SOMACELL

Written by

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OVER BLACK:

THUD. THUD. THUD. THUD.

A steady, pulsing rhythm. Deafeningly loud. Each jolt shaking our seats.

FADE IN:

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING SUB-BASEMENT - DAY

A dark, dank space lit only by a few bare light bulbs swinging from the ceiling. Bodies crowd around, making a cramped and sweaty. ALL MEN --

Scarred. Muscled. Tattooed.

THUD. THUD. THUD. THUD.

That sound is their FISTS smacking into the CONCRETE WALLS. Beating out a rhythm with calloused, bloody knuckles.

A WARCRY.

One man steps into the center of the circle. He wears a MOHAWK and carries a barbed CAT O' NINE TAILS.

Another man steps up to meet him. He has a PORT-WINE STAIN on the side of his face and sports a homemade pair of PANTERA CLAWS.

THUD-THUD-THUD-THUD.

The rhythm gets faster, building to a frenzy as Mohawk and Port-Wine circle each other in the ring. Echoing like a TRAIN is rumbling through this dark space. Louder, louder, then --

SILENCE. The equivalent of a bell at a boxing match.

Port-Wine LUNGES with his claws.

Mohawk DODGES and WHIPS his cat o' nine tails into PORT-WINE's back. Cheers erupt as flesh tears.

Mohawk readies his whip again. But this time the barbs CATCH in Port-Wine's thick cargo pants. Mistake.

Port-Wine KICKS his leg back, YANKING the Cat O'Nine Tails from Mohawk's grip. Then he advances. Claws gleaming.

Mohawk raises his fists... But flesh and bone is no match for a blade.

Port-Wine CHARGES, BLOCKS Mohawk's swing, and

THRUSTS HIS CLAWS up into Mohawk's ribs.

Blood gurgles up out of Mohawk's mouth as he slumps to the floor. Hands reach out and pull his body into the circle.

Port-Wine raises his arms in victory and

THUD. THUD. THUD. THUD.

The crowd calls for a new contender. Into the circle steps:

A WALL OF MUSCLE with a pattern of CIGARETTE BURNS on his back. He holds a simple, household HAMMER.

This is PIKE.

Port-Wine looks at the hammer and grins. He raises one Pantera claw to his face and LICKS OFF THE BLOOD.

Pike gazes back with no expression. But he jostles the hammer in his hand. Feeling its weight, testing his grip. As if he finds the motion soothing.

The wall-pounding raises to a deafening roar -- THUD-THUD-THUD-THUD -- then: silence. Time to fight.

Pike and Port-Wine circle each other. Port-Wine fakes a few JABS with his claws. Taunting. But Pike doesn't flinch.

Instead, Pike starts WALKING TOWARD HIM. Calmly. Casually. Hammer still at his side.

Port-Wine doesn't know what to make of this, but he raises his claws, pulls back, and readies to SWING --

But as he lunges into a DEADLY THRUST, his claws hit nothing but air. In that split second, Pike

DROPS TO THE GROUND

And SWINGS the clawed end of his hammer into Port-Wine's

ACHILLES TENDON.

Port-Wine goes down SCREAMING.

Pike stands, arches the hammer back, ready to send the blunt end into the wine-stain target on his opponent's face, when --

A pair of

EXPENSIVE HEELS

steps into the circle.

The heels belong to DELANEY THOMAS (30s): polished, professional, and not at all terrified of the THUGS surrounding her.

In fact, she appears frustrated more than anything else. And her eyes land on Pike with all the fury of a mother about to scold a child.

DELANEY
What is this, Pike?

Pike WHEELS. His eyes go WIDE -- the first emotion we've seen from him.

PIKE
The fuck are you doing here?!

DELANEY
When I told you to find a hobby, this is not what I meant. I thought we were making progress.

A THUG reaches out from the crowd to GRAB Delaney. Without even looking, she

SNAPS EVERY FINGER IN HIS HAND. *How did she do that?!*

DELANEY (CONT'D)
How can I help you if you won't help yourself? It's not enough for me to want you to have a better life if you don't want it, too. This road you're on... it only leads to one place. But it doesn't have to. You can change.

The hammer sags in Pike's hand. For some reason, this mountain of a man is quailed by a petite professional woman.

But Port-Wine has had enough. With a cry of rage, he RISES up onto his one good leg and LUNGES for Pike while his back is turned.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
Look out!

With lightning reflexes, Delaney SWIVELS Pike out of the way, just in time to miss Port-Wine's swipe.

But a HUSH falls over the crowd.

PIKE
Oh fuck...

Delaney follows his gaze to her own RIGHT SHOULDER, where one of Port-Wine's blades has

IMPALED HER through the collarbone, and out the other side.

Port-Wine looks just as shocked as anybody. He releases his grip on the pantera claw, leaving it hanging from Delaney's shoulder.

On instinct, Pike WHEELS and PUNCHES Port-Wine in the face. It's a powerhouse hit. Port-Wine falls to the floor in an unconscious heap.

Delaney YANKS the blade out of her shoulder in one fluid motion. The pantera claw clatters to the floor.

She looks at the blood blossoming through her blouse. Winces through the pain. Grits her teeth. Angry now.

DELANEY
Great.

She turns back to Pike. Fuming.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
Just. Get your shit together.

And with that, she turns and storms back through the crowd. The thugs around her STEP ASIDE, bewildered and awed.

Pike just stares after her. Utterly stunned.

PIKE
Yo... Yo!
(calling after her)
Mrs. T!

EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING - DAY

Delaney SHOVES open the door and steps out into the morning sun. She leans against the building, blood soaking her shirt,

then moves to touch the WATCH on her left wrist --

Which is unlike any type of watch we've ever seen. ITS FACE IS BLANK. Which means it's something else entirely...

-- but she can't move her right arm. Damn knife wound. Instead, she lifts her left wrist up to her right hand. And when her fingers touch the blank watch face, it

LIGHTS UP, a brilliant blue.

Delaney closes her eyes. And when she opens them, she's in:

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

[Here the color palette becomes more diffused -- duller and darker.]

A blank white room -- sterile, like a hospital.

Delaney is sitting in a rolling chair wearing a sleek

METALLIC HEADBAND.

She takes it off and rubs her shoulder -- which is totally FINE. No blood, no stab wound.

DELANEY
Ow.

Beside her, PIKE is asleep in what appears to be some kind of hospital bed. Electrodes monitor his vital signs. His wrists and ankles are CUFFED to the sides of the bed frame. And he wears a metallic HEADBAND just like hers. Except --

Pike's headband is wired to a PLASMA SCREEN mounted above his bed. Onscreen, we see footage of him exiting the abandoned building where she just was, searching for her.

It's as if Delaney was just inside Pike's mind.

VOICE (O.S.)
You okay?

The room is full of beds just like Pike's. In each one, a sleeping man or woman wears the same electrodes, handcuffs, and metal headbands.

Plasma screens are mounted above each bed. Some show scenes of drug use, domestic violence, physical confrontations, etc. But most show typical, boring aspects of everyday life: driving to work, grocery shopping, watching tv, etc..

This is no hospital, and these aren't patients.

It's a prison. Full of convicts.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Delaney?

The VOICE emanates from an intercom mounted on the ceiling. Delaney gets up. Still rubbing her shoulder.

DELANEY
Stabbed.

VOICE (O.S.)
Again?

Delaney just rolls her eyes.

She exits the White Room and strides down the...

HALLWAY

to the

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM

A temple dedicated to the gods of TECHNOLOGY. Floor-to-ceiling plasma screens stream live feeds from hundreds of convicts, just like the ones we saw in the White Room.

And in the far corner, surrounded by a bank of dozens of monitors, operating an instrument panel more complex than any commercial aircraft's, is the high priestess herself:

JINX (20s), the alterna-hot tech-guru who keeps this whole place functioning. Mostly.

JINX
So we talking graze, flesh wound,
or swiss cheese?

Delaney pours a cup of coffee. Wincing at the weight of the mug on her sore arm. She takes a seat at a table -- the surface of which doubles as a TOUCHSCREEN DEVICE.

DELANEY
I want to see his file.

Jinx's fingers fly over her keypad. In seconds, a FILE icon appears on Delaney's table-screen.

JINX (THE VOICE)
You know Bo's gonna love this.

BO (O.S.)
Love what?

In walks BO (40s), a rough, gruff, bear of a man.

Delaney doesn't look up. But she does pull a crumpled $20 bill out of her pocket and place it on the table.

BO (CONT'D)
You're shitting me.

Delaney ignores him. She opens the digital file and starts scanning through. We see MUG SHOTS of Pike, CRIME SCENE PHOTOS of a murder, and various police report documents.

Specifically, a LOG of dates, times, and events.

BO (CONT'D)
Leg? Stomach? Don't tell me face again.

DELANEY
(reading documents)
Shoulder.

BO
Ouch. What, you dress like a bull's-eye in there?

DELANEY
He's regressing.

JINX
Here we go...

BO
And this is... J104? The guy with a hammer for a security blanket?

DELANEY
Pike. He hasn't had an incident in weeks. No fights, no outbursts, nothing. He was making progress. Working toward a breakthrough. So I thought. Turns out he's just found another outlet. He's just. Regressing.

Bo looks at her, looks at Jinx. Time to put the jokes aside and have a serious talk. He sits.

BO
Delaney. We've talked about this--

DELANEY
So why you feel the need to bring it up yet again--

BO
There's a word for Pike and "regressing" ain't it. Violence is in his blood. He's a lifer.
(MORE)

BO (CONT'D)
A bottom-feeder. He’s never gonna change. Most of them aren’t. A criminal’s a criminal no matter how many second chances they get. Much as I like taking your money, you realize that, maybe you stop getting stabbed. Or shot.

JINX
Also strangled. That one time.

Delaney doesn’t answer. Just stares hard at the file.

BO
You think I’m a hard-ass.

DELANEY
(reluctant)
That’s not true.

BO
Yeah you do. You think I’m a cold, heartless hard-ass who has no feelings. Jinx, you think I’m a hard-ass?

JINX
(smirks)
The hardest.

BO
Well maybe I am. But. Ask me how I sleep at night.

DELANEY
You want to know what I think? I think everyone is capable of change, as long as one person is capable of believing in them.

She picks up her coffee to go.

DELANEY (CONT’D)
(to Jinx)
Prep N319’s uplink for me.

BO
Sure. Run off to the Golden Boy.
(as she’s leaving)
Since when did prison become “No Convict Left Behind”?

Delaney looks back at him. Sheer exhaustion in her eyes... and also raw determination.

DELANEY
Since SomaCell.

INT. HALLWAY

Delaney moves down the hall and pulls open the door to:

INT. WHITE ROOM

Delaney pulls a swivel chair over to the bed labeled N319. A man in his 30s sleeps soundly. Underneath the shaggy hair and beard-stubble is a handsome man with chiseled features. This is MASON.

The plasma screen over his bed shows Mason in a RACQUETBALL COURT, working up a sweat.

Delaney takes a seat and attunes her HEADBAND to the proper frequency. She adjusts it on her head. Leans back.

JINX (O.S.)
Hey. Don't let him get to you.

DELANEY
Never do.

JINX (O.S.)
Who cares what he thinks. Get shot all you want, not like it matters.

DELANEY
Jinx?

JINX (O.S.)
Oh. Right. Initiating uplink... now.

Delaney closes her eyes. And when she opens them:

INT. RACQUETBALL COURT - DAY

[Again, that hyper-saturated color palette, which we will learn is the hallmark of a virtual world.]

Delaney is now clad in workout gear with her own racquetball racket. She KNOCKS on the glass door of Mason's court and lets herself in.

MASON
Almost thought you stood me up.

DELANEY
And miss the chance to kick your ass? Never.

Mason just grins. In this virtual world, his hair is trimmed, his face clean-shaven, and his eyes simultaneously piercing and playful.

MASON
We'll see. I've been practicing.

Mason serves and Delaney rebounds expertly. They volley back and forth, and what starts as a casual warm-up quickly escalates into a fierce competition.

But in between the grunts and shouts of game play, Delaney makes an effort to insert some conversation. As she SLAMS the ball into the front wall:

DELANEY
How's the job?

Mason RETURNS with ease, sending her diving into the corner for her next shot:

MASON
Soul-sucking as ever. Same old routine.
(as Delaney rebounds)
Nice! You?

SLAM! Mason returns. SLAM! Delaney counters.

DELANEY
Good days and bad, I guess.

MASON
And today?

SLAM! Delaney swings with all she's got. The ball RICOCHETS off the wall and PELTS Mason in the thigh. Point, Delaney.

DELANEY
(grins)
Shaping up to be a good one. 3-1.

She readies her next serve...

INT. GYM SMOOTHIE BAR - LATER

Gym patrons clad in their skimpiest summer workout gear sample the monthly special -- "AUGUST BERRY BASIL BLAST".

Dripping sweat, Delaney and Mason share a booth and a couple of post-workout smoothies. There's a casual ease between them. Closeness. Chemistry.

DELANEY
So... no homicidal fits of rage?

She's kidding. Mostly.

MASON
You mean besides when you kick my ass at racquetball?

DELANEY
I gave you fair warning.

Mason sips, contemplating:

MASON
No, you know. Life is good. Not exciting or glamorous, really... But I'm happy, I'm healthy. Another year or two, I think I'll make Executive. Do you ever get that feeling sometimes, where you just know you're on the right path?

Delaney smiles, but it's a little wistful. Bittersweet. If this guy only knew what path he was really on...

DELANEY
Yeah, totally. I get it.
(back to business)
How about the ladies? Anyone special yet?

Mason shrugs, suddenly shy.

MASON
Um. What?

DELANEY
I seem to recall a little blond number, started at your firm a few months ago? Katie... Kathy...

MASON
Kelly? The receptionist? I told you about her? Um. I dunno. I guess she's cute, I just haven't really...

Wait, is he blushing?

MASON (CONT'D)
I don't want to talk about this.

DELANEY
Come on... Why not?

Yep. Definitely blushing.

MASON
Because. You and me, we've known each other, what? Forever? I dunno. It's just too... weird.

DELANEY
Talking to your best friend is weird.

MASON
About this, yeah. I don't know. Can we just drop it? Please?

And suddenly -- it's awkward. There's a thick sexual tension that didn't exist a moment ago.

Mason COUGHS. Delaney SHIFTS UNCOMFORTABLY in her seat. The silence hangs over them...

DELANEY
Well. Girls aside. I'm glad you're happy. You deserve it.
(off his look)
I mean it. Mason. You're a good guy. Which, believe me, is something I so rarely see anymore.

Now it's Mason's turn to shift uncomfortably.

MASON
Thanks. I guess.
(gets up)
I'm gonna grab a water for the road. You want one--?

Suddenly --

The overhead lights BLINK, FLICKER, and GO OUT. But it's not just the lights. For a brief moment, in the darkness, it's as if everything DISAPPEARS -- the booth, the walls, the other gym patrons.

<u>As if Mason and Delaney are standing in a VOID</u>.

Only for a moment. Then the lights FLICKER on, and everything's as it should be.

MASON (CONT'D)
What the... Did you? Did you see that?

Delaney springs up out of her seat.

DELANEY
I have to go. I'm sorry.

MASON
That was... Jesus. What was that?

But Delaney's already out the door. And as soon as she gets away, she touches the BLANK FACE of her wristwatch. The face LIGHTS UP and -- within moments -- Delaney is...

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

[And again, the color palette here is diffused and washed out, a trademark of the real world. Damn, it's depressing.]

...opening her eyes back in the White Room. To find BO standing over her, watching Mason's plasma screen and SCOWLING. But Delaney has other things on her mind --

DELANEY
Jinx?! What the hell was that?!

BO
Just what I was wondering.

JINX (O.S.)
I know, I know... I don't know.

Delaney tears off her headband and storms out of the White Room with Bo on her heels.

INT. HALLWAY

BO
"Anyone special in your life?"

DELANEY
You're observing me now?

Delaney SLAMS into:

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM

Where Jinx is on the FLOOR under her desk, FLASHLIGHT in one hand, studying the complex network of circuits and wires.

DELANEY
Well?

JINX
Short circuit... blown fuse... faulty receptor... Should I keep going? ‘Cause all I have right now is a laundry list of possibilities.

DELANEY
Do you have any idea how much irreparable damage this could cause to his psyche?

JINX
It’s fucking Roger. Like I can’t tell he just downloads porn all night. Every morning I come in, it’s the same -- no bandwidth, memory for shit, and a sticky keyboard.

BO
Mentioning the vic by name? You trying to bait him or something?

On the touch-screen table, Delaney calls up Mason’s file.

DELANEY
I don’t have to answer to you.

BO
Well you damn sure need to answer to somebody!

As before, we see Mason’s mug shot, police documents, and crime scene photos -- the battered body of a once-cute “little blonde number”: KELLY CONNORS.

Delaney WHEELS on Bo:

DELANEY
Twenty-four hours. That’s how far away Mason is from completing his fifth cycle. And his supposed “murder victim”? Barely on his radar. He’s happy, healthy, well-adjusted. Just like every other time. The whole time I’ve been working with him, he rarely even breaks the speed limit. He’s not a violent criminal. He’s a regular guy, just like you.

A few taps of his fingertips and Bo enlarges a photo of Kelly Connors's battered body.

BO
Yeah? A regular man do something like this?

DELANEY
He pleaded "not guilty" during his trial. Maybe he's innocent.
(before Bo can counter)
And even if he's not -- he's been a model citizen from day one. If anyone deserves a sentence reduction, it's him.

BO
And you're gonna say as much to the Board tomorrow?

DELANEY
That's right.

BO
Because he's such an upstanding guy. And not at all because you can't wait to see your "best friend" on the outside.

Delaney's eyes seethe into Bo's.

DELANEY
There's a line. That you are very close to crossing.

They simmer and glare. Neither one backing down. 'Til Jinx pipes up:

JINX
Um. Everything's intact on this end. I'll check the White Room. And all the wiring in between. Isolate the focal point. Give me three hours, maybe four, it'll be like this never happened.

Delaney looks away first. Gathers her things.

DELANEY
You'll call me if there's a problem?

JINX
So you can lend your valuable expertise?
(off her look)
Sure. Whatever.

Delaney heads for the door, but not before Bo can get in one last jab:

BO
It's not that I don't care, ya know. It's that you care too much.

INT. DELANEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Delaney pulls up to the driveway of a modest colonial-style townhouse. She tries to pull INTO the driveway, but there are already TWO CARS taking up space.

DELANEY
(remembering)
Ohhh... shit.

She reverses and parallel parks by the curb. Leans her head back against the headrest. Knows she's in trouble. Sighs.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
Shit.

INT. DELANEY'S HOME - NIGHT

Delaney walks in with a big SMILE plastered to her face.

DELANEY
I'm so sorry--

SHEILA and TOM, couple-friends, jump up from their seats in the living room to hug her.

TOM
Hey! She made it!

SHEILA
We brought this amazing smoked Gouda. You have to try it.

Delaney spies a platter on the coffee table -- cheese and crackers, most of them gone. She is very, very late.

As if she didn't feel bad enough, here comes PAUL with a sour grimace to rub it in. He leans in, feinting to kiss her cheek, but really HISSING into her ear:

PAUL
The wine?

Shit. Another thing to feel sorry for.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Great.

He turns to Sheila and Tom. The fake smile of a dinner host.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Well. Let's break out the bubbly.

CUT TO:

Dark soda BUBBLES AND FIZZES into an elegant glass.

We're in:

INT. DELANEY'S HOME - DINING ROOM - LATER

Delaney, Paul, Sheila, and Tom sit around the dinner table. A lavish meal spread out in front of them. Refilling their glasses with soda because Delaney forgot the wine.

DELANEY
--and the technology is just amazing. A single implanted chip that uses everything from interactive mapping software to real-time web-interfacing to the convict's own personal memories to create a fully-functioning replication of the world as we know it. It's... incredible.

TOM
So. What's the sickest shit you've ever seen?

SHEILA
Tom!

DELANEY
It's really not like that.

SHEILA
"Criminals. They're just like us."

DELANEY
They <u>are</u>. That's what so many people don't understand.

SHEILA
Reliving the exact same crimes over and over again?
(shudders)
I can't even stand reruns on TV.

DELANEY
Well. They don't. Not if we're doing our job. A lot of these guys -- and women -- it all comes down to a couple of mistakes. A few bad decisions. If we can help them see that, we can help them change.

PAUL
Delaney's their voice of reason, if you can believe that.

Sheila and Tom share a glance. There's some obvious tension at this table. So Tom goes for the joke:

TOM
I dunno. You ask me, half the fear of getting locked up was the ass rape.

But Delaney's on a roll now; there's no stopping her:

DELANEY
The simple fact is, the old system didn't work. SomaCell is less expensive, more humane, and more effective as a tool of rehabilitation. When they look back on us in the history books, it'll be like emerging from the Dark Ages into the Renaissance.

Delaney just realizes she's given an impromptu impassioned speech. No one is really sure how to respond.

Sheila tentatively raises her glass.

SHEILA
Well. Here's to the Renaissance.

They all raise their glasses of soda. Paul shoots Delaney a look across the table.

DELANEY
And speaking of books... Paul's starting his next novel.

Sheila and Tom pounce on the new topic. With the conversation turned in his favor, Paul sports the first genuine smile we've seen all night.

INT. DELANEY'S HOME - DINING ROOM - LATER

The guests are long gone, the remnants of dinner pushed to one side of the table. Delaney has documents spread out in an arc around her. Looks like she's in for a long night.

A robe-clad Paul saunters in, starts clearing away dishes.

DELANEY
No, leave it. You worked so hard. I'll clean up.

PAUL
You're not coming to bed?

Shuffling papers:

DELANEY
Got the Parole Board tomorrow. I want to make sure I'm prepared, but... something's missing.

Paul comes over, rubs her shoulders.

PAUL
Mmm. I've been saying that for months.

DELANEY
An intake form. It has to be in here somewhere... This guy has a real shot, though. The cleanest record I've ever seen. His whole cycle reads like one giant breakthrough. It could be you in there, you know?

That's a loaded statement. Paul notes a photo in one of the documents -- Mason. Attractive guy. He bends down, nuzzles her neck.

PAUL
Lucky for you, I'm right here.

Delaney leans into him, and soon they're kissing. Paul moves his hands over her shoulders, down the front of her blouse, but when his fingers find that top button --

Delaney pulls back.

DELANEY
I really should... I mean there's just so much to go over. And I have to find this form.

Paul stiffens. Even as a writer, he's not a man who takes rejection well.

PAUL
Right. Let's avoid the real issue instead. Classic Delaney.

DELANEY
Paul...

PAUL
You know what I was thinking, when I was standing in line at the grocery store this afternoon, buying everything for this dinner you forgot? Maybe I should come back here with a gun. Empty out all the registers. Shoot up the aisles. Maybe <u>that</u> might actually get your attention.

Paul storms off.

DELANEY
Paul!

A door SLAMS deeper within the house.

Delaney sighs. She could go after him. But she goes back to studying her documents instead.

We hold on Mason's photo... could that really be the face of a killer?

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Delaney walks in, dressed in her best SUIT, carrying the stack of files she was poring over the night before.

Jinx is still wearing her clothes from the night before. Hair a mess, eyes bleary. She smirks at Delaney's polished outfit.

JINX
Big day.

DELANEY
Wait... did you go home last night?

JINX
Glitch took longer than I thought. Crafty fucker. Was a systems router, totally shat itself. Easy enough fix once I found it. But yeah. I've basically been crawling around inside our circuit panels all night.

DELANEY
Jesus. You need coffee?

JINX
Way past coffee at this point. Got any human adrenal gland?

BO (O.S.)
How 'bout donuts?

Bo walks in carrying a baker's dozen. And -- what's that? A smile? He flops the box on the table with a flourish while Delaney and Jinx gape.

JINX
This is... new.

BO
Consider this a mea culpa. For yesterday.
(to Delaney)
Lemme make it up to you. We'll go to a bar. Have a few laughs, a few beers.

DELANEY
You hate bars.

JINX
And laughter.

BO
But I like beers. Seriously, I feel like an asshole.

Delaney grabs a BEAR CLAW from the box, rips into it.

DELANEY
(mouth full)
You're forgiven. Give me 10 minutes of quiet time and you're a saint.

She sits down with her file folder, desperately scanning every piece of information one last time.

Bo gazes at her -- something in between sympathy and sadness.

BO
Ya know, no matter what happens, you're a damn fine Specialist. You're doing the best you can.

But Delaney just keeps scanning.

DELANEY
Your one shot at sainthood and it's slipping away...

BO
Alright, alright. I know how to shut my mouth.

Bo grabs two donuts and shoves both into his mouth at once.

JINX
Gross... but effective.

Delaney's focus zooms in on the documents, closer and closer...

And when we finally ZOOM OUT, we see she's --

INT. HALLWAY

Walking and reading. Using every last second. She pushes open the door to...

INT. WHITE ROOM

...and strides over to Mason's bed. She pulls over the rolling chair, straps on the HEADBAND.

But she's not ready yet. She frantically flips through the last few pages, trying to absorb it all --

JINX (O.S.)
Guaranteed you've memorized it. Come on. You're gonna be late.

But Delaney can't put it down yet...

JINX (O.S.) (CONT'D)
De<u>LAAA</u>(ney)--

DELANEY
Okay, okay.

Delaney puts the file down. Leans back in her chair.

JINX (O.S.)
Initiating uplink...

Delaney closes her eyes. And when she opens them, she's in:

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY [SATURATED]

A simple, austere room. Two folding chairs placed before a table. Three bigger, more expensive chairs behind the table.

And Mason pacing frantically. When he sees Delaney, his face is torn between panic and relief.

MASON
I don't know what happened. I woke up, used the bathroom. Got a shower. And when I walked out into my living room, it wasn't my living room. It was... this. I mean... I'm dreaming, right? I must be.

DELANEY
I know this must be very confusing for you.

MASON
I tried to go back, but the doors. None of the doors work.

Mason laughs. It's short and unnatural.

DELANEY
Mason. Do you trust me?

Mason looks at her. Grasping for any life raft to cling to.

MASON
You're my best friend.

DELANEY
Then I want you to listen to me. Let's have a seat. And no matter what happens over the next few minutes, the best thing you can do is just keep sitting quietly. Okay?

MASON
Are you kidding? Is this a joke?

Delaney takes a seat in a folding chair. Mason paces around, then gives up. He takes a seat next to her. Jittery. Antsy.

Suddenly, the DOORS OPEN and three PEOPLE walk in. Two men and a woman. All as somber and severe as this room.

MASON (CONT'D)
Who are they? I swear those doors didn't work a minute ago.
(louder, to the SomaCell Reps)
Who are you?

They ignore him. They take their seats behind the table, the men on either side of the woman. Both men wear pins their suit lapels bearing the SOMACELL SYMBOL.

They unlock briefcases. Open files. Check documents.

SOMACELL REPRESENTATIVE #1
This is the fifth cycle review of Convict N319 Mason Grant, incarcerated June 5, 2015 for the murder of Kelly Connors.
(a nod to the woman)
The Honorable Judge Wilcox presiding.

MASON
<u>What</u>?!

The woman behind the table, Judge Wilcox, nods at Delaney.

JUDGE WILCOX
How long have you overseen him?

DELANEY
Almost four months, Your Honor. Five cycles, approximately three weeks in duration. And he's achieved a breakthrough each time.

MASON
I'm not a murderer! I didn't kill anyone! What is going on here?!

JUDGE WILCOX
And how would you describe Mr. Grant's behavior during this most recent?

DELANEY
Exemplary. No displays of violence or excessive agitation.
(MORE)

DELANEY (CONT'D)
He has broken no laws, committed no crimes, initiates minimal contact with Miss Connors, and has displayed the behavior of a model citizen in all aspects of his life.

Mason looks at her. As if seeing her for the first time.

MASON
Delaney?

DELANEY
(deep breath; she's prepared a speech)
Given the fact that Mr. Grant has no previous criminal record, and the circumstantial nature of the charges that were brought against him, it's my recommendation that--

The two SomaCell Representatives lean across the table with one another to confer. One Representative slides a document over to the Judge. She reads it and frowns.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
It is my <u>recommendation</u> that we implement a standard sentence reduction of six months, and reevaluate the terms of--

SOMACELL REPRESENTATIVE #1
Thank you, Mrs. Thomas. We've heard enough.

Mason's eyes WIDEN at the mention of "<u>Mrs</u>. Thomas". But Delaney won't be deterred.

SOMA-CELL REPRESENTATIVE #2
That will be all, Mrs. Thomas.

DELANEY
--of rehabilitation upon completion of his next cycle!

DELANEY
Excuse me! As Mr. Grant's Specialist, I thought my opinion might be of some use in this hearing! I'm prepared to cite examples of his proven ability to function and thrive within society...

Judge Wilcox smiles -- it may or may not be genuine.

JUDGE WILCOX
Counselor. We appreciate our Specialists' opinions a great deal. Your insight into this case has been extremely valuable in helping shape our decision.

DELANEY
But--

JUDGE WILCOX
Please allow us a moment to confer.

Delaney relents. A sinking feeling growing...

As Judge Wilcox and the two SomaCell Representatives talk amongst themselves, Mason leans over to her:

MASON
You're married??

The Reps and the Judge finally separate.

JUDGE WILCOX
With a violent crime of this nature, four months seems an insufficient period for effective evaluation. Your dedication is to be commended, Counselor. Let's reevaluate after Cycle 10.

DELANEY
What?

SOMACELL REPRESENTATIVE #1
After a thorough deliberation, we have determined that Convict N319 Mason Grant, incarcerated June 5, 2015 for the murder of Kelly Connors, will continue to serve an unaltered sentence of life in prison--

Delaney LEAPS out of her chair.

DELANEY
No--

SOMACELL REPRESENTATIVE #1
--and reboot for Cycle Six effective immediately.

As the Judge and the Reps get up to leave, Delaney becomes frantic.

DELANEY
I'd like to appeal--

SOMACELL REPRESENTATIVE #2
Denied.

DELANEY
I can prove to you--

JUDGE WILCOX
Thank you, Counselor.

And they disappear through the doors. Leaving Mason absolutely terrified.

MASON
Delaney... What's going to happen to me?

Delaney begins to SHOUT, as if to the air around her:

DELANEY
Jinx!! Wait! Just a minute!

MASON
I didn't do anything. I didn't kill anyone. I would never... you know I wouldn't. You know me!

DELANEY
I know. Just... listen--

MASON
Help me. I'm innocent, I swear. Please...

Delaney just HUGS him. Hard. Because it's all she can do.

DELANEY
You're going to be okay. I promise.

But suddenly there's a

FLASH OF WHITE

And Delaney finds herself in:

INT. GYM SMOOTHIE BAR

They were just here yesterday, but something's different. The big sign advertises: "4TH OF JULY SPECIAL -- STAR-SPANGLED STRAWBERRY!"

That's because it isn't "yesterday" -- it's 3 weeks in the past. The start of Mason's next CYCLE.

Mason walks past, then stops -- does a double-take and smiles wide when he recognizes her.

MASON
Delaney Thomas? No way!

Mason is utterly relaxed. Casual. No trace of fear or confusion on his face -- <u>because he doesn't remember</u>.

His memory, like the setting, is back to square one. As if nothing ever happened.

MASON (CONT'D)
Mason. Grant. God, how long has it been? You go here?

DELANEY
I... yeah. Small world.

MASON
Oh, man. Wow. I actually have to go. We've got a new receptionist starting today, I drew the short straw for orientation, it's a whole totally unexciting thing I can't believe I'm babbling about. But can we get lunch? I would love to just... catch up. Hey. You okay?

In a word? No. Shocked, wrecked, angry, frustrated. Definitely not okay. She tries to smile through it, but it's all just too much.

DELANEY
Oh. Yeah, I'm... lunch would be great.

MASON
Still the same number, right? Hey, they've got a great racquetball court here. You play?

DELANEY
A bit.

MASON
We've gotta play. I have to -- but, wow. Really great seeing you. I mean it. What are the odds, huh?

As soon as Mason leaves Delaney HEAVES a deep breath. She touches the blank face of her watch. Can't get out of here fast enough.

INT. WHITE ROOM [DIFFUSED]

Delaney opens her eyes. Blinking away tears. Her expression hardens.

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM - DAY

As soon as she enters, she can see it written all over Jinx and Bo's faces: pity.

BO
Hey, you did everything--

DELANEY
Who's next?

JINX
I mean, they were total assholes--

DELANEY
On the list, who's up?

Delaney's expression is clear: *drop it.*

JINX
Umm. You can check in on Pike?

DELANEY
Let's do it. He ready now?

JINX
Yeah, I guess, if--

Delaney storms out.

JINX (CONT'D)
--you are.

Jinx and Bo share a look.

INT. WHITE ROOM

Delaney takes a seat, straps in. All business.

DELANEY
Need a pit stop before I make contact.

JINX (O.S.)
Where to?

DELANEY
Toy store.

A pause.

JINX (O.S.)
Umm--

DELANEY
Whenever you're ready.

JINX (O.S.)
You're the boss. Initiating uplink... now.

Her eyes close, and when they open again she's:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY [SATURATED]

A low-rent home in a low-rent neighborhood. Bars on the windows. Paint peeling off the walls. A beat-up car on cinder blocks in the driveway. And a detached SHED in the back.

Delaney, PACKAGE in hand, heads around to the back of the house toward the dilapidated storage unit.

When she gets close, we can see thousands of tiny SPIKES poking out of the shed walls at uneven intervals. Nails, hammered into the wood from the inside.

Delaney knocks twice, then enters--

INT. SHED

--to find Pike, HAMMER in hand, pounding nails into an old car tire. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK.

Everything in this shed -- tables, chairs, walls, floor and ceiling -- has been riddled with nails. He's taken OCD to a whole new level.

THUNK. THUNK. THUNK. Pike works slowly, methodically, as if in a trance. This is his zen.

He doesn't even look up when Delaney enters.

PIKE
How's the arm?

An overhead light FLICKERS and BUZZES.

DELANEY
Why? Got a guilty conscience?

Pike doesn't answer. He only looks up when Delaney sets her PACKAGE on a nail-studded table.

PIKE
What's that?

DELANEY
Open it and find out.

Pike gets up. But he doesn't go for the package. Instead, he steps to her. Invading her space. Trying to intimidate her.

But Delaney doesn't waver.

Finally, Pike smiles. Backs off.

PIKE
Long as I've known you, you never been afraid a' me.

DELANEY
Maybe one of these days you'll stop trying to change that.

PIKE
Maybe.

Now Pike goes for the package. Opens it. And frowns.

PIKE (CONT'D)
The fuck is this?

DELANEY
Call it an experiment.

Pike pulls off the wrapping to reveal:

A PLASTIC HAMMER. A harmless child's toy.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
You ever see those fake plastic cigarettes that are supposed to help people quit smoking?

PIKE
You want me to smoke this?

DELANEY
I want you to use it. Only when you're out in public. Leave the real one at home and try this instead.

PIKE
You want me to go out and walk around in public with a Playskool toy?

Once again, the overhead light FLICKERS and BUZZES. For a moment, everything in the back of the shed

DISAPPEARS

into a DARK VOID.

Delaney's eyes narrow. The glitch is back.

DELANEY
(mutters)
Shit.

PIKE
Are you outta your mind?

DELANEY
I have to go. I'm sorry. Just think about it. You owe me.

She makes her way out of the shed as fast as she can--

PIKE (O.S.)
The fuck I do--

--and goes for her watch. Hoping she's not too late.

But as it lights up with that BLUE GLOW:

Objects around her FLICKER and DISAPPEAR -- a parked car, a tree, a house -- just like they did during the glitch yesterday.

The world around her starts to SPIN. Delaney staggers. Nauseous and woozy.

DELANEY
Jinx...?

HER VISION BLURS OUT OF FOCUS.

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

From Delaney's POV:

At first, everything is WHITE. Then shapes begin to materialize, blurry silhouettes:

Her feet. A metal bed frame. She must be lying in bed.

And someone is standing at the foot of the bed. Pacing frantically. It's all very blurry, but it looks like

BO.

And he's saying something -- red-faced and yelling -- but his words are muffled and garbled, as if she's listening to a conversation underwater:

BO
(distorted)
Whaddayou mean you don't know?!

JINX (O.S.)
(distorted)
...I'm trying...

Delaney tries to sit up, but something restrains her. She turns to her side to see:

HER WRIST IS HANDCUFFED TO THE BED FRAME. *What the fuck??*

Bo notices her movement. Sees she's awake.

BO
(distorted)
Oh shit--

But then the room starts SPINNING again. Her vision BLURS once more. And the next time Delaney opens her eyes, she's:

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY [DIFFUSED]

Sitting in her swivel chair next to Mason's bed. Exactly where she's supposed to be.

Except that Bo is hovering over her. A concerned mother hen.

BO
Hey. Delaney?

Delaney yanks off her METALLIC HEADBAND, turns, and

VOMITS

onto the floor.

Jinx comes CHARGING into the room. No trace of smirk on her face. Only genuine fear.

JINX
She's out? You're out. Oh my god. I'm so sorry.

Delaney looks around. All the convicts sleeping in their beds. Everything just as she left it. Normal.

DELANEY
What... happened?

JINX
I thought I fixed it. I swear I fixed it. I thought it was just the router, but it must have--

DELANEY
The glitch?

BO
How bout we get you some water. Lie down for a few minutes.

Delaney rubs her wrists. Can't shake the feel of those cuffs.

DELANEY
I thought I was...

But she doesn't like the way Bo and Jinx are looking at her. Nervous. Scrutinizing.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
...nothing. Nowhere. I didn't know. Like a void.

BO
Damn mind machines. Wrong switch gets flipped, suddenly you're on Mr. Toad's Wild Ride. Least you know it was all in your head.

Delaney looks around. Everything as it was before. Everything as it should be.

DELANEY
...Right. Back to reality.

But though she tries to shake it off, that small seed of UNCERTAINTY has been planted. A FEAR that the world as she knows it could be all in her head.

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM - LATER

Delaney lays on a sofa with a cold compress over her face. Jinx enters quietly, trying not to disturb her.

DELANEY
You don't have to tip-toe around me. I'm fine.

JINX
What? This is how I walk.
(no bullshit)
I just... I'm not used to fucking up, okay?

DELANEY
Everyone makes mistakes.

JINX
Not when they're in charge of other people's brain waves. You sure you're...?

DELANEY
Stop. Asking.

JINX
Okay, but. You should really go home. I've killed all the uplinks 'til Tech gets here. Called Roger in, too. You know what that does to me.

DELANEY
No problem. Just have to observe and report the old fashioned way.

JINX
Yeah? What's that?

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

Delaney and Bo sit back to back in their rolling chairs in the middle of the room, eyes fixed on the MONITORS of their respective convicts, jotting notes on the tablets in their laps. Literally -- observe and report.

BO
Gives a whole new meaning to reality tv.

The monitor Bo is watching belongs to a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN. Onscreen, she's working a checkout line at a grocery store. She opens the cash drawer to deposit some bills and hand a customer their change.

But when she shuts the drawer, she leaves it the SLIGHTEST BIT OPEN. Perfect for pilfering later. She SMILES up at the next customer.

BO (CONT'D)
Come on, Yolanda...

Suddenly, onscreen, the STORE MANAGER walks by. Without missing a beat, Yolanda BUMPS the drawer with her hip, snapping it all the way shut.

BO (CONT'D)
Unbelievable.

Delaney is watching PIKE's monitor. On it, he's nursing a drink at a bar. His free hand wrapped around the toy plastic hammer. Delaney smiles. Progress.

DELANEY
What?

BO
She's about to swipe the till. Then boss man comes around, she aborts the plan.

DELANEY
And that's a bad thing because...

BO
Come on, you preach this to me all the time. It's not just the action that counts--

DELANEY
--it's the motivation.

BO
Exactly. Only reason she's not hands-deep in that register is she doesn't want to get caught. Got nothing to do with her sense of right and wrong.

DELANEY
Oh ye of little (faith) -- are you fucking kidding me?!

Onscreen, a BARFLY cracks a joke about Pike's hammer. Pike responds by SLAMMING him into the bar and SHOVING the hammer down his throat. So much for progress.

Delaney THROWS her tablet, startling Bo. Angry doesn't begin to cover it.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
Why do we bother? Why do we bend over backwards to help them when they won't even help themselves?

Bo's not used to seeing her like this. He goes for the old standby, a joke:

BO
Hey. It's job security.

DELANEY
It's impossible, is what it is.

BO
Not impossible. Exhausting maybe. Frustrating for damn sure. But every now and then you get that one percent. Like Mason. That makes it worth it. You taught me that.

DELANEY
And even then, look where it gets you.

BO
Yeah, I heard about that. Tough break with the board. But hey, I don't pretend to know the ins and outs of what the big guys upstairs do, and neither should you. Guy's as good as you say he is, he'll get his due.

Delaney looks at him... remembering something. Gets up.

BO (CONT'D)
What?

DELANEY
Back in a minute. Twenty bucks says mine commits a misdemeanor before yours.

BO
You obviously don't know Yolanda.

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Delaney finds Jinx relegated to the outside of her panel set up while a few TECH SUPPORT GUYS tinker with the controls. ROGER (20s), the skinny, slimy night-shift tech, hovers nearby, “supervising”.

Delaney motions her over, and she’s happy to comply.

JINX
Fucking Roger. He actually asked me if I tried “turning it off and turning it back on again.” Douchetard.

DELANEY
Got something you can help me with in the meantime.

Jinx perks up. Hates being at loose ends as much as Delaney.

DELANEY (CONT’D)
When I was going through Mason Grant’s files last night, I was missing one report. His official statement, whatever he gave to the police when he was arrested. Nowhere to be found.

Jinx calls up the network on the touchscreen table surface. Her fingers fly as she quickly opens a series of subfolders and scans through titles.

JINX
Huh.

She tries a new approach -- opens a dialogue box and searches using a series of command codes.

DELANEY
Should be an addendum to the intake form. He pleaded innocent; I’m sure it’s lengthy.

Jinx types a series in computer code. GRUNTS.

JINX
You’re right. There’s nothing in his file. You check The Stacks?

DELANEY
Not yet.

JINX
It’s The Stacks or submitting an official request to corporate. I’d pick the option with the least number of rats.

INT. THE STACKS - DAY

A dark and dusty room in the bowels of the SomaCell facility -- what you’d expect of a storage closet. In the digital age, this is where the dinosaurs go to die.

Delaney turns on an overhead light, illuminating:

Rows and rows of FILING CABINETS, drawers arranged in alphabetical order. Each one corresponding to a convict currently or previously incarcerated in this SomaCell facility.

Delaney goes to the “G” section, pulls open the drawer -- sending a DUST CLOUD wafting up -- and searches through ‘til she finds the file -- “Grant, M.”

She flips through the pages. Finds the intake form. One phrase jumps out at her: **...see attached...**

Twin puncture wounds dot the top corner where a staple used to be. But...

No document is attached.

She flips through more pages. Maybe they got separated somehow. But when she gets to the end... nothing.

DELANEY
Dammit.

She returns the file to its drawer. Which is when:

The overhead light begins to FLICKER.

Delaney freezes. Watches as the light sputters and struggles. Unnervingly similar to what happened during the glitch.

Is this just a faulty light, suffering from lack of use? Or could it be something more? A sign that the world around her isn’t what she thinks?

She’s instantly overcome with a terrifying thought.

Slowly, dreading every step, she moves further down the row of cabinets: H... I... J... all the way to:

T.

She opens the drawer. Her fingers trace over the folders as she scans the names printed on the dividers:

“Terry, W.”

“Thatcher, S.”

“Thirwell, J.”

Then... no. It can’t be.

“Thomas, D.”

Oh shit oh shit oh shit. Delaney’s breath HITCHES in her chest. She hadn’t realized she was holding it.

She slides out the file. Her fingers trembling. Flips it open to see:

“Dwayne Thomas. E012.” And a mug shot of some stringy-haired hillbilly.

Not her.

Delaney slumps against the shelf. Weak with relief. Until:

BO (O.S.)
I can take a hint, ya know.

Delaney quickly returns the disc to its place on the shelf. Feeling foolish as Bo saunters in.

BO (CONT’D)
The pleasure of my company’s worn thin, all you gotta do is say so. Don’t have to hide out.

DELANEY
I was just... Mason Grant’s official statement is missing from his file. Electronic, hard copy, everything.

BO
You still on this, huh?

DELANEY
I want to hear his side of the story. Maybe it’ll help me figure out where I went wrong.

Bo gives her a long, hard look for a minute.

BO
So it's a corporate request then, huh? Why don't you let me take care of it. I know one a' them pencil pushers. He'll cut through the bullshit.
(off her look)
Don't act so surprised. I am capable of random acts of kindness once in a blue moon. Now how 'bout that beer? On me. Day like today, I know I could use it.

But Delaney's still on edge.

DELANEY
Thanks. But I think... I'm just gonna turn in. Rain check?

BO
You got it.

Bo starts to leave when Delaney, suddenly contemplative, stops him.

DELANEY
You ever wonder... When they're in their cells. Do you think they ever know?

Bo blanches at the thought.

BO
Jesus. You're right. Last thing you need tonight is a drink. Go home, get some sleep, yeah?

DELANEY
Yeah.

But it looks like sleep is the farthest thing from her mind.

INT. DELANEY'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul sleeps soundly on his side of the bed, but Delaney tosses and turns.

She's laying on her side, but she can't get comfortable. She tries to roll over, but something STOPS her. She tries again. But it's as if she's STUCK somehow.

Delaney's eyes open.

She sees the problem -- her ARM is dangling over the side of the bed, and for some reason, she can't lift it up.

DELANEY
No...

Delaney inches toward the side of the bed. Terrified of what she'll see when she looks down. And sure enough, when her eyes peek over the edge, she sees:

Her wrist is handcuffed to the bed frame.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
No no no no...

And as she looks around, Delaney sees she's not in her bedroom at all. She's in:

THE WHITE ROOM.

Cuffed to her bed in the dark with a room full of other sleeping convicts.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
NO!

Delaney YANKS her cuffed arm as hard as she can, and --

INT. DELANEY'S HOME - BEDROOM - SAME

-- JOLTS up in bed. Her bed. Her bedroom. Paul isn't asleep beside her but, these days, that's reality.

It was all a dream.

Her arm hangs limply by her side -- leaden dead weight, no circulation. She's been sleeping on it. That's why she couldn't move it. Not because she was handcuffed.

She rubs her arm awkwardly. Trying to get the blood flowing. Takes a deep breath. Shivers.

INT. DELANEY'S HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Delaney softly pads down the hall. A BLUE GLOW emanates from the study, slightly eerie. But she peeks inside and --

It's just Paul. Asleep at his computer.

She quietly shuts the door.

INT. DELANEY'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A tea kettle heats on the stove. As Delaney reaches to grab a coffee mug from the kitchen cabinets...

Ouch!

Her shoulder's still a bit tender from the "stab wound" she sustained a few days ago.

She rubs the tender spot as she turns back to the stove. And when she looks up:

PAUL IS STANDING IN THE ENTRYWAY. WIELDING A PLUNGER.

DELANEY
God!

He regards her, bleary-eyed and on edge. Slowly lowers the plunger.

PAUL
(re: the plunger)
I heard noises. It was the first thing I could find. Can't sleep?
(off her look: *clearly*)
That parole case?

Delaney considers. And, because it's a much simpler, easier answer, she nods.

DELANEY
Denied. Flat out, no chance to appeal. I barely got two words in. You should have seen Bo's face. I never knew pity could look so condescending.

PAUL
That guy... I will never understand why his opinion matters so much to you.

DELANEY
It doesn't! I'm just saying... Mason swears he's innocent. He seems innocent. I just wish I knew, one way or the other.

PAUL
Too bad you can't go back. See how it happened the first time. I'm employing this flashback device in my manuscript...

But his voice fades as Delaney tunes him out. His words have SPARKED something. Delaney is suddenly WIDE AWAKE.

INT. DELANEY'S HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Much like last night, Delaney sits at the table with Mason's case files spread out before her. But this time, she's concentrating on two documents in particular:

On one side, Mason's INTAKE LOG --

A detailed list of his day-to-day activities in the real world leading up to the day he committed his crime.

Every convict in the SomaCell system has an Intake Log; it's how their information is gathered to make their virtual world so lifelike.

On the other side, Mason's CYCLE ONE LOG --

Delaney's detailed notes regarding Mason's day-to-day activities during his first SomaCell Cycle.

She's WORKING BACKWARDS, from the last day to the first,

<u>hilighting differences</u>

between the two logs. On the back pages, nearly every entry is highlighted. Toward the middle, the highlights become fewer and farther between. In the first few pages, hardly any entry is highlighted. The takeaway being:

Mason clearly did something during his first cycle that changed his path.

Delaney gets to the first page of each log. The first few days of the cycle. She <u>highlights one final entry</u> --

This is the event where the two time lines begin to deviate.

In the real world, on Day Two of the log, Mason's accounting firm gave him a new client, ALLIED VENTURE PARTNERS (AVP) -- three weeks before he allegedly killed Kelly Connors.

In Mason's SomaCell Cycle One, Day Two, he never received AVP as a new client. And what was the difference? According to Delaney's log --

"7am -- Delaney/Mason Racquetball.

9:45am -- Late for work."

She CIRCLES this entry. If she wants to find out what happened to him, this is where she needs to start.

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

Delaney sits in a swivel chair next to Pike's bed. Metallic headband on. But she's nervous. Sweating. Breathing hard. Fingers tapping on her thighs.

JINX (O.S.)
You have nothing to worry about.

DELANEY
I know.

JINX (O.S.)
The whole system's been checked. Got a gold star of approval. Ding-dong the glitch is dead.

DELANEY
I'm fine. This is me trusting you.

Delaney takes a deep breath. Closes her eyes.

JINX (O.S.)
Initiating uplink... now.

But Delaney's hands involuntarily CLENCH into fists until...

EXT. COMMUTER PARKING LOT - DAY [SATURATED]

Hammer in hand, Pike walks down rows of cars like aisles in a grocery store. Whenever he finds a car with a HOOD ORNAMENT, he PUMMELS it off with his hammer.

That is, until Delaney steps into view.

DELANEY
Also not what I meant by a new hobby. I see our experiment didn't work.

PIKE
Worked just fine, you ask me.

DELANEY
You know they design those toys specifically to <u>prevent</u> choking.
(off Pike's shocked expression)
Eyes everywhere, Pike.

Pike takes a swing at another hood ornament, but Delaney stays his arm.

PIKE
Man, day in, day out. I never had no one stay on me the way you do. You ever think you got too much time on your hands?

DELANEY
Nope. I just think you're worth my time.

That gets to him. Not too many people care about Pike -- in this world or the real world.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
You're mad at the world, huh?
(Pike doesn't answer)
Some days, so am I. You know what I find helps?

PIKE
What's that?

DELANEY
Talking.

She gently, but firmly, takes his hammer. Then hooks her arm in his as they start to walk.

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY [DIFFUSED]

Delaney disengages from Pike's virtual world. Over the intercom:

JINX (O.S.)
See? Smooth like buttah. Prepping N319's uplink now...

DELANEY
Actually. Hold off.

Delaney's met by silence -- Jinx is surprised.

JINX (O.S.)
Okayyyy...

INT. GYM SMOOTHIE BAR - DAY [SATURATED]

Mason sits at a booth facing the entrance. Half his smoothie already gone. Waiting.

He checks his watch -- nearly twenty minutes past the hour.

A WOMAN walks in. He glances up. Hopeful.

Not Delaney.

Mason SIGHS. He knows when he's been stood up.

He walks over to the counter. Borrows a pen and a napkin. Writes a brief note, and hands it to the CASHIER. We can see him describing Delaney: *If she happens to come in...*

As the cashier smiles politely and takes the note, we

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM - DAY [DIFFUSED]

Delaney is watching this action play out on one of the many monitors that lines the walls. Her expression is conflicted; she hates standing him up, but she has a plan.

ONSCREEN -- Mason is now at the office, in the middle of a board meeting. And sure enough, his boss passes him a file:

Allied Venture Partners.

Delaney smiles. Intake log in hand, she makes a small CHECK MARK next to the first highlighted entry. So far, so good.

Jinx comes in, and hands her a thick ENVELOPE.

JINX
Special delivery.

DELANEY
What is it?

JINX
I had to guess? The corporate lawyers covering their asses over your little "on the job incident". Just in case expensive lawsuits happens to be a symptom of a TBI.

Delaney rips it open. Sure enough, inside is a multi-page document full of LEGALESE. About the only phrase she understands is "workman's compensation". At least the stationary heading is pretty -- some kind of <u>leaf logo</u>.

Jinx notices what she's been doing, taking notes on Mason's screen.

JINX (CONT'D)
Whatsa matter? Golden Boy lost his glow?

DELANEY
Just... trying something new.

MONTAGE - DELANEY MAKING HER ROUNDS

We follow Delaney as she checks in with (almost) all of her convicts:

-- Attending a NA meeting with one WOMAN.

-- Helping an OLDER MAN balance his budget.

-- Breaking up a BAR ROOM BRAWL, trying to pull PIKE off a guy whose hand he has just NAILED TO THE BAR.

And finally, we see her sitting in front of Mason's bed, watching his monitor. No contact.

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Delaney watches Mason's monitor on the wall of screens while Jinx and Bo lounge nearby.

ONSCREEN -- Mason is in his office, poring over accounts. Totally mundane.

JINX
I'm surprised more accountants don't shoot up their co-workers. I'm feeling a murderous rage just watching him.

But Delaney isn't biting. Jinx smirks, tries again.

JINX (CONT'D)
I don't get it. Isn't your whole job supposed to be making sure they <u>don't</u> follow the same path that got them in here?

BO
Hey. Ease up.

Delaney finally turns back to them.

DELANEY
Just taking a page from the Book of Bo. “Thou shalt not take a personal interest.”

Bo beams. Proud. He’s gotten through to her.

BO
Amen.

Jinx just rolls her eyes.

INT. WHITE ROOM - NIGHT

Delaney sits in front of a convict’s bed, watching the action unfold onscreen, making notes into her tablet.

Bo sticks his head in the door -- holding his jacket and satchel. Quittin’ time.

BO
Good night for a drink.

DELANEY
Every night’s a good night for a drink with you.

BO
C’mon. How ‘bout that rain check?

DELANEY
I’m gonna finish up a few things here.

Bo regards her.

BO
Ya know “overtime” ain’t in the SomaCell vocabulary.

DELANEY
Another time.

Fine. As Bo heads out:

BO
Nobody likes a martyr.

DELANEY
(grumbles)
Least of all the Grand Inquisitor.

She listens as his footsteps ECHO down the hall, fainter and fainter. Then she gets up and heads into:

INT. WHITE ROOM

Straight for Mason's bed. She pulls a chair over. Watches his monitor intently.

ONSCREEN:

Mason is pulling a late night as well. Still at the office, inspecting documents bearing the AVP logo.

RECEPTIONIST KELLY pops her head in to say good night.

IN THE WHITE ROOM:

Delaney stiffens. But...

ONSCREEN:

Mason barely acknowledges her. Dismisses her with a few words. He's preoccupied -- working with a calculator, adding in figures from a spreadsheet. Something's not gelling.

On the spreadsheet, he CIRCLES a figure: **$40 million.**

Next to it, he writes in his own: **$25 million?**

A case of missing money?

He makes a phone call, tapping his pencil impatiently. Something's not right.

IN THE WHITE ROOM:

Delaney checks Mason's intake log. The next entry shows:

"DAY 8 -- 8:45am -- Followed on his way to work?"

DELANEY
Now it gets interesting.

INT. DELANEY'S HOME - NIGHT

Delaney walks in to find most of the house dark.

DELANEY
Paul?

PAUL (O.S.)
Working.

She heads toward the study. There's Paul, typing away on his laptop, iPod earbuds in his ears.

DELANEY
You eat dinner--

He doesn't look up. Just WAVES A HAND at her dismissively.

PAUL
Working!

Delaney takes in this sad, sorry scene. Is this her boyfriend? Is this her life?

DELANEY
When exactly was it you started to resent me?

PAUL
Really? We're doing this now?

DELANEY
There was this accident at work the other day. Some glitch while I was coming out of a SomaCell. And for just a second I couldn't be sure what was the dream and what was reality. But you know how I can be sure, without a doubt, that this is the real world? Because why <u>in hell</u> would I imagine a marriage like this?

Paul just glares at her.

PAUL
Good. Thank you. Because now I've lost my fucking train of thought. Are you done?

The question hangs heavy between them. This has escalated into more than just another fight, and they both know it.

DELANEY
(quietly)
Are you?

Paul doesn't answer. Just turns back to his computer.

INT. DELANEY'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Delaney stands at the stove where the tea kettle is heating. Thin wisps of STEAM rise up from the spout. She watches, entranced. Zoning...

FLASH!

A room of white. Her feet exposed before a plain metal bed frame. A blur of activity just beyond the bed.

FLASH!

Bo's frantic, muffled yells, and Jinx's distorted reply:

BO
Whaddayou mean you don't know?!

JINX (O.S.)
(distorted)
...I'm trying...

Delaney GASPS as she snaps out of it. Sweating and short of breath.

The tea kettle is now whistling, a THICK WAFT of steam chugging up from the spout.

Delaney studies it. Almost unconsciously, her hand moves to her shoulder, rubbing the spot where she was stabbed in Pike's virtual world. An idea forming...

Slowly, <u>deliberately</u>, she places her hand directly into the tea kettle steam.

And holds it there. But after a few seconds:

DELANEY
Ahh!

She YANKS her hand away. Rubs it against her clothes. Feeling silly and foolish... but not exactly comforted.

When she glances up, PAUL IS THERE. Looking contrite.

PAUL
No. I'm not... I don't want to be done.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

Off Delaney: wary.

DELANEY
The Paul I know doesn't apologize.

PAUL
Hey. I'm trying here. I mean it --
I'll try.

He comes to her and wraps her in a hug. But she's a bit stiff in his arms. A bit hesitant.

She turns her hand over to see an angry red blotch on her palm. Wondering... Then giving in. She hugs him back.

DELANEY
We'll both try.

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

Delaney sets herself up for an uplink to Mason's virtual world. Slides on the headband, leans back in her chair. One last look at her tablet -- Mason's intake log:

"DAY 8 -- 8:45am -- Followed on his way to work?"

JINX (O.S.)
Just couldn't stay away. I knew it.
All that sexy number crunching.

DELANEY
(cross)
Whenever you're ready.

JINX (O.S.)
Ooh, retract those claws, kitty.
Might want to remember who has eyes
everywhere. Initiating uplink...
meow.

Delaney closes her eyes and opens them in:

INT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY [SATURATED]

Delaney casually leans against a column, eyes trained on the steps of a nearby entrance. People stream up and down the stairs. Soon she spots:

Mason. Hurrying down the stairs.

But Delaney doesn't approach him. She moves a bit to make sure the pillar obstructs her from his view.

She's following him. And hoping she's not the only one.

Mason moves through the sizeable line of people going through a turnstile.

Delaney scans the sea of faces around him: men and women business attire. Young mothers pushing strollers. Shaggy-haired kids wearing iPod earbuds.

Mason casually glances behind him as he digs in his pocket for change. When he SPOTS a nondescript

MAN IN A SUIT

in line behind him, he FROWNS. Clearly unsettled.

Bingo.

Mason gets through the turnstile and pushes his way through the crowd. Behind him, the Man In A Suit hurries to keep pace. And behind him, Delaney follows.

Mason keeps glancing over his shoulder. Clocking the Man In A Suit behind him. Growing more distressed as the Man edges closer.

A crowd of people shuffle into a TRAIN and Mason bobs and weaves through them. Making his way to the back.

The Man In A Suit pushes his way in as well. And Delaney slips in near the front, careful to keep her distance.

TING! Chimes announce the train is about to leave the station. The doors begin to close. And that's when:

Mason suddenly

DARTS

off the train.

The Man In A Suit scrambles to follow him. Delaney, too, leaps out of the train and searches the crowd...

There -- boarding a train on the OPPOSITE SIDE of the platform. Just as it's about to leave.

Both the Man In A Suit and Delaney SPRINT to catch him.

The Man In A Suit barely SLIDES THROUGH the doors to an adjacent train car.

Delaney RUSHES to do the same, but --

TING! The doors WHISK closed.

DELANEY
Shit.

The train starts to move... She'll lose her tail if she doesn't think of something quick.

Delaney races to the end of the Man In A Suit's train car,

PIVOTS and JUMPS --

landing with feet firmly planted on the LINK-AND-PIN COUPLER that's hitching his and Mason's cars together. Precariously balanced above the open track below.

She braces herself as the train picks up speed. Dares a glance through the car window...

WHERE MASON IS STANDING ON THE OTHER SIDE.

He hasn't spotted her... yet. He's too busy scanning the passengers in his car for the Man In A Suit. But it's only a matter of time.

Delaney tries ducking down, but her

FOOT SLIPS,

and she barely catches her balance. One of her SHOES FALLS OFF and gets SUCKED UNDER the train.

She needs a new plan. Fast.

Up ahead -- there's LIGHT fast approaching. They're going above ground. Delaney's eyes travel up to the top of the train car...

DELANEY (CONT'D)
No problem. Sure...

As the subway train ROCKETS into the light, the city RUSHING past --

EXT. SUBWAY TRAIN

-- Delaney prepares for the climb.

Another quick glance into the train car:

Mason's still not looking her way. But somebody else is -- a YOUNG BOY gazing at her in amazement.

Delaney smiles at him, puts a finger to her lips: *Shhhh*.

The Young Boy just gapes.

Delaney carefully pivots her feet. Gets a firm GRIP on the outside of the front car. And starts PULLING HERSELF UP. One wrong move and she's a splat on the pavement.

INT. MASON'S SUBWAY TRAIN CAR

The Young Boy yanks on his FATHER'S coat, pointing wildly out the window at Delaney. His father doesn't even look up -- just fishes in his pocket and hands the boy a piece of candy.

But the boy does catch Mason's attention, and he looks out the window just in time to see

A PAIR OF SHAPELY SWINGING LEGS (with no shoes)

disappearing up over the top.

Mason moves to the window, but the legs are already gone.

EXT. SUBWAY TRAIN ROOF

Delaney flattens herself against the top. Breathless and exhilarated. Virtual world or not, this is a RUSH.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Fresh off the train, Mason briskly weaves through the crowd coming out of the subway entrance. Still behind him, the Man In A Suit. And, further back, a barefoot, wind-blown Delaney.

Mason looks back at the Man over his shoulder. They lock eyes for just a moment. Then Mason drops all pretense and

RUNS.

Across four lanes of traffic. <u>And the Man follows</u>.

Delaney runs, too -- paying no attention to the TRAFFIC around her. Even

LEAPING ONTO THE HOOD OF A CAR

so as not to break her stride.

Up ahead:

Mason reaches his office building. A corporate high rise with a revolving door.

The Man is closing in fast. This is it. He can duck inside to safety. Or...

Mason SNATCHES a passing WOMAN's COFFEE CUP.

WOMAN
Hey!

He PIVOTS, TURNS, and SMASHES THE COFFEE CUP

into the front of the Man's suit.

The crowd FANS OUT wide to avoid the splatter. Gasps and cries all around. All eyes on Mason and the Man.

MASON
Oh man! I am so sorry. Look at that!

Mason's hands grab the Man's jacket lapels. Ostensibly trying to pat him dry. But his grip is strong, his eyes cold and steady. *Do. Not. Mess with me.*

The Man is drenched. Scalded. And pissed at all the unwanted attention. Squirming to get away.

MASON (CONT'D)
Here, let me help you...

The Man wrenches himself free. Grumbles:

MAN IN A SUIT
No problem.

And moves away. Disappearing into the crowd.

Mason watches him go. Pleased with himself. Then spots a familiar face --

MASON
Delaney?

He looks again, but the face is gone. No one there after all. Victorious but unnerved, he heads into his building.

Meanwhile:

Delaney has kept moving. Still on the tail of the Man In A (Coffee-Stained) Suit. Who is now angrily barking into a CELL PHONE. She keeps her distance.

Watches as he disappears into another CORPORATE HIGH RISE. She charges in after him, but --

INT. CORPORATE HIGH RISE

-- finds herself in a queue to pass through a metal detector. A SECURITY GUARD behind a desk bearing a simple LEAF LOGO DESIGN checks ID BADGES as people pass through.

The Man steps through the metal detector while flashing his badge. One Security Guard chuckles.

SECURITY GUARD
Rough morning?

The Man ignores him. Stalks to the elevators.

Delaney cranes her neck to track him, but the doors slide shut and he's gone.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Ma'am?

Delaney realizes she's at the front of the queue.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Your badge?

DELANEY
Oh. I'm... meeting someone.
(plays a hunch)
Allied Venture Partners.

SECURITY GUARD
What? There's no company here by that name.

Shit.

DELANEY
You know, I think I just... got the wrong building.
(pushing her way back through the queue)
Excuse me.

EXT. CORPORATE HIGH RISE

Delaney emerges into the morning sun. Looks around to get her bearings -- notes the CROSS-STREET SIGNS.

She catches her breath, and LEANS heavily against the building. Dizzy with adrenaline.

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY [DIFFUSED]

Delaney opens her eyes to find Bo standing over her. Less than pleased.

BO
The fuck was that?

DELANEY
Everywhere I look, Bo. Suddenly, there you are.

BO
I just witnessed, what? Half a dozen violations? Do you have any idea how much shit you could get in? That is a man's mind, not your public playground.

Delaney gets up, brushes past him.

DELANEY
You gonna report me?

BO
Jesus, Delaney. I'm trying to help you. But I can't do that if you won't help yourself.

Delaney PAUSES. She knows those words too well. She says them all the time. To her convicts.

She struggles to regain her composure.

DELANEY
You want to help me? Where's his statement?

BO
(evasive)
I'm workin on it.
(as she walks away)
Where are you going?

DELANEY
Early lunch. Wanna follow me there, too?

But she strides out of the room before Bo can reply.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Delaney parks her car at a metered spot and narrowly avoids traffic as she crosses the street. She glances up at the STREET SIGNS when she reaches the other side:

The exact same cross-streets she noted in Mason's virtual world. And, sure enough, directly in front of her is:

THE CORPORATE HIGH RISE. In the flesh. So to speak.

Delaney studies the exterior -- only numbers above the rotating door. No list of the companies within.

She strides through the rotating doors...

INT. CORPORATE HIGH RISE

...and goes straight for the SECURITY GUARDS. A different man than the one in Mason's virtual world. But the desk, with that LEAF LOGO DESIGN stenciled on the front, is the same.

SECURITY GUARD #1
Ma'am?

DELANEY
I'm ah, looking for Allied Venture Partners.

The Security Guards shrug.

SECURITY GUARD #2
No one by that name.

She strains to see into the lobby. Those elevators leading up, up, up to... who? If Allied Venture Partners isn't here, then who is?

And what do they want with Mason?

SECURITY GUARD #1
Sure you're in the right place?

This time, the LEAF LOGO DESIGN on the desk catches Delaney's eye.

DELANEY
I'm sorry. Thank you.

She's seen that design before... but where?

EXT. CORPORATE HIGH RISE

The answer comes to her as soon as she steps out onto the sidewalk. She stops, digs through her purse, and pulls out...

The document from SomaCell's corporate lawyers detailing their worker's compensation policy.

That exact same LEAF DESIGN graces their stationary heading.

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Delaney returns, sets down her things, and nods at Jinx.

DELANEY
Bo around?

JINX
He's under. Room One.

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

Delaney walks in to find Bo reclined in a chair next to the bed of an OLDER MAN. The monitor above the Older Man's bed shows:

In the virtual world -- the two are fly fishing. Not talking much, but enjoying the simultaneous solitude and company. The Older Man's hands SHAKE badly. Symptoms of withdrawal.

But that's not what Delaney's here for. She's here for --

BO'S TABLET.

Resting in his lap. But how to do this discreetly, under Jinx's watchful eye?

Her gaze travels to the convict in the next bed over. A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN, B221.

DELANEY
Jinx, are you seeing this?

JINX (O.S.)
Bo's drool? I can't unsee it. It haunts me.

DELANEY
B221. She always tachycardic?

JINX (O.S.)
What?? I'm showing a normal heart rate.

DELANEY
120 is normal?

JINX (O.S.)
Shit! Why am I not seeing this?!

Delaney takes this as her cue. Leans in over Bo and deftly swaps her tablet for his. It only takes a second.

Jinx BURSTS into the room. Running at full speed.

DELANEY
Huh. You're right, it's back to normal now. Another glitch?

Jinx doubles over, winded.

JINX
She's okay?

DELANEY
Seems fine.

JINX
Can you keep an eye on her?

Delaney smiles. A helpful colleague lending a hand.

DELANEY
Happy to.

Jinx walks away, still wheezing:

JINX
These fucking machines... are giving me... Tachycardia.

As soon as she's gone, Delaney dives in to Bo's tablet. A quick glance up at the convict's monitor shows:

ONSCREEN -- Bo and the Older Man are packing up their gear.

Shit. She better hurry.

She pulls up his email account. Sent box. Scrolls through the past week of history.

What she finds is largely unremarkable. It's what she doesn't find. No email to request to corporate regarding Mason Grant's official statement.

DELANEY
Busted.

ONSCREEN -- Bo and the Older Man say their goodbyes. The Older Man gets into his pick-up, starts driving away. Bo's hand moves to the WATCH on his wrist.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
Shit!

Delaney acts fast:

Closes out of the email.

Reaches down to swap the tablets back just as...

BO'S EYES OPEN to see Delaney standing over him.

BO
Jesus Christ!

Delaney deftly makes the switch. Bo is none the wiser, still recovering from the shock.

DELANEY
You know you drool when you're under.

Bo removes his headband. Rubs his eyes. Cranky.

BO
Okay, I get it. No one likes a hoverer. Shit.

Delaney offers him a hand, helps him out of his chair.

DELANEY
So tonight. How about that beer?

Off Bo: surprised and pleased.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Delaney and Bo share a booth and a pitcher that's down to its final dregs. From Bo's glassy eyes and animated gestures, we can guess that it wasn't split 50/50.

BO
...But the worst is this religious nut. E492. Grover Osgood. One of those Old Testament "I am the hand of a vengeful God" whack jobs. Thinks I'm his goddam priest.
(MORE)

BO (CONT'D)
I gotta bless him, hear his confession, quote scripture and shit. Me. Half the time I just make something up. Even quoted a Rocky movie once. He don't know the difference.

Delaney commiserates. But her gaze is shrewd. Deliberate.

DELANEY
I was a nutritionist once. No one that girl trusted more than me. Though I did not prescribe the mountains of cocaine she shoved up her nose. No matter how effective they were for weight loss.

Bo snorts.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
We wear a lot of hats, don't we? Sister, aunt, best friend. Neighbor, teacher, baby sitter.

BO
I'm just waiting for the day one a' these punks calls me Grandpa. Shit.

And here it comes -- the punch line:

DELANEY
Colleague. We're colleagues, aren't we?

BO
(oblivious)
Brothers in arms, sure. No stronger bond.

But one look at Delaney's face and Bo wishes he was sober. This is not going to be the friendly, after-hours chat he had in mind.

DELANEY
What I want to know is. Why you would lie to me about helping with Mason's case.

He's a deer in headlights. Grasping for straws.

BO
Why -- what?

DELANEY
The statement.

BO
I'm workin' on it. I told you. You know how these fuckin' bureaucracies operate--

DELANEY
Bullshit.

They stare each other down. Neither willing to back off.

BO
That what this is? An interrogation?

DELANEY
What is it about that one document that's so significant you would go out of your way to keep it from me?

BO
Nothing! Okay? Not a goddamn thing. It's a bunch of conspiracy theory bullshit from a guy who broke the law and don't wanna pay the consequences.

DELANEY
Then why can't I see it?

BO
I thought you were over this! I really did. Thought you'd had a fucking breakthrough--

THEY BOTH FREEZE.

The implications of what he's just said hangs in the air between them. The question that's been gnawing at her, finally answered.

DELANEY
(slowly)
A breakthrough.

Bo struggles to repair the damage.

BO
I mean... you know what I mean. How long I been on you about boundaries and shit?

Delaney's world is crashing down around her. And yet, she's sitting calmly in the wreckage.

DELANEY
Everywhere I look. There you are.

BO
Because we work together.

DELANEY
You always could get under my skin like nobody else. Your opinion mattered so much. Because that's all any good convict wants, right? To please her Specialist?

BO
Look, everybody thinks about it. Everybody wonders.

DELANEY
How many cycles?

BO
You can't do what we do and <u>not</u> wonder--

DELANEY
<u>How many cycles, Bo</u>?

BO
THERE AIN'T NO FUCKING CYCLES! I'M TELLING YOU, THIS IS REAL!

But that look in his eyes -- it's fear. Delaney gets up from the table. Still eerily calm.

DELANEY
I have to go.

BO
No, hey. Not like this. Talk to me, come on. At least -- I'll take you home. Delaney!

But Delaney walks away.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Delaney wanders in a daze. Her face an emotionless mask. Trying to process the horrifying truth...

Almost without realizing, she leaves the sidewalk and steps out into

THE STREET.

Walking directly down a lane of traffic. Staring impassively at the cars that

SCREECH, SWERVE, and HONK

to avoid her.

Frightened, angry drivers yell obscenities she doesn't hear.

She keeps walking, the look in her eyes DESPERATELY WILLING someone -- anyone -- to make contact.

But soon all the cars around her have come to a halt. Sirens WAIL in the distance, growing closer. And another sound is approaching too. The deep, resonant RUMBLE of --

A SUBWAY TRAIN.

Delaney watches the train pass overhead. And makes a decision.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

The station is nearly empty as Delaney positions herself on the link-and-pin coupler between two train cars.

Only a few solitary souls in the cars on either side of her. Either they don't see her, or they don't want to see her. Like most subway patrons, they've perfected the art of keeping to themselves.

The train starts moving. And somehow, in this reality, everything is HEIGHTENED --

The roar is LOUDER.

The train is FASTER.

The coupler more NARROW, and harder to balance on.

The stakes seem higher here, the consequences more permanent. But Delaney is determined.

EXT. SUBWAY TRAIN

When the train goes above ground, Delaney makes her move:

But the metal is SLIPPERY under her hands. The wind WHIPS at her violently. She struggles and strains to pull herself to the roof...

And she makes it. Balancing precariously. Watching the world blur past her.

She chances a glance over the side. On this stretch of track, above a CONCRETE RAVINE, it's a long way down.

Which is just what she wanted.

DELANEY
UNH!

A breath rips out of her -- a deep, gutteral noise of inner turmoil.

If she's going to take a leap of faith, the time is now.

Delaney hesitates... hesitates...

DELANEY (CONT'D)
AHH!

JUMPS.

The train drowns out her screams as she plummets toward the ground. Her limbs flail until --

SMACK!

She hits the ground with a sickening CRUNCH.

Her body LIES STILL in the concrete ravine. A thin, dirty stream of water trickling past.

No one walks away from a fall like this. And yet...

Delaney stirs. Not only is she alive, not only is she conscious, but she's virtually unharmed.

Cut, scraped, bloody, bruised -- sure. But she should be dead. And she would be --

If this was the real world.

She pulls herself into a sitting position.

And finally, that calm reserve breaks. A hundred emotions flood through her as tears fall:

Intense, unabashed RELIEF to be alive.

And the suffocating DEFEAT that none of this -- her job, her marriage, her life -- is real.

This new knowledge, it's a baptism by fire. The pain of this rebirth is etched on her face. Along with --

A RECKLESSNESS we've never seen before.

The tears stop falling, and Delaney begins to

LAUGH.

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

MOANS and CRIES of pleasure emanate from the bank of monitors that, in the daylight hours, is Jinx's domain. But it's not Jinx whose slack face is bathed in the screens' pale glow.

It's Roger, the night-shift tech. Just as Jinx suspected, watching PORN.

That is, until a WAD OF CASH suddenly drops onto his desk.

Roger startles. Hits the PAUSE button, stopping the cries and moans. And looks up to see --

Delaney.

ROGER
I wasn't...

DELANEY
I trust you can be discreet.

INT. WHITE ROOM - NIGHT

A quick series of shots:

-- Chair wheels SCREECH across the floor.

-- A metallic headband SLIDES over Delaney's head.

-- Her long eyelashes FLUTTER closed.

Soon she's:

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT [SATURATED]

Knocking on an apartment door. Nervous. Anxious. Anticipating.

When the door opens, it's MASON on the other side. Disheveled from sleep. Holding a BASEBALL BAT. Which he DROPS the second he realizes it's Delaney on his doorstep.

MASON
Delaney? How did you--

But then she's kissing him. With the hunger and urgency of unbridled passion.

When they finally pull away, they're panting for breath.

MASON (CONT'D)
I can't believe... it's you.

DELANEY
It's not. Not really.

And then they're on each other again. Lips and hands that can't move fast enough. Clothes peeling off. And as they stagger deeper into the apartment, Mason

SLAMS

the door shut behind them.

INT. MASON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Delaney and Mason lie in a tangle of sheets. Mason strokes her arm.

MASON
That was... unexpected.

DELANEY
Unexpected good?

MASON
Unexpected great. Much more fun than when the FedEx guy comes around.
(beat)
When you didn't show at the gym--

DELANEY
I really am sorry.

MASON
--I was worried I'd never see you again. Because I knew, I felt, we have this... connection. I can't explain it. But. I feel it. Is that weird?

Delaney smiles.

DELANEY
Not weird. I feel it, too.
(changing tactics)
I saw you the other day, actually.
On the street.

MASON
You should have said something!

DELANEY
Didn't seem like the best time.
There was a man with you. Looked
like some kind of altercation? I
don't know, but I remember coffee
was involved.

Mason gets it.

MASON
Oh. That. That was... a strange
day.

Delaney pulls away from him slightly. Props herself up so they're face to face. No more pillow talk. It's time for a serious discussion.

DELANEY
Mason. Do you trust me?

MASON
Of course I do. You're my--
(laughs)
Jesus. I was about to say you're my
best friend. I'm not a clinger, I
swear. Usually I'm at least...
eight percent more suave.

DELANEY
I'm serious.

MASON
Okay, yeah. I trust you.
Absolutely.

She pauses. How to say this...

DELANEY
I need you to tell me what's going
on with Allied Venture Partners.

MASON
(startled)
How do you know about--?

DELANEY
All I know is that you found something... unusual. And in trying to make sense of it, you've stumbled into something else. Something dangerous. That's why you thought you were being followed the other day. And why you answered the door with a bat.

MASON
I'm not crazy.

DELANEY
No. But you are in danger. Whatever it is you're on to, the people behind it will go to any lengths necessary to cover it up. Believe me. They will ruin your life.

Mason looks at her: confused. Frightened. Overwhelmed.

MASON
...How about some coffee?

INT. MASON'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Coffee's on the table, but it's just a formality. Instead, Delaney and Mason's attention is focused on a paper trail of documents.

Starting with -- financial reports. Mason points to different charts and graphs as he explains:

MASON
Venture companies like AVP usually have a few limited partners they can "call" capital from when needed. Partners who've agreed in advance to fund a certain amount on demand. That way, a new investment comes up, they can pounce right away. So there's a drawdown account with money sitting in it, waiting to be invested -- here. That has $40 million, according to AVP's internal books. But...

Delaney checks an adjacent account statement.

DELANEY
$25 million. Where's the rest?

MASON
Exactly. So I do a little digging. Find out it's been moved to a second account. Problem is, that account is empty. The funds were wired out in three precise $5 million increments, two days apart. A little over a week ago. To some... looks like a foreign bank by the routing number. Not one I recognize.

DELANEY
So what does that mean?

MASON
I didn't know yet. I called AVP's chief accountant. He tells me the numbers make no sense, he's never even heard of this second account. Maybe it's a new investment? He hands me off to some portfolio manager who knows even less. Then, two days later, I get a call from the co-head of the firm, saying he "appreciates my diligence" but it is, in fact, a non-issue. New investment, blah blah blah. Bottom line being -- drop it. And that's when I notice the car parked outside my house at all hours of the night. And strange men in suits following me on the subway.

DELANEY
You get the name? Of the new investment?

Mason sets another paper on top of the pile. A single page of company letterhead. Across the top: "**VERDANT R&D**" and

THE LEAF LOGO. Just like at the Corporate High Rise. Just like on the letter Delaney received.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
I know this company. The man who was following you... he works there.

MASON
You know anything else about it? Because the intel I've got could fill a Post-it. It's a company on paper only. A shell.

And now would be the time for coffee. Delaney takes a long, slow sip. She's stumped.

DELANEY
This is big. It must be. This is why I...
(thinks better of it; trails off)
Got involved.

Mason studies her.

MASON
Hey. Are you okay? I mean, if you're in trouble...

DELANEY
We both are. Unfortunately. Quite possibly for the same reason. And I'm going to figure out why.

MASON
Whoa, wait. If these guys are as dangerous as you say they are--

DELANEY
It won't be a problem. You trust me, right?

MASON
You make it sound like you're invincible.

She smirks at him. If he only knew...

DELANEY
But in the meantime, I need you to lay low. Act normal. Just go about your daily routine like nothing's changed.

MASON
(alarmed)
You think... what? They're watching?

DELANEY
More than you know.

Mason takes her hand. Worried. Protective.

MASON
When will I see you again?

They lean into each other...

DELANEY
Soon. I promise.

...and share a deep kiss. But when they pull away:

MASON
Delaney?

DELANEY'S POV:

Extreme TUNNEL VISION. As a sudden DARKNESS encroaches Mason and his kitchen get farther and farther away, until:

INT. WHITE ROOM [DIFFUSED]

Delaney is JOLTED back into reality (so to speak). Roger anxiously hovering over her.

DELANEY
Are you crazy?! Killing an uplink mid-stream--

ROGER
You said discreet. Thought you'd want to know, your boy Bo just showed up. Only six hours early for his shift. He always such an overachiever?

Delaney gets it. Scrambles out of the headband.

DELANEY
I was never here.

ROGER
Do I look like the career suicide type?

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Bo lumbers down the hallway. The booze may not have worn off, but his mission has sobered him.

He passes the Control Room. No one there. He GRUNTS and keeps going. Almost to the White Room.

He turns a corner and

SMACKS

right into Roger.

ROGER
Whoa! Easy, big guy.

BO
You seen Delaney? She been in here?

ROGER
(nervous)
Why would I have seen Delaney?

Bo just BRUSHES PAST HIM. Faster now, with growing suspicion.

Roger calls after him:

ROGER (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

He FLINGS OPEN the door to the White Room and finds...

INT. WHITE ROOM

Nothing. The room is empty.

Bo GRUNTS again. Examines the MONITOR over Mason's bed --

ONSCREEN:

Just Mason sitting at a table full of documents. Boring and mundane as ever. Except...

<u>There are two cups of coffee</u> on the table.

IN THE ROOM:

Bo scans the room again. Even bends down and CHECKS UNDER THE BEDS. Nothing. No one here.

But his eyes linger on the SWIVEL CHAIR -- shoved into a far corner. <u>STILL SLIGHTLY TURNING</u>.

Bo races back to the hallway.

BO
DELANEY!

INT. STAIRWAY - SAME

But Delaney's already long gone. She takes the stairs two and three at a time, then BURSTS through a door into the:

INT. PARKING GARAGE

She hurries to her car. Not a run, but a walk that's too brisk to be casual.

She slides behind the wheel. Safe. For the moment.

But what now?

EXT. CORPORATE HIGH RISE - DAY

Delaney stares up at the looming building glinting in the bright morning sun. It's time for answers.

A couple deep breaths:

DELANEY
It's not real.

INT. CORPORATE HIGH RISE - DAY

Delaney moves to the front of the metal detector queue. Two SECURITY GUARDS looks up expectantly.

SECURITY GUARD #1
Badge?

DELANEY
No badge. Just visiting.

Security Guard #2 picks up a clipboard with an approved list of visitor names.

SECURITY GUARD #2
Name?

DELANEY
Oh. I didn't say anyone was expecting me.

Before Security Guard #2 can set down his clipboard, Delaney

TWISTS, SPINS, and UPPERCUTS

into his throat. As he goes down, she GRABS HIS TASER and

DROPS TO THE FLOOR

just as Security Guard #1 LUNGES to TASE her. Delaney

THRUSTS

her taser into Security Guard #1's GROIN,

LEAPS to her feet, and

RUNS FOR THE ELEVATORS.

Screams and shouts from the people in the queue behind her as Security Guard #1 RADIOS for backup.

INT. ELEVATORS

As the doors WHISK closed behind her, Delaney scans the DIRECTORY:

"Verdant R&D. 28th Floor." *Bingo.*

She braces herself as the elevator jolts to life, traveling up, up, up--

DING! A sudden stop. Floor 15. That's no good.

The doors WHISK open on -- a PUDGY BUSINESS MAN, mid-bite on a donut. He chokes in surprise when he sees Delaney

POINTING THE TASER at his gut.

DELANEY
I'd wait for the next one.

The man just nods as the doors WHISK closed once again.

Delaney taps her foot impatiently, watching the floor buttons light up as the elevator passes:

19... 20... 21...

Verdant R&D. What could it be?

22... 23... 24...

Her adrenaline pumping. Every nerve firing.

25... 26... 27...

Whatever awaits her, at least she'll finally have some answers.

DING! The 28th Floor.

The elevator doors WHISK open to reveal:

INT. 28TH FLOOR

Nothing.

Delaney staggers out of the elevator, in shock.

There's nothing.

And we're not talking an empty office -- bare carpets, unpainted walls, unadorned windows.

There's literally NOTHING HERE:

It's a smooth white space. You can't even call it a room; there's no height, width, or depth to it at all. The spatial equivalent of a blank piece of paper before the artist's had a chance to draw.

The 28th floor doesn't exist. Because it was never created. An intentional gap in the programming.

Delaney sinks to her knees.

The full, insurmountable weight of her situation finally sinking in...

And that's when the doors BURST OPEN and

A BATTALION OF POLICE

swarm inside. GUNS trained on her.

And not one of them seems to notice the peculiarity of their surroundings.

POLICE
Hands on your head! Don't move! Put the weapon down! Etc.

Delaney does as she's told. Taser down. Hands on her head. Too tired to fight.

DELANEY
(in a daze)
You going to shoot me? Wouldn't be anything new.

They SLAP cuffs on her wrists and MANHANDLE her to her feet.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION CELL - DAY

Delaney sits on the wrong side of the table. DETECTIVES staring her down.

DETECTIVE #1
You understand, you're facing some serious charges here.

DETECTIVE #2
We want to help you. But we can't do that if you don't talk to us.

Delaney just laughs. Hollow-eyed. Defeated.

DELANEY
You want to help? Why? Because that's your job? You take pride in what you do? Always have? You're both full of shit. You're not real. None of this is real.

Detective #1 leans over to Detective #2:

DETECTIVE #1
We screen for drugs?

DELANEY
I want Bo.
(calling)
Bo!

DETECTIVE #2
Who? We've got a lawyer on his way--

DELANEY
Boooooooooo--

Startled and perplexed, the Detectives get out of there and--

INT. POLICE STATION

--SLAM the interrogation room door shut behind them.

DELANEY (O.S.)
--ooooooooo!

Detective #1 just shakes his head.

DETECTIVE #1
Je-<u>sus</u>.

DETECTIVE #2
It's the weather. Brings all the crazies out of the woodwork.

Inside the interrogation room, Delaney goes quiet. They turn back to look through the small window inset in the door --

THROUGH THE WINDOW

A MAN is now in the interrogation room with Delaney. It's Bo.

DETECTIVE #2 (CONT'D)
What the shit?!

Detective #1 grabs the door. Tries to shove his way back inside. But it's STUCK.

DETECTIVE #1
How'd he get in there?

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION CELL

Bo and Delaney clock the cursing and screaming on the other side of the door -- where a CHAIR has been wedged up under the handle.

Delaney's amused. Bo, not so much.

BO
Are you out of your goddam mind?! What were you thinking??

DELANEY
Not just an empty office space. A total void. as in, a gap in the programming. Why would they do that unless they had something to hide?

BO
They?

DELANEY
SomaCell! They're involved somehow. They must be.

Bo reels.

BO
Jesus. Are you hearing yourself?

DELANEY
Mason was onto something big before he got arrested.
(MORE)

DELANEY (CONT'D)
Some kind of corporate fraud... something. And now the very system that sentenced him, that is denying him parole, is also covering up whatever it is he found. Do you understand the implications here?

BO
Delaney...

DELANEY
An innocent man! Truly innocent. Locked away for the rest of his life in such a way that his knowledge is sure never to get out. And me. The one person who could potentially discover his secret, suddenly I'm in a SomaCell, too? Bo, you know me! Am I a criminal?

Bo's expression is pained. He doesn't want to say it.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
What did I do? What was my crime?

BO
You know I can't--

DELANEY
Was it murder? I killed somebody? The same way Mason "killed" Kelly Connors? Think!

Bo leans heavily against the wall. Sighs.

BO
You know what we're supposed to do. In situations like this.

Delaney stops her tirade. Stunned.

DELANEY
You can't.

BO
It's standard protocol.

DELANEY
A reset? Now? You'd send me back to square one after everything I've...
(pleading)
No. Listen to me. You have to wake me up.
(off his look)
(MORE)

DELANEY (CONT'D)
It’s the only way! Something is very wrong here. If Mason is innocent, If I’m innocent -- how many others are, too?

BO
What you’re asking...

DELANEY
I’m right about this. It’s the system that’s wrong. But there’s nothing I can do about it without your help.
(beat)
Please.

Bo’s face contorts into a grimace.

BO
I’m sorry. I just. I can’t.

DELANEY
(venomous)
That’s right. I forgot. A criminal’s a criminal.

Bo’s fingers go to the WATCH on his wrist.

DELANEY (CONT’D)
Bo! Please! You have to help me!

BO
You think I’m so cold. So callous. I’m trying to help you. I wish you would see that.

The watch emanates a soft BLUE GLOW --

DELANEY
WAIT!

-- and Bo DISAPPEARS.

She is totally. Utterly. Alone.

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

A cold, callous prison cell. Delaney sits in a dark corner, hugging her knees to her chest.

A POLICE OFFICER walks by, making the rounds. His eyes are all sympathy when they fall on her. Delaney’s not the sort they typically get in here.

POLICE OFFICER
You sure there's no one you wanna call?

She just looks up at him. *Someone to call. If only.*

DELANEY
You've heard that saying. If a tree falls in the forest, and no one's around to hear it...

The sympathetic gaze turns wary. Maybe she's not as normal as she looks after all. He moves on.

Once again, Delaney's alone. In the dark. With her thoughts. In her thoughts. She hangs her head in despair.

Where can she possibly go from here?

And that's when:

The lights down the hallway FLICKER.

Delaney looks up. She knows that sign all too well.

The room begins to TILT, to SPIN...

DELANEY (CONT'D)
No.

Delaney clutches her head, trying to make it stop.

Objects around her DISAPPEAR into a void...

DELANEY (CONT'D)
I can't go back. I can't go back. I can't --

Her vision BLURS, everything goes DARK... And suddenly:

INT. WHITE ROOM

Delaney wakes up. Strapped and cuffed to a hospital-like bed. Tubes in her arms, monitor beeping a steady rhythm.

Her skin sallow, her frame thin, her hair greasy. Like she's been under for months.

Delaney blinks. Disoriented. Confused. A familiar face standing over her, but not the one she expected.

DELANEY
Jinx?

JINX
Welcome home. We don't have much time.

The room is dark. Business hours long past over.

Jinx unhooks her tubes, removes the monitors, slides off her metallic headband.

DELANEY
Where is...?

JINX
Bo went home hours ago. I gave Roger the night off. It's just us for now, but we don't have long. Be careful when you stand. Your legs... Well, it's been awhile since you've used them.

DELANEY
Bo -- he told you...?

Jinx tries to steady her as she struggles to stand.

JINX
Please. Eyes everywhere, remember?

Delaney pauses. Gripping Jinx's shoulders. Eyes locked.

DELANEY
(emphatic)
You believe me.

JINX
I <u>believe</u> that if we don't hurry, it won't matter.

She supports Delaney as they head out the room down the

HALLWAY

Slowly, at first, but gaining momentum. Until Delaney abruptly STOPS.

DELANEY
Wait. We need Mason.

Jinx just rolls her eyes.

JINX
I had a feeling you might say that.

INT. WHITE ROOM

Delaney stands over Mason's bed. She holds his hand. A flurry of emotions coursing through her.

DELANEY
I'm ready.

No answer. Delaney's eyes dart to the ceiling -- the overhead speaker system.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
Jinx?

JINX (O.S.)
Umm. Before we go through with this. I just want to make sure you're prepared.

DELANEY
All set. Let's go.

JINX (O.S.)
I know in your world you guys had a very... special relationship.

DELANEY
(sharp)
I'm his Specialist.

JINX (O.S.)
Right. See. The thing is, Delaney -- you're not.

DELANEY
What are you talking about?

JINX (O.S.)
I mean, you <u>were</u>. But when everything happened, when you got your own SomaCell, you couldn't exactly care for him anymore, could you? For any of them. What I'm saying is, he was reassigned. Whatever bond you think you have... he's not going to remember you.

Oh. Shit.

DELANEY
Not... at all?

JINX (O.S.)
Maybe on some subconscious level. The way a smell can evoke an emotion. But for all intents and purposes -- you'll be a stranger to him. You understand, right?

The best thing in her life, and it's about to be taken away from her. As if she ever really had it at all. But... what choice is there?

She studies Mason's sleeping face. Reaches out with her free hand and strokes his cheek -- a far cry from the smooth skin she remembers.

DELANEY
Yes. I understand. Thank you.

JINX (O.S.)
Okay. Let's wake up Sleeping Beauty.

Delaney lets go of Mason's hand. Places it by his side.

JINX (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Disengaging... stand by.

Delaney's eyes go to the screen above his bed.

ONSCREEN -- he's sleeping peacefully.

At least the transition will be easy.

JINX (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Uplink's terminated. Give him a few minutes. He'll be with us shortly.

Delaney looks around while she waits. Her eyes go across the room to

PIKE'S BED.

And what she sees on his video screen is horrifying:

ONSCREEN -- Pike is in a dark, bare cell. No windows. No furnishings. Locked inside a STRAIGHTJACKET. Staring vacantly as he BANGS HIS HEAD against the wall in a rhythmic pattern. Over and over again.

As Jinx walks in:

DELANEY
(appalled)
My god. What did they do?

JINX
What was easiest. As far as the board's concerned, he's a lifer.

DELANEY
But... he was making progress.

JINX
Yeah. With you as his Specialist. Nobody else could deal with him. Nobody else wanted to.

DELANEY
So they just leave him there? Day and night? That's inhumane! It's torture!

JINX
Not if it isn't real. Their words.

MASON (O.S.)
Wh--?

DELANEY
Mason?

Mason's eyes flutter. Blink open. Slowly gaining focus... but not understanding.

MASON
Who are you?

His voice is scratchy and hoarse from months without use.

It's a question that pains her to the core, but Delaney smiles through it.

DELANEY
A friend.

He looks up at her, eyes wide and pleading:

MASON
I didn't... kill anyone.

DELANEY
I know.

Suddenly --

ALARMS WAIL. LIGHTS FLASH. The entire facility going into

LOCKDOWN MODE.

JINX
This. This is why I said hurry.

Delaney looks around frantically for something -- anything -- that could be used as a weapon. No luck.

DELANEY
Tell me you have a gun. A taser. A pepper spray key chain.

JINX
Umm... there's a toolbox and a first aid kit in the control room.

Off Delaney: an idea forming.

INT. WHITE ROOM

From an UNSPECIFIED POV:

Our vision is BLURRY and UNCLEAR, but as things begin to FOCUS, we see:

We're in some kind of hospital bed. Two pairs of wrist and ankle restraints on the floor beside us.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

PIKE. Groggily blinking awake. To find a HAMMER resting in his lap.

INT. SOMACELL HALLWAY - NIGHT

DING! The elevator doors WHISK open and

A DOZEN SOMACELL AGENTS

file out.

Guns trained. Boots echoing on the linoleum floor. Poised and ready for combat.

The LEAD AGENT motions them to start a SWEEP.

They methodically branch out down the different hallways.

The LEAD AGENT leads his team down the main hall. They move into position as they reach the first White Room door. The Lead Agent expertly reaches for the handle, when --

THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN and

PIKE LUNGES OUT,

RIPPING the CLAWED END of the hammer through the Lead Agent's

THROAT.

Blood SPURTS from the Lead Agent as Pike DIVES TO THE FLOOR.

In one fluid motion he

POUNDS the hammer's FACE into the next Agent's RIGHT ANKLE,

then

TEARS into the Agent's LEFT ANKLE with the CLAWED END.

The Agent goes down screaming.

The LAST AGENT behind him AIMS HIS GUN, but Pike

THROWS THE HAMMER into his face,

sending him TOPPLING backwards onto the floor.

Pike leaves the hammer buried in the agent's face. Grinning, he stoops down, and picks up the first two agents' GUNS.

Upgrade.

INT. SOMACELL CONTROL ROOM - SAME

Sporadic SCREAMS and GUNFIRE echo out from the hallway.

As Jinx grabs a HARD DRIVE from her set-up, Delaney and Mason keep lookout by the door.

DELANEY
Now or never.

They open the door and enter the--

HALLWAY

--making their way as quickly and quietly as possible to the

STAIRWELL DOOR.

The hall is empty. The walls riddled with bullet holes. The floor slippery with streaks of blood.

But as they reach the door and Delaney moves to ease it open:

SHICK-SHICK! A gun cocks behind them.

They slowly turn around to see --

PIKE. Covered in blood in guts, very little of it his own. Aiming at Delaney's head.

She's never been afraid of him... but she is now. And he knows it.

DELANEY
Pike...

Pike holds... holds...

Eyes locked with Delaney's. He may not remember her, but there's a glimmer of something unspoken passing between them. There's hope...

BANG! Pike shoots.

Delaney, Mason, and Jinx all FLINCH,

but the bullet wasn't meant for them. It's gone behind them, THROUGH THE GLASS WINDOW inset in the stairwell door.

Delaney pushes open the door and is met with RESISTANCE.

She peeks her head in and looks --

to find the lifeless body of a SomaCell Agent slumped on the other side.

Pike saved them.

Their eyes lock once more. This time Delaney's are full of GRATITUDE. No trace of fear. And when Pike sees this, his expressions softens into something... human. <u>There's hope for him yet</u>.

DOWN THE HALL

An injured agent limps from one room to another. Desperately searching for safety.

Without a word, Pike turns and goes after him. Leaving Delaney and her friends in peace.

INT. PARKING GARAGE

The stairwell doors FLY OPEN and Delaney, Jinx, and Mason come bursting out. Delaney now carries the dead SomaCell agent's GUN.

There's Jinx's car, ready and waiting.

But there's a man standing in the way.

JINX
Bo?

It is Bo. Gun raised, ready to fire.

Delaney levels her pistol at him, too. It's a standoff.

The look in his eyes -- sorrow.

BO
What did you do?

DELANEY
You gonna shoot us, Bo? You gonna shoot me?

Delaney advances. Testing his limits.

Both guns hold steady as Delaney moves closer. Closer. Until she's standing directly in front of him.

AND SHE LOWERS HER WEAPON.

An open target.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
You don't have to help me. You don't have to believe me. But if you're not going to do those things... Then get the fuck out of my way.

Bo doesn't move.

Gun levelled. Eyes hard. Unwavering...

THEN HE LOWERS HIS WEAPON, TOO.

He sighs.

BO
Ah, shit. Yer gonna have to clock me a good one.

Off Delaney: full of gratitude.

DELANEY
Thank you.

And with that, she PISTOL WHIPS him across the face.

WHUMP! Bo goes down cold.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
Let's go.

Everyone follows as Jinx runs for her car.

Four car doors SLAM SHUT

while tires SCREECH

as the car PEELS OUT.

INT. JINX'S CAR - NIGHT

Jinx drives while Delaney has swiveled around in the front passenger seat to get a good look at the back -- where Mason sits, dazed and overwhelmed.

MASON
So Allied Venture Partners is connected to SomaCell through a shell company called Verdant R&D. And they set me up for murder?

DELANEY
I don't know how deep the connection goes.

MASON
Then let's go to the police.

DELANEY
Too risky. As far as they're concerned, we're fugitives. And we won't know anything for sure until--

MASON
We get into that high rise. And we're just going to, what? Walk right into a trap?

JINX
Would certainly give you a front row seat.

Off their confused faces, Jinx pulls something out of her pocket. An external hard drive.

MASON
What is that?

JINX
Thanks to Roger's unsavory nocturnal habits, I took it upon myself to start a back-up system. Of all our files. And you know who I thought might be interested in our little home movies? John Q. Public.

MASON
You really think this will work?

DELANEY
I think it's our best option.

Mason gazes out the window, deep in thought.

MASON
Huh.

DELANEY
What?

MASON
That building. I don't remember it. Must be new.

Delaney follows his gaze. Frowns.

DELANEY
Jinx? How long have I been under?

Jinx doesn't answer. Intensely focused on the road. Too focused.

The truth of her situation sinking in:

DELANEY (CONT'D)
How long??

EXT. DELANEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jinx's car pulls to the curb across the street.

JINX
This is a bad idea. Such a bad idea. There isn't even a word that can adequately describe how much this is a bad idea.

But Delaney's not listening. Single-minded in her mission, she gets and SLAMS the door behind her.

As she strides up the driveway, Mason hurries after her.

MASON
Hey! Ah, Delaney!

Delaney ignores him, until he GRABS HER ARM and physically stops her.

MASON (CONT'D)
Wait a minute. Just... just look!

That's when Delaney realizes:

There are three cars in the driveway, one we recognize as Tom and Sheila's. Lights shining from the downstairs windows. It's another dinner party.

Through the dining room window, they see Sheila and Tom at the table engaged in playful conversation.

MOVEMENT comes from the kitchen window.

Mason PULLS Delaney behind a row of shrubs where they won't be seen. They watch as:

THROUGH THE WINDOW --

PAUL uncorks a fresh bottle of wine. Suddenly a YOUNG WOMAN wraps her arms around him from behind.

He turns and kisses her deeply, SPILLING some wine in the process. They laugh it off as he grabs a dish towel. Wearing the first genuine smile we've ever seen.

IN THE YARD --

Delaney fights and struggles as Mason HOLDS HER in a tight grip.

DELANEY
Let go! Let go of me! That is <u>my husband</u> in there!

MASON
Not anymore, it's not. Listen. I know I don't know you, but I do have this feeling. Something... I don't know, familiar. We were friends in my SomaCell, right?

DELANEY
Something like that.

MASON
Right. Well a friend would tell you that this, what you're about to do, it's a mistake. It won't help anything. It won't change anything. And even if it could, now is not the time.

Delaney stops struggling. Her body shudders. Is she crying? In the darkness it's hard to tell.

DELANEY
We had our problems. Everyone does. But we were going to try. We promised each other we would try...

Mason gets up. Extends a hand to Delaney.

MASON
And maybe you still can. But first, we have to get our lives back.

She hesitates... takes one last look at the place she used to call home...

And takes Mason's hand.

INT. CORPORATE HIGH RISE - DAY

Delaney and Mason take their place in the back of the queue as people pass through the metal detector.

DELANEY
(low)
On my mark. Punch to the throat. Grab the taser. Easy.

MASON
You're sure about this?

DELANEY
Let's just say it's not my first time.

The line starts moving again. Delaney and Mason are almost to the front.

Delaney glances at Mason. He looks nervous. Keeps fidgeting.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
Steady...

Security Guard #1 starts to wave them on, then abruptly stops.

SECURITY GUARD #1
Hold up. You got your badges?

Delaney tries to catch Mason's eye: *Now.* But just as she's about to give him a nod--

SECURITY GUARD #2
(suddenly suspicious)
Wait a minute. Mrs. Thomas? Mr. Grant?

Delaney eyes the Security Guard's TAZER. Ready for anything...

MASON
Yes...?

SECURITY GUARD #2
(pleasant)
You're on the list. 28th floor.

But she wasn't quite ready for that.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Delaney and Mason stand in silence, watching the floor buttons light up:

10... 11... 12...

MASON
So I was thinking... when this is over...

DELANEY
Look. Whatever you think you feel for me, it's a lie. Residual stimuli left over from a chip implanted by SomaCell. It isn't real.

16... 17... 18...

MASON
Yeah, no. I get that. It's just... I'd like the chance to get to know you. For the first time.

DELANEY
When this is over?

MASON
Right.

Delaney considers.

21... 22... 23...

DELANEY
I'd like that too.

25... 26... 27...

This is it --

DING! The 28th floor. The doors slide open to:

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE SUITE

A luxurious suite, all chrome and glass, with a breathtaking view of the city.

And a MAN IN A SUIT waiting to greet them.

The same man who followed Mason in his virtual world.

MAN IN A SUIT
This way please.

Not exactly the welcome they were expecting. Delaney and Mason share a look: what choice do they have?

They follow.

The Man In A Suit ushers them into a

PRIVATE OFFICE

and shuts the door behind them, leaving them alone with...

A MAN in his 50s. Dapper and benign in an expensive suit. A LIAISON.

LIAISON
Mrs. Thomas. Mr. Grant. Tell me.
Was this what you were expecting to
find?

MASON
And you are?

LIAISON
A man with answers. That is what you're here for, isn't it? Instead of running, instead of self-preservation, you chose a quest for truth. Very noble of you. Though knowledge does come with a price. You realize, of course, this is where your journey ends.

He holds out a DOCUMENT. Delaney warily takes it.

DELANEY
(surprised)
Mason's intake form?

LIAISON
I think you'll find his testimony rather... predictable at this point.

DELANEY
He didn't kill anyone. He was framed. By SomaCell. And so was I.

LIAISON
(smiles)
Is that what you think?

DELANEY
But you're only half right. Our intentions aren't entirely noble. Part of it's a quest for truth, sure. Mostly though... we just wanted to see your face.

The Liaison's smile falters momentarily.

LIAISON
I'm sorry?

Mason nods at a giant FLAT SCREEN mounted on one wall.

MASON
Nice TV you got there. You might want to turn it on.

Suddenly -- the Man In A Suit BURSTS into the office.

MAN IN A SUIT
Channel Four.

Curious, the Liaison turns on the TV which is set to a news station, where a somber ANCHORWOMAN addresses the camera:

ONSCREEN --

ANCHORWOMAN
--footage from an anonymous source that provides us with what could be the world's first exclusive look inside the Department of Justice's much-lauded but highly controversial SomaCell rehabilitation program. Let's take a look.

The screen cuts to footage of a scene we recognize:

FOOTAGE --

Of Bo and Delaney inside the police interrogation cell.

DELANEY
Mason was onto something big before he got arrested. Some kind of corporate fraud... something. And now the very system that sentenced him, that is denying him parole, is also covering up whatever it is he found. Do you understand the implications here?

BO
Delaney...

DELANEY
An innocent man! Truly innocent. Locked away for the rest of his life in such a way that his knowledge is sure never to get out.

BACK TO THE ANCHORWOMAN --

ANCHORWOMAN
The person they're referring to is Mason Grant, charged with the brutal murder of his co-worker late last year. Throughout the trial, Mr. Grant professed his innocence--

The Liaison FLIPS to another channel...

ANCHORMAN
--shocking allegations of false imprisonment--

And another channel...

NEWS ANCHOR
--what could be a powerful blow to the justice system--

And another channel...

CO-ANCHOR
--more on this story as it develops.

The Liaison PAUSES the TV. His expression sours.

DELANEY
And that’s just the tip of the iceberg. We have it all on tape.

MASON
Your man following and threatening me. A paper trail of embezzled funds--

LIAISON
All in a virtual setting. None of that is real.

DELANEY
It’s real enough. That “virtual setting” determines the fate of hundreds of thousands of incarcerated citizens in this country. Either it’s real enough to serve as hard evidence, or the whole system is a sham. Either way, the program’s over. Everything SomaCell has built -- done.

LIAISON
Interesting.
(beat)
But let me shed some light on the situation as I see it. Two escaped convicts, one wildly implausible story, and zero credibility given the trail of bodies they’ve left in their wake.

MASON
What bodies...?

The Liaison changes channels once again. This time to a SECURITY FEED of

THE DOWNSTAIRS LOBBY --

Where both security guards and half a dozen civilians have been slaughtered.

Delaney and Mason REEL.

MASON (CONT'D)
Oh, Jesus.

DELANEY
It's your word against ours.

LIAISON
Wrong again, I'm afraid.

Suddenly --

BAM BAM BAM! Bullets RIP INTO MASON'S BODY from behind, where

THE MAN IN A SUIT has drawn a weapon of his own. He pivots and FIRES at Delaney, but

Delaney DIVES FOR COVER behind a desk.

As Mason sinks to the floor, the Man In A Suit CHARGES forward. But Mason

GRABS him, sending him

SPRAWLING, the gun flying out of reach.

The gun lands almost equidistant between Delaney and the Main In A Suit. Simultaneously, they

LUNGE

for it, blocking it from view as

BANG!

The gun goes off. But who did it hit?

The Man In A Suit rolls to his side and -- BLOOD BLOSSOMS on his expensive shirt.

Delaney rolls over as well. Gun in hand.

The sight of Mason's bullet-riddled body gives her a cold resolve. She picks herself up. Trains her gun on the Liaison. Her hands are steady. Confident and callous.

LIAISON (CONT'D)
(smiles slightly)
Still think you were framed for murder, Mrs. Thomas?

DELANEY
No. You're right. I'm guilty as charged.

BAM! A kill shot. Right between the eyes. Blood pools on the floor around the Liaison's still corpse.

Delaney drops the gun and RUNS to Mason. Kneels over him, surveys the damage.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
Oh god.

He coughs and sputters. A bloody mess.

MASON
Delaney...

Delaney hastily removes her outer shirt.

Presses it into his wounds.

Desperately trying to stop the bleeding.

DELANEY
You're okay... you're okay...

But then his hand GRASPS her arm. Firmly.

MASON
Delaney.

Delaney pauses. Looks into his eyes. And realizes, with HORROR:

DELANEY
You're okay.

It's true. Despite lethal bullet wounds, Mason is calm and collected, breathing steadily. Impossible.

Unless...

CLOMP-CLOMP. Two polished shoes suddenly step up beside Delaney. She gazes up to see:

Bo.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
No.

Wearing that unmistakable SomaCell wristwatch.

SHE'S STILL IN HER VIRTUAL WORLD. She has been this whole time.

DELANEY (CONT'D)
No!

She recoils from him. Refusing to believe...

DELANEY (CONT'D)
None of it? None of it was real?
This whole time?

BO
I'm so sorry.

But she's not giving up. She LEAPS to her feet and SPRINTS for the elevator. She slams her palm into the elevator call button, again and again and again.

DING!

The elevator doors slide open to reveal:

A blank wall.

Delaney SCREAMS in anger and agony. POUNDS her fists against the wall.

And when she turns back around, everything's different: The corporate office. The bodies. Mason. Gone.

And in their place:

A simple, austere room. Two folding chairs placed before a table. Three bigger, more expensive chairs behind the table.

And, sitting in those chairs, two SOMACELL REPRESENTATIVES and a JUDGE.

The parole board.

Bo reaches out to her, beckoning.

BO (CONT'D)
Delaney, it's time.

But Delaney is frozen in place. He takes a seat without her.

The board members unlock briefcases. Open files. Check documents.

SOMACELL REPRESENTATIVE #1
This is the thirty-fourth cycle review of Convict V625 Delaney Thomas, incarcerated November 14, 2015 on charges of murder in the first degree, assault with a deadly weapon, possession of an illegal firearm, aiding and abetting a known fugitive, and conspiracy against a federal institution.
(a nod to the judge)
The Honorable Judge Cole presiding.

Behind the table, Judge Cole addresses Bo.

JUDGE COLE
Counselor. How long have you overseen Mrs. Thomas?

DELANEY
Just over two years, Your Honor.

Delaney REELS. Two years?!

JUDGE COLE
And how would you describe Mrs. Thomas's behavior during this most recent cycle?

Bo takes a deep breath. And when he speaks, his voice is heavy with emotion.

BO
I regret to inform the board that, despite my attempts at intervention, Mrs. Thomas did not achieve a breakthrough, and was not successful in deviating from the path that originally lead to her incarceration.

JUDGE COLE
Counselor, in the time you've been working with her, as Mrs. Thomas ever successfully completed a cycle completely divergent from her original path?

Bo glances at Delaney. As if ashamed of some betrayal.

BO
No, Your Honor.

JUDGE COLE
In your opinion, is she capable of true rehabilitation?

Bo hesitates. Really considering the question. After all, this is Mr. “Once A Criminal, Always A Criminal.”

BO
Your Honor... a friend a’ mine once said that everyone is capable of change, as long as one person is capable of believing in them.
(beat)
So yeah. I do think I’ll be able to reach her. One day.

Judge Cole and the two SomaCell Representatives confer...

JUDGE COLE
Your conviction is admirable, Counselor. We can only hope that one day it’s rewarded. Best of luck, and we’ll reevaluate upon completion of Cycle 35.

Bo nods.

BO
Thanks, Your Honor. Gentlemen.

The Judge and SomaCell Representatives make their way to the elevator. Delaney just stares at them as they brush past her and hit the call button.

The elevator DINGS immediately -- doors whisk open and close behind them.

Leaving Delaney and Bo alone.

DELANEY
Bo. You have to--

BO
No. You listen to me. There’s one way out of this, just one. And you’re the only person who can make it happen. What have I told you over and over again? You have to stop caring.

DELANEY
(realizes)
You mean Mason.

BO
Forget him. I don't care if you're fucking soul mates, you wanna get outta here, he's just a number. Do you understand? You sever that tie... none of this shit happens.

DELANEY
I can't--

BO
It's your life I'm talkin about here! A convict is a convict. A convict is a convict --
(shakes her)
-- say it!

DELANEY
You don't really believe that. And if you can't do it, how can I?

And in that moment, Bo realizes he's just going to lose her all over again.

With nothing else to do, he wraps her in a hug. If ever we thought he didn't care, our doubts can be laid to rest.

BO
A convict is a convict. A convict--

Suddenly, we FLASH TO:

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

Delaney opens her eyes. Removes her metallic headband. Rubs her shoulder.

DELANEY
Ow.

Beside her, in his hospital-like bed, PIKE sleeps soundly.

JINX (O.S.)
You okay?
(beat)
Delaney?

Delaney gets up. Still rubbing her shoulder.

DELANEY
Stabbed.

JINX (O.S.)
Again?

Delaney just rolls her eyes.

As she's about to leave the room...

BO ENTERS.

DELANEY
I owe you twenty bucks. Shoulder.
(off his look)
What's wrong with you?

He struggles for composure.

BO
Under the weather is all. Not to worry, it'll pass.

DELANEY
(distracted)
He's regressing. Pike.

BO
Well you know what they say. If at first you don't succeed. Try, try again.

Bo puts his arm around her. But as they walk out of the White Room, we gradually

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

The scene is actually framed within a TV MONITOR. We've been watching this whole thing play out ON SCREEN.

As we continue to pull back, we see the monitor is in a--

WHITE ROOM

[With a subtly altered color palette; the first time we're truly seeing the real world.]

--mounted above a hospital-type bed, where the REAL DELANEY is locked in a deep, coma-like slumber. Wearing a metallic headband, hooked up to various vital sign monitors. Wrists and ankles cuffed to the bed.

Just one of a dozen convicts, all sleeping peacefully. Their lives playing out over and over on the monitors above them.

FADE TO BLACK.