HELIX

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Lynda Obst Productions
Sony Pictures Television

FADE IN:

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

Hard breathing. As if through a tunnel.

A RUBBER HAND wipes the surface of a MASK clear. We're looking through this mask. We read on a STEEL PLATE -

INFECTIOUS AREAS. NO UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY.

The mask tilts down -

TO OPEN THIS DOOR, PLACE ID ON SENSOR.

The same gloved hand reaches out, places a hard plastic BADGE against the electronic eye. A digital screen reads -

PROCESSING.

Then:

YOU ARE CLEAR TO PROCEED **DR. FRANK PEDERSON, US ARMY**

The heavy carbon door slides open, leading to a chamber where Pederson is met by another man wearing the same orange RACAL SUIT. This is DR. HIROSHI HATAKI. Hataki, muffled American accent, speaks through the reinforced mask -

HATAKI
Where were you?

PEDERSON
(tough, slighty southern)
Hunting polar bears. Where the hell do you think?

WHITE DETOXIFYING GAS shoots down from the ceiling. Painting them. Cleansing them.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
You're overreacting by doing this in here. You'll spook the other scientists.

HATAKI
They're scientists. And who says they know we're here.

The gas stops, and almost instantly, the milky residue on their suits evaporates. Hataki extends his hand, places his own ID BADGE over the next sensor.

PROCESSING

Then:

YOU ARE CLEARED TO PROCEED **DR. HIROSHI HATAKI, ROLAND PHARMACEUTICALS**

The next chamber opens -

BIOSAFETY LEVEL 2. CAUTION: ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT

Pederson and Hataki enter. Both lift their arms. Pederson now towers over the other man.

PEDERSON
The investors then. The Brazilians.

HATAKI
They left yesterday.

Even through the mask, we can see this is news to Pederson. STROBE LIGHTS envelop the room. Then stop. The next door opens -

BIOSAFETY LEVEL 3. NEGATIVE PRESSURE, ZERO TOLERANCE. The back door SLAMS behind them.

PEDERSON
If it was what you thought, we'd be dead already. That or -

But we don't get to hear it. Instead, a VACUUM sucking the life out of the room. It's deafeningly loud, then powers down much the way a hair dryer does. A KEYPAD emerges -

CAUTION. EXTREME BIOHAZARD LEVEL 4. ENTER ID CODE.

Both do.

YOU ARE CLEARED TO ENTER

The final door opens, revealing -

INT. DISECTION ROOM - DAY

The walls look like something from fifty years into the future. But on a very normal looking surgical table -

An overweight MAN lays naked. Limp. Both Pederson and Hataki remove SURGICAL TOOLS from a shelf, approach the body.

PEDERSON
So you suspect...

HATAKI
I prefer to keep an open mind.
Stomach?

PEDERSON
I'll do it.

Pederson selects a large curved knife and slowly, expertly, begins to open a slit above the man's navel.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
Ten bucks says we find an undigested donut in here. Jelly or powdered?

Hataki doesn't respond. Pederson continues with the cut. But before he can finish, the man's stomach FALLS open, spilling -

LIQUEFIED GUTS in every direction. It's like his insides have been DIED BLACK and sent through a blender.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
What the -

Both jump back. Pederson slips in the mess, falls to the ground. But the insides keep coming, as if being FORCIBLY EVACUATED. Pederson's alarmed, but Hataki's calm as ever. Part of him almost looks...intrigued?

HATAKI
Check the mouth and neck. Quick.

Pederson jumps around the expanding pool of sludge, opens the mouth. There's blood. And the teeth appear a little...too long? He then feels the neck when -

The entire head falls off. It descends to the floor as -

PEDERSON (O.C.)
Holy shit. We have a code grey. Initiate lockdown IMMEDIATELY.

It hits the tile with a THUD as we -

HARD CUT TO:

A BLACK TITLE CARD -

HELIX

FADE OUT.

ACT I

FADE IN:

INT. CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC), ATLANTA - DAY

DR. ALAN FARRAGUT (early 40's) - glasses, tweed, handsome in an academic kind of way - carefully dissects something on his desk. We pull back to reveal - it's a PLASTIC MODEL BOAT.

A KNOCK at the door. A younger doctor, SARAH JORDAN (mid 20's), thin, timid, and excited just to be there, enters.

JORDAN
You sure you want to see this? It is your last day.

Farragut places the last sail on the beam, looks up.

FARRAGUT
This place is my life. I want to see everything.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Farragut, clearly the authority figure in the room, watches as Dr. Jordan presents -

JORDAN
We originally thought BCM-8 was a derivative strand of AP-4, but after distilling it -

An IMAGE of a CELLULAR STRAND cut in half.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
- we confirmed that it was a by-product of normal cellular division, and hence, an *improvement* upon the original strain. Darwinism triumphs again.

Polite APPLAUSE from the group. Another senior researcher, DR. KATHERINE WALKER (mid 30's), - short spiky hair, slightly butch, but also pretty - shoots Farragut a mocking look.

Farragut ignores it.

FARRAGUT
Very impressive, Dr. Jordan. Though perhaps we should shy away from science versus God undertones.
(MORE)

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
This may be a government agency, but we are in Georgia.

Friendly laughter. Jordan, appreciative, smiles back.

INT. CDC HALLWAY - DAY

Farragut walks with Walker.

WALKER
(intentional)
And I swear to God, if I have to listen to another 'prodigy' from Yale rediscover gravity in that room...

FARRAGUT
The girl's brilliant. She just needs a chance to prove it. Besides, that's Pete Jordan's daughter.

Walker looks up with surprise, but says nothing.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
And didn't you go to Yale?

WALKER
But I hated it. My parents forced me.
(then)
You sure you want to go back to that world?

FARRAGUT
I'm sure I don't. But my wife deserves to know her husband isn't being attacked by deadly microbes every day. A university setting gives her that.

WALKER
Unless you're eating in the dining hall.

Farragut half grins, takes in his surroundings. He's had a good twenty years here. He begins a rare smile when -

MAJOR SERGIO BALLESEROS (30) - short, in military uniform, and built like a tank - approaches from behind, cutting through the rest of the staff like a hot knife.

This guy clearly isn't a doctor. Just as clear - he isn't intimidated by them.

BALLESEROS
Dr. Farragut?

But before Farragut can turn, Balleseros steps around him and stops him in his tracks.

BALLESEROS (CONT'D)
Major Balleseros, Army Engineer Corp, Fort Bragg. We have a problem, sir.
(before Farragut can object)
And yes, I know it's your last day.

Balleseros turns, gestures for them to follow.

BALLESEROS (CONT'D)
Come with me.
(then)
Now, please.

INT. TRANSMISSION ROOM - DAY

It's like the Pentagon War Room, but for doctors. Farragut and Walker enter, see their boss, GENERAL MAX AEROV (50's) to their left. This is serious and they know it.

FARRAGUT
Shit.

Walker starts to leave.

AEROV
She should stay.

FARRAGUT
Shit.

WALKER
Okay.

Balleseros takes a seat beside Aerov.

AEROV (CONT'D)
(to Farragut)
Look, I'm sorry to have to -

FARRAGUT
Spare me the emotional plea till the end. Deal?

Aerov nods slowly - fine.

AEROV
Eleven hours ago we received an unidentified distress call from the Area 32 International Research facility.

FARRAGUT
Area 32?

AEROV
International territory. No one country holds jurisdiction. No one set of laws.

WALKER
In other words, no laws at all. Who do we think placed the call?

AEROV
It was an unauthorized leak through an off-grid device. We contacted the base directly for confirmation, they denied it. We contacted the military to see if they'd also picked up the distress call, they sent us this gentleman.

Aerov gestures towards Balleseros, who stares straight back.

WALKER
And the purpose of the facility?

BALLESEROS
What we're dealing with is an isolated incident that is non-relevant to the facilities mandate.

Farragut and Walker exchange a look - *what?*

AEROV
(anticipating)
In addition to performing the structural evaluation, Major Balleseros will serve as the military liaison on the case.
(off their concern)
The Major is well versed in working *under* scientists.

Farragut and Walker exchange another look - *yeah right.*

BALLESEROS
What's important is that an unidentified pathogen has infected two doctors.
(then)
USAMRIID's concerned it might be a retrovirus.

WALKER
(dubious)
Do you even know what a retrovirus is?

AEROV
(stopping the pissing war)
One of the doctors is catatonic. The other's already bled out.

Silence.

AEROV (CONT'D)
Look, this case is sensitive. There are over one hundred scientists from thirty UN countries in that facility. We only need you to confirm that this is not a retrovirus. Whole thing should take twenty four hours.

Farragut's unimpressed, stands to leave.

FARRAGUT
Dr. Walker is an excellent diagnostician. You should put her on the case immediately.

Aerov and Balleseros exchange a look. Farragut's weary -

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
And now, go ahead and tell me why I'm the only guy who can do this.

Balleseros takes a deep breath, preparing to drop the bomb -

BALLESEROS
The dead index patient is Dr. Paul Farragut...your brother.
(then)
He's still up there. What's left of him.
(then)
Twenty four hours.

EXT. CDC - DAY

Farragut storms towards his car. Walker follows.

FARRAGUT
You sat there saying nothing. You owe me more than that.

Walker's face - *I owe you?*

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
I was set up.

WALKER
Set up how? They came to you because he's family -

FARRAGUT
Fort Bragg doesn't operate on courtesy. They came to me because -

WALKER
You're the best?
(then)
Don't flatter yourself. I could do this on my own.

FARRAGUT
Then do. Because I'm not going.

Walker grabs him by the arm.

WALKER
I know you're upset. I also know you *want* to go.

The two stare at each other - and we know Walker's right. Farragut shakes her off, gets into an old Volvo, and drives off.

INT. FARRAGUT HOUSE - DAY

A Victorian home in the final stages of being packed up.

Farragut enters quietly, stands in the doorway, and watches his wife -

MARGARET (29), good natured, pretty, but slightly too thin, pack a box of wedding photos. She moves about her task with an excitement that breaks Farragut's heart. Finally -

FARRAGUT
Hi.

Margaret looks up, smiles. She clearly loves him too.

MARGARET
You're home early. Good, I could use another pair of hands.

Farragut walks over, kneels beside her. But instead of helping, he just sits there.

She looks up, smiles again. He smiles back, sadly. And with that one look, she knows...

EXT. FARRAGUT'S BACKYARD - DAY

Farragut sits with his wife on a porch swing. She's curled up against him, trying to act braver than she actually feels, as they rock back and forth.

FARRAGUT
I don't have to go.

MARGARET
He's your brother.

FARRAGUT
But we hadn't even spoken in twenty years. The guy didn't even come to our wedding.

MARGARET
You almost didn't come to our wedding.

For a brief moment, both laugh. These two have a long history. She takes his hand.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
I'll be fine.

FARRAGUT
You deserve better than this. I keep saying that but -

MARGARET
One last case isn't going to kill us.

Margaret immediately regrets her choice of words, buries her head into him.

FARRAGUT
I <u>don't</u> have to go.

MARGARET
- but you should. <u>You know you should.</u>

More silence.

FARRAGUT
You're the only family that matters to me.

MARGARET
You're the only family that's *ever* mattered to me.

She wraps up against him even tighter. Then -

MARGARET (CONT'D)
When do you leave?

Farragut starts to answer, then stops. Runs his hand through her hair. And she, knowing him all too well -

MARGARET (CONT'D)
There's a car waiting outside, isn't there?

HARD CUT TO:

INT. ARMY HELICOPTER - TWILIGHT

Farragut, now in a military jump suit, sits with Walker, Major Balleseros, and...Sarah Jordan?

Jordan, thick reading glasses now fogged over, looks even skinnier in gear. She shakes from the cold. Walker removes her own jacket, hands it to Jordan, revealing a frame that's -

Feminine, shapely, but <u>ripped</u>. If we had to fight any of these four, Walker would be last on the list.

And she knows it.

FARRAGUT
We're going to follow normal expedited protocol - explore, isolate, identify, and get the hell out of there.
(specifically to Walker)
No vanity research.
(then)
I want to be back on this copter by nightfall. Understood?

JORDAN
(to Farragut)
Thanks again for assigning me.

Walker, not convinced herself, tries to smile while Balleseros just stares - worried by the newbie.

FARRAGUT
(nipping it in the bud)
Every team needs a pathologist to work the cultures. You're the best I've seen in twenty years. I mean that.

JORDAN
(excited, to everyone)
Thank you. And I know I'm new, but -

FARRAGUT
(firm, to everyone)
Everyone's new until they aren't.

Cased closed.

BALLESEROS
We'll be briefed on the parameters when we land.

The team collectively leans back. Walker looks at Farragut.

WALKER
Your wife's a good woman.

Farragut stares back, sadly, but it's lost on Jordan.

JORDAN
Tomorrow is my one year anniversary.

Jordan proudly holds up a picture of herself with her husband. He's as dorky as she is, and it makes her awkwardness even more endearing.

FARRAGUT
You should have said something.

JORDAN
And miss an opportunity like this? My husband understands. Besides, I want to be part of a team.

Farragut looks the four over, they're hardly a team.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
(to Balleseros)
What about you?

WALKER
He's single. Army always sends one single man to keep the rest of us in check. Who better to make the hard decisions than someone with nothing.

Ballerseros pulls a small SILVER CROSS from his camo jacket.

BALLESEROS
I wouldn't say nothing.

Walker smirks. Jordan observes Walker's empty ring finger.

JORDAN
But you're not married either.

FARRAGUT
Walker was a staunch defender of the 'Don't ask, don't tell' policy.

Balleseros smirks back - so she's gay.

WALKER
I goddam loved that policy.

Quiet LAUGHTER until - the helicopter BANKS left, begins its approach, revealing -

Miles of FROZEN TUNDRA in every direction. It's beautiful AND terrifying. The laughter stops. *They're in the fucking Arctic.*

PILOT
(intercom)
Welcome to the Circle.

Suddenly - the helicopter SWERVES from a violent gust of wind. A plastic satchel falls from a ledge which Balleseros, lighting quick - *scary quick* - catches.

Walker notices. And now she's even more wary. The other two, oblivious, catch their breath, and relax.

FARRAGUT
(to Balleseros)
I told my wife I'd be here one day.
I was serious.

Balleseros tightens his mouth, looks away.

EXT. AREA 32 INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH BASE - DAY

The helicopter touches down and our foursome are immediately greeted by Pederson and Hataki. Now without their suits on -

Pederson is beyond huge. He could play football for the Jets. Hataki, meanwhile, is extremely handsome, with sharp features and deep eyes - the Japanese George Clooney.

Both men are clearly unhappy to have visitors. Pederson steps forward.

PEDERSON
Colonel Frank Pederson, Army Procurement.

Pederson and Balleseros salute one another.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
Sorry there's no red carpet, but we didn't know you were coming till an hour ago. We're not really used to having guests.

FARRAGUT
Well here we are.

HATAKI
Hiroshi Hataki. Roland Pharmaceuticals.

Farragut and Walker exchange a look.

HATAKI (CONT'D)
Both the deceased and the surviving patient are sequestered inside. Follow me.

Suddenly, the helicopter starts to lift off. Walker spins, concerned.

PEDERSON
It's too cold to keep the copter stationed here. Besides -

Pederson gestures to black SIGNS in several languages marking the facility as a QUARANTINED RESEARCH AREA.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
- we don't need the pilots any more spooked than they are already. Camp Eisenhower is just forty miles south. They can be here at a half hours notice.

All six start approaching the entrance, but Jordan can't take her eyes off the signs.

WALKER
(quietly to Farragut)
Big pharma working with the military?

Hataki, thirty feet away but still overhearing her -

HATAKI
We'll tell you everything inside.

From Walker's now creeped out face, we seriously doubt this.

INT. AREA 32, INDUSTRIAL LIFT - DAY

A private glass elevator slowly moves floor by floor down the center artery of the complex. As they descend, they see SCIENTISTS moving about the facility.

Our team changes into AREA 32 SCRUBS while Pederson explains.

PEDERSON
One hundred and six doctors, including Hataki and me, work the two hundred and fourteen thousand square foot complex. On top of the research, we handle all cooking, cleaning, and facility maintenance. Think of us like a space ship. But with way better technology.

Jordan appears slightly uncomfortable changing out in the open.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
Relax, it's one way glass.
(then)
It's important for you to keep a low profile. Our research, and the way we conduct ourselves, has political implications.

WALKER
How? What is this place?

Hataki starts to answer while Pederson pulls out a tray with four DEX SYRINGES. Farragut, Walker, and Jordan immediately inject themselves. Balleseros just stares at the needle.

HATAKI
We're a research lab. Just like you were told. A place for the private and public sectors to come together across countries to create new partnerships.

As they descend further and further, the number of scientists radically thins out, replaced by COMPUTER MAINFRAMES, then HEAVY SEALED DOORS. Doors that are impossible to see past.

HATAKI (CONT'D)
I've been overseeing Area 32's research since it's inception in hopes of piggy backing on anything that has commercial applications. Needless to say, it's an extremely delicate operation, all the more reason we need you to -

FARRAGUT
We got it. But right now, we're wasting time.
(to Balleseros)
You stay with Colonel Pederson. I want to see a vector map of every possible transmission route including the ventilation ducts -

PEDERSON
(stern)
They're UV filtered. And besides, it's not airborne. We know this from the infection rate.

Farragut gives Balleseros a quick look - but doesn't argue.

FARRAGUT
Walker, you work with Hataki to construct a list of all possible human carriers and begin interviews to assess transmission mechanisms and/or commonalities among current or future carriers. If this thing can spread person to person, I want to know how and who's most at risk.

WALKER
I should be in the disection room. With you.

FARRAGUT
(to Jordan)
You'll be assisting me with the initial autopsy of the deceased.
(to group)
No one talks to the surviving index patient until we have a better idea of what we're dealing with. We'll meet outside the slammer in one hour.

Everyone nods, if Walker reluctantly. And then, all three turn to Balleseros, who still hasn't injected himself.

JORDAN
It's to help with the thin air.

But Balleseros just stares. It's unclear whether he's scared of needles, or just wary in general. Walker takes note again.

BALLESEROS
I'll be fine.

And then, with a hiss, the elevator stops.

FARRAGUT
Remember people, this thing is hot. Your small mistakes can kill you. Your even smaller mistakes can kill all of us.
(then, to Pederson)
Now, show me the body.

INT. DISECTION ROOM - DAY

Farragut stands across from Jordan, both in Racal suits. Between them, on the table, is a non-porous BLUE BODY BAG.

Both prepare their equipment. Farragut, two decades of experience, does it blindly. He can't stop staring at the sack. There's a hint of sadness in his face - *it is his brother* - but only a hint. He's the consummate professional.

Jordan, despite years of study, is slightly nervous now that she's actually on a site. She tries to hide it, but Farragut knows <u>nothing</u> can prepare you for this kind of experience.

FARRAGUT
You ever seen a bag like this?

JORDAN
I know what it is, sir.

FARRAGUT
It’s reverse engineered to prevent any contamination, in or out.

JORDAN
I know what it is, sir.

Farragut smiles, fastens a needle onto a syringe, rechecks his gloves. He sees Jordan’s arms begin to ever so slightly shake. Keeps lecturing -

FARRAGUT
Your hands are the most vulnerable part of this kind of work. Over twelve thousand health workers are infected annually this way.

Jordan looks up. Says nothing.

FARRAGUT (CONT’D)
The second greatest vulnerability is claustrophobia induced by the head gear. If you feel light headed, excuse yourself, but under no circumstance remove the mask -

JORDAN
Sir.

FARRAGUT
- or you might find yourself in the same condition as the thing you’re working on.

Farragut still hasn’t taken his eyes off the bag.

JORDAN
Dr. Farragut. Would you like to do this alone?

Farragut stares up at Jordan.

FARRAGUT
I’m just trying to prepare you. First time in the field can be hard.

JORDAN
I’m prepared, sir. My father’s been talking about this kind of stuff since I was in diapers.

FARRAGUT
Right. Now open the bag.

Jordan reaches over and unzips -

SHOT FROM BELOW

Jordan looks down into the bag, and her EYES GROW LARGE. She turns pale, sputters VOMIT into the front of her mask, and backs away.

Farragut smiles sympathetically, then turns down towards the bag himself. But what he sees hits <u>him</u> even harder. He shakes.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
You should go, Sarah.

SARAH
But -

FARRAGUT
I'll leave the samples outside for you.
(then)
<u>Now</u>, please.

Sarah does so reluctantly, and he goes back to staring. His face says it all - even *he* wasn't ready for this. *Scientifically or emotionally.*

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry, Paul. So sorry.

He takes a breath. Then another. Then another. Slowly recomposing himself. Then, slowly, painfully, he begins to work.

But then, he sees something. Something he's never seen before. And his face darkens.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
Dear God.

Then, probing even further.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
<u>Dear God.</u>

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT II

INT. MASTER CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Doubling as Pederson's office - it's plain. Mostly filled with diagrams, computer monitors, and a couple ping pong paddles in the corner.

Balleseros looks over STAGING MAPS, and we now get a grasp of how incredibly layered the facility is. Almost like a labyrinth.

PEDERSON
Eighty six self contained research labs. Forty three miles of sewer lines. One hundred eighteen miles of subterranean ducts.

Balleseros, not much of talker, takes notes. But his eyes never leave Pederson for more than a second.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
How many years you been with the service?

BALLESEROS
Nine. First six doing anthrax detection in Iraq. Last three as a structural engineer stateside.

PEDERSON
So you're not a doctor? This shit must seem crazy to you.

BALLESEROS
Not really.

PEDERSON
You Mexican? We have some scientists from Guadala -

BALLESEROS
I grew up on an army base in Michigan. I was adopted.

That kills *that* conversation. Balleseros points to the map.

BALLESEROS (CONT'D)
What's this here?

PEDERSON
That room's been redesigned in the past six months. Emergency exit used to lead straight out. It's been sealed for security reasons.
(off Balleseros's look)
Bears and shit.

Ballerseros lets it go. For now. They go back to the map.

BALLESEROS
And these hallways?

PEDERSON
All negative air pressure. The facility was exactingly built to prevent cross contamination -

And here's where we switch to 3D CSI MODE. We now see the entire facility, transparent, from above. And from above it looks *very* different and *ten times as big*.

PEDERSON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
As you saw, individuals pass freely throughout Level One, or Living Zones -

The LEVEL ONE zones light up ORANGE. We see simulated people, think The Sims, moving through those areas, talking, eating -

PEDERSON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
- but are forced to detox themselves in decontamination chambers before and after passing into a Level Two, or Work Zone -

These ZONES light up BLUE. Movement is orderly and spaced out, almost like a conveyor belt.

PEDERSON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Eighty percent of our personnel conduct their projects in Level Two zones, making it the largest area for possible cross contamination. Certain experiments with unpredictable or unstable by-products call for scientists to work in Level Three Zones -

These ZONES, significantly smaller, light up in RED. Movement is sparse, restricted, and staccato. This is what we didn't see behind those doors.

PEDERSON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
- which is where you'll be spending most of your time here. These areas are subject to regular ultraviolet eradication with neither staff nor equipment leaving without redundant tox screens.

BALLESEROS (O.C.)
No level Four?

PEDERSON (O.C.)
No.

The discerning viewer will remember this contradicts what we saw in the teaser.

BALLESEROS (O.C.)
Air supply and disposal?

PEDERSON (O.C.)
Class R.

We ZOOM in on a MAN COUGHING.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
In a normal building a pathogen can roam freely throughout a ventilation system -

We follow a VIRUS moving throughout the entire facility, dodging and weaving like a boy in a water slide, going from room to room, person to person -

PEDERSON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
But our system filters out all bugs known to earth in the duct joints -

Literally THOUSANDS of ULTRAVIOLET DUCT FILTERS light up throughout the map, KILLING virus particles as they pass by -

PEDERSON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
- and disposes any chemical by-product into a discharge tank outside of the facility -

We see remnants pass up and out through additional ducts, get eradicated and burned again, then get pushed out of the building into a large quadruple reinforced STEEL TANK held at one thousand degrees below zero.

PEDERSON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
- where if by some miracle of God something still lived, it would freeze to death immediately. In, or outside, the tank.

BACK TO THE ENGINE ROOM -

Pederson looks pleased with himself.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
Another advantage of working up here.

BALLESEROS
I'd like to see this exit duct.

PEDERSON
Of course you would.

The two men stand up, start to exit.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
It's nice to be working with another military man on this. You and me, we think the same.

Off Balleseros face, we're not so sure...

INT. HATAKI'S OFFICE - DAY

Sleek. Large. The few visible items are expensive. Along the glass table - PHOTOGRAPHS of all STAFF, including nationalities, detailed MANIFEST SCHEDULES, and specialities.

Hataki watches Walker pick through them.

WALKER
Men mostly.

HATAKI
Intentional. Gender uniformity leads to less sexual interaction.

The irony of this isn't lost on Walker, or Hataki.

WALKER
(sarcastic)
You don't want little arctic babies roaming the halls? This place could live on forever.

Hataki stares back deadpan - as if she doesn't understand the import of what she just said.

HATAKI
It was an American idea.
(then, brushing over it)
I expected your team would want to meet with the infected survivor first. Isn't that standard?

WALKER
(continuing to work)
Suspected infectees will say whatever it takes to get them out of confinement. Better to go in with a theory than let them form one for you.
(then)
Farragut has his process. We've had good success with it in the past.

Walker lifts a photo, makes a notation.

WALKER (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Besides, you guys already asked him the obvious questions. Right?

It sounds rhetorical, but something about the way Walker asks, it's like she's always probing - but with a smile. Hataki, too smart for games, doesn't respond.

HATAKI
So you've worked with Farragut before?

WALKER
With. Under. Around. We're friends too.

She consults her chart again.

WALKER (CONT'D)
Our dead patient worked in the infectious disease unit. Our surviving patient, Mark Ligoria, in the aerosol group. How often do staff from these departments interact?

HATAKI
Almost never. Break times are designed to inhibit interaction during the work day.
(MORE)

HATAKI (CONT'D)
No one needs to know what anyone outside their group is working on.

WALKER
Except you and Pederson.
(re-checking the schedule)
What about the vaccine group? How mobile are -

HATAKI
You don't think we've considered baton theory?

Walker stops for a half second - she was thinking that - but doesn't give him the immediate satisfaction.

WALKER
I think it's clear from the manifest schedules that a pathogen would have had ample opportunity to spread via -

Back to CSI MODE.

It's a more simple version of the overhead map we saw before, except now Simulated People are milling about the entire facility.

WALKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
- a baton like method.

We see one Doctor with a BATON, which he passes like a virus, to another Doctor walking perpendicular across him. After each pass, the Baton starts to immediately fade, until it's passed again.

This keeps happening, moving the Baton, before it can die, across the entire facility in a matter of seconds. Truly infecting no one except the FINAL CARRIER.

BACK TO OFFICE -

HATAKI
Except, as we've said, <u>it's not airborne</u>. We're certain because we remove the air carrier mechanism from all of our cultures. So unless you're suggesting all these 'baton passers' kissed each other in passing, the likelihood of a fomite method of transmission seems negligible. It's a theory predicated on the idea that we're being careless or underhanded.
(MORE)

HATAKI (CONT'D)
(then)
I gather you've come into this with a anti-corporate bias.

WALKER
Have you found anything to sell?

HATAKI
No. But that's the thing, we have money for decades. So I can be patient. The military wouldn't have known what to do with microwaves if we hadn't shown them the frozen pizza.

Hataki smiles. There's something oddly charming about the man, he certainly seems to believe his own words.

WALKER
So you're making better microwaves...Thank God.

HATAKI
God has no say in what we're doing.

Hataki sees her face, playfully laughs it off. He then gestures to a window overlooking one of the factory floors. DOCTORS mill about - moving test tubes, calibrating machines.

Next, Hataki beckons to an opposite, smaller window, which overlooks the very empty Arctic tundra.

HATAKI (CONT'D)
The best thing about this part of the world - no press, no politicians, no distractions. That almost justifies the expenditure in itself.

WALKER
For years no one's visited, or left the base. And then three days ago, the...Brazilians?

HATAKI
Most of our investors never make the trek up here. But certain parties invested particularly heavily. They were curious and we complied.

WALKER
Complied with what? What did they want to see?

Hataki shifts in his seat.

HATAKI
Evidence that we existed, and that their money was going to good use.

Then, nipping it in the bud before she can follow up -

HATAKI (CONT'D)
Our position on travel is a safety issue, surely one that the CDC tries to employ as well, Kate.

Walker, pleasant despite the use of her first name, smiles back, holds up six photos from the pile, led by one of DR. YEMI BABINGTON (black, late 40's).

WALKER
Paul Farragut, our patient zero, had the highest probability of interaction with these six, who could have formed a human viral chain to Ligoria. Quarantine them and prepare them for questioning.

She drops the photos, and exits.

INT. FARRAGUT'S BROTHER'S ROOM - DAY

Our Farragut enters, stands there silently. It's an empty dorm, with a few shirts hanging in the closet, a pair of shoes under the bed, but otherwise empty.

Farragut walks over to his brother's desk. If he's having an emotional reaction, he's hiding it. It could be a strangers room...

He opens the drawer. A few PENS, a SCREWDRIVER, and a NOTEBOOK. Farragut flips through the first few pages - random notes, scribbles. He shuts the drawer.

He moves over to the bed, sits down. Looks underneath - nothing. Opens the night stand. At the bottom of it -

A PHOTO of his BROTHER (then 12) with his PARENTS, all making a cake. Farragut stares at the photo, and for the first time, he looks affected. But not half as affected as when -

He looks up, and sees ANOTHER PHOTO, FRAMED, by the headboard. It's of his BROTHER (10) and HIMSELF (6), FISHING.

Farragut picks it up and stares. This from a guy he hasn't spoken to in two decades? It makes no sense. And weirder still -

Why would he put a photo of their parents *in a drawer* and a framed picture of Farragut *out on top*?

Farragut looks even closer. It's not clear he even remembers this photo? Farragut inspects the edges of the frame, and that's when he discovers...

They're loose? Farragut picks at them with his fingernails. He goes back to the drawer, takes out the screwdriver. And like the surgeon he is, he delicately pries the frame open, pulls out the photo, to see -

Bizarre WRITING on the back. Almost like it's some kind of *made up* language. *Or code*?

Farragut runs back to the drawer, pulls out the notebook. He turns through the pages, faster and faster, until - ALL THE PAGES are written in this code.

<u>HUNDRED OF PAGES.</u>

And then, in the middle of it all, ONE single line written in plain text -

<u>THE HELIX PROJECT.</u>

A NOISE from behind him. Farragut drops the picture frame, SHATTERING it, spins and sees -

Walker, standing there, staring at him. She walks over, sees the photo, right side up, covered in glass.

WALKER
You okay?

FARRAGUT
I...

But Walker isn't looking for an explanation. She's never seen his this vulnerable.

WALKER
You want a minute?

FARRAGUT
You don't understand.

WALKER
If it was my brother, I'd want a -

FARRAGUT
It was my brother who called us.

Both stare at each other, confused.

WALKER
How is that possible?

FARRAGUT
I don't know.

WALKER
Why wouldn't he call you directly?

FARRAGUT
We're not friends. We're not anything.

She picks up the photo of the two boys.

WALKER
Well this picture suggests otherwise.
(then)
And right now, so does your face.

Farragut turns, sees his face in the mirror. She's right - he does look distraught. *He's not sure how to emotionally deal with this.*

WALKER (CONT'D)
Are you sure you don't want a minute?

Farragut's face hardens.

FARRAGUT
What I want, is to wrap this up by tonight, and be with my wife by tomorrow.

WALKER
You've never backed down from a mystery before.

FARRAGUT
Tonight, Walker. We're on that plane by tonight.

INT. SLAMMER OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Farragut sits at a table with Walker. She clearly wants to keep discussing the connection with the brother, but one look from Farragut's face wards her off.

WALKER
Fine.
(then)
Where's Ballerseros then?

FARRAGUT
Late.

WALKER
Figures.

FARRAGUT
Meaning what?

WALKER
Meaning we know nothing about him.

FARRAGUT
He's just doing his job. And nobody likes to inject themselves with needles. We're the freaks.

She relaxes - he's always a step ahead of her in the conversation.

WALKER
Speaking of, where is Jordan?

FARRAGUT
Preparing the samples.

WALKER
She do okay?

FARRAGUT
Better than you your first time.

WALKER
And the...remains?

FARRAGUT
Too early to say. Based on what I saw in the bag, the virus is foreign to anything we've ever seen before. Looks man made.

WALKER
Big pharma messing around in the snow.

FARRAGUT
Don't read into it. You know what else is man made? Tylenol. People die from over-the-counter meds all the time. He could have been sick before he even arrived here.
(then)
You find anything?

WALKER
Six transmission candidates, one especially good one. An African Doctor.
(then)
Why am I assigned to -

FARRAGUT
Because you're good at coaxing information out of men. I imagine it has something to do with the one way nature of the attraction.

Walker tries to suppress her smile.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
This stuff always has more to do with people than pathogens. You know that. These interviews are our best chance of solving this thing.

WALKER
The first one starts in an hour.

FARRAGUT
Then let's get this over with.

And with that, Farragut hits a switch, revealing DR. MARK LIGORIA on the other side of the glass. The man is catatonic, but stable. He's loosely restrained by leather bands - reassuring given the man has the build of a professional wrestler, and the stare of a dead man.

WALKER
Look at his eyes.

FARRAGUT
Disease crazy? Or "crazy cause they locked me up here and no one's told me anything"?

Point made. Farragut hits a button, speaks into a microphone -

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
Dr. Ligoria, my name is Dr. Alan Farragut, of the United States Center for Disease Control. My colleague, Dr. Katherine Walker, and I have reviewed the account you gave Dr. Hataki, and we have some follow up questions. If you understand what I'm saying, please respond in the affirmative.

The man lifts his eyes.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
You stated that you had zero interaction with Dr. Paul Farragut in the week prior to noticing your initial symptoms. Is that correct?

The man nods.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
And in the report you describe those initial symptoms as minor hallucinations, feeling numb to pain, followed by slight hemorrhaging in the gum line, and a progressive fever. May I ask why you took twelve hours to report your condition to your superiors?

The man leans forward, scans the room, mumbles something.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
Could you repeat your answer?

He looks around again, MOUTHS something unclear towards them.

WALKER
Could be dysphoria brought on by dehydration.

Farragut nods, but he's not convinced. Hits the mic again.

FARRAGUT
Was there any possible exposure to unidentified elements in the days leading up to your outbreak? Possibly a compound in transition.

More mumbling. Walker leans over, hits the button.

WALKER
Dr. Ligoria. You have symptoms similar to Dr. Paul Farragut from organics, but for some reason they're manifesting themselves differently in you. Do you have any idea why that might be?

More of the same. Ligoria then leans back, closes his eyes. Walker's nonplussed.

WALKER (CONT'D)
A doctor with a bad attitude?

FARRAGUT
Or just tired.

Farragut then stares even more closely. The man is still mumbling, but it almost looks...calculated? Like he's intentionally rocking his head to avoid someone seeing.

Farragut stands up, looks through the glass, around the room. Nothing but water bottles and an observation camera. Then, the mumbling stops, and dark thick saliva starts to spill from Ligoria's mouth.

WALKER
Nothing in his indication should cause that.

More saliva. The man goes limp. Farragut's curious.

FARRAGUT
I'm gonna go in for samples.

EXT. AREA 32 BASE - DAY

Balleseros, now dressed in snow gear, follows Pederson along the outside wall. The place truly is a fortress, with no views inside save the evenly spaced three-inch metallic glass windows every ten meters.

And inside those windows - long empty hallways that appear to have been abandoned for years. It makes no sense and it's scary as shit. Balleseros turns away and looks up, sees huge CLOUDS forming, but says nothing. Pederson sees his face.

PEDERSON
Weather here changes every few hours. It's nothing.

They keep walking, Balleseros's eyes warily alternating between Pederson, the integrity of the walls, and the vast tundra behind him. The stark white landscape is disorienting.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
We have a saying up here, staring is scary. Keep your eyes in front of you. You get lost, you're dead in twenty minutes.

They round another corner, and arrive at the EXIT DUCT. As described, it leads to an enormous disease REFUSE TANK surrounded by BARBED WIRE.

BALLESEROS
Worried about thieves?

PEDERSON
No one's that stupid. Damn bears.

Balleseros looks again, suspicious. Even we think wires don't seem like the right kind of deterrent for twelve hundred pound polar bears.

Balleseros pulls out a METAK gauge gun and examines the duct. It's a complicated piece of engineering, but it looks fine. He moves around to examine the other side when he sees -

A COPPER TUBE, two feet in diameter, leading into the ground.

BALLESEROS
What the hell is that?

PEDERSON
Plumbing. What did you think we did with the shit?

Balleseros walks closer, kicks at the surface ice around the pipe where it enters the ice pack, slowly clearing a view.

BALLESEROS
I thought the sewage pipe empties into the north side. Map J.

Pederson's impressed, and wary, of this guy's memory.

PEDERSON
Right. But that's for human waste.

Balleseros gets down on his knees and scrapes away the surface snow entirely. And that's when he sees it - through three feet of ice, the water below is BROWN.

PEDERSON (CONT'D)
This here's for the monkeys.

Balleseros looks up, alarmed.

INT. DIAGNOTICS LAB - DAY

In absolute silence - Jordan, remarkably calm as she's back to doing what she does best, carefully places samples into petri dishes with a quartz eye dropper.

The work is tedious *and* beautiful, with little explosions of light erupting each time two mixtures collide. And there's a rhythm to the work, like playing the drums. Except these drums could explode and kill you. And everyone you know.

She finishes the final dish in the row, lifts the tray, and begins to walk toward the STEEL OBSERVATION CABINET when -

VOICE (V.O.)
How are things going?

Jordan spins, sees Dr. Hataki behind her. Takes a breath.

JORDAN
Good, sir. We should have a better idea in six hours.

HATAKI
Four. That processor accelerates the growth mechanism by thirty percent.

Jordan's never heard of such a thing.

HATAKI (CONT'D)
We developed and built it here using tri-polar magnetism. It forces the cells to divide quicker by literally ripping them apart.

JORDAN
Is that...safe?

HATAKI
We were actually looking for a way to *slow down* the process. This was a necessary step in getting there.
(off Jordan's uncertainty)
Relax. We used to develop and test things like this in space all the time. But there's no political will for that kind of research anymore.

Jordan's still not sure what kind of research he means. But before she can ask -

HATAKI (CONT'D)
We wanted to save mankind too, we just didn't have the tools yet.

Jordan wants to smile, this is exciting for her. But...

JORDAN
Sir, should you be in here? Protocol -

HATAKI
Sorry. I'm not a government man myself, and, well, you can hardly blame me for being curious. I'll get out of your way.

But rather than move, Hataki just stands there, watching Jordan, who can feel Hataki's stare over her shoulder.

Finally, Hataki walks back by the culture cabinets, hovers for another few seconds with his back to us, and exits.

Jordan, now disquieted by the encounter and slightly nervous again, goes back to her work, inserting a long needle into the sample sack -

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SLAMMER - DAY

Farragut pulls a LONG SYRINGE out of a stocked TOOL KIT. We pull back - see Farragut in a full RACAL suit, standing five feet from Dr. Ligoria, who's back to murmering incoherently.

From up close, Farragut sees the man's sweat. It's almost... black? Black sweat? Farragut speaks to Walker through his mic -

FARRAGUT
Giving subject ten cc's of anesthesia to faciltate the extraction process.

- then inserts the syringe into the left side of the man's lower spinal cord. Ligoria calms down, goes limp again.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
Pulling five cc's from the spleen to test for lymphatic infection.

Farragut pulls out another thinner syringe, and expertly inserts it into the man's side. The chamber behind the needle slowly fills with milky fluid. Farragut begins to pack up, takes another look at the fluid, and frowns.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
Pulling a redundant sample directly from the lower jaw.

Farragut leans in towards the man's head. Unlike the rest of Ligoria's body - which is strangely as smooth as a teenagers - his face does appear affected. The lines around his eyes are too deep. For a man of *any* age.

Farragut pulls out a new syringe, starts to insert it below the jaw when -

Ligoria's <u>eyes flash open</u>. He lunges for the needle with one hand and grabs Farragut's neck with the other. Walker scrambles at the window -

WALKER
Oh, God. Shit.

Farragut keeps wrestling with him, blood now trickling out of Ligoria's neck.

FARRAGUT
Let go. Let go.

But Ligoria's not letting go. Instead, he's turning Farragut's head AWAY from the security camera.

WALKER
Requesting permission to use sedation gas.

From Farragut's POV - the men's faces are inches apart. Farragut is hampered by the suit, but Ligoria is equally hampered by the arm restraints and anesthetic.

LIGORIA
(Italian accent)
It's in the cage.

FARRAGUT
Calm down. Let go.

Farragut desperately tries to hold onto the needle - <u>the TIP is less than a CENTIMETER from his own NECK</u> - while not poking and infecting himself.

Ligoria pulls harder and the men TWIST, the needle now hidden somewhere amongst their contorted bodies. Balleseros charges into the observation room. Sees what's happening.

BALLESEROS
What the -

WALKER
(intercom to Farragut)
Again, permission to use gas?

But Farragut, still scrambling to control the needle, shakes his head no.

BALLESEROS
Do it anyway.

WALKER
But Ligoria's our best lead.

Balleseros pushes past Walker towards the control panel.

BALLESEROS
Over-riding internal chain of command.
Will trigger gas in five, four -

BACK ON LIGORIA AND FARRAGUT

We're right in their faces.

LIGORIA
(whispering)
I never wanted to live like this.
It's too much. They'll try and tell
you I'm crazy -

Farragut looks into the man's eyes. He looks exactly that.

BACK ON WALKER

Who's debating whether to stop Balleseros. Two panels in the ceiling open, two gas mains drop, ready to go.

BACK ON LIGORIA

LIGORIA (CONT'D)
The cages -

BALLESEROS
Initiating -

FARRAGUT
(to Walker)
Wait. It <u>will</u> kill him. Our *only* lead.

LIGORIA
(whispering frantically)
The little men. The zool.

FARRAGUT
(to Ligoria)
That doesn't make sense -

LIGORIA
I knew you wouldn't believe -

Ligoria takes control of the needle, but Farragut turns him over and shoves his neck into the corner of the operating table. Blood shoots faster from Ligoria's cut. He groans.

Farragut cracks Ligoria's wrist sideways, takes the needle back, and falls backward, out of his reach, just as Walker hits the emergency shut off valve.

WALKER
Get out of there, now.

Farragut, dripping in sweat, backs out of the room, and collapses.

INT. SLAMMER DECONTAMINATION HALLWAY - DAY

Farragut, now de-suited, enters the room. Walker, Jordan, and Balleseros wait. Farragut removes tools from his kit and places them in defined slots along the wall as they speak.

WALKER
What the hell happened?

FARRAGUT
The suit's intact. I'm fine.

WALKER
But what happened? The anesthesia should have -

FARRAGUT
Slow metastic process. Might be why he's still alive. Samples should confirm that.

WALKER
Wait. You got the samples?

FARRAGUT
They’re off to the lab as we speak.

Smiles all around.

FARRAGUT (CONT’D)
(to Jordan)
You okay running tissue cultures on Ligoria?

JORDAN
(almost defensive)
Of course.

FARRAGUT
(to Balleseros)
And can we trust the integrity of the delivery mechanism inside this building?

BALLESEROS
Actually, that’s why I came back early. We can’t trust anything. They’re using Monobos as test subjects.

JORDAN
So?

FARRAGUT
The ‘so‘ is why didn’t they tell us.

WALKER
They think it’s non-relevant. How many are we talking?

BALLESEROS
I don’t know.
(pausing)
But it’s intentionally mismarked on the maps as a fuel center. And the room’s been redesigned. In the past two weeks.

Complete silence - t*his is no oversight*. Something clicks on Farragut’s face. He glances back towards Ligoria - *what was it he said?* Another frown.

Farragut keeps placing tools along the wall until he realizes one is missing. From the wall, it looks like it would have been some kind of tiny bone saw. He checks his kit again.

It’s empty.

FARRAGUT
Shit. Go check on -

Farragut and Company run -

INT. SLAMMER OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Ligoria's gone. And from the ceiling, a PANEL'S MISSING.

He's escaped. *You gotta be fucking kidding me.*

CUT TO BLACK

ACT III

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Our team, Pederson, and Hataki scramble down a corridor.

PEDERSON
How could you leave him in there with a bone saw?

WALKER
The man attacked and stole it from his kit. We couldn't even see -

PEDERSON
Is it not protocol in the CDC to check your inventory before leaving an area?

Point made. But Farragut's mind is elsewhere.

FARRAGUT
How could a man break out of a slammer with just a saw? And it was a <u>fifteen</u> foot jump to the ceiling.

This hits everyone. <u>It does seem impossible.</u>

PEDERSON
I don't know, Farragut, perhaps he's just smarter than us. But we'll never know for sure, because he sawed off the room's security camera before exiting.

Hataki stops in front of a locker, pulls out a key, opens it, and removes a local OVERHEAD MAP.

HATAKI
(calming them down)
What matters is we find him. Navigating the ducts is almost impossible *with* a map and equipment.

PEDERSON
Not to mention a healthy dose of sanity.

Hataki shoots Pederson a look. Farragut catches it.

HATAKI
(nipping it in the bud)
Ligoria was an aggressive scientist prone towards risk taking. But all the great ones are. You'd agree to that, wouldn't you, Dr. Farragut?

Another shot and it lands. What does Hataki know? But there's no time for that now. Hataki's finger stops at a point on the map right below a BLUE DUCT.

HATAKI (CONT'D)
Without oxygen supplementation, he couldn't have made it further than here.
(then, to Pederson)
Do it.

Pederson, showing his first sign of hesitation since we've met him, grits his teeth, then reaches into that same locker, which we now see has a large EMERGENCY CONTROL BUTTON.

FARRAGUT
Wait. What are you -

But it's too late. Pederson hits the button, and immediately, overhead, the sound of SCREECHING. Like a jet engine.

PEDERSON
(over the roar)
Flooded it with phosgene oxime. If he wasn't dead before, he sure as hell is now.

Slowly, the screeching winds down. Our team stands in shock. Finally -

WALKER
I'll go get him.

PEDERSON
No, you won't. That stuff could kill an elephant. It'll take three hours for the oxime to clear out. We'll get him then, but right now we have other problems.

BALLESEROS
Like the monkeys?

Silence again. But Hataki's prepared -

HATAKI
We should have mentioned them, but we didn't because as of now, we've never actually used them. The monkeys are to test compounds before they enter a human space, but neither of our infectees had any contact with them, and as your man here discovered, they are on a completely separate eco maintenance system. Hence, zero interaction.

FARRAGUT
I'd like to see them anyway.

Hataki and Pederson exchange a look.

HATAKI
Why?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Walker and Jordan walk towards the east wing. Walker's pensive. This is also the first time the two women have been alone together. There's tension. Experience versus new blood.

JORDAN
You don't *actually* think this could be a retrovirus?

WALKER
The presence of monkeys makes it more likely than ever. Retroviruses *love* to jump species.

Jordan's not on board.

WALKER (CONT'D)
Look, you didn't see Ligoria. His eyes were empty. His body mechanics marred. You ever seen what a retrovirus does to a central nervous system?

JORDAN
I may have seen just that two hours ago. But it's hardly concrete evidence of a -

WALKER
True. For that we'd also need to see it hijacking healthy DNA. Which is why you need to work faster.

But Jordan's not buying it - Walker's explanation or the idea that Jordan's somehow slowing them down.

JORDAN
You're seeing what you want to see. Things die. In fact, *everything* dies. Doesn't mean it's a conspiracy.

Walker looks the girl over - *is she seriously lecturing to her*? They come to a fork in their path.

WALKER
Your first cultures should be ready in ten. You should go.

Jordan stares at her, then storms off.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - DAY

Walker sits in small room, going over surveillance footage, preparing for her first interview. Splayed across the table are photos of the six possible human carriers from earlier. But right in front of her is -

Yemi Babington, the same African doctor featured earlier. He's also the doctor Walker's currently watching on black and white footage taken a week before.

In it, the conservatively dressed doctor walks quickly down a narrow hallway, which would be unremarkable, except that the man STOPS, every two or three seconds, to look beside him.

Which makes no sense because -

The entire hallway is sealed. And empty.

Walker stops the footage, rewinds it, plays it again. Then another time. What the hell is he looking at?

She pauses it. ZOOMS in on his face. Is he crazy, paranoid, tired, or just...

A THUD from above Walker. She looks up, startled, as her headphones fall from her ears.

What the fuck was that?

She waits for it to come again, but...nothing. Exhausted herself, Walker puts her headphones back on, starts a new video.

But then, from above her, the *tiny* sound of banging. Walker takes off her headphones, looks up -

HARD CUT TO:

FARRAGUT (O.C.)
Can you stop banging on that?

Pull back to reveal -

INT. SIMIAN CONTAINMENT FACILITY - DAY

Farragut and Balleseros, in SEMI-PROTECTIVE HAZMAT SUITS, walk through stacks of screeching, hideous MONKEYS. The room is beyond enormous - with rows so long they fade into a blur.

Farragut stares at the animals while Balleseros checks a cage by tapping it with a wrench.

BALLESEROS
I guess we found our 'bears'.

FARRAGUT
West African Monobos. More expensive because they're harder to catch. Harder to catch because they're smarter. They're also markedly less interested in sex than their counterparts.

Balleseros nods, unconsciously touches his mouth.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
You need a cigarette or something?

Balleseros is surprised he noticed the tick.

BALLESEROS
I'm quitting. You quitting?
(then)
Takes a smoker to know one.

FARRAGUT
Yet another thing I've forced my wife to suffer through. Sailing, smoking, and sc -

BALLESEROS
Sex.

FARRAGUT
I was going to say science.
(then)
All four, I suppose.

Both men smile at the quiet moment of comic relief, and the subject is dropped. They keep walking.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
I'm not really used to having a chaperone. Why are you here?

BALLESEROS
I'm checking the design specs.

FARRAGUT
I mean here here. Why were you sent here with us?

Balleseros stops, stares at Farragut through the cages. He starts to give a rehearsed line, then changes his mind.

BALLESEROS
I'm not sure.
(then)
Yet.

And with this one line, Balleseros, strangely enough, might be the only other man in the facility Farragut trusts. Farragut then leans in towards a cage, takes a monkey's hand, and rotates it back and forth. It looks fine.

BALLESEROS (CONT'D)
I'm gonna go check the other wing. You gonna be okay without my...supervision?

Balleseros smiles, walks off. Farragut moves on to the next monkey.

INT. LAB - DAY

Jordan removes another culture from a tray, examines it through a ELECTRON MICROSCOPE, records her observations in a MIC -

JORDAN
Sample 9t shows normal cellular division and growth.

Jordan carefully puts it back, pulls out the next sample.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
Sample 10t, again normal, but...no signs of cross-reactivity? The host's immune system had no idea what to do with it, strongly suggesting an artificial compound -

Jordan, more excited now, puts it back and pulls out another -

JORDAN (CONT'D)
Sample 11t shows more division. Except...it's flawed.

Jordan stands up, alarmed.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
It's as if it was *designed* to retard cell death, but poorly designed. Allowing for too many internal mutations.
(almost to herself)
But why?

Jordan goes to find the 12th tray when - she realizes it's missing. She searches the outlining trays, confused.

She starts going through the surrounding cases, the same that Hataki was hovering over earlier. Starts to panic. Losing shit is not okay in this kind of work. And on her first assignment.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
No. No.

Jordan spins, looking everywhere, when - she catches the side of her right containment suit on the edge of one of the cabinets, opening a very tiny RIP.

But she's too frantic to notice. She goes back to the shelves, still looking.

EXT. SURVELLIANCE ROOM - DAY

Walker slowly enters the hallway, looking up, down, everywhere. She takes a left, moving slowly, waiting for the noise again.

But the slower she walks, the longer the hallway starts to seem, and the softer she moves, the quieter. Impossibly long. Impossibly silent.

This is her first time moving alone through the complex. And alone, this place is a hundred times creepier.

Walker looks behind her again. Nothing. Above her. Nothing. Below her - her own feet on the oddly dim floor. And then -

A STRANGE SHADOW FROM ABOVE. She starts up, begins to SWING her arm defensively when -

She sees Farragut. Standing there with a note pad. Silent.

FARRAGUT
I guess we're both scaring each other today.

He sees her balled up fist, ready to strike, and smiles.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

Walker catches her breath, shakes her head yes.

Above them, in the FAR distance, the ever so slight sound of the beginning of a THUNDER STORM.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
Good. Because Jordan's found something.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

BLACK through a MICROSCOPE -

JORDAN (O.C.)
This is it at 100xp.

The lens OPENS. CLOSE UP of a TISSUE SLIDE. Pink. Bushy.

JORDAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
And this is it at 10,000xp. Note the telomeres at the ends.

PUSH IN a hundred times closer on ONE CELL. The ends are frayed like bunches of WIRES - not that different than the split ends of a human hair. Except more radiant. And twisted.

WALKER (O.C.)
Let's just tray three trays forward.

The same cell, but this time it looks stuffed with writhing little spaghetti threads. Filling like a water balloon -

JORDAN (O.C.)
These cells are dying way too fast.

WALKER (O.C.)
And the remaining ones are copying themselves far too rapidly.
(then)
It goes against everything we know about disease pathology.

They skip three trays forward again. More fraying. Another CLAP of thunder from the sky as the storm continues to form.

FARRAGUT (O.C.)
That's because it's a man made retrovirus.

WALKER (O.C.)
Three more.

Now the ends are completely frayed, and the cell looks to be on the verge of exploding.

WALKER (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Dear God. It's mutating faster than...anything I've ever seen. I don't understand how they got it to do this -

JORDAN (O.S.)
Magneticism.

BACK ON OUR TEAM

WALKER
What?

JORDAN
Hataki told me they'd created a device that increased the rate of cellular division by -

WALKER
Told you? Told you when?

JORDAN
In the lab.

WALKER
(can't believe it)
Why was Hataki in the lab with you?

Silence. Jordan's embarrassed, because she knows Walker's right.

FARRAGUT
Anything else happen in there we should know about?

Silence. Jordan tries to recover -

JORDAN
I should have Ligoria's blood ready within the hour. We can use it to compare -

But the mention of Ligoria sets off a different alarm in Walker's head.

WALKER
Wait a second. Ligoria's still up there. We can't have him bleeding out all over -

Farragut instantly knows where she's going with this.

FARRAGUT
Don't even think about it. It's too dangerous.

WALKER
It's a goddam <u>retrovirus.</u>

The two stare eachother down. But finally, with this mountain of evidence mounting, Farragut gives in.

<u>They're done fucking around.</u>

FARRAGUT
Do it.
(then)
I need to call my wife. We're not going anywhere.

INT. AREA 32 INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH BASE - NIGHT

The sounds of the storm are growing.

Scientists move about taking precautions to secure the structure. There's an orderly way to their movements, but this storm feels anything but normal. Lamps swing. Floors rumble.

And in the midst of it -

Farragut runs, looking for a phone. He stops someone -

FARRAGUT
I need a line out.

But the SCIENTIST brushes him off, keeps moving his cart into a steel cabinet.

Farragut tries again with someone else, but again, no response. These people are in the middle of a well rehearsed drill, and they seem to be immune from distractions.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
(louder)
I need a line out. I need a -

Farragut grabs a larger scientist, who stares right back. As it's an international base - it's not even clear whether half of them speak English.

Farragut turns another corner, sees a -

SATPHONE built into a wall. He grabs it, tries to dial out. NOTHING. Tries again. Nothing. Tries again, when -

Pederson grabs him by the arm, turns him around. Farragut throws him off.

PEDERSON
Just what are you trying to -

FARRAGUT
I'm calling my wife. I'm telling her we're staying.

Pederson's face flashes from concern, to anger, and finally, to amusement.

PEDERSON
Stay as long as you want, friend. But communications for the whole base are down. You aren't calling anyone...

INT. MONKEY CONTAINMENT WING - DAY

Balleseros's eyes move from monkey to monkey, scanning them. They're remarkably, even scarily, human. But again, they look fine. He marks his clipboard for each one he passes.

He looks down the long aisle way, there's at least fifty just in this column. But it doesn't faze him. Balleseros keeps working his way down the line.

Hands, feet, eyes, mouth. That's the order to scan for disease and that's the order he does it in. It's methodical. And boring.

Ballerseros comes to the end of the row, starts to turn towards the next when - he hears MONKEY SQUEAKING behind him.

Lots of it. He debates whether to skip to that section, decides against it. Starts with the row in front of him.

Hands, feet, eyes, mouth. Hands, feet, eyes, mouth. Hands -

More SQUEAKING. It's deafening. Balleseros starts to ignore it again, but can't. He turns around and heads towards that section, but instead of finding monkeys, he finds...

<u>EMPTY CAGES. All of them.</u> Confused, Balleseros walks closer. Examines the cages. They're all closed, locked, clean. Except -

When he looks even closer, some of the locks have been...switched? This would be lost on most of us, but Balleseros is a structural engineer. He turns them over, and now he's sure of it.

He sees SCRATCHING on the rear of the next cage. Rust everywhere. He looks closer - these cages look...*incredibly old? Wildly old.* He keeps moving.

A newly painted ceiling on the next one. New walls on the following one. They've all been repaired. And they been repaired to look like they've never been broken.

Ballerseros stands up. *What the hell happened here?* The squeaking returns. Balleseros runs over and sees ONE MONOBO still remains.

Balleseros approaches it. The monkey stops screaming, stares back, then squeaks out a few softer sounds. Almost like it's trying to...communicate?

Balleseros just stares. It's like looking into the face of a child. And this child is scared. Ballerseros checks the Hands. Normal. Feet. Normal. Eyes. Scared, but...normal. Mouth -

The monkey doesn't want to open it's mouth. Balleseros pulls out a CRANK TOOL, uses it to grab the animal's jaw, and forces it open. Revealing -

It's gums are FALLING APART. BLACK BLOOD and DROOL spill out everywhere. Balleseros stumbles back -

BALLESEROS
Jesus Christ.

- then calms down. Stares at the monkey, who smiles back morosely. A blood smile. But weirder still - it's TEETH are incredibly long and...rotting? As if it's been alive for...

The monkey then points towards another WALL, and makes a rough *lifting* movement with it's arms. Balleseros stands up, sees the wall. Goes over. Examines it.

It's a false wall, designed not to attract attention. It's also the new wall Balleseros saw on the map in the beginning. Balleseros checks his surroundings, and pulls it up.

INT. ANOTHER HALLWAY - DAY

Balleseros walks down the hallway. Unlike the rest of the base, this part feels abused. As if it was recently trashed.

Ballereros comes to the end, sees a door. Not an electronic sealed door, but an older one with a lever and steel crank shaft. Balleseros takes a deep breath, and turns the wheel.

The door opens -

EXT. AREA 32 INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH BASE - DAY

He's outside. The storm is getting crazier and crazier. He can barely breath. But then, he sees it -

Literally THOUSANDS of MONKEYS, as far as the EYE CAN SEE, FROZEN in the snow. Caught in the act of...escaping?

Ballerseros falls to his knees. He's never seen anything like it. We've never seen anything like it. These animals were RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES.

Balleseros turns to his left, sees -

Hataki, in full outdoor gear, staring at him. At this moment, Hataki doesn't look in charge at all.

BALLESEROS
Dear God.

INT. LAB - DAY

Jordan continues working with the cultures, while simultaneously scanning the room.

She’s not paranoid, just wary. Losing another tray would be a disaster. She tries to focus. Catalyzes each dish with a dropper.

JORDAN
(to Mic)
Adding thoractate to tray seven W -

When Jordan sees -

A FLY buzzing about the room. A fly? The room is positively pressurized. It’s...impossible.

Jordan takes a step back, follows the Fly as it buzzes throughout the room. It moves in large swooping motions, stopping here and there to rub its front legs together.

Jordan’s confused and scared. This fly could ruin the sterility of the room. But the fact that she let in a fly, a second mistake, could ruin her career.

She keeps watching it. It’s as if the fly is...mocking her? Buzzing louder and louder. Too loud. And then...it lands on Jordan’s MASK.

The two stare at each other, almost daring the other one to act. The fly is making FACES at her. Jordan’s starts to sweat. Is this really happening? She closes her eyes and -

OPENS THEM.

The buzzing is gone. And so is the fly. Jordan looks around the white sterilized room. No fly anywhere. As if she...imagined it all.

Jordan blinks again, goes back to the trays. Relieved, but at the same time, almost shaking.

JORDAN (CONT’D)
(to Mic)
Adding thoractate to tray eight -

And then, a BANG from above. Then another. <u>THEN ANOTHER.</u>

It sounds scarily close to what Walker heard earlier. But this time it’s way LOUDER and more distinctly like...like someone is walking up there?! <u>CIRCLING HER.</u>

Jordan freezes again. Is that who took the tray...? First the fly, then this?!

Jordan shakes it off - her mind must be slipping.

She just needs to stay focused -

And then, she COUGHS again. And this time, from her mouth, we see the slightest hint of GREY mist gather on her mask.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TOTAL BLACKNESS

Breathing through an oxygen mask. More comes into focus...

A WOMAN in a Racal suit. Crawling on her stomach. More focus -

It's Walker. Sweating profusely.

She pants as she moves, checks her hands. In her left, the MAP from earlier. On the map, marked, the spot where Ligoria is.

And in her other hand...a DISSECTION KIT. And that's when we realize -

She's up in the *fucking* DUCTS.

Walker strains to round a corner, her suit barely making the bend. Another long hallway.

THUNDER from above. But this time it's painfully loud. What kind of storm is this?

She keeps moving, but her movements are out of rythm with thunder, making each lunge forward more and more awkward.

A CRACK of LIGHTNING causes the vents to REVERBERATE. Walker looks down at her body. She's shaking.

A slight incline starts in the vents. We get closer to her face. Sweat everywhere. Almost fogging up the mask.

It could be from fear, but the grit in her teeth suggest determination. Or something even deeper.

More thunder. The sound of WIND whipping the building. And then, the worst possible scenario -

The vent starts to NARROW. She twists and turns, winding her way up the increasingly cramped space like a snake.

The fact that she's still even moving is incredible.

One last corner. Walker's beyond exhausted, and so is her oxygen supply. She's breathing WAY too hard.

She takes a final deep breath, bends her body, hears a massive CLAP of THUNDER. She contorts herself around the final corner, ready for anything. Except...

NOTHING?

He's fucking gone.

And Walker's face - *horror.*

CUT TO BLACK

ACT IV

EXT. OVERHEAD SHOT OF THE BASE -

The MOTHER of all storms. As bad as it sounded, it's a hundred times worse. Think HAIL the size of BOWLING BALLS. ICE CHUNKS the size of CARS.

It's strangely beautiful.

And scary as hell.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

Farragut and Walker charge down the hallway.

FARRAGUT
You're sure?

WALKER
I searched the entire duct.

FARRAGUT
If he's alive -

WALKER
But it's not possible. Oxime affects the cell lining the second it passes through the skin. He has to be dead.

WALKER (CONT'D)
You're not listening to me. You saw the first tissue set. We may not understand this thing, but we absolutely know it kills anything it gets inside.

Farragut stops, something big has occurred to him.

FARRAGUT
You're right.

WALKER
I know. This thing *rips* people to shreds -

FARRAGUT
Which means Ligoria might be infected by something *different*.

Silence while they both take this in.

WALKER
The markup was the same -

FARRAGUT
So we do a second one. Because if he's still alive, then this *thing* is something we've <u>never</u> seen before.

This hits both of them. Hard. Farragut turns to Walker.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
Find Babington.

WALKER
He's in quarantine.

FARRAGUT
Go now. We need to know how this thing spreads and we need to know <u>immediately</u>.

Walker starts to run off, then turns back.

WALKER
And you?

FARRAGUT
Me? I need to go back to the goddam microscope.

INT. LEVEL 1 LIVING FLOOR - NIGHT

Walker scrambles through groups of scientists trying secure the facility as the storm escalates.

She works her way down two steep set of stairs, scans her ID card, and enters

INT. QUARATINED AREA - NIGHT

A row a metal doors, each blocking a separate room, except -

They're all OPEN. Walker runs over. Worse - <u>they're all EMPTY.</u>

But there's no sign of struggle. It's as if they were...<u>let out to help?</u>

Angry, Walker runs back out into -

INT. MAIN FLOOR - DAY

She weaves in and out doctors like a running back, stopping over and over to scan the facility.

But because of the chaos, NO ONE is where they're supposed to be. All doors that should be closed are open. All rooms that should be full are empty.

Where the hell is he?

She takes a left, passes through the -

INT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

Plates of FOOD sit along tables, abandoned by the diners now working their stations.

It feels like a ghost town. She passes through the also empty kitchen, into the -

INT. BOILER ROOM - NIGHT

Rows of PISTONS and WATER TANKS creak as they move up and down. Almost like a maze.

Walker picks her way through it, and in the distance, sees -

A BLACK MAN with his back to her, playing with a THERMOSTAT.

She darts towards him, hurdling around two boilers, spins him around.

BLACK SCIENTIST
What the -

<u>But it's not him.</u>

WALKER
Shit.

BLACK SCIENTIST
Who the hell are -

But she's already off to -

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Walker runs past more empty rooms, looking for Babington's. Finally, she finds it.

LOOKS IN -

It's empty. Someone under the sheets. Not moving.

Walker whips off the sheets to see -

DIRTY LAUNDRY.

She exits - keeps moving. Faster and faster. But where else to look?

She runs up a ladder, looks over the entire floor. This place is <u>way too</u> big. She's starting to give up when -

She sees a communal bathroom. Heads in -

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Walker scans the room - white, huge, bright overhead lighting. It's rare to see a shared bathroom this empty.

Eerie almost.

A FAUCET runs in the distance.

She walks towards it. Peering around as she moves. It's so quiet compared to what's going on outside. And with each few feet she sees HERSELF, over and over again, in a different above sink mirror.

She sees her own eyes. She looks rawer than ever.

And fierce.

She stops in front of the faucet, turns it off. But...WATER is still running somewhere. She scans the row of faucets. All off.

She then turns, sees -

BABINGTON. COVERED IN BLOOD. Lying DEAD under a still running SHOWER.

Walker gasps, falls to her feet.

She looks up. A panel in the roof's been displaced. As if someone's climbed back up.

Shaking, she moves closer to the naked body. It's been punctured in two different places. And ORGANS have been removed. <u>This can't be happening.</u>

And then, she sees it.

A BONE SAW. *Farragut's* BONE SAW.

Also covered in blood. Left. Like a calling card.

INT. APEX LABORATORY - DAY

It's a new lab to us, with high ceilings, and an especially large discharge duct in the upper corner of the room.

Farragut stares down a microscope through his gas mask. It's like he's in love with whatever he's looking at...

ON SLIDE

We're zoomed in at 1,000,000xp. And what we see is - a SIMPLE, PURPLE, VIRAL STRAND. And yet...it's stunning.

Farragut talks into a MIC -

FARRAGUT (O.S.)
Six hours ago my team and I arrived at Area 32 to explore the possibility of a retrovirus. We found one.

He keeps staring while the virus ROTATES LIKE A BALLERINA.

FARRAGUT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
One hour ago evidence suggested that the virus may have mutated into two highly similar but distinct strands. Strand A appears to be killing cells at a rate we have never seen before. I am currently looking at Strand B.

Farragut zooms in further.

As we move closer, it turns RED, dancing FASTER AND FASTER - twisting, swirling, thrusting. Almost like it's...POSSESSED.

FARRAGUT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Strand B is distinct in that while structurally similar to A, it is *not* killing the cells, but rather, catalyzing them.

And while ten billion of these could fit on our finger nail, it's quickly becoming the most terrifying thing we've ever seen. More twisting. More gyrating.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
We have evidence that Strand A was responsible for the death of Dr. Paul Farragut and is a *designer* retrovirus capable of killing a subject within twenty four hours. Strand B, meanwhile, has given Dr. Mark Ligoria abnormal physical strength, in additional to some kind of immunity to lethal toxins. Causing to him live...when he shouldn't have.

The thing looks fucking <u>DEMONIC.</u>

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
Both variants of the virus are robust, and both appear to be mutating at a radical and unpredictable rates.

Farragut takes a deep breath. ZOOMS in even closer on one of the holes. From this magnification, it's huge. <u>Like the MOUTH OF HELL -</u>

FARRAGUT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And now, I believe it's mutating again. Right in front of my eyes.

Faster. Uglier. Spinning like it's on FIRE. Perpetually. Forever.

Farragut LOOKS UP -

He can't believe it. He slowly, almost shaking, leans back towards his mic.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
I now have reason to believe that Area 32 is a research facility for experimentation in the field of life extension. Possibly... permanent extension.
(then)
Which could potentially make killing this thing...

Farragut can't believe he's saying this.

FARRAGUT (CONT'D)
- next to impossible.

THEN -

CUT to a POV shot from the VENT in the corner.

Two EYES stare down at Farragut. Two BLOOD SHOT eyes.

We hear a CREAK, as if it's opening, then -

HARD CUT TO:

OVER BLACK -

HELIX

END PILOT