oxygen

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ACT ONE

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

CLOSE ON -- A Molotov cocktail SPINNING mid-air in slow motion... Almost beautiful the way it lights the night sky... Until it CRASHES into a POLICE VAN... EXPLODING in a ball of fire...

An Illinois field becomes a BATTLEGROUND. Reeking of manure and burnt gunpowder.

A line of NATIONAL GUARDSMEN stand in riot gear. Weapons readied. Freezing. Panting. Marinating in blood and sweat. But holding their ground.

Through a CLOUD OF TEAR GAS -- A wave of CREATURES stampede towards them. They are men, yet not men. These are the Orions. Otherworldly. Scattering in every direction.

The LEAD GUARDSMAN gives his men a nod and a HAILSTORM OF BULLETS STRIKE THE ORIONS. We track one ORION, who is hit in the forehead. He falls hard with a sickening THUD. Eyes wide open. Staring right at us. And as blood drips down his face we see ONE SMALL BLACK DOT UNDER EACH OF HIS EYES. And STRANGE MARKS, like tattoos, around his NECK and FACE...

The guardsmen work to quickly reload their weapons -- But it's too late for them. As the Orions continue to charge, COLLIDING with the guardsmen, CRUSHING them in the charge...

But the Orions are soon met by a greater foe -- TANKER TRUCKS. DELIVERING ROUND AFTER ROUND OF FIRE -- One by one the Orions begin to drop -- OUTMATCHED...

WHEN ACROSS THE FIELD -- we zero in on TWO WIDE EYES, peeking out from behind a tree. This is ROMAN (6). An Orion. But an innocent. A lost puppy. He spots a clearing and rushes across the field and into the night air... as we CUT TO:

INT. WHITEHILL HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A NEWS ANCHOR on television. Behind him, the image of a POLICE CAR ON FIRE.

NEWS ANCHOR
... And while Officials report that most of the intruders have been rounded up, it's possible some may have eluded capture...

A frightened MICHELLE WHITEHILL (30s) sits watching the news from the sofa, nervously fidgeting with a GOLD CROSS around her neck. Her husband RAY WHITEHILL (30s) stands vigilant at the window, peering outside.

MICHELLE
We should go to my mother's.

RAY
Things won't be any better there. Plus, there are road blocks everywhere...

Michelle shakes her head. Can't believe this is happening...

MICHELLE
So we just sit here and wait for them to come for us?

RAY
Try to relax. We don't even know if they mean any harm...

EMERY (O.S.)
Wait for who to come for us?

Ray and Michelle turn to find EMERY (6) peeking around the corner. Precocious. A light in her eyes. Ray quickly mutes the television. Michelle puts on a fake smile.

MICHELLE
Nothing, baby. Everything's fine. Time for bed.

RAY
Don't forget to take your medicine.

Emery nods. She may be six, but she's still smart enough to know when something is being hidden from her...

INT. WHITEHILL HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emery enters the kitchen, where she takes a few PILLS from a pill box labeled *Tuesday*, washing them down with water. A familiar routine. On the news in the next room, an EYEWITNESS is interviewed --

EYEWITNESS (O.S.)
The government keeps callin' it an "invasion." But they'd prob'ly call it an "arrival," y'know? Who do you think drew their weapons first?

Emery looks outside the kitchen window at a SHED in the backyard. Sees the door ajar, FLAPPING in the wind.

EXT. WHITEHILL HOME - NIGHT

A curious Emery exits the house, walking with a flashlight...

INT. SHED - NIGHT

She slowly opens the door. Scans the dark shed with her flashlight... Did something just move? She scans again...

EMERY
Hello?

She walks further inside... There, huddled in the corner of the shed, she finds ROMAN. Shivering. Scared. His clothes dirty. He looks up at her. Startling how human he seems. Emery, spotting the tell-tale dots under his eyes...

EMERY (CONT'D)
You're one of them. Aren't you?

Roman just stares back at her, his teeth chattering...

EMERY (CONT'D)
I'll be right back.

INT. WHITEHILL HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Emery enters as the NEWS PROGRAM continues in the next room.

SQUAD LEADER (O.S.)
We didn't have any warning. They just started charging. We had no choice but to take some of 'em out.

Emery sees her dad in the hallway pulling a GUN out of a safe. She backs away, the image frightens her. Ray doesn't notice as Emery sneaks past him, grabbing a blanket...

INT. SHED - NIGHT

Emery wraps the blanket around Roman.

EMERY
You don't look like a monster.

He offers her a grateful smile...

EMERY (CONT'D)
You can stay here tonight. I'll come see you in the morning.

Roman watches as she leaves... As WE TIME CUT TO:

INT. SHED - MORNING

Roman lying asleep under the warm blanket. Emery tiptoes inside, leaving a bowl of LEFTOVER SPAGHETTI beside him. While inside the house, dire TV NEWS reportage continues:

TV NEWS (O.S.)
... the public is asked to remain watchful and vigilant...

After Emery tiptoes out, he opens his eyes. Sees the spaghetti. He takes a tentative bite of one strand. His eyes open wide -- intrigued... The texture and taste so foreign to him. Later that night --

INT. SHED - NIGHT

Emery and Roman sit cross-legged on the floor of the shed underneath a MAKESHIFT FORT made out of DROP CLOTHS. Roman watches as Emery expertly demonstrates making a STRING FIGURE out of yarn with her hands.

EMERY
This one's called Jacob's Ladder...

Roman watches, positively entranced...

EMERY (CONT'D)
Here. You try.

Emery lifts Roman's hands, transferring the string figure to him. Their warm touch connecting them... The moment interrupted by the sound of --

DOGS BARKING. Emery stands, looks out the window. Sees TWO POLICE OFFICERS WITH DOGS on a sweep of the neighborhood, heading towards the shed.

OFFICER 1 (O.S.)
You smell one of 'em, boy?

EMERY
(to Roman, alarmed)
Quick, hide!

But it's too late; they're right outside now. Without warning, the cops BARGE into the shed. Roman instinctively grabs Emery, pulling her behind him, protecting her. The cops mistake this as a threat --

OFFICER
Get away from her.

The officer brandishes his weapon -- A TREMOR GUN. Points it directly at Roman. But a frightened Roman does not budge...

PEWWW -- A GOLF BALL-SIZED LASER SHOOTS from the officer's gun, hitting Roman directly in the abdomen. He falls forward. CONVULSING violently. Emery watches in horror --

EMERY
Stop! He wasn't trying to hurt me!

MICHELLE (O.S.)
Emery!

Ray and Michelle burst in. Ray grabs Emery and carries her back into the house as she desperately tries to fight free. She watches from over her dad's shoulder as the officers lift Roman's seemingly lifeless body, carrying him to their van.

EMERY
My friend! They killed my friend!

AS EMERY'S SCREAMS ECHO IN THE NIGHT, we pan up to see what has been hovering above us this entire time...

SIX SPACESHIPS. A fleet of large, oval, alien crafts.

AS WE SMASH CUT TO:

NIKE RUNNING SHOES, pounding the concrete. As ON-SCREEN appear the words: "*10 YEARS LATER.*"

EXT. STREET - MORNING

This is SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD EMERY. Out for a morning jog. Ear-buds in, pushing herself HARD. Like she's being chased. As she PASSES through a peaceful suburban neighborhood we hear:

REPORTER (V.O.)
The Orion Sector was constructed outside of Chicago not long after the Invasion. No Orions were permitted outside its walls without authorization and they were forced to obey a mandatory curfew...

We INTERCUT the following scenes of TV NEWS FOOTAGE with Emery on her run...

EXT. ORION SECTOR - GUARD GATE - DAY

SHAKY HANDHELD VIDEO outside A LARGE IRON GATE. Footsteps take us closer... The camera pans to find the REPORTER (42) as he and his CAMERAMAN approach the gate...

REPORTER
We're right outside the Sector now.

We catch a quick glimpse through the gate inside the camp -- Piles of trash. Flies BUZZING. Is this a housing project or a landfill? An angry GUARD steps in front of the camera --

GUARD
Get back. I said, GET BACK!

The video FREEZE-FRAMES on the guard before CUTTING TO BLACK.

REPORTER (V.O.)
No humans were allowed inside, other than those employed there. Some derogatorily referred to the Orion Sector as "The Insector." And to the Orions as "tatties," for the strange, tattoo-like marks around their face and neck....

EXT. ORION SECTOR - GUARD GATE - DAY

A GROUP OF ACTIVISTS wearing "Free the Orions" t-shirts.

REPORTER (V.O.)
While others were more sympathetic to our visitors' plight...

ACTIVIST
Their ships are busted. They came here seeking refuge. This ain't the America I grew up in, man.

INT. GOVERNMENT MEDICAL FACILITY - LABORATORY - DAY

A DOCTOR (60s) examines blood samples through a microscope. Loves his work. Wears an official-looking uniform.

DOCTOR
Their internal anatomy is symmetrical. Two hearts. Two stomachs. Etcetera. When I analyzed their blood samples, I was amazed to find they maintain a 100% blood oxygen level 100% of the time.

REPORTER (O.S.)
That's good?

DOCTOR
That's exceptional. I imagine that's why their bodies remain healthy and disease-free under harsh conditions. This serves to support their primary function.

REPORTER (O.S.)
Which is?

Beat... As the Doctor's tone turns grave...

DOCTOR
Survival. By any means necessary.

EXT. WEST CRAVEN HOSPITAL - DAY

Finally, Emery comes to a stop outside a building -- WEST CRAVEN HOSPITAL. She works to catch her breath before entering the sliding glass doors...

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - OFFICE - DAY

A SOCIOLOGIST (50s) sits at a desk with his hands folded. Poised. Academic. He speaks to the off-screen reporter.

SOCIOLOGIST
We can never forget the horror of those three days. But we've had peaceful relations for ten years now. It's time for a fresh start.

And we realize that this entire sequence was being broadcast on a TELEVISION inside --

INT. HOSPITAL - JULIA'S ROOM - DAY

A hospital room. JULIA (16) sits perched on her bed, surprisingly vibrant for a girl who has made this place her home. Stacks of magazines and books about the Orions sit on her bedside table. She is watching the news report on TV when Emery enters, still catching her breath --

JULIA
Only you can pull off sweaty sexy at 7 AM.

Emery pours herself a glass of water from a pitcher on the table. Downs it. Once she finishes --

EMERY
Help me stretch?

JULIA
Oh, no. I'm not falling for that one again.

EMERY
I know you hate it, but it's a necessary evil...

JULIA
But it's one of the perks of being The Dying Chick! The amount of exercise you have to do is *inversely proportional* to the amount of pizza you can eat.

EMERY
Sorry, dude. And you're *not* The Dying Chick. You're just The Lazy Chick On The Road To Recovery.

Julia grumbles as Emery takes a seat at the foot of her bed.

EMERY (CONT'D)
Anyhow - you've always said you wanted a personal trainer...

JULIA
Named "Fernando." Or "Tristan." With an accent. And abs.

EMERY
I have abs.

JULIA
I mean boy abs.

EMERY
Well, it's a day of new beginnings. For us both.

And Emery takes Julia's hands. Julia acquiesces, stretching her legs out in front of her on the bed. Emery gently pulls Julia forward, stretching her muscles, as a CRAZED WOMAN on the NEWS PROGRAM is interviewed --

CRAZED WOMAN (ON TV)
It's no secret some of them Orions had plastic surgery to hide themselves among us...

JULIA
Gotta love the conspiracy theorists. One of them was claiming the Orions grow a medicinal herb inside the Sector called cyper.

EMERY
Can it cure conspiracy theorists?

JULIA
Just saying. Maybe you could get chummy with one of the Orions. Get a batch. Fix up everyone in this hospital...

Emery loosens her grip and Julia sits back, taking a breath.

EMERY
You look tired. Did you sleep?

JULIA
My new roommate snores.

EMERY
So did your old roommate.

JULIA
Yeah, but at least I could always just pelt her with M&Ms from across the room to shut her up.

EMERY
Thanks for that, by the way.

Emery smiles... Beat... Then:

JULIA
Are you nervous about today?

EMERY
(shrugs)
Yeah. Sure. I mean, the guy on the news last night was saying how "*the eyes of the world*" would be on Marshall High. Leave it to me to start my first day of school in front of "*the eyes of the world.*"

Beat... As Julia smiles at Emery:

JULIA
I'm really glad you got better, Em.

EMERY
Thanks. Now it's your turn.

Off a hopeful Emery, WE CUT TO --

INT. WHITEHILL HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

RAY and MICHELLE (now 40s) watching the NEWS -- Images of MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL, road blocks, protests and helicopters... They trade a look of concern. As upstairs --

INT. WHITEHILL HOME - EMERY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Emery opens her closet, clad in a towel, and surveys the options: An important decision. She pulls out a purple top and snatches a pair of boots, next to which sit an OXYGEN TANK decorated with stickers. A remnant from another life. Soon after...

INT. WHITEHILL HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Emery rushes down the stairs. Michelle is a nervous wreck.

MICHELLE
(rapid fire)
That shirt looks nice. Maybe you want a sweater, too? I packed you a lunch. My chicken salad with an apple. Do you have all your notebooks and pens?

EMERY
Mom, relax.

MICHELLE
This *is* me relaxed.

EMERY
Dad, help me out here?

Ray kisses his daughter on the top of her head.

RAY
Sorry, kid. Your mother's been dubbed "Best Worrier in the County" eleven years running. It's amazing how she *trounces* the competition!

MICHELLE
To *not* worry on a day like this is what would be amazing...

RAY
I better get going. Traffic's going to be nasty. Good luck, babe.

Emery watches as Ray grabs his ID card from a drawer and puts on his holster, getting ready to head to work. She eyes her father's gun. A familiar image Emery will never be comfortable seeing. As Emery's CELL beeps --

EMERY
And that's my ride.

EXT. WHITEHILL HOME - DAY

Emery exits her house. Takes a deep breath as she closes the door behind her. In the driveway, Emery's best friend LUKAS (16) waves to her from his beat-up SEDAN. Lukas is goofy cute. Perpetually in a hoodie. Minutes later --

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DAY

EAR-CRUSHING MUSIC blares from the car speakers. Lukas yells over the noise --

LUKAS
In honor of your first day I made a post-metal proto-mathcore playlist.

EMERY
(winces)
Is this for me? Or more for you?

But Lukas's focus shifts as he checks the rear view...

LUKAS
Oh boy...

A GREEN MILITARY BUS with tinted windows soon pulls up next to Lukas's car. Emery and Lukas turn to face it.

LUKAS (CONT'D)
Is that... them?

WE CUT INSIDE THE BUS TO FIND --

INT. MILITARY BUS - DAY

NINE TEENAGERS sitting in rows -- These are the ORION NINE. They look like normal kids, except for a dot under both eyes and marks on their face and neck. One of the Nine, DRAKE (16), a macho Orion, eyes a GUARD with an MP5 standing at the front of the bus, keeping watch. Drake leans forward to whisper to another MALE ORION sitting in front of him.

DRAKE
Never thought I'd say this, but I'm already starting to miss our Sector School...

ROMAN
Don't worry. Soon as they realize this is all a colossal mistake we'll be back there...

We now see this Male Orion is making a STRING FIGURE with his hands. And we understand this is ROMAN (16), the boy from the shed. But no longer a boy. Handsome. Gentle. But a little brooding. AS WE CUT TO:

EXT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

On any other day -- AN ORDINARY, ALL AMERICAN, BRICK PUBLIC SCHOOL. But today, outside the school gate, it's MAYHEM --

ANGRY PROTESTORS carry signs reading "*Stop the Integration!*" "*Close ~~Marshall~~ Martian High!*" "*Separate, Unequal, Inhuman!*"

REPORTERS fight for space on the front lawn, some speak in Russian, Italian, German... DEENA STILES (35), a fame-seeking reporter, speaks to PRINCIPAL SAUL WESTON (38). Strong, but uncomfortable with the media spotlight.

DEENA STILES
Principal Weston, I see in addition to your own security, ORC has called in armed military guards.

As we hear the RUMBLING of more MILITARY VEHICLES coming around the corner. Saul, displeased by the overabundance of security, tries to smile through his frustration...

SAUL
Safety is key. But I will not let it interfere with the students' education. Our academic record--

And Saul is suddenly cut off by an angry PROTESTOR, who jumps in front of the camera, waving a black flag decorated with a RED HAWK -- the symbol of the anti-Orion movement.

PROTESTOR
They belong with their own kind! Our kids were raised right!

WE CUT TO:

AN OUTSTRETCHED TONGUE, pierced with a tiny diamond stud. A FINGER places a THIN BLUE STRIP on the tongue. We are with --

INT. TAYLOR'S CAR - DAY

TAYLOR (16) and ROCHELLE (16). Taylor is Alt-Girl Cool -- the tastemaker of the sophomore class. Rochelle is preppy, more structured -- a bad girl wannabe. Taylor ingests the strip -- the hottest drug of the 2020s. She closes her eyes, savoring this meditative moment. Seconds later, she opens her eyes. Grinning.

ROCHELLE
My turn.

TAYLOR
Sorry, that was my last one.

ROCHELLE
Bitch.

Rochelle scans the parking lot. When her eyes catch Emery exiting Lukas's car outside. Taking a PUFF from her INHALER.

ROCHELLE (CONT'D)
Who's that?

Taylor follows Rochelle's gaze.

TAYLOR
Oh, I remember her from middle school. She was sick, remember?

ROCHELLE
Oh, yeah. She had, like, tubes coming out of her face. She's cute now. A little blah maybe.

TAYLOR
Well, she picked a hell of a day to rejoin society...

While outside --

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

We pick up Lukas and Emery, mid-conversation --

LUKAS
So the macho white dude finds himself in this weird world dominated by chimps and orangutans and has no idea how to communicate with them. I mean I get that the class structure is a satire of a Westernized class system...

As Lukas prattles on, Emery drowns him out, and we stay in her POV as she scans the parking lot, filling up with STUDENTS, BRIMMING with energy and life... ON ONE BENCH --

TWO LENIN WORSHIPPERS in a heated debate. Bushy beards and ill-fitting jeans. Angry at the world. Across the lot --

ASIAN FASHIONISTAS type furiously on their itty-bitty cell phones. Clad in miniskirts, despite the chill. Meanwhile --

GAMER TROLLS show off their latest gadgets. One reveals a SKATEBOARD that's *also* a wireless LCD screen. The other trolls pretend not to be impressed as they ride passed --

THE BIFFS -- bully jocks in bulging jeans, lead by ERIC (16), the resident douchebag. Emery zeroes in on an honorary Biff -- GRAYSON (16) -- Chiseled and crush-worthy -- as he meets up with Taylor and Rochelle.

Emery takes this new world in, not sure exactly where and how she "fits"... When her thoughts are interrupted by a HELICOPTER flying overhead. Emery and Lukas watch as it hovers above them. We follow their gaze towards the crowd gathered outside the school gate...

EXT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

... Where Deena Stiles now interviews GLORIA VALDEZ (35). A sophisticated, hard-nosed government suit.

GLORIA VALDEZ
I speak for all of my colleagues in D.C. when I say after three years of ongoing discussions we're proud to see this program finally come to fruition...

A GOVERNMENT SUIT approaches Gloria. Whispers in her ear. As Gloria walks away rapidly --

GLORIA VALDEZ (CONT'D)
Excuse me.

DEENA STILES
That was Director of the Orion Relations Committee, Gloria Valdez.

As the CAMERA SWINGS AWAY to find the military bus from earlier pulling up to the gate with ominous portent. The CROWD gets more boisterous as COPS IN RIOT GEAR move in.

COPS
Keep your distance!

The ROAR OF THE CROWD begins to rise as GUARDS struggle to hold the protestors back. One HECKLER breaks through and tries to JUMP in front of the bus, forcing it to SLAM on the breaks. Guards TACKLE the heckler as he desperately fights to break free... As he is carried away, the back door opens...

One by one, the Orion Nine file out of the bus. Stone-faced and silent, they do not acknowledge the protestors.

Roman makes his way towards the entrance to school, followed by his sweet, younger sister SOPHIA (15). He eyes the RAUCOUS CROWD. Some fearful, others enraged. When he catches a QUICK GLIMPSE of someone walking just beyond the crowd...

Curious, he strains to peer through the protestors in order to catch a better view... But can only catch QUICK POPS of this face... *a very familiar face*...

When finally, the figure emerges from the crowd and Roman immediately recognizes...

It's Emery.

And he no longer hears the roar of the crowd. Everything goes silent. As Emery glides in slow-motion, WE FLASH TO --

TEN YEARS AGO. The same INNOCENT LITTLE GIRL, sitting underneath the fort, teaching Roman to make string figures.

BACK TO THE PRESENT --

A stunned Roman watches in disbelief as Emery walks toward the school's entrance. But then SOPHIA comes up behind him. Captivated by the CHAOS at the gate...

SOPHIA
I mean, could this day possibly get *any more* insane -- ?

Roman turns in Emery's direction...

ROMAN
I think it just did.

Sophia frowns... Huh?

OFF ROMAN... Watching Emery enter the school... His world spinning even faster now...

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

The Orions stand in line at a SECURITY CHECKPOINT just inside the school's entrance. ARMED SECURITY GUARDS wand each of them down and scan their BAR-CODED WRISTBANDS.

Lukas and Emery stand nearby at a row of lockers. Emery eyes Roman standing in line. Though she does not recognize him, she finds herself inexplicably drawn to him...

TAYLOR (O.S.)
Rumor is they have *three* penises.

Emery snaps out of it. Finds a grinning Taylor before her.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Small, medium and *extra large.*

Taylor and Rochelle LAUGH, continuing past Emery.

LUKAS
That's Taylor and Rochelle. They're in charge.

EMERY
In charge of what?

LUKAS
All of it.

Emery watches as Taylor and Rochelle are immediately swarmed by a gaggle of STUDENTS. She then turns back to the Orions.

EMERY
Have you ever heard about an herb the Orions supposedly grow inside the Sector? Something called cyper?

LUKAS
No. But I *did* hear they eat skunks.

EMERY
Why would they do that?

LUKAS
Cheaper than raccoon.

Emery looks at him. Lukas smiles. Emery watches as the Orions are shuffled off down the hall and disappear into a room...

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY

HUMAN STUDENTS and TEACHERS sit in the auditorium, lined with ARMED GUARDS. Principal Weston speaks from the stage.

SAUL
The Orion students will be interspersed in classes along with our other sophomore students...

INTERCUT WITH --

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - BACKSTAGE - DAY

Gloria addressing the Orion Nine, standing backstage in a line-up. She's tough. Like a drill sergeant.

GLORIA VALDEZ
You don't know me. But I'm well acquainted with each of you...

TERI (16), a sexy but tough Orion, leans over to Roman, WHISPERING in their NATIVE ORION LANGUAGE, which can only be described as GIBBERISH if spoken with a SLIGHT LISP.

DRAKE
(smirks)
Graklo mof teah...

Gloria's eyes dart to Teri.

GLORIA VALDEZ
Yes, I have been laid recently. And no, you're not going to get away with that in here. You will speak English in this school.

Teri looks away, feeling caught. As Gloria continues:

GLORIA VALDEZ (CONT'D)
I know you've all been briefed on protocol and passed your MHS Entrance Exams, but in case there's any confusion...

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY

SAUL
I'm sure you've noticed increased security. We don't anticipate any violence, but the guards are here to protect you. And the Orions.

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - BACKSTAGE - DAY

GLORIA VALDEZ
The guards have been authorized to use their tremor guns if you step out of line. They will not hesitate to send you to the Crate. Those wristbands you're wearing are tracking your every move.

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY

SAUL
Behind the walls of this school, they're just like you. They're students.

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - BACKSTAGE - DAY

GLORIA VALDEZ
You're test subjects. Here to answer the question: *Can Orions learn to play nice with humans?* There are a lot of people out there hoping you fail. It's up to *you* to prove them wrong.
(smiles)
Ready for your debut?

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY

SAUL
... So please give the Orions a Marshall High Bulldogs welcome...

A few CLAPS from the audience as the Orion Nine are lead out onto the stage by a smiling Gloria. It's daunting for them, but they remain stoic. Only Sophia seems thrilled by the attention... Until --

A SMALL REMOTE CONTROLLED SPACESHIP flies through the air towards the Orions, narrowly missing them before CRASH-LANDING on the stage at Gloria's feet. The human students ERUPT in LAUGHTER. An angry Saul grabs the microphone --

SAUL (CONT'D)
No violence against the Orions will be tolerated at this school. Am I making myself clear?

An anxious Saul eyes the Orions, poised for any hint of retaliation. But they do not react.

WHILE IN THE AUDIENCE -- Emery eyes a LAUGHING Eric and Grayson. Eric holds his cell phone, which he had been using to control the toy... As the BELL SOUNDS --

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

ARMED GUARDS trail behind the Orion Nine as they walk down the hall. STUDENTS stare as they pass. Others whisper.

ROMAN
I wish we were the kind of aliens who carried ray guns...

SOPHIA
Give it a chance, Roman. Remember our first day at the Sector School? You guys *hated* it there, too.

DRAKE
At least we didn't have to deal with tremor guns pointed at our heads all day long...

TERI
Or worse.
(grimaces)
Glee club.

They reach their lockers, only to find they've been vandalized. A CUSTODIAN kneels, washing off a LARGE RED HAWK that has been painted on the lockers. Drake, furious, punches a locker. A few human students SNICKER as they walk past. Teri HISSES at them, momentarily startling them.

WHILE DOWN THE HALL -- Emery stands at her locker, which has a FINGERPRINT SCANNER. Emery watches as other STUDENTS place their index finger on the scanner to open their lockers. She follows suit, but it doesn't seem to be working...

GRAYSON (O.S.)
You have to use your right hand.

EMERY
Huh?
(turns to Grayson)
Oh.

She places her right index finger directly on the scanner. ACROSS THE HALL -- Taylor and Rochelle observe Grayson's act of kindness. Amused.

ROCHELLE
He has a soft spot for the charity cases, doesn't he?

The scanner BEEPS and the locker opens. Emery smiles.

EMERY
I swear I'm not usually this technologically inept.

GRAYSON
You get a pass on your first day...

Grayson smiles as he continues down the hall. Meanwhile --

DOWN THE HALL -- An angry Drake watches as the last of the paint is cleaned off the Orions' lockers.

DRAKE
Humans are savages. We can't trust a single one of 'em. Right, Roman?

But Roman has now become distracted -- eyeing Emery at her locker down the hall...

ROMAN
(conflicted re: Emery)
Yeah. That's right.

Meanwhile --

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - GIRLS BATHROOM - DAY

Sophia enters the empty bathroom. Finds a DISCARDED MASCARA WAND sitting on the sink. Eyes it curiously. She hears the door to the bathroom OPEN, GIRLS LAUGHING.

Sophia quickly ducks into a stall, closing the door behind her. She peeks through the sliver in the door at TWO GIRLS.

GIRL 1
... And got pregnant?

GIRL 2
Yep. And now her parents are letting her sit the school year out. They think the Orions will try to eat the baby or something.

Sophia watches as the girls apply lip gloss and eyeliner. She eyes them. Fascinated by this transformation... As the BELL SOUNDS, taking us to --

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

THE AMERICAN FLAG displayed on a giant TOUCHSCREEN BLACKBOARD at the front of the room. The HUMAN STUDENTS stand, placing their right hands on their hearts, reciting --

STUDENTS
...And to the Republic, for which it stands, one nation, indivisible...

Some Orions stand, others do not. Meanwhile, across the room, Roman catches Emery staring. She quickly looks away.

STUDENTS (CONT'D)
With liberty and justice for all...

As the students sit, Eric turns to confront Drake, who remained seated throughout the pledge.

ERIC
You eat our food, wear our clothes, breathe our air, but you can't be bothered to pledge to our flag?

DRAKE
We're not citizens.

ERIC
That's right. You're martians.

ROMAN
Technically, martians are from *Mars.* We're from a *far superior* planet.

SNICKERS from the class. But then:

MISS JACOBS
That's enough! The Orions are not required to pledge to the flag.

MISS JACOBS (30), the teacher, has her hand hovering over a PANIC BUTTON on her desk. Prepared to alert the guards... But she breathes a sigh of relief when the boys stand down. Roman offers Eric a gentle smile and shrug.

ROMAN
Cheer up. You get to keep liberty and justice all for yourself...

Eric glares at Roman, making a mental note of this mockery, as the digital stars and stripes WAVE in the background --

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. ORION SECTOR - GUARD GATE - DAY

CONCERTINA WIRE lines the top of the TEN FOOT CONCRETE WALL. Just outside the gate, a REPORTER interviews NOX (42). An idealistic, tactful, natural born Orion leader.

NOX
I'm thrilled the government is finally taking steps towards unifying our races...

Nox's eyes tick to a MILITARY BUS as it passes, coming to a halt outside the gate. He smiles.

NOX (CONT'D)
And I couldn't be prouder to have my own children be part of the program.

AT THE GUARD'S BOOTH: The Orion Nine exit the bus, met by Ray, Emery's dad. A security guard at the camp. Ray makes sure each Orion is accounted for, scanning their wristbands. GAIA (40), Roman and Sophia's mother, is there to greet them. Nox wraps up the interview and walks to his family.

NOX (CONT'D)
How was it?

SOPHIA
They smell better than I thought they would...

NOX
That's good. I think. Roman?

ROMAN
Excellent. We've been far too insulated in the Sector from just how awful many of these people are. A dose of the real world can only be good for our souls.

NOX
(shakes his head, smiles)
Your brother has mastered the earthly art of sarcasm with relative ease, Sophia...

SOPHIA
Tell me about it. If I have *any* hope of making friends, I'm gonna have to distance myself from him!

ROMAN
Why do you want to be friends with them?

SOPHIA
Everyone in the Sector is miserable. Humans are fun.

Roman rolls his eyes, but Gaia snaps at her daughter --

GAIA
Stemko kol thep toa--

NOX
Gaia. English...

GAIA
Humans are the *only species on the planet* that practice abject cruelty on their own kind. You're there to learn, not to make friends.

SOPHIA
But they also invented the cheeseburger! No other species did that...

NOX
And, in the grand scheme of things, a Big Mac *far outweighs* 2000 years of war and genocide...

Nox smiles at Gaia, who softens.

GAIA
C'mon. I've got dinner waiting...

As they disappear behind the camp wall --

INT. WHITEHILL HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emery and Michelle sit at the dining room table eating Chinese takeout.

EMERY
I mean, they seem nice. Not as scary as I thought they might be...

Michelle shakes her head... A little bit of concern there...

MICHELLE
Your dad always says they're just like us in that way: there are good ones. And there are bad ones.

Beat... As Emery takes a bite of shrimp...

EMERY
I thought a lot today about the boy in the shed...

MICHELLE
What about him?

EMERY
Just how, if he hadn't tried to protect me, he'd still be alive now. Heck, it might have been *his* first day of school, too...

Emery is quiet, lost in that memory. Michelle eyes her...

MICHELLE
Not everyone can be saved, baby. Sometimes there's a greater plan at work...

Off Emery, hearing her mother's words, yet not quite able to subscribe to her philosophy --

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

A NEW SCHOOL DAY. Biology class. The ORION and HUMAN STUDENTS sit on opposing sides of the room. Rochelle and Emery are lab partners. Taylor sits across the aisle.

MR. TURK
We dissect different species so we can learn more about the way their bodies function...

The Orions share a look. How long before they're next?

MR. TURK (CONT'D)
Today we'll be dissecting a fetal pig.

The image of a FETAL PIG PROJECTS up off of each desk into a 3-D HOLOGRAPH. Lifelike. Graphic. Its underbelly exposed.

ROCHELLE
Gross.

MR. TURK
Who wants to make the first incision?

Drake eagerly raises his hand. A little too eager. Mr. Turk nods. Drake uses a VIRTUAL SCALPEL to make the incision.

MR. TURK (CONT'D)
Very good. That clicking sound is normal. Just premature bone tissue. Now fold back the flaps of skin...

A disgusted Rochelle pipes up --

ROCHELLE
This is inhumane.

From across the room, Teri SNICKERS.

ROCHELLE (CONT'D)
I'm seriously gonna puke.

Emery eyes a panicked Rochelle, who's about to purge. Emery thinks fast, taking Rochelle's WRIST and pressing gently in between her tendons. Rochelle looks at her quizzically...

EMERY
It's acupressure. Just breathe slowly...

Rochelle is at first a little freaked out, confused, but slowly, very slowly, she starts to breathe normally again...

EMERY (CONT'D)
Feel better?

Rochelle nods... A small smile beginning to curl up...

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

The cafeteria, boisterous at lunch time. STUDENTS file up and down rows of tables, surrounded by HIGH-TECH VENDING MACHINES. The Orions sit together, but apart from the humans.

Drake stands at one of the vending machines. A SCREEN offers him three choices: Low-Fat? Vegetarian? Orion? He presses the button for "Orion." An AUTOMATED VOICE speaks --

AUTOMATED VOICE
You have chosen: Puffed rice cake. Would you like chicken-flavored? Beef? Or carrot?

Drake scowls -- all of the choices unappetizing...

While ACROSS THE CAFETERIA -- Emery stands at another vending machine, considering her options, when Taylor approaches.

TAYLOR
Today might be a good day to skip the ham steak.

EMERY
Good call.

TAYLOR
That was cool what you did for Rochelle. Always thought that stuff was kinda old school hocus-pocus.

EMERY
Maybe. Whatever it is, it's worked for me before...

When their attention is drawn ACROSS THE ROOM, where Eric has DUMPED THE BOOKS of one of the Orion Nine (CALEB, 16). But before it gets heated, a TEACHER intervenes.

EMERY (CONT'D)
Why does Eric hate them so much?

They watch as the teacher scolds Eric, who merely laughs and walks away, leaving Caleb to collect his books and papers...

TAYLOR
His father used to have this totally sweet restaurant, a neighborhood place. But it was over in Bunkhead...

EMERY
Where they put the Sector...

TAYLOR
Yep. And people started moving away, on-the-quick. After that, Eric's father did a lot of staying at home and drinking his breakfast, if you know what I mean.

Emery nods... She looks genuinely moved. Taylor studies her for a beat... Then:

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Let me see your phone...

Curious, Emery produces her cell phone. Taylor takes her own phone, presses a button, and "bumps" the phone against Emery's. Emery's screen LIGHTS UP: The image of A SCARECROW WEARING A PARTY HAT displaying an address...

EMERY
What's this?

TAYLOR
An invite for Friday. There's a party at this abandoned farmhouse. You should come.

EMERY
Can I bring Lukas?

TAYLOR
I guess if you're a package deal...

EMERY
We're just friends. We've been neighbors forever.

TAYLOR
Oh, good. Grayson wasn't sure...

EMERY
Grayson... was asking?

TAYLOR
(smiles)
See you at the club fair.

Taylor exits. Emery smiles: Did that seriously just happen?

While ACROSS THE ROOM -- Roman eyes Emery. Teri follows Roman's gaze... Deeply suspicious and a little jealous...

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - BATHROOM - DAY

Emery washes her hands at the sink. When Teri exits a stall and begins to wash her hands next to Emery. Emery, alone in the bathroom with Teri, goes for it --

EMERY
Hi.

Teri doesn't even look up. But Emery is persistent...

EMERY (CONT'D)
I know this is a weird question, but I, uhh, have a friend who's...
(starts again)
Do you know where I can find... Cyper?

Teri looks up at Emery. Smiles. Devilish. She turns to Emery. For a moment, Emery doesn't know what she's going to do, though she's clearly hit a nerve.

Teri reaches for the scarf around Emery's neck and uses it to dry her hands. Never breaking eye contact. And exits. Off Emery -- What's her problem?

EXT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - COURTYARD - DAY

A club fair. Dozens of tables are set up in the courtyard, each for a different club or sport. Emery sits at a table with a sign that reads HEARTS & CRAFTS. Lukas approaches.

LUKAS
You always did love a good pun.

EMERY
You're about to thank me.

Emery shows Lukas the party invite. He scans it. Impressed.

LUKAS
How'd you manage this?

EMERY
Taylor invited us. Well, me. And, by extension, you.

LUKAS
Thanks for remembering the little people, Em.

Emery playfully throws a pen at Lukas as he walks off. She gets up to retrieve it. As she reaches for the pen, another HAND comes into frame, beating her to the punch. She looks up to find -- ROMAN. He hands her the pen. Emery, stunned --

EMERY
Thanks.

ROMAN
You're welcome. This is your club?

EMERY
I'm just manning the booth. There are a bunch of other volunteers.

ROMAN
What is it?

EMERY
You go to local hospitals. Spend time with the patients. Painting, scrap-booking... That sort of thing.

Nothing from Roman, as he looks through the PHOTOS on the table of "Hearts And Crafts" VOLUNTEERS with PATIENTS...

EMERY (CONT'D)
I found it really comforting.

ROMAN
You were in the club last year?

EMERY
No. I... uhh -- was a patient.

We see this surprising information register on Roman's face.

ROMAN
And what did you prefer? The painting or the scrap-booking?

EMERY
The scrap-booking. Which some people find creepy. But it's helpful when you want to organize your memories in a short amount of time... A lot of these people need to organize their memories...

He looks at her. Gets it. Nods. But Emery now notices their conversation has gained attention from her classmates. She looks across the courtyard at a disapproving Taylor and Rochelle. Eric GLARING at Roman.

ROMAN (O.S.)
So can anyone sign up?

EMERY
Sorry?

ROMAN
For your club?

EMERY
It requires a lot of after school hours, and with your curfew and not being permitted outside the Insector -- I mean -- your sector, without permission, you probably shouldn't --

ROMAN
I understand. Our memories are stored in a separate computer, anyways. So I'd be no good at scrap-booking.

She looks at him. Huh? He smiles.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
Joking.
(then)
Thanks anyway.

Emery watches him walk away. Nearly stops him, but decides against it...

As Roman makes his way across the courtyard, Eric and a group of his CRONIES approach him.

ERIC
You like talking to our girls, Tattie? You think they're *pretty*?

Roman is utterly placid, utterly calm... Not in a sinister way at all. But in the way of a true pacifist...

ROMAN
I was interested in joining her club. But she wouldn't have me. Which is just as well. I don't have an artistic bone in my body.

ERIC
Do you have *any* bones in your body?

ROMAN
Good point. Our skeletal structure is actually 10,000 centipedes holding hands. How'd you know? That's Orion Secret #145.

... albeit a *wise-ass* pacifist. He, once again, offers Eric that muted smile... But then Drake and Teri approach...

DRAKE
Everything okay, Roman?

ROMAN
Everything's fine. We're just getting to know each other.

Eric and Roman maintain the glare... Until:

ERIC
You play by our rules here. Got it, freaks?

Teri makes a move for him... Roman holds her back...

ROMAN
We got it.

And he ushers Teri and Drake away, though they continue to stare daggers at Eric and the rest...

INT. HOSPITAL - JULIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Emery sits at the foot of Julia's hospital bed.

JULIA
They were pissed because you talked to an Orion?

EMERY
You should have seen their faces.

JULIA
I suppose it *is* sort of everyone's worst nightmare. Both sides...

EMERY
What is?

JULIA
The notion of the human-Orion hook-up...

EMERY
"Hook-up?" We were talking about painting and scrap-booking!

JULIA
Alas, my sweet, innocent child that's *how it begins!*

Emery laughs, shakes her head.

JULIA (CONT'D)
I'm just saying. There are stories. Rumors. Of humans and Orions. Who fell in love. In the Sector. Only to be caught. And consigned to the Crate for the rest of their days.

EMERY
You are, quite literally, the most overly dramatic person I've ever met in my life.

JULIA
That's what happens when you're stuck in a bed. A girl can only watch so much reality TV before tales of star-crossed human-Orion lovers and the dragons that protect them begin to crowd the brain...

EMERY
Dragons? What dragons?

JULIA
Okay. Never mind the dragons.

Emery smiles. A HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR enters with a folder.

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR
Hi, Julia. Here are those discharge forms. Make sure your parents sign all three copies.

She sets the folder down on Julia's bedside table. Julia looks at Emery. A little guilty. As if caught...

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)
We're going to miss you around here.

JULIA
Thanks. I'll miss you guys, too.

The Hospital Administrator exits.

EMERY
You're going home? For good?

JULIA
Yep. Tuesday.

EMERY
And you didn't tell me? We should be celebrating!

Julia takes a breath. Not quite prepared for this...

JULIA
Em. The chemo isn't working. And finding a mixed-race bone marrow match could take years...

Emery doesn't understand...

EMERY
Then why are you going home?

JULIA
Look at me. I'm anemic. I'm getting pneumonia every other week. I've lost, like, ten pounds in two weeks. I know most sixteen-year-old girls would be thrilled at the thought of that. But not this one.

EMERY
So what are you saying?

JULIA
I'm saying it's over...

EMERY
You're giving up?

JULIA
It's not about giving up. It's about *accepting*. I don't even care about the poking and the prodding and the puking. What I can't take anymore is seeing my parents get their hopes up, only to have them dashed, one lousy hematocrit test after another...

EMERY
Jules, this is stupid, there has to be something else --

Julia shakes her head... Emery fights back her emotions. Then, her wheels begin to turn...

EMERY (CONT'D)
Will they let you out for an hour?

JULIA
Probably. Why? Where are we going?

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Lukas pulls up in his car in front of the hospital, where Emery and Julia wait. He rolls down his window.

LUKAS
Ladies. Your chauffeur has arrived.

As Emery and Julia trade a look...

EXT. ORION SECTOR - NIGHT

The Sector looks dark and foreboding. A walled sprawl of silence and ruin...

LUKAS
I thought we were getting fro-yo...

Lukas pulls up to a SERVICE ENTRANCE near the back of camp. Julia's face presses up against the glass, full of wonder.

EMERY
We'll only be half an hour, I promise. Just wait here.

LUKAS
You're going inside?

EMERY
My Dad wants to give Julia a tour. It's like a Make-A-Wish thing...

LUKAS
You can't just walk around in there.

EMERY
Relax. We'll be fine.

Julia kisses him on the cheek. And his world suddenly seems a little brighter. As Emery and Julia walk to the gate...

JULIA
I thought you said Ray wasn't working tonight?

EMERY
He's not. But I had to tell Lukas something...

JULIA
Em, this is crazy.

EMERY
Crazy would be not taking this chance...

Emery produces her FATHER'S ID CARD. As the girls approach a GATE, the full weight of this bold and potentially dangerous move now hits Emery. She turns to Julia.

EMERY (CONT'D)
You sure you know what this herb looks like?

Julia nods. Emery inserts her father's ID card and the gate swings open. MOTION SENSOR LIGHTS fill the DAMP, EMPTY MAINTENANCE TUNNEL before them. As the girls take a tentative step inside, the GATE SLAMS SHUT BEHIND THEM, and we SMASH CUT TO BLACK --

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. ORION SECTOR - STREET - NIGHT

FLOOD LIGHTS illuminate dirt streets. Lined with rows of SHIPPING CONTAINER BUILDINGS. SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS are perched on every corner. It's not quite the Warsaw Ghetto, but far from a cushy gated community...

WALKING CAUTIOUSLY DOWN THE STREET -- Emery and Julia are on high alert... Startled by every MOVEMENT and SOUND...

TWO ORION CHILDREN -- a BOY and a GIRL -- race past them on bicycles rebuilt from salvaged parts...

LAUGHTER turns their heads sharply -- An ORION WOMAN with sexy curves chatting up a GUARD at the bottom of a stairwell. Emery and Julia keep their heads bowed as they walk quickly to avoid the guard, who clearly has other things on his mind. They turn a corner, hurrying along to another part of camp...

EXT. ORION SECTOR - MARKET DISTRICT - NIGHT

A crowded market. Rows of makeshift booths -- clothing, "human" food, tchotchkes. Emery catches a glimpse of an ORION handling smuggled electronics - laptops, cell phones...

Emery walks with Julia through the maze of tables. A few ORIONS eye them suspiciously. Emery is clearly nervous, but Julia doesn't notice: She's enthralled. Then --

ELDERLY ORION (O.S.)
Thepaatye?

Emery and Julia turn to find an ELDERLY ORION WOMAN offering jewelry. They clock her sharp 4-inch FINGERNAILS. The Elderly Orion eyes the girls, surprised to discover they are human. She strains to convey...

ELDERLY ORION (CONT'D)
Bracelets?

EMERY
No, thanks.

JULIA
I'll take three!

But as Julia reaches into her pocket and pulls out CASH, a CROWD OF CURIOUS ORIONS flock to the girls, eager to make a sale. A SHIFTY ORION (20s) at the lead --

SHIFTY ORION
What do we have here? You know you kids aren't supposed to be in here...

Emery and Julia trade a look. Julia goes for it --

JULIA
Do you have any cyper?

The Shifty Orion eyes them. Finally shrugs, a sale's a sale:

SHIFTY ORION
Right this way...

The Shifty Orion leads the girls to another booth, but the Elderly Orion steps in, threatens --

ELDERLY ORION
Ghaj en klor!

The Elderly Orion CLAWS at him. He retaliates, SHOVING her back into a GRUFF ORION'S table. The COMMOTION has invited attention from other ORIONS, who now surround the group --

When a BLARING SIREN is heard, the Gruff Orion calls out --

GRUFF ORION
REVSOLO!

ORIONS SCATTER in every direction and the girls know what this means -- The guards are coming!

Now panicked and full of dread, Emery and Julia attempt to make their way out of this chaos, as a HAND grabs Emery's -- Roman, pushing his way through the crowd --

ROMAN
C'mon!

As Emery and Julia RACE away from the market --

EXT. ORION SECTOR - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

A ROOFTOP DOOR opens and Roman, Emery and Julia rush outside into a ROOFTOP GARDEN.

EMERY
Jules. You okay?

JULIA
(breathing heavy)
Are you kidding? That was amazing!

ROMAN
What are you *doing* here?

Emery is almost embarrassed to tell him. But Julia isn't --

JULIA
We've come for your cyper!

ROMAN
(smiling wide)
Well, why didn't you say so! I guess it's curative powers are no longer just our secret. There it is. Take as much as you'd like...

And he gestures. To where a LONG, THIN, RED HERB grows profusely in the garden. Julia goes over to it...

JULIA
Wow. There's so much of it!

Emery clocks the bemused grin on Roman's face...

EMERY
Is that really cyper -- ?

ROMAN
Yep, that's really cyper. Or as it's sometimes known...
(beat)
Saffron.

JULIA
Saffron?

ROMAN
No one knows how that rumor got started. But some enterprising guards have made a good amount of cash trading our saffron-as-magic-remedy to gullible humans outside of the Sector.

Emery and Julia share a disappointed look.

JULIA
It was worth a shot.

Roman senses the breadth of their discouragement...

ROMAN
Do you have a sick friend?

JULIA
I don't. She does.

And there are tears in Emery's eyes. Roman now gets it, feels guilty for teasing them. But Julia walks to the edge of the roof. Looks out at the lights of the camp.

JULIA (CONT'D)
This wasn't a total loss. At least I got to see this place!
(to Roman)
I'm obsessed with all things Orion. It's, like, a hobby.

ROMAN
There's a better view of the Sector from up here...

Roman helps Julia to a higher landing on the rooftop. As Roman's arms stretch up, his shirt rises. Emery can't help but sneak a peek at his bare skin, but is stunned to see a large SCAR on his abdomen.

EMERY
How did you get that?

ROMAN
(looks down, embarrassed)
It was a long time ago.

Emery considers this... When --

BANG -- GUARDS BURST onto the roof of the building DIRECTLY across the street. The three DUCK -- Julia staying low on one side of the roof, Emery and Roman on the other...

Emery eyes Roman... Now closer in their hiding spot... She begins to put the pieces together... Especially when a guilty look sweeps over his face. Keeping her voice low:

EMERY
Was that you? In the shed? It couldn't have been...

But Roman looks away. Feeling a little caught.

EMERY (CONT'D)
Could it?

At last, he nods.

ROMAN
I should've told you.

EMERY
You knew this whole time? How?

ROMAN
The minute I saw you at school... I had this sudden bizarre craving for cold spaghetti. It was then I knew.

He says it in all seriousness. She looks at him. He smiles. She laughs.

EMERY
But... I watched them carry you away. I was sure you were dead.

ROMAN
Came close. One of my hearts stopped beating for a few minutes. Luckily I have a backup...

Emery smiles. Beat... Roman turns to Emery...

ROMAN (CONT'D)
I never got to thank you. For saving my life...

EMERY
I was six. I hardly did anything.

ROMAN
You were kind. When everyone else was cruel. That's something.

Emery smiles. Roman studies her... Then:

ROMAN (CONT'D)
I've always wondered about you. Where you might be... What you were doing...

They gaze at one another, drawn closer... A connection rekindled. Interrupted by --

JULIA
I think they're gone.

Julia notices their gaze...

JULIA (CONT'D)
What's going on here?

As Emery and Roman share a smile, WE CUT TO --

EXT. ORION SECTOR - NIGHT

Emery and Julia, now outside the gate, rushing to Lukas's car. Emery helps Julia along, her energy waning...

JULIA
So many things to scratch off the bucket list tonight. Visit Orion Sector. *Check*. Debunk cyper myth.
(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)
Check. Unwittingly orchestrate Emery's reunion with Hottie Orion. *Check*.

Emery smiles wide. Julia clocks her excitement. Warns...

JULIA (CONT'D)
Just be careful. You left your dragon at home...

As Julia climbs inside the car, Emery turns back, taking one last look back at the camp. Filled with anticipation. Longing. *But for an Orion?...* As we CUT TO:

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

THE NEXT DAY. Eric and a few of his CRONIES chat with Sophia at the end of a hallway. She seems to enjoy the attention.

ERIC
We took a poll. And you've been crowned the finest of the nine.

CRONY
But don't tell your friend, Teri. We think she might bite.

The boys LAUGH. Sophia, starting to get uncomfortable...

SOPHIA
I should get to class...

Eric takes a step closer, cornering Sophia...

ERIC
Tell me something... Is it true what they say about Tatties?

He goes for her skirt. She SMACKS his hand away.

ERIC (CONT'D)
You're a feisty one, aren't you?

His hand grabs her waist, reaches below her skirt. Just as --

ROMAN turns the corner, sees Sophia is cornered. Goes into FULL-ON BIG BROTHER MODE --

ROMAN
Leave her alone.

Roman moves in. Eric PUSHES him backwards, gets in his face--

ERIC
You just can't seem to get out of my way, can you?

Eric's cronies GRAB ROMAN FROM BEHIND and SHOVE him into a LOCKER ROOM. The door is SLAMMED behind him and LOCKED, leaving Sophia outside to SCREAM --

SOPHIA
ROMAN!

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Roman is SHOVED down an aisle of lockers.

ERIC
No cameras in here, freak. No one coming to help you...

Roman knows the time for playing nice has passed. Roman KICKS, STOMPING Eric hard in the CHEST. Eric falls back, momentarily stunned. Then CHARGES Roman. As they CRASH hard against a row of lockers --

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Emery turns the corner, hears Sophia's cries.

SOPHIA
Somebody help! They've got my brother in there!

Emery rushes over, POUNDS on the door.

EMERY
Hey! Open up!
(to Sophia)
Go find someone to help.

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Roman is on the ground now. KICKED in his RIGHT SIDE by Eric and his cronies, then his LEFT... His hands desperately search the area around him. Making contact with A SOCCER CLEAT. GRIPPING IT TIGHTLY...

WHACK -- THE METAL STUDS NAIL ERIC IN THE SIDE OF THE FACE. He FALLS next to Roman, and they begin to wrestle... When --

SECURITY OFFICERS break down the door and rush inside, TACKLING ROMAN, RIPPING the boys away from one another...

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - OFFICE - DAY

A badly bruised Roman sits in an office alone. His leg shaking nervously. Fearing his punishment. While outside...

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

... a concerned Saul watches Gloria approach.

SAUL
If news of this fight gets out--

GLORIA VALDEZ
There is more at stake here than just the program, Saul...

SAUL
What are you talking about?

GLORIA VALDEZ
We need the Orion Nine.

SAUL
Who's we?

GLORIA VALDEZ
Don't let it concern you.

As Gloria pushes passed Saul, entering the office...

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - OFFICE - DAY

... She closes the door behind her and leans against the desk in front of Roman. She surprises him by handing him a TOWEL.

GLORIA VALDEZ
Clean yourself up.

Roman takes the towel. Wipes blood from his face.

GLORIA VALDEZ (CONT'D)
I've been watching you for a long time. You think your father is the reason you're here. But you're wrong. You were all hand-picked.

ROMAN
Hand-picked? For what?

GLORIA VALDEZ
You'll understand soon enough. But for now: You have to stop acting like an animal...

ROMAN
He assaulted my sister.

GLORIA VALDEZ
This happens again, they'll Crate you. Hand you over to military doctors for thirty days to have your balls put in a jar and studied. You don't want that. And I don't want that...

ROMAN
And my balls definitely don't want that...

Beat... She studies him... Her expression resolute..

GLORIA VALDEZ
I always protect my investments... That is, until they lose their viability...

Roman eyes Gloria: What does she want with the Orion Nine?

INT. MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Emery watches as Roman exits the office. She considers going to him. But then, Taylor and Rochelle surround her.

TAYLOR
We're blowing off 9th. Wanna come?

EMERY
We're supposed to have a quiz...

ROCHELLE
Everyone's getting an automatic 4.0 this year. It's like in college if your roommate kills herself.

EMERY
I don't think that's real.

As Grayson approaches...

GRAYSON
I heard they took Eric away for some kind of debriefing...

TAYLOR
He gets fully attacked and then has to get grilled?

EMERY
Sophia said Eric did the attacking.

The others look at her --

TAYLOR
Are you the Orion liaison now?

Taylor and Rochelle continue on with Grayson. Emery kicks herself for speaking up... Until Grayson turns back --

GRAYSON
Hey, see you tonight, right?

TAYLOR
Yes, you'll see her tonight, Grayson. God. Attempt to be cool. Even social newbies like Emery still like a little cool with their drool.

And he flashes Emery the peace sign. She beams as she watches them go: Maybe there's hope for her after all...

WHILE DOWN THE HALL -- Sophia rushes up to Roman, hugs him.

SOPHIA
I'm sorry.

ROMAN
It wasn't your fault. Are you okay?

Sophia nods. Though clearly still a bit shaken. When a relieved Drake and Teri arrive...

DRAKE
Man, I'm glad to see you. We were afraid they were Crating you.

A look back toward Gloria's office...

ROMAN
I'm still not sure why they didn't.

DRAKE
We can't mess with them at school.

TERI
It has to be off-campus.

Roman looks at the two of them. Shakes his head...

ROMAN
How about we don't mess with them at all?

Roman walks off with Sophia. Off Drake, his wheels turning, WE CUT TO --

INT. WHITEHILL HOME - EMERY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emery giving herself a once-over in the mirror: Tight jeans, high heels, red lips. Perfectly date-ready. Ray enters, eyes his daughter. With a sigh --

RAY
It's the beginning of the end.

EMERY
(smiles)
No. It's a party.

RAY
You'll be careful?

EMERY
Always.

RAY
Have fun. You deserve it. I'm heading to work...

Ray exits as an eager Emery puts on another coat of lipstick... Meanwhile, back at the Sector --

EXT. ORION SECTOR - ALLEY - NIGHT

Drake meets with Teri and a few other MALE ORIONS.

TERI
Even if you can get out to crash their lame party, you'll never get back in time to make curfew.

DRAKE
Maybe, maybe not. But I'd rather do thirty days in the Crate than let them think they've got the upper hand. We need to send a message. What happened to Roman today can never happen again.

As the other Orions nod in agreement --

EXT. ORION SECTOR - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Roman helps Nox fill a large planter with soil. He flinches as he lifts the heavy bag -- his arm sore from today's fight.

NOX
Let's take a break.

Roman drops the bag and they both take a seat on a bench, overlooking the camp. After a few moments of silence...

NOX (CONT'D)
Something happen at school?

ROMAN
Nothing I wanna talk about.

Nox looks up at the sky. He feels Roman's eyes on him.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
Do you ever miss it?

NOX
Of course. Every day.

ROMAN
But you work so hard to get all of us to adapt to this place. Even though these people would rather we were back up there. Or dead.

NOX
Since the beginning of time we'd wondered if maybe there was intelligent life beyond our planet. And now... to have finally found it? How can it not be embraced? How can we *not* try and see if some kind of intergalactic harmony can be reached?

ROMAN
Easy for you to say. You don't have to go to school with these maniacs.

NOX
We crawl before we walk.

ROMAN
We do?

NOX
Well, *humans* do. It was an analogy.

ROMAN
They crawl before they walk?

NOX
Forget I said it.

He smiles... Beat... Then:

ROMAN
You really believe this integration can work?

NOX
I do. Because despite the cruelty they are capable of, they also have an incredible capacity for splendor.

Roman shakes his head... As Nox gets up to his feet...

ROMAN
I don't see it.

NOX
Then you're not listening to enough Beatles songs.

Roman smiles.

NOX (CONT'D)
Just give them a chance, son. That's all I ask. Just open your hearts.

ROMAN
Both of them?

NOX
Both of them.

Nox smiles at his son. Later, we find --

EXT. ORION SECTOR - ROMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Roman walking toward his house, his father's words still ringing in his ear, when Teri approaches.

ROMAN
Not now, Teri.

TERI
Do you remember when you were attacked by those guards? When we arrived here?

ROMAN
Of course I remember. They left me a permanent scar as a parting gift.

TERI
It took you six months to learn how to walk again. Three months to speak. And even then your voice was barely above a whisper. Me and Drake found this junky old wheelbarrow. We'd carry you around in it, race each other through camp.
(smiles)
You loved that.

ROMAN
I did. But... what's your point?

Teri, turning serious now...

TERI
I saw you last night. With that girl, Emery.

ROMAN
I was keeping her out of trouble.

TERI
You really wanna keep her safe? Then stay away. Because if the guards catch you together, this time your punishment's not going to be as much fun as a six-month stint in a dirty wheelbarrow...

Roman shakes his head, keeps walking. But Teri won't be defeated. She catches up with him...

TERI (CONT'D)
I don't know why you even bother making connections with humans. If all goes according to plan... Soon *they're* going to be the ones behind these walls.

Roman stops walking...

ROMAN
What are you talking about?

TERI
Just something my father and the rest of the Gwans talk about in their Monday meetings. I listen in.

ROMAN
No offense, Teri, but your father is an idiot. They found him hiding in a Porta-Potty on Arrival Day.

TERI
That's just a rumor. And you're a prick.

And she walks away. But turns back for:

TERI (CONT'D)
Oh, and by the way: Drake and them went after that kid, Eric.

ROMAN
What do you mean?

TERI
They're going after him hard at some party tonight.

Off Roman's panicked expression, we CUT TO --

EXT. ORION SECTOR - NIGHT

Roman hustling through a sketchy area of camp. Abandoned, boarded-up BUILDINGS. FIGURES in the shadows. Roman keeps his head down, careful to avoid the surveillance cameras...

At the end of the street: A LANTERN hangs outside a DOOR. A sign on the door reads: HOUSE OF CARDS. Roman enters --

INT. HOUSE OF CARDS - NIGHT

To find ROUGHNECK ADULT ORIONS scattered around a few tables, playing an Orion game involving LIQUID TRANSLUCENT MARBLES. In another corner of the room we find more "human" (but clearly less popular) games -- Pool tables. Poker. Etc...

A brave Roman passes by the Orions, ignoring their piercing stares, and walks directly to the --

BACKROOM - Where he finds WEEBLE, the crusty owner, sitting at a table, reading a magazine. He looks up at Roman.

WEEBLE
What do you want?

Roman holds out a $20 bill. Weeble eyes Roman.

WEEBLE (CONT'D)
Aren't you Nox's son?

Roman shakes his head, “no”. Weeble stares back -- not entirely convinced. Roman digs out another $20 bill from his pocket. Extends it to Weeble. Taking a threatening tone...

ROMAN
You must be confused.

Weeble nods. Yes, he must be. He takes Roman’s money and pulls a tiny GADGET from his pocket, pointing it directly at Roman’s bar-coded wristband. It BLINKS twice, SCRAMBLING the signal. He then lifts a TRAP DOOR in the floor underneath the table... MOMENTS LATER, we find --

EXT. ORION SECTOR - NIGHT

Roman climbing the ladder UP TO GROUND LEVEL, now on the other side of the camp’s wall. He is past the point of no return, resigned to his decision. As the PULSING BEAT OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC takes us to --

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

A TWO-STORY ABANDONED FARMHOUSE in the middle of a field. No other homes or lights for miles.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Wireless speakers POUND. GRAFFITI lines the walls. The SCHOOL’S ELITE fill the crowded dance floor...

ACROSS THE ROOM -- Lukas bobs his head to the beat, clearly out of his element, but trying to fake it. He waves to Emery from across the room, relieved to see a familiar face.

She waves back, looking a bit nervous, as Grayson hands her a drink. She notices he wears a SILVER RING on his thumb.

EMERY
Cool ring.

GRAYSON
It was my brother’s. He got it when he became an officer.

EMERY
Is he still in the force?

GRAYSON
No. He, uhh, was killed in action. During the Invasion...

EMERY
I’m so sorry.

GRAYSON
It's okay. I don't tell many people. Then you end up being the glum guy with the dead brother. The tragedy defines you.

EMERY
Tell me about it. Glum guy with the dead brother, meet sick girl with the lame antibodies.

Grayson smiles. Emery loosens up a bit, now seeing this vulnerable side to Grayson she didn't know existed...

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

A buzzed Emery LAUGHS with Grayson. They sit close on a discarded mattress, scrunched up against a wall.

Taylor nods to Emery from across the room. A look of approval and acceptance. Emery smiles, nods back. For once feeling like she might actually "fit" somewhere... When an out-of-breath PARTYGOER bursts into the room --

PARTYGOER
You guys gotta see this...

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

One of Eric's CRONIES has been STRIPPED DOWN and TIED to a scarecrow pole, his BRIEFS stuffed inside his mouth, his eyes wide with fear. Eric and the stunned partygoers file out.

ERIC
Who did this?

When DRAKE and a few of the other ORIONS step out of the cornfields. GASPS. WHISPERS. A few KIDS just turn and run.

DRAKE
We just want to have a talk with Eric.

Eric steps up to Drake. Unafraid. The two boys stare each other down. Close. Very close.

ERIC
This ends tonight.

DRAKE
For once we agree.

Suddenly DRAKE HEAD BUTTS ERIC -- sending him FLYING BACKWARDS. As Drake hovers over Eric, prepared to pounce, TWO ARMS WRAP AROUND DRAKE FROM BEHIND --

As Roman YANKS him back and away --

DRAKE (CONT'D)
What are you doing here, Roman?

ROMAN
You have any idea what they'll do to you for breaking curfew?

The humans are watching them argue... Roman spots Emery... Sees Grayson take her arm...

But then - in the distance we hear POLICE SIRENS -- SHIT.

TAYLOR
(yells)
COPS!

And it's a SUDDEN MAD SCRAMBLE -- PARTYGOERS bolting in every direction. In the melee, Emery gets KNOCKED over. Almost trampled. When a HAND reaches out for her... *It's Roman.*

EMERY
Thanks!

Grayson finds Emery...

GRAYSON
Let's go -- !

EMERY
(to Roman)
C'mon!

Emery follows Grayson to his Jeep. Roman hesitates, but decides not to follow her...

As Grayson, Emery, Eric and Taylor climb in... Emery can see Roman, eyeing the SCRAMBLING TEENS as they bail. He is the only one left, as everyone else has jumped into cars and peeled off. Roman scans the field -- Which way should he go?

Emery calls out, waving him over --

EMERY (CONT'D)
Roman! Get in!

TAYLOR
Are you nuts?
(yells)
Hurry up, Rochelle!

Rochelle rushes up to the Jeep, climbing in the back.

EMERY
But do you know what the cops will do to him?

ERIC
His problem. Not ours.

An appalled Emery looks to Grayson -- but he knows he's been overruled...

Emery considers her options - *Should she choose the safety and comfort of her new friends? Or be bold and stand up for what she believes is right?* The SIRENS are getting closer...

And as they're about to take off, she makes her choice, JUMPING OUT OF THE BACK OF THE JEEP --

GRAYSON
Emery! What are you doing?

But Emery is racing for Roman... Eric shouts to Grayson:

ERIC
We gotta go, Man. C'mon.

GRAYSON
We can't leave her!

ERIC
She picked the Tattie over you, dude. Own it.

Taylor and Rochelle share a stunned look as the Jeep peels away and Emery runs up to Roman...

ROMAN
That wasn't very smart.

EMERY
Now we're even. C'mon. We're better off on foot...

And she takes his hand. And leads him into the TALL CORNFIELDS. As the sound of COP SIRENS fills the night air --

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Emery and Roman RUSH through the cornfield, breathless...

EMERY
We should be fine here.

They slow down. Roman eyes Emery as she catches her breath.

ROMAN
You okay?

EMERY
Other than having just possibly committed social suicide? Sure.

ROMAN
It's funny. All these years, we're taught about this vaunted thing called "humanity." Something we could never, by definition, possess.

He looks at her, taking a step closer...

ROMAN (CONT'D)
But after only a few days of being amongst your kind... And the intolerance, the anger, the fear... This concept of "humanity" doesn't seem so clear...

EMERY
No. There are lots of good people.

ROMAN
I've only met one.

She looks at him. He smiles. She smiles back. She looks down at her hand still holding Roman's. She spots his red, bruised knuckles -- RAW from his fight with Eric.

And Emery is now very aware she is alone in the middle of nowhere... with an alien. Roman senses her trepidation.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
You don't have to be afraid. I would never hurt you.

And somehow she believes him. They lean in closer... Their faces now inches apart...

Electricity there... Interrupted by BUZZING -- Emery's cell phone. Frustrated, the moment lost, Emery checks her phone.

EMERY
Sorry. It's my mom.
(answers)
Hey... I'll be home soon --

Emery's face drops as she listens...

EMERY (CONT'D)
Okay. I'm on my way.
(hanging up)
It's Julia. I have to go.

ROMAN
I understand.

EMERY
If you keep walking straight...
You'll find the road to the Sector.

ROMAN
Thanks. Are you okay... ?

She looks at him... Suddenly very upset... Then:

EMERY
I have to go --

Roman watches her go, obviously distressed. As we CUT TO --

INT. ORION SECTOR - ROMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nox entering the house to find Gaia pacing.

GAIA
Curfew is in fifteen minutes. And
Roman's not home yet.

Nox turns to Sophia, who is doing homework.

NOX
Do you know where your brother is?

SOPHIA
He probably just lost track of time.

Nox puts a reassuring hand on a nervous Gaia's shoulder.

NOX
Don't worry. I'll find him.

As a concerned Gaia and Sophia watch Nox go, the melancholy piano of Sigur Ros's "Saeglopur" begins, taking us to Emery...

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Standing outside Julia's hospital room. A NURSE approaches.

NURSE
She slipped into it so quickly. I'm so sorry, Emery.

Emery eyes Julia. Now comatose. Hooked up to machines. JULIA'S PARENTS sit on either side of Julia, crying, holding her hand... While back at camp --

EXT. ORION SECTOR - STREET - NIGHT

Nox spots Teri on the street.

NOX
Teri. Have you seen Roman?

TERI
No.

Nox senses Teri is being cagey.

NOX
Teri...

TERI
I tried to stop him. He went after Drake. To some party in the West Hills --

The news wallops Nox, confusion and fear washing over him --

NOX
What? Beyond the walls? *But how?*

INT. HOSPITAL - JULIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Emery sits at the foot of Julia's bed, her usual spot. Her heart breaking. But we pull back to find --

ROMAN. Standing in the shadows of a DOORWAY across the hall, out of sight from the hospital staff. He looks through the glass at Emery, who does not see him. While back at camp --

EXT. ORION SECTOR - NIGHT

Nox is on a mission towards the House of Cards. Loaded for bear. A curious GUARD -- BRADEN (30s) eyes him as he passes.

BRADEN
Nox. Don't see you in this part of--

NOX
Not now.

And a determined Nox continues on. Sensing trouble is afoot, Braden reaches for his radio to call for back-up... He watches as Nox BURSTS inside --

INT. HOUSE OF CARDS - NIGHT

-- Stunning the ORION PATRONS. As Nox charges into the --

BACKROOM -- just as Weeble's eyes dart away from something on a shelf in the corner... Nox grabs Weeble by the collar...

NOX
How could you let him go out there?

Just then, Braden, Ray and a few other GUARDS burst in --

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING AREA - NIGHT

Emery sitting in the waiting area. Eyeing her bare feet, dirty from her run in the fields. Michelle rushes into the hospital. Sees her daughter. Emery stands as she approaches. Looks up at her mother...

EMERY
I guess she couldn't be saved...

And Emery can no longer hold it together. She breaks down, falling into her mother's arms. While down the hall...

INT. HOSPITAL - JULIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Roman stands in the doorway of Julia's hospital room. He steps inside... Closing the curtains. He reaches into his pocket and takes out the CYPER HERB... While back at camp --

INT. HOUSE OF CARDS - NIGHT

The guards move in on Nox and Weeble. Their hands hovering over their WEAPONS. A harried Nox, careful with his words --

NOX
I'm only here looking for my son.

Braden ignores Nox. His eyes instead focused on a stash of SMUGGLED ELECTRONICS in a box...

BRADEN
That what I think it is?

Weeble eyes the box. Then eyes Braden. Knows he's fucked. Nox becomes increasingly frustrated, as he eyes Ray taking out a pair of HANDCUFFS, he pleads --

NOX
(re: the electronics)
I have nothing to do with that --

RAY
I believe you, Nox. It's only for questioning.

NOX
Ray, please. I have to find Roman.

Suddenly Weeble grabs something off the shelf. As we find --

INT. HOSPITAL - JULIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Roman picking off a SHARP PIECE of the herb... He makes a FIST with his right hand. A VEIN BULGES from his wrist. And as the ROARING GUITARS send the MUSIC skyward --

Roman SHOVES THE SHARP HERB DIRECTLY INTO HIS VEIN... As he DOUBLES OVER IN AGONY --

INT. HOUSE OF CARDS - NIGHT

A desperate Weeble trains a HOMEMADE PVC PIPE GUN at the GUARDS. The guards instinctively DRAW THEIR WEAPONS. It's a stand-off. With a Nox caught in the middle. Unarmed.

BRADEN
Drop your weapon!

Nox takes a step towards Weeble, attempting to diffuse --

NOX
You don't want to do this.

WEEBLE
I can't go back to that place, Nox. They screw with your head.

But BEHIND WEEBLE -- another GUARD, who has entered through the back of the building, CREEPS up on him... As we go --

INT. HOSPITAL - JULIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Roman's BUBBLING VEINS -- the herb, now deeply embedded in his arm, REACTING WITH HIS BLOOD. A pained but still determined Roman opens a drawer and pulls out --

A SYRINGE. As he begins to FILL THE TUBE WITH HIS BLOOD...

INT. HOUSE OF CARDS - NIGHT

The guard makes his way closer to Weeble... Tries to SNATCH Weeble's gun from behind, but during their BRAWL the gun goes off -- HITTING BRADEN IN THE ARM... A split second later --

A SECOND SHOT RINGS OUT --

And Ray's eyes go WIDE. We think for a moment he's been shot. But no... He is the shooter. His gun aimed directly at Weeble. But it's Nox who is caught in the line of fire. As he falls backwards onto the dirty floor...

INT. HOSPITAL - JULIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Roman INJECTS the syringe filled with his blood into Julia's IV... Just as --

INT. HOUSE OF CARDS - NIGHT

Ray kneels, huddled over Nox. His shirt now BLOOD-STAINED. A panicked Ray applies pressure to Nox's chest...

We go CLOSE ON Nox's face, his wide eyes looking up at Ray. When slowly they begin to close... And the sound of AMBULANCE SIRENS soon transform into --

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

BLARING HOSPITAL MACHINES -- A CONSTANT STREAM OF BEEPS...

Emery and Julia's parents rush down the hall. They stop at Julia's room and look inside to find --

JULIA. Awake. Alive. A DOCTOR tending to her. He looks up at them. Pure disbelief and joy.

Julia's parents break down into tears. Emery can't react. Overjoyed, yet stupefied. She takes a step inside the room. Noticing something on the floor beside Julia's bed --

A TWIG OF CYPER. Emery recognizing it immediately... As she looks up at the window, sees it is slightly ajar... Knows this wasn't just a stroke of luck, a medical miracle...

She takes a step towards Julia's bed, purposefully concealing this evidence from view... Making her complicit...

Off Emery -- Blissfully unaware of the tragedy that's occurred at the Sector, only aware that life will never be the same... As we FADE TO BLACK, taking us to the --

END OF SHOW