCD/anxiety: these people are his family, and it stresses him out to no end to have it fraying, so he starts rearranging chairs around the table:

SYLVESTER
Yeah, well, this needs to work, cause *out there* is not an option. No one else would have us -- I don't even have an apartment. Seriously -- I haven't not slept in this warehouse for like... ever.

Everyone TALKS OVER EACH OTHER, a cacophony of dysfunction:

TOBY
I can take one of the standing teaching offers from Stanford or UCLA --

HAPPY
Please. *Rutgers* wouldn't hire you after what went down at Princeton.

TOBY
Princeton was a misunderstanding, I should've never used Undergrads as test subjects... they cry too easily.

SYLVESTER
(as one sentence:)
I've got enough money left for 3 months unless I sell my car which would give me an extra 2 months but drops the odds of me getting to 33% of my job interviews --

WALTER
Sylvester, take a breath --

SYLVESTER
-- which gives me a 51% chance I'll be living under a bridge in 4 and a half months--

A commanding FINGER WHISTLE from Walter STOPS THEM, all except for Sylvester, who's spinning out in an OCD chair-arranging frenzy. Walter SNAPS his fingers to Toby, who -- ritualistically -- pulls out a DECK OF CARDS, tosses them to Walter, who SHUFFLES them like a pro and spreads them on the table:

WALTER
Hey, Sylvester: put the deck back in order.

Sylvester SHIFTS from chairs to cards like a MAGNET, begins ordering... Jacks, Kings, etc... the process calming him:

SYLVESTER
Queens -- Jacks -- Tens--
(deep breath, BIG smile)
Thanks, Walt.

BOOM! They all turn to the door now VIBRATING from IMPACT --

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND INTELLI-GENTS HEADQUARTERS - SAME TIME

As the thugs SMASH a **metal pole** they've pulled from the dumpster into the door, two BLACK SEDANS screech into the alley, skid to a STOP: ND AGENTS exit car #1. Federal Agent **CABE GALLO** (45, NY blue collar, no nonsense) exits car #2:

THUG #1
Good, cops. Guy in there owes me money --

CABE
Drop it, or I'll put a bag of pills in your pocket fat enough to get you a room in Lompoc. Understand?

As the thugs RUSH OFF, Cabe slides his badge under the door:

CABE (CONT'D)
Homeland Security. Open up.

INT. LOW-RENT INTELLI-GENTS HEADQUARTERS - SAME TIME

Sylvester picks up the badge, alert, tosses it to Walter, who checks it: it's real. Nods to Sylvester, who OPENS the door to reveal Cabe -- ON WALTER as he sees him and PALES:

WALTER
No. Get out of here --

CABE
Walter, I wouldn't be here if I weren't desperate, trust me --

WALTER
Trust you? Is that a joke? I was a kid, you lied to me --

HAPPY
Who are you? What is this?

CABE
What this is -- is either the best day of your lives, or the worst.
(beat)
45 minutes ago there was an automatic software upgrade in the LAX Control Tower. It had a bug.
(MORE)

CABE (CONT'D)
Now the entire system's down, computers are on a continuous reboot cycle --

HAPPY
Waiwaiwait... all your communications are down?

CABE
Contact was lost between LAX, Long Beach, Burbank -- incoming flights were diverted, but the ones about to start descent are outta comm range. None of our programmers can crack this thing, it's--
(reads from his notes)
Pre-Web 3rd Generation 3 tier MFC. Ancient stuff only you do.

ON WALTER, jaw tense, as the vice grip of his dilemma locks in: fight-or-flight VS lives at stake...

SYLVESTER
How many planes? Are in the air?

CABE
Fifty six. Without landing guidance, they'll run outta fuel.

SYLVESTER
... and crash.
(Walter just stares)
And crash, Walter.

WALTER
I heard him.
(to Cabe)
You need to leave my place of business now.

CABE
Is that what you call it? I ran all of you: Happy Quinn, Toby Bissel, Sylvester Potts... you spend your time hustling cards, losing jobs, setting up home computers, and punching your clients in the face -- now, I may not be a genius, but that doesn't sound like the smartest business plan to me. Do this, and you'll each have 50 grand in your pocket by dinner. You don't, people and metal will be falling from the sky in less than 2 hours.
(gestures: Walter's t-shirt)
(MORE)

CABE (CONT'D)
You wanna be “heroes?” Today’s your day.

As our team trades nervous looks, we HOLD ON WALTER AND CABE, eye-locked, their charged history colliding with our ticking clock and: **TITLE CARD....**

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. LOW-RENT INTELLI-GENTS HEADQUARTERS - DAY - RESUME

Walter TOSSES the binder back to Cabe abruptly:

WALTER
Even with half my IQ, I wouldn't be dumb enough to believe you twice. "Forget about it and move on" isn't an option for people with photographic memories.

CABE
Yeah, I'm aware: it took 6 years to get rid of those Indecent Exposure convictions you hacked onto my record. You got your pound of flesh. We're even.

WALTER
The fact that you think we're even is why I'll never trust you.

HAPPY
Give us a minute --

Happy takes Walter's arm, leads him to a quiet corner. Cabe, anxious, folds his arms to wait. Beside him, Toby folds his arms too. Cabe glances over:

CABE
The hell're you doing?

TOBY
Mirroring you so your subconscious relates to me better -- it's a little tense in here, thought it might calm you down.

CABE
(not at all calm)
And how's that working out for ya?

WITH HAPPY AND WALTER: they speak sotto:

HAPPY
Is that the guy? The one you told me about?
(Walter nods)
I hate him already. But money's money and we need it, especially you.
(points to the Cooler)
Think about what 50 thou could do. For *her*.

Her? What does that mean? Whatever it is, it's tempting for Walter, his very lifeblood... yet, it's not nearly enough:

WALTER
A drop in the bucket.

HAPPY
Every flood starts with a drop, right?
(small grin)
I know you don't trust him. But the difference between then and now...
(gestures: the team)
... is us.

That buoys him. Point: Happy. Walter looks over at Cabe who shifts his weight, eager to get going. Toby does the same. Cabe turns to him; Toby takes a semi-fearful STEP BACK. Walter makes a split-second CALCULATION, moves toward Cabe:

WALTER
LAX Tower Control is the main hub for all the other airports --

CABE
Fix the software there, it auto corrects Long Beach and Burbank.

WALTER
The new software's the glitch: first step's to delete it, download the *old* software -- that's enough for the planes to land.

CABE
So you'll do it --

WALTER
You had your social security re-issued through the Witness Protection Program so I couldn't hack you again. Give me your new number.

CABE
No way.

WALTER
Then you don't get our help. I need assurance to guarantee trust.

CABE
(a beat, <u>shit</u>...)
Fine. 038--

SYLVESTER
(like a shot)
-- Nope. 038 means Rhode Island issued.

TOBY
Your accent and aggression says New York. Queens. Bronx, maybe.

CABE
(busted: double shit)
... 101-58-5875. Can we go now?

TOBY
He's telling the truth.

WALTER
(to Cabe)
You're trying to outsmart the wrong people. Lie to me again... and I will erase you.

Walter grabs his bag and walks out. Happy grins at Cabe, grabs her gear, and follows, as do the others -- SMASH TO:

EXT./INT. PLANE - SKIES AT 30,000 FEET - DAY

WHOOSH: a 747 JETLINER rips past camera, cutting clouds -- CAPTAIN JASON PIKE radios to no avail, growing concern:

CAPTAIN PIKE
Still no contact --

CO-PILOT
At 10,000 feet I might get a signal.

CAPTAIN PIKE
If we descend without comms, we could run into another plane.

CO-PILOT
Less than 100 minutes of fuel...

Grave looks, off which the SCREAM OF A SIREN takes us to:

EXT./ INT. GOVERNMENT SUV'S - 405 FREEWAY - DAY

Two GOVERNMENT SUVs shred down the 405. In the LEAD VEHICLE, Cabe and Walter up front: Walter's writing some kind of LIST on a pad -- Cabe glances over:

CABE
What're you doing?

Walter turns from view and doesn't answer, no trust here. Toby, Happy, Sylvester in the backseat:

SYLVESTER
I knew the slogan was a mistake: this isn't an ordinary problem and we sure as hell aren't heroes. These t-shirts are a polyester blend of lies.

TOBY
It's marketing psychology. Who's gonna hire someone with the slogan *"Nerds-That-Never-Got-Laid-In-High School-Who-Can-Fix-Your-Router?"*

SUDDENLY: SCREECH! Everyone LURCHES forward as Cabe BRAKES HARD: UP AHEAD, an OVERTURNED TRUCK. Unmoving traffic.

CABE
Dammit --

SYLVESTER
Odds of success just fell to 36%.

HAPPY
This is going great so far.

Cabe steps out in frustration to see if he can move traffic; Walter gets out too, as Toby says:

TOBY
Ah, yes, getting 3 feet closer will definitely help you move that truck...

EXT. 405 - CONTINUOUS

Walter and Cabe in the gridlock -- HORNS BLARING -- YELLING --

WALTER
You're a Fed, get us a copter --

CABE
Air traffic's been shut down til the situation's resolved.

Sylvester's head PEERS out the window:

SYLVESTER
No copter? Now it's 17%!

As Cabe heads forward to see what he can do, we go CLOSE ON WALTER as the SYMPHONY OF CHAOS blares around him... and the closer we get, the sound begins to FADE AWAY until it goes...

... DEAD SILENT. As before, everything around Walter has SLOWED. HIS EYES SNAP BACK AND FORTH AT REM SPEED, CALCULATING -- and now, an echo on the wind, he hears:

A YOUNG GIRL'S LAUGHTER. As we -- ***FLASHCUT:*** *POV dreamlike -- we're running behind that REDHEAD GIRL from our opening -- chasing her through PURPLE WILDFLOWERS -- she turns to us:*

REDHEAD
C'mon, Walter... catch me! You can do it!

A DOPPLER HORN SMASHES US BACK TO:

WALTER ON THE HIGHWAY, his eyes STOP MOVING AT REM. Somehow, this memory has GALVANIZED HIM -- he knows what to do:

WALTER
CABE!
(up ahead, Cabe whirls)
We need a reliable wireless signal with no chance of going down -- I just fixed one a mile West of here.

INT. DINER - DAY

BAM: our team bursts in -- Cabe, ON FIRE, beelines to Paige, who looks up in surprise as she sets food down on a table:

CABE
Owner --

Startled, she POINTS and asks "What's happening?" but Cabe's already moving to an equally startled Nemos --

CABE (CONT'D)
I need to commandeer your diner for a National Emergency -- you and your staff can stay but that's it.

He flashes his BADGE and throws down an ENVELOPE OF CASH:

NEMOS
Everybody out! You pay tomorrow!

As he shoos people out, our team RAPIDLY sets up gear. Paige pulls Ralph to her protectively -- the kid's rapt, watching WALTER, as Sylvester takes ANTI-BACTERIAL WIPES to the table:

CABE
What're you doing?

SYLVESTER
Any idea the levels of bacteria found on counter-tops? From chicken alone--

CABE
(SNATCHES away the wipes)
Forget the chicken --

ON NEMOS, sidling up to Paige, whispers:

NEMOS
My immigration status makes me not so comfortable around Federal Agents, understand? You lock up?

She nods, Nemos is quickly OUT the back door. This is noticed by Walter, who glances over at Ralph and Paige:

WALTER
Good to see you again, Ralph.
(to Paige, curt)
I'll take a Coke, easy ice.

PAIGE
Uh, normally "please" makes its way into that sentence.

He glances over -- registers her tone -- says, softer:

WALTER
Please.

As Paige moves to the soda fountain, she sees Sylvester skim an "LAX EMERGENCY PROCEDURES" binder as Cabe brushes urgently past, on his cell:

CABE
Roughly a hundred and nine minutes til the first planes go down --

PAIGE
Is-- is something wrong at LAX?

SYLVESTER
It's top secret.

PAIGE
How secret can it be if the guy who set up our wireless is working on it?

-- as we WHIP TO WALTER, slipping on a headset -- he runs the show like a master conductor tuning his orchestra --

WALTER
Happy: prep a POST check so after the system's stabilized we can make sure there's no overheating hardware --
(she's OFF)
(MORE)

WALTER (CONT'D)
Sylvester: run odds on the patch linking back into the system, I don't want the same problem tomorrow. Toby: profile the Black Hat Hacker boards, look for a saboteur --

Everyone SPINS into motion as Paige sets Walter's soda down. This time he looks up at her says, unprompted, meaning it:

WALTER (CONT'D)
Thank you.

The MOMENT holds -- a small CONNECTION -- then he's back to work -- Sylvester swallows, feeling the pressure:

SYLVESTER
We screw up, brains and testicles are gonna bounce all over town.

HAPPY
Actually, fuel tanks'll ignite on impact. You won't *find* a body part.

TOBY
Except maybe the more viscous organs. A blood-soaked spleen will burn at a slower rate --

PAIGE
-- HEY.
(everyone looks up)
I'd appreciate it if you'd all check your language around my 7-year-old.

SYLVESTER
Sorry.

HAPPY
My bad.

TOBY
It's just science.

PAIGE
-- no, it's just common courtesy. Be *decent* in my place of work.

With that, Paige moves back to Ralph. Walter watches her go, pretty damn IMPRESSED, as Cabe starts tossing out WALKIES from a duffel bag -- hands one to Walter:

CABE
Secure channel to LAX, Air Traffic Supervisor's on the line, his name's Brooks --

WALTER
(works laptop + walkie)
I'm hacking into airport security -- Mr. Brooks, I'm gonna rotate your cameras to point at the monitors. I'll see it remotely and walk you through the steps --

INT. LAX CONTROL TOWER - SAME TIME

It's MADNESS here: Air Traffic Controllers scramble as BROOKS, HEAD ATC (60's, non-techie), responds into walkie:

BROOKS
Whoa, who am I on with here? I'm not comfortable with you hacking into *anything* at this airport--

WALTER
Then don't make it so easy. My name's Walter O'Neil and I was brought in to fix your problem since you're not capable of doing it yourself. Look behind you at the camera --

Brooks turns: the CORNER SECURITY CAMERA pivots on its own. ON WALTER'S LAPTOP we see the image rotate, but it STOPS moving when it only has a SLIVER of the monitor inside the control tower in sight.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Dammit, the camera doesn't turn far enough.

HAPPY
(lightbulb!)
Wait a minute -- uh, Brooks, is it? Can you put your chair under the camera, please?

BROOKS
My... *chair*?

HAPPY
Just do it... Now stand on it and take a coin from your pocket. Reach to the top of the arm that rotates the camera and use the coin to remove the screw.

As Brooks does that, Walter leans back to give Happy access to his keyboard and her fingers fly. The camera begins to turn 20 MORE DEGREES...

HAPPY (CONT'D)
Wait for iiiit....

... giving a FULL VIEW of the tower on the computer screen! The image FLICKERS every two seconds. Jesus, she's good...

WALTER
Brooks, we see the room -- now hit Control C right in-between the flickers on the screen. You gotta get it at the exact moment I say "now" -- ready?

BROOKS
Oh, okay --

WALTER
(the FLICKER, then)
Now --

Brooks tries, stressed -- NOTHING --

WALTER (CONT'D)
You missed. Try again.

BROOKS
It's too fast --

WALTER
Forget it. We'll use the function keys, once we're in I'm gonna need you to do a core dump --

BROOKS
Uh... full disclosure? I don't really "use" the computers. I just look at blips on screens and tell 'em when to land.

Walter's eyes SNAP to Cabe: who the hell is this guy?

WALTER
He doesn't know basic prompts?!

RALPH
(softly)
He's old. He doesn't understand.

Walter TURNS to Ralph. Paige is STUNNED -- Ralph never talks to strangers -- starts ushering him away:

PAIGE
Ralph, sweetie, let's let 'em work...

WALTER
No, he's right... *Brooks,* go to the terminal and find me a kid -- a <u>fat</u> kid -- playing a video game in an Anthrax T-shirt or something, <u>now</u>!

INT. LAX TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER

TRAVELERS SCATTER as Brooks and Security SPRINT through the terminal shouting "MOVE ASIDE" --

SECURITY (INTO WALKIE)
Sweep Gates 1 through 12! And have a team search the food court!

BROOKS
There!

ON A FAT KID (15) playing a video game in a PRIMUS t-shirt:

BROOKS (CONT'D)
Kid, you any good at computers?

FAT KID
(not looking up from game)
Whaddayou think?

BROOKS (INTO WALKIE)
I found a fat kid but he's wearing a "Primus" t-shirt? That work?!

THURMAN
(fat kid?!)
<u>Hey</u> --

INT. DINER - DAY - <u>INTERCUTTING</u>

WALTER (OVER WALKIE)
<u>Let me talk to him</u>!

Brooks hands the EXTREMELY CONFUSED FAT KID the walkie --

WALTER (CONT'D)
Hi, there -- what's your name?

FAT KID
... Thurman?

WALTER
Thurman, you code?

THURMAN
Like a ninja. *Why?*

WALTER
Get him to the tower now!

Security Guard YANKS THURMAN OUT OF HIS CHAIR --

INT. LAX CONTROL TOWER/ DINER - DAY - INTERCUTTING:

Brooks and Security RUSH THURMAN in as Walter guides him:

WALTER
There's a problem with the computers, I need you to get into BIOS, help re-install software.

THURMAN
Hell I am. Y'all called me fat.

Walter SPINS to Paige, hands her the walkie:

WALTER
Talk to him like you talked to Ralph this morning.

PAIGE
... What? N-- no, I don't know what to say --

WALTER
Yes you do. Pretend he's your son and follow your instincts. Do it now.

Ralph is WATCHING her expectantly. Finally, Paige nervously clears her throat, takes the walkie, in the fire now:

PAIGE
Um, Thurman? Hi. I'm Paige. I have a son and sometimes kids tease him too. And it sucks. That's why he likes to get lost in video games.

THURMAN
I don't "get lost" in them. They're just cool.

Nerve struck, the kid's reacting defensively -- Sylvester slips Walter a note that reads: **6.8% Success Rate.** Walter BRUSHES the note away, laser focus -- THIS IS TENSE AS HELL -- but Paige, God Bless her, stays right with the kid:

PAIGE
I know, right? They are cool. The new GTA? You played that yet?

THURMAN
You... let your kid play “Grand Theft Auto”?

PAIGE
I play with him -- that way I can explain the violence. Check out the new add on’s, by the way -- there’s this Lamborghini Murciélago? Killer.

CABE
(no time for this!!)
Lady --

Feeling the squeeze, Paige SNAPS her fingers at Cabe to pipe down -- he does -- another moment not lost on Walter --

PAIGE (INTO WALKIE)
This is real, Thurman, it’s not a game: real people up in planes are gonna die if you don’t help. They need you. The buttons you push right now will actually make a difference. You up for it, Buddy?

Our team is taking in Paige too, impressed -- then, Thurman’s hands lower to the keyboard in front of him:

THURMAN (OVER WALKIE)
Okay... game on.

Walter takes the walkie from Paige, nods thanks -- she smiles back and SIGHS in relief -- Happy leans in to Paige, a grin:

HAPPY
Nice work.

PAIGE
(secretly proud)
... You, too.

A MOMENT between them as Walter keys the walkie to Thurman:

WALTER
Do a core dump and restart the BGC. Brooks, give Thurman the original installation disc to download.

BROOKS
Software was installed 15 years ago. I don’t know where the hell it is and the company went outta business.

WALTER
When do you back up your data?

BROOKS
Every night. We use Data Solutions on Ventura --

WALTER
I can hack in and get it --

THURMAN
No go, dude. System's air-gapped.

WALTER
The live system's an Open House but the back up's Fort Knox: this is why people hate government.

CABE
You wanna have this conversation now? We've got an hour and a half.

WALTER
If we get a copy of the old software from the back-up server, I e-mail it to Thurman -- he clicks a link and the system's up and running as if the corrupted software was never downloaded.

SYLVESTER
(checking a palm pad)
"Data Solutions" is between Coldwater and Laurel, 20 minutes *east*, you won't hit 405 traffic.

WALTER
(to Happy and Toby)
Get to the server, I'll prep here to relay to LAX --

CABE
I'll get you clearance, *take my car and stay in contact* --

He tosses Happy his keys -- as she CATCHES them we SLAM TO:

INT. DATA CENTER - HALLWAY - 20 MINUTES LATER

Toby/Happy RUNNING down a hall with the BUILDING MANAGER:

MANAGER
We just finished renovating the whole place. Each room's airtight and fireproof --

Manager enters a code, a door SLIDES open. Toby/Happy rush into what's essentially a small SERVER ROOM, stacked with servers 7' high), quickly start setting up laptops:

TOBY
Which one of these backs-up LAX?

MANAGER
We keep that info in our Inventory Listings...

He turns to a shelf to retrieve the listing... but the shelf is empty. His face FALLS as he realizes...

MANAGER (CONT'D)
... Oh God. We packed up all the binders when we renovated. We haven't brought it all back from storage yet--

TOBY
-- Where is it?

MANAGER
A Store-N-Stuff in Northridge... look, it's after 5, I'm the only one here, but I'll leave right now and call you in 30 minutes with the number of the server--

HAPPY
-- Just shut up and go!

Manager closes the door, and RACES OFF --

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON KETCHUP BOTTLES, STACKED MOUTH-TO-MOUTH. RACK TO PAIGE, marrying the bottles. Her eyes go to WALTER at his laptop, writing installer code. Their eyes meet; he scans her hands, tactless as always...

WALTER
You have anemia. It turns fingernails pitted, that's why your polish looks streaky and cheap. You need more iron.

Paige STOPS, offended. Moves to the booth seat across from him... PUSHES the top of his laptop DOWN, CLOSING IT. He looks up, trance broken, startled. Her voice is FIRM, controlled, like a parent scolding a child:

PAIGE
You... are an ignoramus. Even if you're right? And that's why my polish looks "cheap?" Who the hell're you to walk into my diner and judge me? You don't do that.
(MORE)

PAIGE (CONT'D)
It hurts my feelings. Do you understand?

WALTER
... I recognize I've been told things like that. Before.
(beat)
A lot.

PAIGE
And for the record, you're wrong -- my polish streaks because Ralph likes to do it, he loves to paint, and I don't appreciate you telling me he needs "help," either. I get it from everybody -- yes, he's slow, have some empathy.

ON WALTER. The barest twitch of musculature in his jaw belies a seismic reaction to that. Paige has no clue that she has no clue what she just said:

WALTER
When was he diagnosed?

PAIGE
It's none of your damn business.
(but just as quickly:)
His whole life. I've been to nine experts -- six doctors --

WALTER
M-hm. And all these "experts"... lemme guess, they diagnosed Ralph with ADHD, OCD, and mild autism, then prescribed Ridalin and told you it'd be better in the morning.
(off her SURPRISE)
How close am I? I'll take "exactly" if that's the answer.

Paige -- amazed and confused -- how does he know all this?

WALTER (CONT'D)
Take a look at your son right now.

She glances over: Ralph is at a table, having once again arranged condiments and silverware, moving them around:

WALTER (CONT'D)
The Sweet & Low? That's the King. The Stevia's The Queen, the Sugar In The Raw packets are the Knights, the vinegar's the Bishop, the spoon's The Rook, and the forks are the pawns.

SLOWLY, WE PUSH IN ON PAIGE. We watch the insane, impossible moment of her realizing what he's saying... in a nanosecond, her brain scours her son's life, and every wrong assumption that she, and everyone else, has made. She exhales, SHOCK:

PAIGE
He's... he's playing chess?

WALTER
He's imagining a 64 square board and 8,902 possible outcomes. In his head. With only eight objects. At Master Level.
(reads her tag)
I hate to be the bearer of bad news "Paige"... but your son's a genius. And he doesn't "*like to paint*." He does your nails because he wants to hold your hand and be close to you, but he doesn't know how.

Paige's eyes WELL. With a mother's love comes the guilt of misunderstanding her son's pain, which Walter reads instantly. He re-opens the laptop and goes back to writing:

WALTER (CONT'D)
It won't help you to feel guilty -- this is a "get out of jail free" card. You weren't able to see it, not because you don't love him, or because you're not trying...
(beat)
But because it's literally impossible for you.

Paige swallows. He starts to gather up his computer, which fires an immediate need in her, desperate for his guidance...

PAIGE
How... how can I help him?

WALTER
You can pretend to understand him, but soon he'll hit the realization he's surpassed you as a source of authority. That's when it'll get harder for you... and more lonely for him.
(beat)
I'm sorry, I have work to do.

And moves off. Off Paige, mind tumbling, wildly emotional... her eyes go to RALPH, their lives now and forever changed.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. DATA CENTER - SERVER ROOM/CLOSET - SAME TIME

Happy and Toby test servers, she checks her watch, anxious:

HAPPY
Where the hell's the manager?

Suddenly, a POPPING NOISE -- SPARKS FLY from the server Toby's at -- then a BURNING SMELL and TRAIL OF SMOKE -- she looks over at him, holding a USB cable with a GUILTY LOOK:

HAPPY (CONT'D)
What'd you do?

TOBY
I tried to plug the USB into the USB connector to scan the drives but it wouldn't fit, so I wiggled it around and pushed harder.

HAPPY
You shorted out the machine -- the USB's on the other side, that's the HDMI port. Where're your glasses?

TOBY
I... I thought I looked better without them.

SUDDENLY: BEEPBEEPBEEP! They look UP -- the SMOKE has hit the SMOKE ALARM -- WATER SPRAYS FROM CEILING SPRINKLERS -- Happy SCRAMBLES to protect equipment -- more servers SPARK -- she grabs the laptop, hits the door pad: BZZZ! RED LIGHT:

HAPPY
Nonononononono --

TOBY
Stop messing around, open the door!

HAPPY
I can't! The server you fried had the door codes!

TOBY
The room's vacuum-sealed... that means *water*-tight too!

Happy LUNGES for her Walkie on a shelf:

HAPPY (INTO WALKIE)
Walter! The room's filling up with water and we can't open the door!

INT. DINER - SAME TIME - INTERCUTTING:

Everyone REACTS -- Cabe snatches his walkie:

CABE
Seriously?

HAPPY (OVER WALKIE)
No! I thought now was the right time for a prank call! Yes, we're seriously trapped in here!

Walter gets on his laptop, types FURIOUSLY, keys his walkie:

WALTER
Gimme dimensions of the room, Happy --

HAPPY
About 9 by 6 by 10, give or take. 3" pipe. 7' corrugated shelving --

WALTER
-- How high is it now?

Water's to the KNEES on Happy and Toby, pouring in HARD --

TOBY
At our knees! IT'S AT OUR KNEES, WALTER!

WALTER
(spins to Sylvester)
Figure out how much time they have.

Sylvester spins to the "SPECIALS" blackboard but is AGHAST to find DIFFERENT SIZES OF CHALK PILED WILLY-NILLY IN THE HOLDER -- pours the chalk onto the table, starts lining them up in size order (just like in the teaser)...

WALTER (CONT'D)
Not now, Sylvester.

SYLVESTER
Just-- just lemme do my thing --

CABE
What the hell's he doing? *What are you doing?*

SYLVESTER
(frantically moving chalk)
I can't calculate until there's order! It's my process --

CABE
Your *process?* My process involves my foot and your ass--

HAPPY (OVER WALKIE)
Just pick a piece of chalk!

ON PAIGE -- AN IDEA -- GRABS all the chalk EXCEPT ONE PIECE and shoves them in her pocket, offers the piece to Sylvester:

PAIGE
Here. <u>One</u> piece. It's the biggest <u>and</u> the smallest. So it's in order. *Ok?*

SYLVESTER
(a beat: yep)
That works.

He grabs the chalk, gets to work, as Paige looks to an increasingly impressed Walter --

PAIGE
Ralph organizes his closet by ROY-G-BIV.

SYLVESTER
(as he calculates)
Assuming standard commercial water pressure and reducing for the volume of their bodies and the shelving, they'll be underwater in 14 minutes...
(STOPS, GRAVE)
<u>We can't get there in time</u>.

Walter starts SCRIBBLING something --

PAIGE
... Ralph, go play in Mr. Gianakos' office.

Ralph, sensing the seriousness, hurries off... but PEEKS around the corner to keep listening:

INT. DATA CENTER - SERVER ROOM/CLOSET - SAME TIME

The room's getting FULLER -- as they keep trying to protect the laptop, Toby's falling deeper into PANIC --

TOBY
The body reacts when death's imminent -- adrenal cortex in overdrive, skeletal and cardiac muscles tense while smooth muscle relaxes -- that's why you might feel the water near me getting noticeably warmer--

HAPPY
I'm not dying like this... not without a damn Christmas present.

TOBY
... What?

HAPPY
Foster homes always send you back early December so they don't have to buy you anything.

TOBY
(as that LANDS)
... Not one present? Ever?

HAPPY
No way I'm dying before someone gets me a *damn Christmas present*. So I'll figure a way out if you calm down and keep looking for the software, deal?

TOBY
If we get out of this? I swear I will buy you a Christmas present, a Chanukah present, and something for all seven pillars of Kwanzaa --

INT. DINER - SAME TIME - INTERCUTTING:

ON WALTER -- stressed to the max as he runs calculations --

PAIGE
What're you doing?

WALTER
Greater Good Analysis: do I try to save 2 *exceptional* people with the ability to change the planet, or accept that's not possible given time constraints and figure out a new way to save thousands of *average* people?

She just looks at him -- words that don't compute --

PAIGE
Are you kidding? You save everybody. *A* normal person tries to save everybody.

He looks up. For the first time, HELPLESSNESS in his eyes:

WALTER
But I'm not normal.

He reaches out... and turns OFF the walkie, SILENCING Happy and Toby's PANIC on the other end. Stands up, stoic.

CABE
What the hell are you doing?!

WALTER
There's no way to resolve this.

He EXITS. EVERYONE'S STUNNED. Cabe starts dialing his cell:

CABE
Calling the cops --

PAIGE
You think the *cops*'ll get there faster? *It's L.A.*

But he's off and making the call -- Paige looks to Sylvester to do something, but he just stammers, scared, lost--

SYLVESTER
I-- I didn't predict this --

ON PAIGE: IT'S ALL ON HER. She BURSTS through the back door:

EXT. SIDE STREET OUT BACK - CONTINUOUS

-- Walter -- walking away -- Paige RUSHES OUT:

PAIGE
Hey --
(she GRABS his arm)
Hey. I understand what's going on: You're doing what Ralph does when he doesn't understand how to fix a problem, he panics and shuts down --

WALTER
Do I look panicked to you?

PAIGE
Not until you said that. When you don't know *some*thing, you feel like you don't know *any*thing, because *Knowing*'s the only value you have. But you can do this.

He just stares, unreadable. Has she gotten through? Then:

WALTER
Let me explain something to you. Left brain: logic. Right brain: emotion. For all practical purposes, I have no right brain.
(MORE)

WALTER (CONT'D)
Emotional speeches, “pep talks” -- they don’t work on me. They work on artists, musicians, waitresses -- people who’re satisfied being underpaid to serve others.

Paige literally FLINCHES. As usual, Walter wasn’t trying to insult her; to him it’s merely a statement of fact:

PAIGE
I get it, I’m the dumb waitress.

WALTER
I never called you that.

PAIGE
You don’t think I wanted to do something else with my life? Something my son could be proud of? But I’ll tell you one thing: I’m smart enough to know people almost never get second chances to make up for something they should’ve done. And if you let your friends die, you’re gonna wake up with it everyday for the rest of your life.
(beat)
I promise you that.

ON WALTER. Paige has no idea how much she just hit the bullseye, but for reasons she couldn’t possibly know about:

PAIGE (CONT’D)
Come back inside with me, Walter.

He just stares. And right when he’s about to say “no” --

RALPH (O.S.)
It stops and starts.

RALPH at the back door. She turns, confused:

PAIGE
... What, Honey?

He points to a WATER TAP against the wall, drips of WATER coming from the pipe. CLOSE ON WALTER, as he looks at the water, at the boy... drip... drip... drip... EVERYTHING SLOWS DOWN AROUND HIM, even Paige... BUT NOT RALPH. They meet eyes. Walter’s again move at REM SPEED as it HITS -- and we:

SNAP BACK TO SPEED -- Walter’s already rushing back into the diner, blowing right past her:

PAIGE (CONT’D)
Walter?

INT. DINER - MOMENT LATER

He BURSTS IN, ADRENALIZED -- Paige/Ralph on his heels:

WALTER
The Sherman Oaks DWP's two miles away -- if we can't turn water off to their building, we'll turn it off to the whole district.

CABE
We're not shutting down water to an *entire city* -- What if there's a fire? What about hospitals?

WALTER
-- Firetrucks have tanks, Hospitals have back-up systems--

--In the next 10 minutes?--

CABE
-- I need to get authorization --

-- Walter, there's a protocol for this, I'd have to go through the Mayor's office --

WALTER
This is exactly what you did last time -- ask for help, then play the government card, and people end up dead. Again.

PAIGE
Again? What do you mean again?

CABE
Hey, sorry you don't like it, but I'm the only one here with a federal badge, so I'm the only one who gets into a municipal water facility.

ON WALTER, knowing Cabe has him bested -- and THAT'S IT: he SHOVES CABE, much to Cabe's SHOCK, and everyone else's...

CABE (CONT'D)
... Watch it.

WALTER
I'm done doing what you say.

PAIGE
Walter --

CABE
Back off, O'Neil--

WALTER (CONT'D)
-- Or what? You'll arrest me?

SYLVESTER
Guys, we're down to 4% success --

WALTER
Sylvester, stop spouting stats like a badge of honor!

ON SYLVESTER: something strange. Why's he almost... smiling? Walter SWINGS at Cabe, who THROWS HIM on the floor -- a FIGHT ensues -- uncharacteristically, Sylvester SPRINGS TO ACTION, pulls Cabe off -- Walter staggers up:

WALTER (CONT'D)
The hell with you --

And he's OUT the door again, passing Paige, who's FRUSTRATED:

PAIGE
Great! He just came back!

And now it's clear, Sylvester IS smiling:

CABE
The hell's so funny?

VRROOOOM! A car TEARS PAST the diner window --

PAIGE
... Hey... *That's my car.*
(pats her apron)
Where are my keys?!

CABE
(pales, pats pockets)
My badge --

SYLVESTER
I palmed it when I pulled you off and slipped it to Walter.

CABE and PAIGE react -- realizing what's just happened --

PAIGE
(it was a code)
... "Badge Of Honor"...

CABE
... Sonofabitch...

SYLVESTER
People like us don't resort to violence unless there's logic behind it.
(snatches up the walkie)
Guys, hold on! Walter's on it -- *just keep looking for the LAX software.*

INT. DATA CENTER - SERVER ROOM - SAME TIME

ON TOBY/HAPPY on top of the shelves: water at their chests --

HAPPY
Just breathe --

TOBY
We'll have *no choice* but to breathe. When you drown, CO2 fills your bloodstream and eventually we'll breathe in, even though we *know* there's no air under there--

Happy PLANTS A KISS on Toby, LONG AND HARD to calm him down. When she pulls away, he's STUNNED MUTE, dazed...

HAPPY
We calm now?
(he nods)
Good, gimme your belt!

TOBY
(quickly undoes it)
... Are we--?

HAPPY
NO! I need it for the door!

She GRABS his belt, DROPS UNDERWATER --

EXT. DWP SECURITY GATE - MINUTES LATER

Walter SCREECHES to the GATE, flashes Cabe's badge at GUARD:

WALTER
Deputy Director Cabe Gallo. Your facility might be compromised, *I need immediate access* --

INT. DATA CENTER - SERVER ROOM - SAME TIME

Toby, almost at the ceiling, water at his neck, plugs a server to a light-fixture outlet (only dry one left), as we GO UNDERWATER to find Happy, having wrapped Toby's belt around the door handle, pulls with all her might:

INT. DWP - SAME TIME

Walter RACES to the MAINFRAME'S COMPUTERIZED CONTROL PANEL, starts hacking into it, as we CUT TO:

INT. DWP SECURITY GATE - SAME TIME

The Guard sees MONITOR READINGS shut down. Unsure, he dials:

GUARD (INTO PHONE)
Yeah, this is DWP Station 12. Some guy's here flashing a badge and now the system's going haywire...

INT. DATA CENTER - SERVER ROOM - SAME TIME

Happy EXPLODES to the surface, GASPING. Water's 1/2 way up Toby's neck -- he's running the last server on his laptop -- she reaches for the ceiling, YANKS on a 3' piece of REBAR until it BREAKS FREE -- swims back under with it, WEDGING the bar between the door and molding, wraps the belt around the sharp bar, leaving a "tail" to pull on. As she PULLS...

Toby, nose pressed into 4" OF REMAINING AIR, holds up the laptop/server to keep it dry: then... **"LAX BACKUP"** appears on screen! A PROGRESS BAR quickly fills -- software's downloaded! Toby SHOUTS into the walkie:

TOBY
We got it! We can land the planes!

He holds the computer above the water, a last effort to save the planes -- a DEEP BREATH before he's engulfed --

INT. DWP - SAME TIME

Walter TYPES FURIOUSLY, downloading the backup:

TOBY (OVER WALKIE)
Get us outta here! Oh God--

WALTER
Almost there, Toby, hold on --

VOICE (O.S.)
HANDS UP! ON YOUR STOMACH!

WHIP TO COPS CHARGING IN, GUNS POINTED -- Walter's KNOCKED to his belly:

COP #1
You're under arrest for tampering with a municipal water plant--

WALTER
-- You're making a mistake! I want to talk to your senior officer!

SYLVESTER (OVER WALTER'S WALKIE)
Walter! I lost contact with Happy and Toby... they're gone!!

OFF WALTER, face pressed to the ground, CUFFED, the pain of lives lost, as MUSIC SWELLS and we:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT./EXT. DATA CENTER - SERVER ROOM - RESUME

UNDERWATER: Happy PULLS on the Belt/Bar fulcrum; the door BUDGES a crack! She SHOVES IT FULLY OPEN... STRAINING with everything she's got and... **WHOOOOOSH**! THEY'RE FORCED OUT AT AMAZING VELOCITY! Happy SLAMS into the wall -- HARD -- PAINFUL -- before we see what happens we SMASH BACK TO:

INT. DINER - SAME TIME

CABE (INTO WALKIE)
Toby? Happy? ... sonuvabitch -- Walter, where the hell are you?

Beat, then the VOICE that responds is entirely UNFAMILIAR:

VOICE (OVER WALKIE)
10-17, is there an Agent Cabe Gallo on this channel?

CABE (INTO WALKIE)
This is Agent Gallo, who the hell's this?

EXT. DWP WATER STATION - DAY

The COPS have Walter in CUFFS, are using his walkie:

COP #1
Officer Tadych of the LAPD. I have a Walter O'Neil in custody, he has your badge and says he's on assignment with you?

CABE
(well, not exactly, but)
... Yes. Call the Federal Building on Wilshire, they'll confirm this detail, but do it in transit -- I need him back here A-SAP.

The DINER PHONE has started RINGING. Paige answers in BG:

SYLVESTER
It won't matter: we lost our only chance to save the planes. At least a dozen collisions, the rest'll probably head to the ocean to avoid ground casualties...

PAIGE
... *Oh my God!*

They all TURN -- Paige is holding up the phone in excitement:

PAIGE (CONT'D)
It's Happy! They're alive and on their way back with the software!

Off Cabe, WIDE-EYED --

EXT. DINER - 15 MINUTES LATER

CABE'S SUV SCREECHES TO STOP in front, just as an LAPD COP CAR does too. Toby and Happy leap from the SUV, as Walter emerges from the cop car -- tosses Cabe back his badge:

WALTER
You're welcome.

Before Cabe can respond, Walter heads right past him to Happy and Toby, who holds up the laptop triumphantly...

TOBY
Seats back and tray tables up, everybody, these planes are as good as landed!

As they ENTER, Walter sees how Happy's carrying her shoulder:

WALTER
Your shoulder's dislocated at the glenohumeral joint.

HAPPY
4 years Varsity Lacrosse, I'm good--

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Walter pops open the laptop as everyone gathers round:

CABE
So this is it? We're getting the planes down?

WALTER
Simple as e-mailing a file.
(into walkie)
Brooks, I'm sending you a bug-free version of the software -- all you have to do is open your e-mail and click a link. Thurman, can you make sure he uploads it properly?

THURMAN (V.O.; OVER WALKIE)
No, but I can do it --

BROOKS (V.O.; OVER WALKIE)
-- Hey, watch it --

As Walter types away, the tension seems to LIFT a moment...

TOBY
We... did it. We actually pulled this off.

HAPPY
(pats Cabe's back)
I take Pay Pal, Traveler's Checks --

SYLVESTER
(to Toby and Happy)
Statistically, you should be dead.

TOBY
Sometimes you beat the numbers, Pal.

SYLVESTER
(meaning: his friends)
There's safety in numbers.

The MOMENT of unity... is SUDDENLY BROKEN as Walter springs up and KICKS OVER his chair --

PAIGE
What's wrong?

WALTER
Water damage -- the hard drive's corrupted, it froze --

HAPPY
Nono, it's gotta be good --

TOBY
Wait... we almost died for *nothing?*

WALTER (CONT'D)
We don't have time to dry the hardware and run an overhaul --

CABE
You're the genius, find another way --

WALTER
What do you want me to do? No place else on earth has the software.

Ralph slowly puts a finger on a PLANE on Sylvester's chart. Sylvester looks at him, then the plane... an EPIPHANY:

SYLVESTER
You're looking in the wrong place, Walter! It's not on earth!

TOBY
What's not on earth?

SYLVESTER
The *software* -- it's on the *planes*! They use a duplicate copy to communicate with the tower -- if they took off before this morning's update, then they still have the old, bug-free software on board!

HAPPY
A flight from Asia would've taken off before the bad software downloaded. Damn, Sylvester, that's a brilliant idea...

SYLVESTER
(looks at Ralph, amazed)
Not sure it was mine, actually.

WALTER
It won't work: we still have the same problem. What we need is 7 miles over our head and there's no way to get in touch with the people who have it.

The air is sucked out of the room, their brief hope GONE. Frustrated, Walter turns away and looks to the WINDOW, as the team THROWS OUT RANDOM IDEAS in B.G... their voices go ECHOEY AGAIN as we PUSH IN ON WALTER, his eyes moving at REM SPEED, calculating... but he DOESN'T have the answer...

Then... VRRROOOMMM! A FERRARI F-360 glides past out the window. WALTER'S EYES track it and... THE FERRARI RAMPS TO SLOW-MOTION MID-PASS... WALTER'S EYES SNAP BACK AND FORTH AT REM. The Ferrari pulls into an EXOTIC CAR DEALERSHIP a block away. **SNAP TO SPEED** as Walter SPINS, to Happy:

WALTER (CONT'D)
Can you fabricate wind guards and make differential airbrake adjustments on a high performance car?

HAPPY
With a plastic spoon and my eyes closed.

WALTER
(to Cabe)
I need to commandeer a really fast car. Gimme your badge.

CABE
(rolls eyes: again?!!!)
What the hell for?

WALTER
I can waste time explaining something you won't understand, or you can trust that what I'm thinking has the highest probability of working.
(Cabe's uncertain: trust?)
At least I'm not stealing it this time.

Beat... then Cabe TOSSES his badge to Walter --

CABE
What kind of car?

EXT. EXOTIC CAR PARKING LOT - DAY

TRACKING OVER A BLACK BUGATTI SUPER SPORT, hood up, to reveal HAPPY doing what she does better than anyone on earth -- Toby's plays "nurse" to her "surgeon," handing her tools, so fast: she strips a wire like a hunter skins a rabbit/ grabs electrical tape/ bites some off/ all in a QUICK CUTS -- she's amazing, brilliant, Toby can't help but be mesmerized...

TOBY
Fast hands... delicate, but strong...

HAPPY
(doesn't look up)
You do realize you're talking out loud.

... Uh, no. He didn't. Now he does. Swallows embarrassment as CABE TAKES FRAME, walking to Walter, along with the team:

CABE
Still a mess to LAX. Escort's just gonna get you to the back-up faster.

WALTER
That's why we're going west to Santa Monica Airport.

CABE
(beat: what?)
Their runways are too short for a 747.

WALTER
We don't need runways. We're gonna to do the transfer while the plane's still in the air, barely off the runway.

CABE
(beat: is he kidding?!!)
There's a neighborhood next door.
You could take out half a block --

WALTER
Actually, if we fail, it'll be more
like four blocks.

Cabe just STARES -- no choice -- Happy SLAMS down the hood:

HAPPY
She's ready.

WALTER
I'm gonna need someone shotgun,
and before you volunteer, your
shoulder disqualifies you.
(to Cabe)
The Bugatti window's 22" and your
shoulder span's at least 25", you
won't fit through.

TOBY
Guess I'm your huckleberry.

WALTER
No. I need you to find an Asian
flight and profile the entire
manifest -- we're looking for a
daredevil, a maniac, the exact
opposite of Sylvester.

SYLVESTER
Hey --

WALTER
Fine. Come along. At 240 mph.

SYLVESTER
Hell no.

HAPPY
I can push through it, Walt.

WALTER
(a beat, shit)
I guess we have no choice. Get in.

Happy puts her tools down, but we can see her shoulder's in pain. Ralph PULLS on Paige's sleeve. She looks at him: a MOMENT of understanding. Something in his eyes she almost never experiences. Ralph nods...

PAIGE
You sure?
(Ralph nods again;
(MORE)

PAIGE (CONT'D)
then, to Walter)
I'll go.

Everyone turns to Paige. Walter calculates: her, Ralph --

WALTER
... No.

Paige walks up to Walter, talks SOTTO so no one else hears:

PAIGE
Look... he needs this.

WALTER
There are easier ways to bond with your child.

PAIGE
What about your "greater good analysis?" Isn't saving 10,000 lives worth the risk? You told me he won't need me much longer anyway... til then, the least I can do is set an example for him.

That LANDS on Walter -- she has his full respect. Finally, he nods. Paige swallows, kneels in front of Ralph:

PAIGE (CONT'D)
Happy's gonna watch you while Mommy and Walter help the people in the planes, ok?
(as they HUG)
I'll be back soon. I'll be okay.

Ralph nods. Paige gets into the car. The cop cars spin their cherries providing an ESCORT and... Walter PEELS OUT. A beat, Sylvester looks to Ralph:

SYLVESTER
Odds are high she won't be okay.

Happy SLAPS Sylvester on the back of the head as **CALL IN THE CAVALRY by THE SHYS** KICKS IN and we HARD CUT TO:

EXT. LA SIDE STREETS/INT. BUGATTI SUPERSPORT - MOMENTS LATER

The Cavalry -- aka: Walter and Paige. **KICK ASS POLICE ESCORT** races through LA streets. Paige holds on TIGHT, terrified:

PAIGE
This thing has airbags, right?

WALTER
Yes, but at these speeds they're useless.

Toby crackles through on the walkie: **INTERCUT WITH DINER** where the gang hacks away at personal information -- a MAN'S DRIVER'S LICENSE PHOTO appears:

TOBY
Think I got somebody: *Duncan Dupree*. 5 foot six, 140 pounds. Flat feet kept him outta Army Rangers; couldn't follow dad onto St. Louis PD due to bad hearing; suspended in high school for a fight with the football team -- not one player -- *the whole team. T*his little man has something to prove.

WALTER
Perfect. Contact him.

TOBY
How the hell do I do that?!

WALTER
(as he's hanging up)
You have a 187 IQ, figure it out!

Paige looks over at Walter, nerves spiking, grips the door:

PAIGE
Something I don't get. Someone'll email us the software as the 747 flies over? Won't it be going too fast to get a wireless signal from the plane?

WALTER
... No. Because when it's 30 feet off the ground, you and I will be driving directly under it.

Paige STARES at him: *WWHAAAAAAT?!* MUSIC SWELLS and --

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. BUGATTI SUPERSPORT RACING THROUGH LA - RESUME:

They SHOUT against the roar of SIRENS and the car ENGINE:

PAIGE
YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT GETTING UNDER A PLANE! I THOUGHT WE WERE GONNA BE BEHIND IT!

WALTER
That would be more dangerous, we could be crushed by the jetwash! Underneath is safer because the pressure will be equalized --

PAIGE
I'm just supposed to sit here while a plane practically lands on top of us?!

WALTER
No... you're gonna be on the roof.

Beat:

PAIGE
What?!

WALTER
You have to lean out onto the roof and hold up the laptop to maximize chances of getting a signal! No signal, no software transfer! No software transfer, the planes go down.

PAIGE
This is... this is INSANE!

WALTER
At these speeds the force would normally decapitate you, but Happy built a shield, so, my suggestion is... try to stay under the shield.

INT. DINER - DAY

Cabe on the phone, preparing for the worst --

CABE
Foam the runway, foam the whole city for all I care --

He turns to find RALPH listening -- AWKWARD BEAT, then Cabe grabs a pie from the PIE FRIDGE, hands it to him:

CABE (CONT'D)
Here. Everything's fine.

And RUSHES OFF, leaving Ralph holding the pie, as we WHIP TO: Toby/Sylvester/Happy working laptops -- over tinny speakers, phones ring, then voicemails -- the calls END, next number's DIALED -- as they talk, their eyes NEVER leave the computers:

TOBY
We're not getting through to anyone, send me more phone numbers!

SYLVESTER
Trying! Hacking isn't really my thing -- there's 440 people on the flight, *and they all have their phones off 'cause they're on a damn plane!*

TOBY
There's always some narcissist who doesn't think the rules apply to him or an overwhelmed mom traveling with kids who forgot to turn it off -- basic human nature. A phone was left on *somewhere* --

SYLVESTER
-- still won't get through at 36,000 feet. Damn Novell software! It's too old to do all this in a few minutes.

ON HAPPY -- her fingers FREEZE. She looks up, WIDE-EYED:

HAPPY
Old technology. Search for someone with an out-of-date analog phone. Their receivers are 10 times stronger than smartphones, they can get a signal way up there --

TOBY
(fingers flying)
-- On it. Losing anyone under 50 or who makes 6 figures. Can't work for a tech company and...
(finds it! Bingo!)
... *Gordo was his name-o!* Gordon Dooley, 68, Plastics Salesman from Reseda returning from a work trip. Salesmen are trained to never turn their phones off or risk losing business -- service is linked to a Retron A-64 analog.

SYLVESTER
Call him!

INT. PLANE - SAME TIME (INTERCUT AS NECESSARY WITH DINER)

GORDON DOOLEY (68, shlubby salesman) reads SKYMALL. His PHONE buzzes. Surprised, he pulls out an old flip-phone:

GORDON (INTO PHONE)
... Hello?

TOBY (OVER PHONE)
Mr. Dooley, listen carefully, there's an emergency with your flight and I need you to bring your phone to the man sitting in 19A <u>immediately</u>.

GORDON
(a beat)
Nice try, Sully. See you at work, jagoff.

He hangs up, reads. The phone RINGS again. Gordon answers:

GORDON (CONT'D)
Listen, ya putz--

TOBY
-- No <u>you</u> listen. Get your fat ass to 19A or I'll tell your wife about the Asian Porn you ordered in your hotel room. Got it, My Man?

Gordon pales, SPRINGS from his seat and hustles over to 19A. Hands the phone to... DUNCAN DUPREE, 30's, WWE t-shirt, wiry and lean: a spitfire with "little man syndrome" who's up for anything:

GORDON (CONT'D)
I... I think this is for you?

Huh? Confused, Duncan takes phone --

DUNCAN (INTO PHONE)
Who's this?

TOBY
Duncan, this is the federal government. And today, you finally get to be the hero...

INT. COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER

Captain Pike and Co-Pilot -- TENSE -- prepare for the worst:

CO-PILOT
There's been one clean water landing in the entire history of--

CAPTAIN PIKE
-- we're running on fumes, there are no other cards to play here. We tell the cabin once we're over water. Black box is on; if you have anything to say to anyone... say it now.

And then -- ***BANG BANG BANG!*** on the door --

DUNCAN (THROUGH DOOR)
Captain! Captain! I know what's going on! I need to talk to you--

INT. PLANE CABIN - SAME TIME

MALE AND FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANTS pull Duncan from the door and struggle to RESTRAIN HIM:

DUNCAN
No! I can help! I got a call from someone talking to the LAX tower, he says they've lost communication and control of the approach -- that's why you're not being waved in to land -- I can help you!!

FLIGHT ATTENDANTS
-- Hold him down!

-- God, He's really strong --

-- I've got the zip ties!

Passengers start FREAKING OUT -- then the cockpit door OPENS:

CAPTAIN PIKE
Let him go. Keep the passengers calm --
(to Duncan)
How do you know?

Surprised, the Flight Crew lets Duncan go and RUSHES OFF as Duncan hands Pike his cell:

DUNCAN
I got a call. Go ahead, Toby --

INT. BUGATTI SUPERSPORT RACING THROUGH LA - INTERCUTTING:

WALTER (INTO PHONE)
Actually, my names's Walter! Captain, if you do exactly what I say, everyone onboard will live --

CAPTAIN PIKE
(rushes back to cockpit)
-- I'm all ears, Walter --

WALTER
You're carrying an uncorrupted version of Control Tower software. You need to e-mail it to me so we can get it downloaded at LAX. Only way to do that is for you to get 30 feet off the ground so I can grab your wireless signal.

CAPTAIN PIKE
Where will you be?

WALTER
Under you in a car going 240 miles per hour. We're doing this at Santa Monica; we called ahead, Runway Two's been cleared.

CAPTAIN PIKE
I'm right over Santa Monica, runways are short there and my minimum cruise speed's 209 knots -- we'll only have seconds to make that connection -- how do you know it'll work?

WALTER
That's where Duncan comes in.

Pike looks back to Duncan, who gives a slight smile:

DUNCAN
I'm Duncan.

INT. PLANE PROPER - SECONDS LATER

Duncan and the CO-PILOT race down the aisle -- on the move, Duncan yanks a PORTABLE WIRELESS DEVICE from a guy's laptop:

DUNCAN
I need this, thanks --

INT. PLANE - BOWELS OF PLANE - SECONDS LATER

As they hurry through the plane's belly, Co-Pilot grabs a roll of DUCT TAPE, hands it to Duncan, points to something we don't see:

CO-PILOT
Right there... Good luck!

Duncan just nods. Co-Pilot takes off. Duncan's alone. Looks down at what we don't see... swallows hard, and RIPS OFF a piece of the tape with his TEETH --

INT. DINER - SAME TIME/INT. LAX CONTROL TOWER - SAME TIME

WHIPPING THROUGH THE TOWER, we find BROOKS and 15-year-old THURMAN, relaying to Sylvester --

BROOKS (TO SYLVESTER)
Did you click the link we sent?

ON Sylvester's laptop: plane "blips" head toward each other:

SYLVESTER
Yes. How long until the first planes hit?

BROOKS
2 minutes, 52 seconds --

INT. BUGATTI VEYRON - OUTSIDE S.M. AIRPORT - SAME TIME

The police escort approaches the back gate to the runways -- Walter sees the 747 approaching, flips a panel, and presses a button: it's NOS! Paige **SCREAMS** as Walter **blows past his police escort**, FISHTAILING onto:

EXT. RUNWAY/INT. BUGATTI - SAME TIME

THE BUGATTI HITS THE RUNWAY! Walter pulls on a jerry-rigged cable: THE SHIELD that Happy built POPS UP ON THE HOOD --

WALTER
NOW! YOU CAN DO THIS!

Paige, TERRIFIED, climbs out the window with the laptop, holds it high above her head as...

THE PLANE ROARS OVER HER, ALMOST CLOSE ENOUGH TO TOUCH! SHE SCREAMS AS WALTER HOLDS THE CAR STEADY RIGHT BENEATH THE PLANE. AND NOW, LANDING GEAR LOWERS, TO REVEAL, DEAR GOD...

DUNCAN CLINGING TO IT LIKE A BABY KOALA, THE WIRELESS DEVICE DUCT-TAPED TO HIS BODY! He's wide-eyed and windblown, but gives Paige a stunned wave "hello" as the plane and car streak down the runway, just a few feet apart:

INT. COCKPIT - SAME TIME

Pike HURTLES toward HOMES -- Co-pilot works the keyboard:

CAPTAIN PIKE
8 seconds before we have to pull up--

CO-PILOT
File almost ready, about to send... sending now....

EXT. RUNWAY/INT. BUGATTI - SAME TIME

PAIGE -- one hand CLINGING DESPERATELY to the car, the other clinging to the LAPTOP as... SHE SEES IT RECEIVE THE FILE! COLLAPSES back into the car, Walter SEES the screen --

WALTER
CLICK THE FILE THREE TIMES!

She does... and the e-mail is FORWARDED TO LAX as the landing gear RETRACTS, sucking Duncan back into the plane, which BANKS upward, **causing the Bugatti to shake!**

Walter CUTS the wheel, HITS the air brake -- the Bugatti SKIDS across the runway -- SKIIIIIIIIIIIIDS -- finally, barely coming to... A SAFE STOP.

BREATHLESS, Walter looks at a disheveled Paige... and says:

WALTER (CONT'D)
You stayed under the shield. Well done.

With that, Paige PUKES out the window.

INT. LAX CONTROL TOWER - SECONDS LATER

Brooks and Thurman watch a PROGRESS BAR on the computer: ***98% 99% 100%.*** Lights and screens POP AWAKE -- Brooks GRABS a mic:

BROOKS
Mayday! Mayday! This is LAX Tower Control, communication's restored, we'll have you all safely on the ground in moments! Confirm contact!

SCORES OF RESPONSES: *Thank God, Control/ We were sweatin' up here!* Tower crew EXPLODES IN WHOOPS/HOLLERS -- Brooks throws Thurman into a BEAR HUG -- as Thurman, spent, requests:

THURMAN
Can I please go now? My parents are prob'ly really worried...

INT. DINER - SAME TIME

Happy, Toby, and Sylvester go NUTS! Toby and Happy HUG... when they PART, Toby says, meaningfully:

TOBY
Merry Christmas.

Happy GRINS as Sylvester musses Ralph's hair, points to the laptop: ***"FILE UPLOADED."***

SYLVESTER
Your mom did that...

Ralph doesn't smile... but looks pleased.

INT. BUGATI - SAME TIME

Walter/Paige hear the celebration via Walkie. She leans back against the headrest, wiped out, delirious. Looks over Walter, who like Ralph, doesn't smile... but looks pleased:

PAIGE
Good thing you didn't keep walking down the alley.

WALTER
(a beat)
Good thing you came after me.

Off the two of them -- an unlikely team.

EXT. SANTA MONICA AIRPORT - TARMAC - SUNSET

Against the glorious sunset, cop cars everywhere, cherries spinning. The WHOLE TEAM is being interviewed by Feds, as we find... Cabe, who's been handed four envelopes of CASH from a fellow agent -- turns to WALTER, who's scanning the crowd:

WALTER
Where's the waitress?

CABE
A cop took her and Ralph home.
(a beat)
You look disappointed.

WALTER
(reveals nothing)
I think you have something for me.

Cabe hands the envelopes to Walter, who checks: $50K each.

CABE
Everyone's real happy with your work today. So... Deal's a deal.

WALTER
I want a share for Paige, that Duncan guy, and the Thurman kid.

Cabe nods, he'll do that. Walter turns to go without a word:

CABE
Walter.
(Walter turns)
I'm sorry about what happened between us... back in the day. I lied to you. I thought I was doing it for the right reason.

WALTER
(it's still a raw wound)
We killed people.

CABE
To save tens of thousands more... but I'm still sorry.

Walter stares at Cabe. Into him:

WALTER
I believe you. I also know the fact you're apologizing means you've realized we're the key to your future.

ON CABE, called out. He nods, okay, here goes...

CABE
I was reassigned here to set up a new kind of Strategic Response Team, something game-changing. See, I can't train average agents to think like you, you're a different species. Problem is, the bad guys are getting smarter too, so we have to fight them in a smarter way: they hit our banks, electrical grids, hospitals -- we cover everything from missing kids, to stolen nukes. You'd have the full resources and backing of the U.S. Government, clearance at the NSA, DOD --

WALTER
This conversation's oddly familiar.

CABE
Look... I didn't have as much autonomy then to keep my promises. I do now.
(beat)
We can make a real difference, Walter... but I can't do it alone. And from what I know about you and your buddies, you can't either.

Walter looks across the tarmac at his team, protectively:

WALTER
Failure is not an option for people like us... if they aren't protected, they'll beat themselves up inside until they break.

CABE
They're beating themselves up already: What's their purpose? Why were they given their gifts and put on this planet? What I'm offering you all... is the answer.

WALTER
Very dramatic.

CABE
(sincerely)
... I'm trying here, Walter.

Walter stares. And then, reaches into his pocket, pulls out his NOTEPAD. Tears off a PAGE with HANDWRITTEN SCRAWL. Hands it to Cabe, who reads, confused...

CABE (CONT'D)
Fixed salaries, cars, a research Lab, full control over your hires, and a yearly government grant to fund your...
(is he reading this right?)
... "Immortality Project?"
(looks up)
When did you write this?

WALTER
In the car after we left the warehouse. You asked me what I was doing.

ON CABE. Stunned, can't help but CHUCKLE a little...

CABE
You <u>knew</u> I'd offer you a job...

WALTER
Your badge said "Homeland Security Strategic Initiatives Division," that's a hell of a promotion, the kind that forces you to prove yourself quickly if you wanna keep it. I assumed if we survived today... you'd see <u>we</u> would be the "strategy."

CABE
(heartened)
So... you trust me?

WALTER
Absolutely not... but I don't need trust, I have leverage: this time your career depends on us. You can't hurt me without hurting yourself, and you aren't dumb enough to hurt my friends, since you'd end up the sole focus of my retaliation... and we all know how that goes.

Damn. Rockstar. And to our surprise, WALTER offers his hand first. A beat, then Cabe SHAKES. As...

CABE
"Failure is not an option..."
(beat)
Has a ring to it.

And Cabe rejoins his squad, as HAPPY, TOBY, and SYLVESTER rejoin Walter. A beat, Toby takes one look, and...

TOBY
Your lips are parted and you're leaning slightly forward, primordial signs of desired communication.
(beat)
You have something to tell us.

Off Walter's slight GRIN --

EXT. PHYSICAL THERAPY FACILITY - NIGHT

VROOOM: The BUGATTI screeches to a stop. Walter exits his NEW CAR, admires it, then hurries into...

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY FACILITY - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON WALKING BRACES, attached to a WOMAN'S ARMS -- we BOOM UP THEM to reveal a RED-HAIRED WOMAN. This is **PEG**, working with an encouraging THERAPIST. Quietly, from a distance, Walter watches in the doorway, a DOCTOR beside him:

DOCTOR
She never quits. No matter how sick she gets.

Walter never takes his eyes off Peg. So clear he loves her.

WALTER
My sister isn't sick. She's just stuck in a broken machine.

And walks off toward her, leaving the doctor somewhat confused, as we PRELAP:

PEG (PRE-LAP)
Tell me what you're thinking, Wally...

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY FACILITY - PRIVATE ROOM - LATER

A PHOTOGRAPH on the nightstand: 11 YEAR OLD WALTER and the REDHEADED GIRL we've been seeing, who we now understand is PEG as a child... as we PAN TO ADULT PEG, in a chair, Walter in a a chair too, pulled close...

PEG
... 'Cause you seem almost... *happy.* And that's not like you.

He pulls out his green file: "IMMORTALITY PROJECT." Opens it to show her charts, neuro-scans of a MOUSE BRAIN...

WALTER
I've been doing research for your condition. Mapping a mouse's neurological path when he finished a maze. I put a chip in his brain... and was able to download the memory.

PEG
(stunned)
You put the mouse's memory... on a computer chip?

WALTER
It gets better: when I removed the chip, he couldn't do the maze anymore. When I put the chip back in, he found the cheese.
(as hopeful as we've seen him)
Do you understand what that means?

She looks at him, loving him for trying so hard, but scared by the prospect of actually being hopeful about this...

PEG
I'm not a mouse, Honey.

WALTER
No. But you're not this *broken body* either.
(MORE)

WALTER (CONT'D)
You're your *consciousness,* Peg. And when I get this right? I'll be able to transfer a human brain's contents -- memory, thoughts, emotions -- when the body fails. To a healthier body, a robotic host, whatever.
(beat)
I'll have made death and disease extinct.

PEG
Walter Patrick O'Neil, ALS is my fight. Don't put it all on you...

But he is putting it all on him, and nothing's ever gonna change that, as he looks at his sister with utter devotion:

WALTER
No one else was there for me. Mom or dad, other kids made fun of me... but you always believed in me.
(beat)
Don't stop now. Please.

A TEAR rolls down her cheek. Since her muscles have betrayed her, she has to ask him to...

PEG
Put my hand on your face.

He does. Her thumb gently strokes his cheek:

PEG (CONT'D)
You amaze me, Wally. You always have.

He looks at his sister. And says:

WALTER
I'm going to fix you.
(beat)
I promise.

HOLD. As a KNOCK KNOCK takes us to --

EXT./INT. GROUND FLOOR APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

PAIGE, opening the door to her small, Deep Valley apartment:

PAIGE
... Walter?

WALTER
Hi. Um, sorry for coming by late-- I just wanted to... apologize for offending you today. Twice. That wasn't... *decent*.

A vulnerability in him she hasn't seen.

PAIGE
... Thank you. It's ok.

WALTER
I also want to offer you a job.
(off her SURPRISE)
Government-funded problem solvers. You said you wished you could do something else with your life. Something greater. Now you can.

Paige is stunned... trying to understand...

PAIGE
... why? I'm-- I'm not a genius...

WALTER
But you're raising one. You know what to say when we're misbehaving, or upset. Or scared. The work we'll do requires interaction with the world. With people. Not our strong suit.
(beat)
We need an interpreter.
(hands her a paper)
Salary plus benefits.
(she reads amount, even <u>more</u> stunned)
Getting in that car wasn't your second chance... <u>this</u> is.

She looks at him, overwhelmed. And in this moment, READS HIM. Her gift.

PAIGE
... for you, too?

Walter looks down. This is a story he tells almost no one. It's awkward for him. Unusual. We PUSH IN ON HIM, for:

WALTER
When I was 16, my Hacker name was "Scorpion." I chose it because a Scorpion's a docile creature by nature... but if it's pushed too far, it stings.

She nods gently, yeah. This next part's harder...

WALTER (CONT'D)
Knowing I had that kind of power made me overconfident... so when Cabe came and asked me to develop tracking software to drop first aid packages to soldiers behind enemy lines, I did.
(beat)
One day I turned on the news and saw the live feeds of us dropping bombs on Baghdad... they were using my system to kill people.
(on Paige, STRUCK)
I'd designed it for speed over accuracy... so 8% of the bombs were off-target by 100 yards. Which means... over two thousand civilians died needlessly in hospitals, shopping malls... a kindergarten school...

ON PAIGE, eyes welling. Heartbroken for him. So softly...

PAIGE
You were... just a kid.

He nods. Right now, he looks like one. Then...

PAIGE (CONT'D)
You know... I helped Ralph with a report on arachnids once? There's another thing about scorpions...
(beat)
They're incredibly loyal to their family.

Walter can't quite meet her eyes. And offers, gently...

WALTER
If you don't want to fail your son, tell him to ignore any sentence that starts with "Normally." Don't ever let him be scared of what he's capable of. And it'll be hard for him to make friends. Sometimes it'll feel like nobody in the world likes him. Make sure he knows it isn't his fault... the word *Prodigy* comes from the Latin *prodigium*, a monster that violates the natural order. You'll need to protect him.

PAIGE
From who?

WALTER
From everyone who isn't like him... and from himself.

Just then, RALPH walks by in the background, smiles/waves:

RALPH
Hi, Walter.

Paige... is STUNNED. Turns back to Walter, GRATEFUL...

PAIGE
He's never smiled or waved at anyone before. Ever.

WALTER
(simply)
He recognizes one of his own.

Ralph puts on a video game, subtly pushes a controller across the floor beside him -- an invitation.

Walter looks to Paige. She nods. Walter enters, gently sits next to Ralph. As they play...

WALTER (CONT'D)
Can you pause your dreams, Ralph?

RALPH
Yeah.

WALTER
Ever rewind them?

RALPH
Sometimes.

WALTER
... yeah. Me too.

During this, we've been PUSHING IN ON PAIGE, watching, eyes wet, feeling happier than she's felt since her son's birth: he's finally made a connection to another living soul.

She smiles, a smile like a lamp turning on. Walter turns back to look at her, and she NODS: telling him nothing on earth could stop her from taking that job.

As MUSIC RISES:

END OF PILOT