

THE CHROME HOLLOW

NELOU KERAMATI (WGA-1944646)

**OVER BLACK**

CHYRON: AND SO TO SURVIVE IN AN ARTIFICIAL WORLD WE ABANDONED OUR HUMANITY.

**EXT. MODERN METROPOLIS - PREDAWN**

A black skyscraper soars from the heart of downtown. CLOSER -- glowing pixels emerge -- CLOSER -- an apartment unit -- CLOSER -- we're inside.

**INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

QUENTIN CALDWELL, 40s, sits up in bed with glowing red eyes. He peers out into the dim hallway, then rises.

**KITCHEN**

Caldwell idles before an open drawer, holding a butcher knife.

NOEMI (O.S.)

Dad?

Caldwell's teen daughter, NOEMI, emerges from her bedroom. She spots her father's demonic eyes, his knife, and

NOEMI

No, no, NO!

**EXT. MUSIC GALLERY - MORNING**

Pedestrians peer into the gallery at priceless instruments.

Nearby, a woman in a dark, minimalist uniform -- ELLIS AMBROSE, 30s -- stares at a blank wall.

The Limbal Rings around her irises GLOW as her POV shows a LIVE FEED of her apartment only she can see.

Her 7-year-old, OLIVER, waddles into the kitchen -- calls for Ellis, then sits at the counter and grab a protein bar.

Ellis goes to call him when **CONSIGNMENTS NOW OPEN** accosts her POV and cuts the live feed.

The gallery's SmartSecurity detects her and HAIRLINE SEAMS carve an entrance in the wall to reveal a narrow stairwell leading down. Ellis enters and the wall reseals behind her.

**INT. MUSIC GALLERY, CONSIGNMENTS - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis enters a warm space with a classic quality -- millwork and wooden shelves brimming with secondhand instruments.

CLERK (O.S.)  
Can I help you?

Ellis spots a grey old man approaching.

ELLIS  
I've been looking for a Vintage Amalphi, circa 2060. I believe you acquired one a few years back?

CLERK  
It's still paying for our lease.  
(off her look)  
There are few collectables more valuable than an Amalphi, my dear.

ELLIS  
Do you have a record of who you sold it to?

CLERK  
I can't disclose that. Besides, given what he paid for it?

He laughs. Ellis nods, unsure of where to go from here.

CLERK  
Do you play?

ELLIS  
Oh, no. It's for my son.

The clerk mulls it -- indicates for her to wait -- heads into the back. He reappears with an old violin case -- rests it on the table -- takes out a small, mahogany violin.

CLERK  
Not a name history will remember, but...

He rests the bow on the strings and starts to play. The tune is so painfully beautiful, Ellis's eyes fall shut.

CLERK (CONT'D)  
(hands it to her)  
What better way to be devastated?

Ellis inspects it -- scuffs, flaws and all. It's perfect.

**EXT. CITY CENTRE, PUBLIC SQUARE - DAY**

Pedestrians flow on a magnetized Transit Belt along the public square -- weaving into one another like fish in an aquarium.

Ellis steps into the flow -- taps fingers to her thumb in a sort of CODE -- summons a live feed of her home again.

She looks for Oliver in the kitchen -- living room -- his bedroom. The bathroom door is ajar. Not in there, either.

She checks her own bedroom and finds him digging for something under her bed.

ELLIS  
(amused mutter)  
Whatchu doing?

INTERCUT WITH OLIVER:

Oliver pulls out blankets and pillows in meticulous order -- as if for the hundredth time -- crawls under the bed -- slips out with a large shoe box.

At the sight of it, Ellis's face drops.

Oliver takes out a man's shirt and puts it on -- a bottle of cologne -- smells it -- a photograph -- peers at it longingly.

Ellis cuts the feed, utterly gutted, when **CODE BLACK - ARREST WARRANT FOR QUENTIN CALDWELL** snaps her to attention.

People back away from Ellis, gaping at the HAIRLINE HALO now crowning her head.

Ellis spots a black skyscraper across the square -- steps off the Transit Belt -- POV pinning Caldwell on the 177th floor.

Her earlobe's rim GLOWS. She hears

LACHLAN (V.O.)  
Status?

AGENT (MANV.O.)  
One Hostile and one Civilian, Sir.  
His teen daughter.

LACHLAN (V.O.)  
Shit.

Ellis puts down the violin case -- seals it onto the magnetized floor with a holographic barrier.

AGENT (MANV.O.)  
We've secured the perimeter.

LACHLAN (V.O.)  
I need you to stall.

Ellis taps to FILTER all digital stimuli -- signs, ads, traffic lights, landscaping -- EVERYTHING VANISHES, revealing the bare bones of the minimalist city.

AGENT (MANV.O.)  
ETA?

Ellis's POV calculates, then generates a DIGITAL ROUTE to Caldwell with **APPROXIMATE ETA: 3 MIN.**

LACHLAN (V.O.)  
8 minutes.

Ellis SPRINTS across the square -- sharp focus on her dynamic path as it changes around emerging obstacles.

She cuts through alternate realities generated by others -- a boy's filter of game characters -- a young woman's filter of Victorian costumes -- a man's Japanese garden -- all the while fixated on her destination.

#### **EXT. SKYSCRAPER - CONTINUOUS**

Agents at the entrance spot Ellis. Their POVs scan her Halo and the CHROME NETWORK identifies her as

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
Agent Ellis Ambrose: A-Class.

They unseal the entrance as Ellis storms into the lobby, arcs to the back and slips into an elevator just as it slides shut.

#### **ELEVATOR**

OPERATOR  
What floor--

Ellis plants her palm on the wall panel -- wipes all entries -- activates the 177th floor and fortifies as they all SHOOT UP.

#### **HALLWAY**

Ellis exits the elevator -- virtual weapon drawn -- crosses to an adjacent hall -- spots Caldwell detained by Agents.

She approaches -- a terse nod -- follows her digital route into Caldwell's apartment.

**INT. CALDWELL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

The wall of Agents facing the window is broken when the 6'6" team leader -- JERICHO, 40s -- spots Ellis and strides over.

The gap reveals the issue: Caldwell's daughter on the ledge of the balcony.

JERICHO

This is Agent O'Halloran's case.

Ellis's POV summons the girl's infographics: **NOEMI CALDWELL, 13. SEVERE DEPRESSION. MOTHER SYNAPSED, DECEASED.**

ELLIS

(cautious approach)

Noemi, my name is Ellis Ambrose.  
I'm an Agent at Chrome.

All Agents yield with reverence. Jericho's pissed.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

I know you're scared, but I'm  
going to need you to--

NOEMI

You can't TAKE HIM!

ELLIS

(beat)

Noemi, your dad is really worried  
about you.

Noemi looks up -- face breaks when she spots her father cuffed in the hallway.

ELLIS

If anything were to happen to his  
little girl...

Noemi's gaze finds Ellis again -- staring blankly.

ELLIS

(is it working?)

I'm coming to help you down, okay?  
Just shift your weight towards me.

NOEMI

(softly)

The apple doesn't fall far...

She steps off.

CALDWELL

EMMY!

ELLIS RUNS -- FOOT TO LEDGE -- DIVES AFTER HER.

Agents SWARM the balcony -- SHE'S INSANE!

Jericho heads for the door.

**EXT. TOWER - CONTINUOUS**

The ground RACES UP. Ellis taps a code -- complex, urgent, her Limbals glow BLACK as a DIGITAL PARACHUTE weaves out from her spine -- reducing her momentum.

She lobs a DIGITAL LASSO down to Noemi -- GOTCHA -- but then

Her Limbals FLICKER OFF -- her parachute and lasso VANISH as the sky turns RED, her plunge resuming in soundless horror

SPLAT -- Noemi strikes the ground -- Ellis, moments behind.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
System restored.

Ellis taps -- a DIGITAL NET SOARS from the ground -- catches her -- stretches down to mere feet shy of Noemi.

Spectators stare at an angel of doom suspended over Noemi's body, unable to see the digital net holding Ellis in place.

Ellis drops down -- panting -- as Noemi's pool of blood glosses the pavement -- creeping towards her.

DIGITAL HEXAGONS snap together, forming a HAZARD DOME to seal off the scene. Through the forcefield enters LACHLAN O'HALLORAN -- young, tall and attractive, with a commanding presence that can chill water into ice.

LACHLAN  
What the hell happened here?

He helps Ellis up, then taps to summon Noemi's infographics.

LACHLAN  
(realizing)  
Did you intercept my Code Black?!

ELLIS  
You wouldn't have made it in time.

LACHLAN  
In time for what?! This?!

JERICHO (O.S.)  
Agent O'Halloran.

Lachlan spots Jericho at the Hazar Dome's threshold.

ELLIS  
Her father is in custody upstairs.  
You should take him out the back.

Lachlan softens a bit, then walks over to Jericho.

LACHLAN  
Go home, El. It's your goddamn day  
off.

With a broken glance at Noemi, Ellis exits through the barrier.

LACHLAN (CONT'D)  
You have Caldwell?

JERICHO  
He was trying to off himself but  
we got to him in time. But then  
the girl threatened to jump.

LACHLAN  
And you let her?

JERICHO  
Agent Ambrose... complicated the  
situation.

LACHLAN  
(of course she did)  
Clean this up.

**EXT. PUBLIC SQUARE - DAY**

Ellis crosses the square with the violin in her sights. In the background, Chrome's public announcement plays.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
We apologize for this morning's  
glitch. We are doing everything--

ANOTHER GLITCH and Ellis COLLAPSES -- PARALYZED from the waist down. She props herself up -- looks up at the red sky, the REAL SKY behind the illusion -- spots a little girl running over.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
System restored.

A spark runs from Ellis's spine to her toes. She can move her legs again, but lets the little girl help her up.

ELLIS  
Thank you, sweetie.

The girl claps at her triumph before her mother scoops her up.  
Ellis watches the mother and child for a bit, then heads to the violin -- unseals it -- and sets off.

**INT. ELLIS APARTMENT - DAY**

Ellis walks in, looking for Oliver, then swoops down to him on the floor near the entrance.

OLIVER  
(hyperventilating)  
The sky was on fire.

ELLIS  
(rubs his back)  
It was just a glitch. Everything's fine. That's it. Deep breaths.

OLIVER  
I want-- I need to--

Ellis gives him space. Oliver summons a holographic violin through his wrists and starts to play. And he's brilliant.

ELLIS  
That's it. You're doing so good!

Oliver cracks a smile.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
Don't forget to breathe.

As his pitch steadies, Ellis sneakily takes out the vintage violin from its case and rests it in Oliver's lap.

Oliver looks down -- nearly chokes on his excitement -- scared to even touch it -- looks up at Ellis with bewildered eyes.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
(big smile)  
Well, go on!

Oliver picks it up -- bow to strings -- and it's magic. There's an organic coarseness to the sound no hologram could imitate.

She watches -- teetering between pride and pain -- longing to--

NO. She can't. She shouldn't. But he plays just like...

She rises and heads into her bedroom.

**INT. ELLIS'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

With Oliver's music in the background, Ellis unseals a secret compartment in her monolithic wall and takes something out.

**INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis sits back down with a hand-written SHEET MUSIC. So deeply immersed in nostalgia -- so seamless Oliver's transition -- it takes her a moment to realize he's begun to play off of it.

She wells up as he resurrects a melody she's long heard only in memory when her POV displays **CALDWELL ADMITTED TO LIMBO**.

The music stops.

OLIVER  
It's work, isn't it?

ELLIS  
I'm sorry, honey. There was an emergency this morning--

Oliver starts playing another song with a faster tempo.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
You keep practicing, okay? I'll see you when I get home?

Oliver tightens his lips as Ellis runs a hand through his hair, kisses him on the temple -- heads for the door.

Once she's gone Oliver grabs the sheet music -- holds it up against the light -- inspecting the unfamiliar handwriting.

*What if...?* He leaps to his feet.

**EXT. CHROME PLAZA - DAY**

Ellis walks Chrome Plaza towards a massive reflective surface. Her Halo appears, scans down her body, and she hears

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
Agent Ambrose. Welcome to Chrome Headquarters.

An entrance opens in the monolithic wall, then quickly reseals following her entry, rendering the illusion of nothingness.

From above, Chrome HQ is revealed to be a massive reflective cube, nestled and camouflaged inside a lavish green park.

**INT. CHROME HQ, LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

Heading for the elevators in the back, Ellis's POV reads  
**LUCIEN: MY OFFICE.**

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - DAY**

Ellis enters to find LUCIEN O'HALLORAN -- a sophisticated man in his 70s -- sitting behind his massive desk.

LUCIEN

I heard what happened. Caldwell.

ELLIS

I was just headed to WhiteSpace to analyze his Dream.

LUCIEN

They say you *dove* after the girl.

ELLIS

I was trying to save her.

LUCIEN

People saw you, El. If the Board issues a formal inquiry -- if they find out you've been writing code to manipulate the system--

Ellis nods, wanting the lecture over already.

LUCIEN

(beat)

I need you in Quarantine. I need you to dig in and fix these damn glitches once and for all.

Ellis grips the bridge of her nose.

LUCIEN

No one else sees patterns like you. Codes like you.

ELLIS

Lachlan can. He's just as capable at tackling this.

LUCIEN

Lachlan can't handle Quarantine.  
 (rises, walks over)  
 The system is unstable. People are scared. Seeing that hellish sky? Remembering what's out there?

ELLIS

I get an hour a day with Oliver,  
if I'm lucky. Even *that* you want  
me to give up?

LUCIEN

If Dendrites infiltrate the system  
we'll all be at their mercy. If  
not for them, the Caldwell girl  
would still be alive.

(beat)

What if it was Oliver?

ELLIS

(meets his eye; *don't*)

You'll be late for your lecture.

She leaves, making his chest deflate.

**INT. CHROME HQ, QUARANTINE ANTECHAMBER - DAY**

The wall splits to reveal ANSEL KEATS -- 30s, attractive with a  
gentle aura -- aglow in the light of a vast underground space.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)

Ansel Keats, Junior Architect.  
Welcome to Quarantine.

As he enters, the guards behind him seal entry to Quarantine.

He ventures into a strange and amorphous cave -- cuts through  
diagonal shafts of light -- walks a path with rotating wall  
panels that tease what's beyond...

Further down, a massive underground boulder dips into a black  
reflecting pool. Ansel spots a faceless nun peering into it,  
realizing she's a statue when the sharp light on her dims.

Breath caught, he ventures on. Everything is illusory --  
hypnotic when in motion, incomprehensible when idle.

As he walks through a bottleneck, the walls deform as if trying  
to touch him -- morphing to the contours of his body -- coming  
alive with heat and magnetism.

Surreal -- thrilling -- terrifying -- all of it icing -- and  
then there's the cake: a BLACK CUBE the size of a studio  
apartment that his POV identifies as **BLACKBOX**.

He walks right up to it -- staring as if at the gates of heaven  
-- when a familiar unease washes over him.

INTERCUT a preteen Ansel steeling himself, then reaching with a  
trembling hand for the doorbell of a luxury residence.

Reaching out to BlackBox, Ansel's Halo appears automatically, expands, and scans down his body.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
Ansel Keats, Junior Architect.

Glowing seams reveal an entrance to the dark space inside.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
Welcome to BLACKBOX.

**INT. BLACKBOX - CONTINUOUS**

Ansel enters the seemingly boundless space. It reseals to snuff out all light. Ansel squints at a slender circle on the floor -- where a man sits in a chair with his back to him.

**EXT. PARISIAN CAFE - DAY**

Sitting outside a quaint Parisian cafe, BEAU LEVESQUE, 40s, watches his wife chat with a flower vendor across the street.

He smiles -- watching her torn between near-identical bouquets -- bursts into laughter when she piles all 3 onto her left arm.

ANSEL (V.O.)  
Beau Levesque?

**INT. BLACKBOX - CONTINUOUS**

Levesque emerges from his MEMORY and looks up at Ansel.

ANSEL  
Sorry to interrupt. I'm--

LEVESQUE  
Ansel Keats. Welcome.

He swivels in his chair and shakes Ansel's hand.

ANSEL  
Thank you, Sir. It's a pleasure.

LEVESQUE  
Youngest Junior Architect to get Quarantine? Pleasure is all mine.

Levesque taps and a glowing circle outlines Ansel's work space. Empty, except for a chair.

LEVESQUE (CONT'D)  
That's you.

Ansel's enthusiasm dims. *Is this it?*

**EXT. CHROME PLAZA - DAY**

Oliver strides through Chrome Plaza -- spooking every time he mistakes an Agent for Ellis.

He walks past a tour group and is spotted by a young woman with DARK GREEN HAIR -- LOURDES SINCLAIR, 20s -- who starts looking around for his guardian.

She spots a young mother crouching down to her twins -- a boy and a girl -- and her heart quickens. She can't look away.

LUCIEN (V.O.)  
... but what is consciousness?

Sinclair is pushed on as her group advances towards the HQ.

**INT. CHROME HQ, AUDITORIUM - DAY**

On a massive circular platform, Lucien faces a full auditorium.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
Since the dawn of science, it was widely believed that consciousness is generated by the brain. A mere byproduct of cognition. Until one day, like all universal truths, this too was challenged.

He summons a Holographic GRAND PIANO playing a simple tune.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
Take a song. A simple melody. What happens to your brain if you hear it over and over again?  
(the music loops)  
You will store it as a memory. And curiously, this tune will generate the same neural pattern in your brain whether you hear it today, or a million years from now. So, you see -- through the process of forming a memory, this tune actually *changes* your mind.

Students stare with awe. Fascination. Amongst them, Sinclair remains low in her seat, head down, hawk eyes glued to Lucien.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)

Just as a sheet music instructs an instrument -- consciousness is the blueprint that guides the brain's development.

(beat)

But then-- what if a blueprint is anomalous? Tainted with trauma?

The piano tune grows more and more ominous -- abruptly ends.

LUCIEN

Many years ago -- when I was just starting out as a psychiatrist -- a man came to me with recurring nightmares. And I knew the only way to alleviate his suffering was to uncover its underlying source.

INTERCUT BETWEEN LUCIEN AND ELLIS:

**INT. CHROME HQ, WHITESPACE - DAY**

Inside a white void with no discernible edges, Ellis steps onto a circular platform with a slender black rim.

WHITESPACE (WOMANV.O.)

Activating DreamScape.

Darkness falls. The platform rim glows, generating an IMMERSIVE Hologram of Caldwell's Dream.

LUCIEN

The source, it turns out, was a traumatic event buried so deep in his subconscious, it resurfaced only in dreams.

Ellis experiences Caldwell's Dream as if dreaming it herself. It is fragmented -- hazy -- just as a dream would be.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)

Trauma... from a past life.

A man who is clearly NOT CALDWELL drags a screaming boy into the kitchen of an abandoned house.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)

These nightmares were memories -- made by *another man*, from *another time*...

The man shoves the boy in the oven -- SLAMS it shut -- reaches for the knob -- Ellis terminates the Dream and stumbles back in the dark, shaken from the visceral experience.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
 ... memories that helped forensic  
 investigators solve a cold case  
 from decades prior.

Ellis taps and generates a white, glowing MIND MAP resembling roots of a tree. Everything below grade: the subconscious.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
 A dream, then, is a sapling that  
 alerts us to the roots beneath the  
 surface. A sapling that *will* grow  
 into a mighty tree, unless  
 uprooted as soon as it sprouts.

Ellis traces a RED ROOT to the surface where it spills over the threshold -- manifesting as a dream.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
 That is what we do. We intervene  
 before the disease metastasizes.

Ellis cross-references the Dream with a criminal case. A MATCH. The child *was* incinerated. The killer, never caught.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
 Like tuning an instrument, we use  
 Channel Resonance to recalibrate  
 the brain. To restore Equilibrium.  
 We mitigate the echoes of the past  
 and erase noxious frequencies that  
 promote psychosis. And in doing so  
 give you a second chance at life.

Sinclair's Limbals GLOW GREEN as a holographic GUN appears in her trembling hand -- one that only she can see.

#### **INT. WHITESPACE - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis watches as DreamScape generates a summary report.

DREAMSCAPE (WOMANV.O.)  
 Probability of self-harm at 97.6%.  
 Synapse highly recommended.

Ellis taps to confirm.

DREAMSCAPE (WOMANV.O.)  
 Synapse scheduled for 8:00 PM  
 tomorrow. Thank you for using  
 DreamScape.

WhiteSpace regains illumination. Ellis steps down and sits on  
 the edge of the platform.

PROTESTOR (V.O.)  
 You're invading people's privacy!

**INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS**

Sinclair spots a young man a few seats over -- glances at  
 Lucien who's skimming the audience for him. She sinks further  
 in her seat.

LUCIEN  
 (spots the protestor)  
 You're right. We are. And I wish  
 we didn't have to.

PROTESTOR  
 You don't.

Silence swells. Coughs and murmurs punctuate the tension, but  
 Lucien maintains eye-contact with his challenger.

Sinclair's heart pounds in her ears. If he sees...? Her grip  
 tightens on her weapon.

LUCIEN  
 (moment of truth)  
 A year after Chrome was founded, a  
 man drove a bus full of children  
 off a bridge. The ones who didn't  
 drown, he choked to death himself.  
 And I let him do it.

Gasps suck all oxygen out of the air. Sinclair stares, aghast.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
 He was a deeply troubled man. And  
 he masked it very well. None of  
 those who knew him could imagine  
 him capable of such a thing. But I  
 knew, having analyzed his Dream  
 myself. I knew, with almost full  
 certainty, that he was a ticking  
 time-bomb. But I was so sick of  
 trying to convince people that we  
*need* this -- we *need* Chrome to  
 prevent these awful catastrophes--  
 (MORE)

LUCIEN (CONT'D)

(beat)

So, I did nothing. I knew the risk, and I let him slip through the cracks... And I have to live with that for the rest of my life.

People glance at one another -- whisper -- cuss -- sympathize. Sinclair stares -- breath caught -- torn.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)

I can't change the past, but I can fight for the future. For all of us. Chrome is healing, and healing is forgiveness -- a second chance. One I pray I'll someday deserve from you.

A tepid applause crackles as he walks off the platform. As people rise, Sinclair unclenches, gun vanishing into her wrist.

**EXT. CHROME HQ, WESTERN WALKWAY - DAY**

Inside a grassy moat, beneath a canopy of trees, Oliver stares at his reflection in the monolithic wall of the HQ.

ELLIS (V.O.)

Now, this is only for emergencies.

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. ELLIS APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Palm to palm, Ellis transfers a CODE to Oliver.

ELLIS

It lets you open a door in any SmartWall. If you ever sense that you're being followed, or feel scared for any reason, run to the nearest wall and hide inside.

OLIVER

For how long?

ELLIS

Until... I, come, GET YOU!

Oliver BURSTS into laughter as Ellis grabs him and starts nibbling his face.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

Must! Bite! Cheeks! Om nom nom!

BACK TO:

**EXT. CHROME HQ - CONTINUOUS**

Oliver rests a shaky palm on the wall -- runs the code -- startles when an entrance hollows beneath his hand. He enters the dark cavity. The wall reseals behind him.

**INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Oliver emerges from a wall -- looks about the unmarked space. He walks a complex maze of corridors -- feeling lost -- cuts through a wall -- feeling even more lost -- but then...

**INT. INNER LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

Oliver exits a wall into a vast interior space several security thresholds deeper than the main lobby.

He dashes behind a massive column -- taps to label the vicinity -- skims till he spots **EMPLOYEE ARCHIVES** on the back wall.

EUREKA -- he sneaks a peak from behind the column -- coast is clear -- dashes to the wall -- runs a code -- vanishes into it.

A baffled Guard spots him from an adjacent corridor.

**INT. EMPLOYEE ARCHIVES - CONTINUOUS**

The room -- lit through slender clerestory windows -- bears nothing but a BLACK SEARCH PODIUM akin to a tombstone.

Oliver pulls out the sheet music -- unfolds it -- lifts a fingerprint -- applies it to the podium.

**SEARCHING...** Infographics appear for ELLIS AMBROSE.

No -- Oliver holds the sheet up against the light -- lifts and applies a much larger partial print.

**SEARCHING...** Infographics appear for ANSEL KEATS.

The sheet music slips from his grasp. He takes out a photo -- the one from Ellis's shoe box -- of a young man's silhouette playing the violin.

He looks up at Ansel. *It's him!*

GUARD (O.S.)  
What are you doing?

Oliver turns to find a Guard reaching to grab him -- kicks him in the shin -- dashes to the back wall and vanishes into it.

INTERCUT Ellis in her office receiving an **EMERGENCY CALL**.

**INT. EMPLOYEE ARCHIVES - DAY**

Ellis runs in. Lachlan dismisses the Guard and strides over.

LACHLAN  
You gave your kid a Trespass Code?

A beat. Ellis registers where they are -- what must've happened -- tracks Oliver with glowing Limbals and runs back out.

LACHLAN (CONT'D)  
AMBROSE!

**EXT. CHROME PLAZA - CONTINUOUS**

Oliver emerges from a wall close to the main entrance -- scans around -- then runs out onto the Plaza.

He tries to walk slow, to blend into the crowd, but can't. He wants to run. To hide somewhere and cry...

Ellis dashes out the main entrance and spots Oliver nearing the heart of the Plaza.

She falls on his trail -- unaware that Jericho is watching her from the shadows -- when she suddenly hears in her ear

AGENT (MANV.O.)  
Target in sight.

Ellis spots Agents converging in on the plaza.

ELLIS  
(stops)  
Fuck you, Lachlan.

She braces to be debased by her underlings, but they rush right past her. Ellis's focus sharpens on Oliver, and she's running.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
Oh, no no no no no-- NO!

Agents surround Oliver -- seal him inside a RED HOLOBOX.

AGENT (MANV.O.)  
Target acquired.

Jericho smirks, savouring Ellis's turmoil.

JERICHO  
 (mutters)  
 Do it. Do it, you stupid bitch.

Agents spot Ellis -- infer aggression -- summon an echelon of defence by SLAMMING DOWN SUCCESSIVE FORCEFIELDS.

**HQ MAIN ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS**

Lachlan runs out -- sees Ellis charging at the barricade.

LACHLAN  
 ELLIS! DON'T!

Ellis DRAWS -- Lachlan taps -- DEACTIVATES her legs -- Ellis COLLAPSES -- striking the ground hard.

Jericho scoffs at the de-escalation -- runs over.

Ellis props herself up as Agents surround her, legs listless. She looks to Oliver when Jericho GRIPS the back of her neck and sends a SHOCKWAVE through her body.

Darkness encroaches, and we

FADE TO BLACK:

**INT. CHROME HQ, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Lachlan enters, lingering by the door.

A long conference table of Board Members is bookended by Lucien and an elegant woman in her 70s -- BEVERLY BLACKSMITH.

BLACKSMITH  
 ... I just don't think funnelling people into underground freezers is the solution. There are better ways to combat our mental illness pandemic.

LUCIEN  
 The system is working.

BLACKSMITH  
 The system has halted progress. We're frozen in time. Literally.

A few board members chuckle at the jab.

LUCIEN  
 Our world is a delicate microcosm. We can't afford to be brazen.  
 (MORE)

LUCIEN (CONT'D)

The data doesn't lie -- we've nearly eradicated suicide. Depression, anxiety and substance abuse are all at historical lows.

BLACKSMITH

I know how proud you are of your CryoCrypts, Lucien. But we are hemorrhaging money trying to fix people. Frankly, the investment just isn't worth the return.

BOARD MEMBER 1

What do you propose, Beverly?

BLACKSMITH

We go back to basics.  
(summons Hologram)  
Pull people from the Crypts. Put them to work. Expand city limits.

LUCIEN

Are you out of your mind? This isn't a game, Beverly.

BLACKSMITH

Growth requires room, Lucien.

LUCIEN

You're asking me to sell out the people in my care--

BLACKSMITH

(over)  
You've turned humanity into an experiment -- coddling the weak--

LUCIEN

(over)  
You can't-- no, no, you are--  
(slams table)  
NOT exploiting my patients for slave labor!

Blacksmith looks at Lachlan with a ghost of a smile.

LUCIEN

(walks off)  
Find another way to feed your greed.

Lucien exits. A beat, then Board Members rise -- an awkward smile -- a courtesy nod -- as they trickle out of the room. Once it's just Blacksmith and Lachlan, she approaches.

BLACKSMITH  
I take it you disapprove?

LACHLAN  
Look. I know this is personal for you. I know since the divorce--

BLACKSMITH  
This has nothing to do with that. Your father is weak -- clinging to his one glory from 50 years ago.

LACHLAN  
This isn't about him.

BLACKSMITH  
Oh, please. It's always been about him. He's so in love with what he's built, he's blind to all its flaws.

LACHLAN  
Expanding city limits is no joke. Thousands could die from toxic exposure.

BLACKSMITH  
What is that in the grand scheme of things?

Lachlan scoffs. She actually said it.

BLACKSMITH  
(beat)  
I had such high hopes for you. You were such a smart little boy. But you were so eager to please him, you never grew out of his shadow. From the looks of it, you never will.

She exits, leaving him gutted.

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - DAY**

Lachlan enters to find his father hunched in his seat.

LACHLAN  
I know this is bad timing, but--  
Lucien looks up. He already knows.

LACHLAN (CONT'D)  
 (beat)  
 I'll take care of it.

**INT. HOSPITAL, PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT**

Ellis comes to -- looks down at blood-tinged bandages wrapped around her waist. Shaky hands reach down to a childless womb.

ELLIS  
 (muffled; distant memory)  
 Oh, God-- my baby...

LACHLAN (V.O.)  
 Ellis.

**INT. CHROME HQ, ELLIS'S CELL - DAY**

Ellis snaps to attention inside a milky-white holographic cell -- finds Lachlan at the entry -- rises as he enters.

LACHLAN  
 I wanted to--

SLAM -- she shoves him back against the wall.

LACHLAN  
 The hell is your problem?

ELLIS  
 He was using a code I gave him.  
 (closes in)  
 You crossed the line. Arresting my son?!

LACHLAN  
 I had *nothing* to do with that.

She goes to shove him again but he restrains her.

LACHLAN (CONT'D)  
 (gently)  
 El -- his Arrest Warrant came from DreamScape.

Ellis stares. Bullshit.

LACHLAN (CONT'D)  
 They processed his Dream this morning. They found enough--

ELLIS  
 He's seven.

LACHLAN  
I'm so sorry.

Ellis tries to pull away but Lachlan tightens his grip.

LACHLAN (CONT'D)  
You can't see him.

ELLIS  
(breaks free)  
Oh, *hell* I can't.

LACHLAN  
You intercepted his arrest! You're  
in no position to make demands.

Ellis goes for the door -- Lachlan blocks.

LACHLAN (CONT'D)  
Now, you listen to me -- Lucien  
pulled a lot of strings to get  
your charges dropped. He's already  
on thin ice with the Board--

ELLIS  
Move.

Lachlan unseals the cell and Ellis strides off, cutting through  
the guards with authority.

A beat, then Lachlan follows, avoiding deriding looks.

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. EXAMINATION HALL - DAY**

A younger Lachlan looks to the front of the Exam Hall -- at a  
digital RANKING CHART currently in alphabetical order.

PROCTOR  
Welcome to Chrome's Neuro-Spatial  
Deduction: the most important test  
you will likely ever take.

A Holographic Rubik's Cube appears before each student. Instead  
of colour, each square hosts either a number or a symbol.

PROCTOR (CONT'D)  
What you all see before you is  
called a NumeRubix. Affectionately  
nicknamed 'The Tumor' by many of  
your predecessors.

A few nervous laughs disrupt the still air.

PROCTOR (CONT'D)

Your objective is simple -- shrink the growing mass to the lowest common denominator -- ONE. To accomplish this you must develop Algorithms in real time. But keep in mind -- you're not racing against time, but each other.

Lachlan spots Lucien near the exit, watching from the shadows.

PROCTOR (CONT'D)

Good luck.

THROB -- the Holograms start growing like cancer. Lachlan rotates -- taps on numbers and symbols -- following a logic we can't understand. Every few taps, A CHUNK VANISHES.

Others frantically chip away at theirs, failing to keep up.

Down to 37 cubes -- Lachlan peeks at the Ranking Chart -- he's in First Place -- *stay focused... almost there...*

BUZZ! -- Tumors freeze -- groans swell.

Breath caught -- NOT done -- Lachlan looks up at the Ranking Chart and reads **1ST PLACE: ELLIS AMBROSE. 2ND PLACE: ANSEL KEATS.** And in 3RD -- right above the cut-off: **LACHLAN O'HALLORAN.**

He glances at Lucien who is visibly disappointed -- then skims the crowd for this *Ambrose* son of a bitch.

He spots Ellis staring up at the Chart with awe, zooms in on her face and time... stops.

That is until the other who bested him -- Ansel Keats -- walks up to Ellis and introduces himself.

**ELLIS'S ROW - CONTINUOUS**

ANSEL

I think this might be a record.

Ellis looks up -- a bashful smile -- instantly smitten.

ANSEL

What's your secret?

ELLIS

It'll cost you a coffee.

Ansel smiles like: I'd buy you a thousand, if you'd let me.

BACK TO:

**INT. BLACKBOX**

Ansel emerges from the SAME MEMORY, reminiscing with bloodshot eyes. Levesque glides over in his chair and hands him a vial.

LEVESQUE

Not all memories are worth  
keeping.

ANSEL

Not all pain is suffering.  
(takes the vial)  
What is this?

LEVESQUE

Perfume.

ANSEL

What is it, really?

LEVESQUE

(chuckles)

Privacy: an Elixir that can erase  
selective memories. You take a few  
drops, think of whatever it is you  
want to forget... and boom.

ANSEL

Jesus. How do I know if it worked?

LEVESQUE

You know that feeling... when you  
know you've forgotten something  
but can't remember what it is?  
Like that, but permanent. It  
destroys the neural connections  
that code for the memory.

ANSEL

And it's gone forever?

LEVESQUE

Unless it's a shared memory. But  
then it would be recalled from the  
other person's perspective, so...

ANSEL

(this can't be legal)  
Where did you get this?

LEVESQUE

My wife was a perfumer. This one batch she made -- every time she sprayed it she couldn't remember a damn thing after.

They both laugh.

ANSEL

Handy if you got a checkered past.

LEVESQUE

Or need to forget the day they took your wife.

(beat)

All I remember from that day is waking up in the dead of night and... not reaching for her side of the bed.

(off Ansel's look)

It's fine. I've kept the memories that matter.

**INT. QUARANTINE LOUNGE - DAY**

Ansel stares into space as his coffee brews.

LACHLAN (O.S.)

Quarantine Lounge. I suppose congratulations are in order.

He walks over to Ansel -- starts fixing himself a cup.

ANSEL

Not as exclusive as I'd hoped.

LACHLAN

(beat)

I was so sure it would be Ellis. But I guess she wasn't as inclined to abandon her family to claw her way up the ranks.

ANSEL

Are you upset that I got it? Or that I earned it?

LACHLAN

There's still one spot left.

ANSEL

Too bad O'Halloran isn't one for nepotism.

Lachlan comes close as if to remind him, *I am O'Halloran.*

LACHLAN  
 Ever seen a wealthy man with a  
 filthy rescue dog?  
 (looks Ansel down)  
 I guess you were his good deed of  
 the day.

Ansel goes to punch him but holds back, realizing this is just what Lachlan wants. So, he swallows his rage and storms out.

Lachlan takes Ansel's drink. Small, but a victory nonetheless.

**INT. QUARANTINE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

Ansel strides through an enigmatic walkway -- abrasive emotions coursing through him like a raspy, rhythmic tune, and we...

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. ELLIS'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

... where Ansel plays the same tune for a crate of green moss.

ELLIS (O.S.)  
 You're crazy.

Ansel turns to find Ellis in the doorframe, having just snapped a photo of him with a vintage camera.

ANSEL  
 It helps them grow.

Ellis shakes her head and leaves, so Ansel drifts into the song Oliver played earlier from his hand-written sheet music.

Ellis returns with a smile -- crawls onto the bed as Ansel glides near and canopies over her -- bathing her with rapture.

BACK TO:

**INT. OLIVER'S CELL - DAY**

Curled up on the floor, Oliver hums the same tune -- hearing it now whenever he pictures the only photo he has of his father.

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - DAY**

Lucien peers out his window at a serene meditation room -- a floor of moss, a cherry blossom tree -- a view that vanishes when Ellis barges in -- revealing Chrome Plaza beyond the veil.

Ellis leans on the back of the chair in front of her, Limbals flickering OFF.

Knowing, Lucien seals the room and he too goes **OFFLINE**.

ELLIS

You promised me. You swore if anything suspicious showed up in his Dreams--

LUCIEN

I wasn't notified of the Warrant. I'm sorry.

ELLIS

You're sorry. You're--  
(slams the chair down)  
They arrested him!

Lucien susses her agita. Decides not to defend.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

I want to see his DreamReel.

LUCIEN

Absolutely not. El-- you know I can't do that. It's a conflict.

ELLIS

Then, *tell* me.

LUCIEN

(long beat)  
At the turn of the century, there was a controversial artist known only as the Sculptor.

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT**

Champagne in hand, a man in a white suit walks through rows of bronze sculptures and adoring attendees.

LUCIEN (V.O.)

He hosted an impromptu exhibition, called 'Suspense'.

The sculptures of women and children appear suspended as though clawing their way out the depths of hell.

LUCIEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 He was an overnight sensation. His  
 sculptures were unprecedented.  
 Their expressions... horrifying.

**EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF A REMOTE TOWN - DAY**

Dawn breaks behind the silhouette of a secluded building.

LUCIEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 People kept pressing him about his  
 inspiration, but he wouldn't tell.

A young journalist sneaks up to the building -- peeks through murky windows -- spots a water-tank -- tools -- plastic molds of what look like the contours of a human body.

He starts to snap photos, oblivious to The Sculptor behind him who flings a wire around his neck and chokes him to death.

BACK TO:

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - DAY**

Ellis stares, breath caught.

ELLIS  
 What does this have to -- why was  
 Ollie's Dream flagged?

LUCIEN  
 You know I can't tell you that.

ELLIS  
 There's been a mistake. Has to be.  
 I want a re-analysis.

LUCIEN  
 Ollie's Dream wasn't just flagged  
 as potentially harmful. It's been  
 verified as an unsolved crime.

ELLIS  
 (realizing)  
 You've found the burial site.

LUCIEN  
 The Coroner is coming in tomorrow  
 to brief us on the remains.

Ellis feels the world tilting around her.

LUCIEN

I'm so sorry. But given that this is a recent crime with frequencies strong enough to affect a child--

ELLIS

I took Caldwell's Case. I would have been home with him. I should have been home with him...

She backs away and exits into the hallway.

LUCIEN

El--

**HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Lucien runs out and looks both ways. She's gone.

**INT. WALL CAVITY - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis slides to the floor in the tight, dark space. A beat, and she sends a COVERT MESSAGE to...

INTERCUT Oliver curled up in the corner of his cell. His Limbals GLOW BLACK and his POV reads **MESSAGE FROM MOM**.

Ellis waits -- breath caught -- **MESSAGE REJECTED** -- tries again -- same outcome.

Shaking, she summons her **NEUROTRANSMITTER LEVELS**. As her finger glides against her thumb her **ENDORPHIN LEVELS SURGE**, and her face grows awash with artificial calm.

ELLIS (V.O.)

You took it. You took the job.

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. ELLIS'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT**

With the front door ajar, Ansel turns and sees Ellis in her sleepwear. She eyes his duffle bag.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

The last guy who took Quarantine was in there for 4 years.

ANSEL

This is an opportunity to affect real change. The kind we can't do from out here.

ELLIS

(beat)

I thought you'd at least stay for him.

ANSEL

Who do you think I'm doing this for?! I want my kid to be able to travel! To see the *real* world! This-- *this* isn't living!

BACK TO:

**INT. QUARANTINE, MEDITATION ROOM**

Ansel sits on the floor with a wooden box in his lap -- his decision, a boulder on his shoulders.

ELLIS (V.O.)

(distant; broken)

I can't do this alone.

He opens the box -- peers inside at 3 dozen VIALS of various plant species. One is missing.

LEVESQUE (O.S.)

Thought I was the only one who ever came here.

Ansel watches him come in, holding a vintage flask.

ANSEL

I like it. It's quiet.

LEVESQUE

We sure don't get enough of *that*.

(sits down)

What are those?

ANSEL

Bio-engineered plants. Designed to thrive in toxic environments.

LEVESQUE

You do know your job is to develop code, right?

ANSEL

You do a great O'Halloran.

LEVESQUE

(beat)

You did not bring this up to him.

(MORE)

LEVESQUE (CONT'D)  
 (off Ansel's look)  
 Can't believe you walked out of  
 there alive.

ANSEL  
 Left in such a rush I forgot one  
 of my samples.

LEVESQUE  
 Eh. He'll shove it up your ass  
 next time.

Ansel chuckles. It fades quickly.

LEVESQUE  
 O'Halloran is a good man. He gave  
 me Quarantine after my wife was  
 taken, knowing full well I'd be  
 snooping on her from BlackBox. But  
 you gotta realize, CHROME is his  
 legacy. You don't go making waves  
 in someone else's zen garden.

ANSEL  
 I just thought with a new source  
 of oxygen -- if we could just  
 reduce the toxicity in Negative  
 Space -- maybe one day they'll  
 lift the global travel ban...  
 (shuts the box)  
 So much for making a difference.

LEVESQUE  
 Well, okay if *that's* your goal  
 then forget O'Halloran. You wanna  
 pitch to Blacksmith.

ANSEL  
 But O'Halloran hates her.

LEVESQUE  
 So? What do you care?

ANSEL  
 (beat)  
 How much time does she have left?  
 Your wife?

LEVESQUE  
 4 more years.  
 (takes a swig)  
 You know... when we first met, we  
 were both the same age.  
 (MORE)

LEVESQUE (CONT'D)  
Once she gets out though...? I'll  
be 16 years older than her.

ANSEL  
(beat)  
She won't care.

**INT. CORRIDOR - DAY**

Ellis strides down the hall -- sneaks into WhiteSpace before  
being spotted by others.

**INT. WHITESPACE - CONTINUOUS**

She steps onto the platform.

ELLIS  
Activate DreamScape.

WHITESPACE (WOMANV.O.)  
Access denied.

ELLIS  
(beat)  
Search Criminal Archives for  
quote: The Sculptor.

WHITESPACE (WOMANV.O.)  
Access denied.

Ellis curses under her breath -- thinking of a way to bypass  
the block -- when WhiteSpace starts to lose illumination.

She looks down with GREEN LIMBALS at the glowing rim of the  
platform -- and is suddenly THRUST into...

**BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE**

... a secluded art studio -- large plastic molds -- a man  
filling them with bronze -- burnt bodies in the corner...

Ellis emerges from the Dream and stumbles off the platform.  
Where she had just stood, geographical coordinates appear.

ELLIS  
Locate.

A hologram of Chrome City appears and shrinks as a route  
stretches from the HQ to a remote location outside the Chrome  
Dome, labeled **NEGATIVE SPACE**.

Ellis stares, heart quickening.

**EXT. CHROME PLAZA, LAUNCH ZONE - DAY**

**OFFLINE**, Ellis gets onto a company bike -- activates it -- speeds off. She cuts through the dense city centre -- crowds, Transit Belts, structures -- heading towards city limits.

**EXT. CHROME DOME THRESHOLD - DAY**

Ellis takes an underground ramp -- speeding down a dark tunnel. Encased in a HoloSuit, she's granted entry through layers of thick Holo-Barriers -- her POV upgrading her on **AIR TOXICITY** with each threshold she crosses.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
(looping)  
Warning. Air toxicity at lethal  
levels.

The air grows thicker -- more opaque. It's hard to even see the final barrier -- till it glows RED.

Ellis FISHTAILS -- skidding to a stop. She mulls her options, then overrides the system with a Ghost Algorithm.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
(garbled)  
Access den-- Access granted.

The barrier turns WHITE. Ellis speeds through it and up a ramp.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
Entering Negative Space.

**EXT. NEGATIVE SPACE - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis emerges onto a road barely visible through smog. She switches to **XRAY VISION** and finds herself surrounded by a hell-scape: demolished buildings, tree stumps, burnt cars...

She looks at the REAL SUN -- a pink pill dimmer than the moon -- seeing what others never see. What they refuse to see.

She summons a second layer of protection, then rides off.

**INT. BLACKSMITH'S OFFICE - DAY**

Blacksmith sits at her desk. A knock. Her secretary peeks in.

SECRETARY

The coroner is here, Ma'am.

A pudgy man holding a briefcase -- NATHANIEL FINCH, 40s -- enters and meekly approaches. Blacksmith seals the room.

BLACKSMITH

Mr. Finch. Welcome. Please.

FINCH

(he sits)

Thank you. I'm sorry -- I was told I'm here to brief Mr. O'Halloran?

BLACKSMITH

He is preoccupied at the moment. But I'm certainly curious to hear of your findings.

Finch puts his briefcase on the table and opens it. Blacksmith leans in and inspects the human remains.

BLACKSMITH (CONT'D)

How many victims?

FINCH

42, Ma'am. We're still digging.

BLACKSMITH

Busy man, this Sculptor.

(beat)

I presume you've written a report?

Finch taps on the desk, transferring his report to Blacksmith. He waits while she reads.

BLACKSMITH (CONT'D)

Fascinating.

FINCH

As you can see, the samples--

BLACKSMITH

Mr. Finch -- given that this case is of personal significance to Mr. O'Halloran...

(saves the report)

I think it's best we keep these findings to ourselves. For now.

Finch stares -- concerned by her request -- nods in compliance.

**EXT. NEGATIVE SPACE - RURAL ROAD - DAY**

Ellis's X-RAY VISION detects a small town further ahead.

She veers off the main road -- a shortcut through wreckage -- closing in on her coordinates.

**EXT. ABANDONED TOWN - DAY**

Turning a corner, she spots a GREEN HOLOGRAPHIC CUBE big enough to fit a large building. Her POV identifies it as **STEMCELL**.

She parks her bike -- approaches the threshold -- peers in through the semi-transparent HoloBarrier. Her x-ray vision is blocked from pinpointing the exact coordinates inside, so she steels herself -- pushes through, and...

**INT. STEMCELL - CONTINUOUS**

... emerges onto a gorgeous, green landscape. Brick and mortar homes overrun with ivy -- a moss blanket connecting everything.

Ellis kneels and touches the moss -- brushes her hand along a patch of grass... *It's real. And is that... music?*

She rises, running diagnostics: **TOXICITY: 0%**.

ELLIS

Bullshit.

Though anxious, she deactivates her protective shield -- GASPS as fresh oxygen floods her lungs. It's so pure -- so rich with nature's scent -- she practically feels high.

And the music she thought she heard? It's coming from somewhere down the hill.

**RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOOD**

The music builds as Ellis nears a classic 3-storey building dominated by nature. The music, certainly coming from inside.

CLICK - Ellis turns her head slightly -- sees no one from the corner of her eye -- till a young woman -- Sinclair -- appears behind her as her camouflage lifts.

SINCLAIR

Walk.

She presses her gun to Ellis's head -- prompting her forward.

Ellis walks towards the house her POV identifies as **MAISON VERT** -- spotting other armed individuals scattered about.

The front door opens to reveal a lanky young man in a ski mask -- TRIMBLE, 20s -- aiming an automatic weapon at Ellis.

**INT. MAISON VERT - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis runs a search off his irises as she enters -- **NO MATCH FOUND.**

The space is dark and unkempt, though clearly once a remarkable manor. Ellis skims the luxury furniture, paintings, artifacts -- but is repeatedly blocked from lifting intel.

Trimble opens a door to a stairwell. Points to it with his gun.

**INT. MAISON VERT, BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis enters, silhouetted by windows to an enclosed below-grade garden. In the middle of the room, a masked man -- DAMASK -- sits in an armchair.

DAMASK  
(digitally modified voice)  
Agent Ambrose. It's an honor.

Ellis draws near, eyes glued to the damask pattern on his mask.

DAMASK (CONT'D)  
I'm afraid introductions are not a courtesy I can afford. But for all intents and purposes you can refer to me as Damask.

ELLIS  
You hacked me with a snippet of my son's Dream. Why?

DAMASK  
The youngest to have ever been committed. The world we live in.  
(long beat)  
Your son's fate is sealed. He'll be Synapsed for decades, likely surpassing your lifespan. And CHROME will not be making any exceptions because they can't afford to open the floodgates.

Gun drawn, Sinclair circles around, standing at Damask's side.

DAMASK (CONT'D)  
But if the evidence incriminating your son were to say... disappear?

ELLIS  
What do you want?

SINCLAIR  
A copy of CHROME's Patient  
Archives.

ELLIS  
Are you out of your mind?

Sinclair flashes a smug smile.

DAMASK  
Sinclair, here, is likely the most  
skilled Dendrite you'll ever meet.  
She can infiltrate DreamScape and  
wipe all evidence of your son's  
'psychosis'. No footprints.

ELLIS  
I'm not stealing thousands of  
people's private information in  
exchange for--

SINCLAIR  
Something you can do yourself?  
(off Ellis's look)  
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to  
question your loyalty to Chrome.  
Then again, you did ride all the  
way out here by yourself. Offline.

ELLIS  
Why show me your face? Are you  
*that* arrogant? Or just daft?

BANG - Sinclair fires. Trimble drops down, taking cover. A bead  
of blood breaks on Ellis's earlobe, but she remains fortified.

SINCLAIR  
(clicks tongue)  
Missed.

Ellis smiles. *No, you didn't.*

DAMASK  
I respect your reticence. We are  
asking you to steal from a man you  
regard as a father. But I think  
you'd feel differently if you knew  
what *really* awaits your son.

A spark of doubt. Dread.

DAMASK

If you think the real victim here is you being robbed of watching him grow up... if you think he'll just shut his eyes and wake up as if no time has passed--

ELLIS

(realizing)

You worked for CHROME...

DAMASK

Your son is scheduled for Synapse at 6:00 PM tomorrow. I hope that gives you enough time to ponder our offer.

Ellis heads for the door.

SINCLAIR

Remember, Agent Ambrose: our offer is only good while you still have something to barter with.

A beat, and Ellis is seen out by armed men.

DAMASK

(beat)

You shouldn't antagonize her.

Sinclair walks over to the window -- peers up through a canopy of green maples, awaiting Ellis's exit.

SINCLAIR

She won't let him get Synapsed.

DAMASK

That's not the same as stealing the Archives. You underestimate her loyalty to CHROME.

SINCLAIR

She's already made up her mind. She just doesn't know it yet.

**EXT. NEGATIVE SPACE - NIGHT**

Ellis approaches the Chrome Dome on her bike.

**EXT. CHROME DOME - NIGHT**

Ellis rides through streets that feel foreign now. There's unrest. Anger. Holographic signs protesting Oliver's arrest.

She checks the time -- **7:34 PM** -- then accelerates towards the HQ in the distance.

**INT. CHROME HQ, SYNAPSE ANTECHAMBER - DAY**

A technician -- PAISLEY, 30s -- leads Caldwell and a pair of Guards to a monolithic wall his POV identifies as **SYNAPSE**.

ELLIS (O.S.)  
Give us a minute?

Paisley spots Ellis behind them -- looks at the Guards -- all men step out of earshot. Caldwell keeps his head down.

ELLIS  
I can't imagine what you're going through.  
(painful beat)  
I know it's hard to hear, but you will come out of this stronger.

CALDWELL  
(meets her eye)  
There is no coming out of this.  
You can't rip someone out of time and space and expect them to heal.

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. CALDWELL'S APARTMENT - DAY**

CALDWELL (V.O.)  
You can't rewire a brain and leave the essence intact...

MONTAGE of Caldwell's wife's release -- arriving back home -- sitting on the couch -- staring vacantly at Noemi.

CALDWELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
You can't take something without leaving a void.

Caldwell and Noemi prep food in the kitchen. In the background, Caldwell's wife steps off the ledge, vanishing.

BACK TO:

**INT. SYNAPSE ANTECHAMBER - CONTINUOUS**

Paisley approaches. Ellis signals for more time.

CALDWELL  
I heard about your son.

ELLIS  
(beat)  
Karma's quick, I suppose.

CALDWELL  
This isn't Karma. This is cruelty.  
And yes, you deserve it.

Ellis balks. Paisley reads the situation and steps in -- unseals Synapse with his palm-print -- leads Caldwell in.

As the entrance reseals behind them -- Ellis lifts her palm off the wall -- peeks at it as Paisley's print seeps into it and is **SAVED**.

Ellis scans the vicinity, then marches off.

**INT. HALLWAY - DAY**

Ellis nearly bumps into Lachlan as he turns a corner.

LACHLAN  
Hey. How are you?

ELLIS  
You deactivated me. They were taking my son, and you let them.

LACHLAN  
Did you want to be shot? You were charging at Agents! I saved you!

ELLIS  
Please, you love pulling rank! Son of the big boss -- think you can do whatever the hell you want!

LACHLAN  
Oh, that is rich, coming from you. None of this would've happened if you'd been home with your kid instead of barging in on MY CASE!  
(off her look)  
I'm sorry. I'm didn't mean--

ELLIS  
 (walks off)  
 Don't you dare follow me.

A sobering beat, and Lachlan heads in the opposite direction.

**INT. CHROME HQ, SOMA - DAY**

A vast beehive of Chrome employees inside hexagonal cubicles engage with Holograms we cannot see.

**PRIVATE CHAMBER**

Lucien is inside Oliver's DreamReel. It's horrible. Graphic. The victims. The sculptures.

He spots Lachlan approaching and terminates the Dream.

**MAIN SPACE**

Lachlan bridges the gap as Lucien steps out the chamber.

LACHLAN  
 What's happening with Ambrose?

LUCIEN  
 My last name isn't license for you  
 to waltz in wherever you please.

He heads for the exit. Lachlan follows.

**INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Lucien and Lachlan emerge from SOMA.

LUCIEN  
 The next time you override your  
 clearance--

LACHLAN  
 What are you doing about her kid?

LUCIEN  
 (beat)  
 Beverly is using him to stoke  
 outrage. If the Board bends--

LACHLAN  
 She doesn't have that kind of sway  
 with the Board.

LUCIEN

She wouldn't call for a referendum unless she knew had the votes.

LACHLAN

They won't sell you out. They're all here because of you.

LUCIEN

And they're stuck here because of me. But with her dangling the idea of progress? Of profit? She turns *them* with money... and the public with moral outrage.

(goes to leave, but first)

The next time you overstep your bounds, I'm revoking your status.

He walks off. Lachlan spots Blacksmith eavesdropping from an adjacent hall before gracefully vanishing around the corner.

**INT. LACHLAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

The room is bathed in red mood lighting. A STUNNING ESCORT fucks Lachlan in his chair. And he's just not into it.

LACHLAN

That's enough... *Enough.*

The room regains illumination.

ESCORT

What's wrong?

LACHLAN

(pushes her off)

I got work to do.

**LATER**

Lachlan sits at his desk -- staring into space -- then summons a 3D Hologram of the HQ.

LACHLAN

Locate Ellis Ambrose.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)

Target Offline.

LACHLAN

(mutters)

'Course you are.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
One Duplicate Found.

Puzzled, Lachlan scales up the Hologram to find 2 tags labeled **DALTON PAISLEY**. One inside Synapse, the other...

Lachlan unseals his office door just as Paisley walks by.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
Dalton Paisley, welcome to  
Synapse.

**INT. SYNAPSE - NIGHT**

Ellis ventures into a seemingly boundless space akin to WhiteSpace. Instead of a platform there's a minimalist slab.

ELLIS  
Directory.

A holographic list drapes from the ceiling. Ellis skims, then expands **DREAMREEL ARCHIVES**.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
Search by name. Oliver--

LACHLAN (O.S.)  
AMBROSE!

Ellis freezes, knowing he's got her in his crosshairs.

LACHLAN  
Hands up. Get 'em up!

Ellis raises both hands as Lachlan marches over -- grabs and swings her around -- cuffing her.

ELLIS  
Lachlan--

LACHLAN  
(muttering)  
I warned you. I fucking warned--

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
Dalton Paisley, welcome to  
Synapse.

Ellis grips Lachlan's hands. Behind them, Paisley spooks and spills his coffee.

ELLIS  
(whispering)  
He hasn't seen. *Please*, Lachlan.

The cuffs vanish into Lachlan's wrists before he even registers his decision. He turns to Paisley who's staring quizzically.

ELLIS  
 (to Paisley)  
 I will be Synapsing, briefly. To  
 address Mr. Caldwell's concerns.

Lachlan looks at Ellis.

PAISLEY  
 Oh. Uh... I don't think I have the  
 authority to--

LACHLAN  
 I do. Get it running.

Paisley dashes to the back of the space, spilling the rest of his coffee on his lab coat.

LACHLAN (CONT'D)  
 (sharp whisper)  
 This is the last time. You hear  
 me? The last time.

He walks over to Paisley.

A beat, then Ellis joins them. She lies down on what her POV identifies as the **SYNAPTIC TERMINAL** -- scared -- uncertain -- if what Damask implied about Synapse is true...

SYNAPSE (WOMANV.O.)  
 Activating Synaptic Terminal.

PAISLEY  
 Calibrating... Now, this'll feel a  
 little weird.

A holographic dome encapsulate Ellis's head and fills with fog. Her eyes fall shut -- body relaxing.

PAISLEY  
 (off Lachlan's look)  
 It's just to induce sleep. She  
 needs to be perfectly still.

Lachlan crosses his arms. *Why is she doing this?*

PAISLEY  
 (restless in the silence)  
 We extract the mind for safe-  
 keeping. If anything goes wrong,  
 we can use it as a template to  
 restore everything.  
 (MORE)

PAISLEY (CONT'D)  
The patient has no awareness  
without it.

Lachlan looks at him. *Think I don't know all this?*

Paisley drops his head -- sees the coffee stains on his lab coat -- grows even more anxious.

SYNAPSE (WOMANV.O.)  
Synapse on standby. Ready to  
commence Neural Imaging.

LACHLAN  
I'll take it from here.

Paisley looks at him -- dares not challenge -- heads out.

**INT. SYNAPSE ANTECHAMBER - CONTINUOUS**

Paisley exits Synapse, the wall resealing behind him. He lingers, then brings his ear to the hairline seam of the entry.

**INT. SYNAPSE - CONTINUOUS**

Standing at the head of the slab, Lachlan taps and

SYNAPSE (WOMANV.O.)  
Commencing Neural Imaging.

From the circular headrest a HALO ascends, scanning Ellis's brain. Lachlan watches -- fascinated -- curious.

SYNAPSE (WOMANV.O.) (CONT'D)  
Imaging complete. Commencing  
consciousness extraction.

A holographic SAPLING sprouts above Ellis's head, branching out to fill what looks like an invisible walnut shell: a DIGITAL REPLICA of Ellis's brain.

SYNAPSE (WOMANV.O.) (CONT'D)  
Extraction complete. Commencing  
Channel Resonance.

Lachlan stands still -- silent -- tempted -- Ellis's genius at his fingertips.

LACHLAN  
Open Memory Archives.

Ellis's Halo appears around her Brain Replica -- expands into a SPINY ORBIT resembling a sound-wave.

Lachlan rotates it -- selects an UPWARD SPIKE at random -- and is flung into one of Ellis's memories...

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. ELLIS'S BEDROOM - DAY**

A warm, golden sunset -- everything in a haze -- fragmented -- lacking trivial details often missing from memories.

Snippets of Ansel writing music -- smiling at Ellis while changing -- resting his head on her belly in bed...

BACK TO:

**INT. SYNAPSE - CONTINUOUS**

Lachlan emerges from the memory -- shakes Ellis's emotions -- rotates the orbit -- selects a prominent DOWNWARD SPIKE, and

Beep... Beep...

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. HOSPITAL, PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT**

Beep... Beep... Ellis regains consciousness -- groggily reaches down to her stomach. No baby bump. Just bandages.

Beep. Beep. Beep beep beep beep--

ELLIS  
Oh, God-- my baby...

A harrowed Lachlan runs to her bedside.

LACHLAN  
He's fine. He's in an incubator.

ELLIS  
(chokes on a sob)  
I want to see him.

LACHLAN  
You need to rest. We've got the best doctors looking after him.

ELLIS  
Where's Ansel?

Lachlan stares. She doesn't remember. How can he--

ELLIS  
 I can't--  
 (touching her leg)  
 Lachlan, I can't feel my legs.

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP--

BACK TO:

**INT. SYNAPSE - CONTINUOUS**

Lachlan emerges from the memory -- stumbles back -- heart pounding. He looks at Ellis -- at her calm -- *where are you?*

**INSIDE ELLIS'S MIND**

Nothing. No shapes. No sounds. A neutral shade of chrome -- slightly brighter in the centre than the periphery.

Ellis SENSES looking left -- right -- up -- but there's nothing to see. Or hear. She doesn't even have a body. She just...

Exists.

**INT. SYNAPSE - CONTINUOUS**

Lachlan rests a hand on Ellis's belly. Only 3 minutes in, but he's already done with this experiment. He taps and

SYNAPSE (WOMANV.O.)  
 Terminating Resonance.

Ellis's Brain Replica seeps into her skull like wisps of dry ice.

SYNAPSE (WOMANV.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Consciousness Splice, complete.

Just as Lachlan reaches for Ellis's shoulder she JOLTS AWAKE -- clutching her body -- inhaling as if emerging from under water.

LACHLAN  
 (gently secures her)  
 It's okay. You're back.

ELLIS  
 I can't let -- you -- you must let him go. You must let him go!

LACHLAN  
 (over her pleas)  
 Calm down. Calm-- Ellis--

ELLIS  
 You can't-- I can't let--  
 (tries to break free)  
 Let go. Lachlan, let go! Let me  
 go! LET ME GO!

Synapse unseals. Guards run in past Paisley.

GUARD 1  
 Sir?!

Ellis sees them -- Limbals GLOW BLACK and -- WH-WH-WH-WH-WHAMP!  
 -- a magnetic blow THRUSTS everyone back!

Ellis runs to the wall -- deploys a code -- vanishes into it.

LACHLAN  
 ELLIS!

Lachlan runs after her out of Synapse -- followed by Guards.  
 Paisley looks at the Synaptic terminal, expression darkening.

**INT. WALL CAVITY - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis maneuvers through a dark maze -- stumbling -- bumping  
 into corners.

ANSEL (V.O.)  
 What's wrong?

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. ELLIS'S LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Ansel rushes over from the kitchen.

ANSEL  
 What is it?

Ellis looks up at him -- wide-eyed -- hand on her belly.

ELLIS  
 It's a boy.

ANSEL  
 You're-- are you serious?!

ELLIS  
 You're happy?

ANSEL  
 You're not?!

Ellis breaks into a tearful laugh as Ansel sinks to his knees -- bringing his hand and cheek to her belly.

ANSEL

A boy...

BACK TO:

**INT. OLIVER'S CELL - NIGHT**

ELLIS (V.O.)

A boy...

Oliver stares into space -- hurt -- angry -- POV showing a list of unopened messages from Ellis.

**EXT. CHROME PLAZA - NIGHT**

Ellis emerges from a wall -- eyeing the Launch Zone when she's HACKED with new coordinates somewhere inside Chrome Dome.

She hops on a bike -- goes **OFFLINE** -- speeds off.

**INT. BLACKBOX - NIGHT**

Ansel's analysis reads **COMPLETE**. He starts muttering as he skims the results.

LEVESQUE

What?

ANSEL

The numbers... they don't add up.

LEVESQUE

How did you get this job again?

ANSEL

Come here.

Levesque suspends his work and glides over in his chair.

LEVESQUE

When I said 'work on your pitch' I meant on your free time.

ANSEL

Look at this. Look at the CO2 emissions from these CryoCrypts. Does this seem right to you?

LEVESQUE

It's Cryogenic sleep. You probably don't breathe as much.

ANSEL

Exactly. It's *too much* CO2. 80% of the energy you expend during sleep you breathe out as Carbon Dioxide.

(off his look)

People in CryoCrypts aren't fed.

LEVESQUE

(beat)

So, at this rate...

ANSEL

They would waste away in a month.

Levesque glides back to his workspace -- clears everything -- summons a **CRYOCRYPT HOLOGRAM** with a woman inside.

Ansel stares. It's her: Levesque's wife.

ANSEL

She looks... peaceful.

A beat, then Levesque wipes the hologram.

LEVESQUE

We-- we should get back to work.

**INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT**

Damask is playing chess with Trimble when Sinclair enters.

SINCLAIR

She's here.

**INT. COVERED PARKING - NIGHT**

Ellis -- far less composed than the last time -- is surrounded by armed men when Damask and Sinclair step out.

DAMASK

Agent Ambrose. To what do we owe this pleasure?

ELLIS

(beat)

I Synapsed.

Sinclair squints -- looks at Damask whose face is concealed.

ELLIS

There was nothing. I was aware,  
but I couldn't think. Or feel. I  
didn't have a body to feel with.  
And time... crawled...

DAMASK

It's hard to feel time without a  
frame of reference.

ELLIS

No, I *felt* time. I *felt it*. But  
minutes... felt like days.

SINCLAIR

You're telling us this, because?

ELLIS

If there's an issue with Synapse,  
I can suspend all activity.

SINCLAIR

You'll just be extending the queue  
in Limbo. Your kid'll stay locked  
up. Just in a different cage.

ELLIS

It'll buy me time.

DAMASK

(beat)

And what if it's not a glitch?  
What if what you experienced isn't  
an exception, but the rule?

ELLIS

It can't be. It can't be.

DAMASK

Do you think that's something a  
child could withstand? How much of  
his mind do you think will be left  
after a week? A month?

SINCLAIR

Why are you even here? You have a  
chance to walk away from all this!

ELLIS

The Patient Archives have every  
bit of knowable intel on a person:  
accounts, passwords, psychological  
profiles...

SINCLAIR

Fine.

Sinclair taps and hacks Ellis, turning her Limbals GREEN.

Before Ellis can block she is FLUNG into a Dream -- one not unlike when inside the DreamScape program -- becoming...

The Sculptor.

Sinclair watches from the shadows as Ellis experiences -- with all senses -- the horrifying crimes of the Sculptor.

Praying this is it, Sinclair releases Ellis from the nightmare.

Ellis stumbles back -- looks at Sinclair who summons rows and rows of bronze statues, then breaks them into fragments.

ELLIS

(realizing)

It's fake... The Dream is *fake*.

SINCLAIR

Not everyone breaks in to steal.

Ellis draws -- BANG! -- Sinclair vanishes -- Ellis aims at Damask but is tackled by a camouflaged Sinclair.

Armed men converge as Sinclair fights Ellis with equal might, skill, and precision -- both armed -- both disarming.

Still hacked, Ellis shuts her eyes -- sussing the space with sound -- WHOOSH -- dodges a blow -- lands a blow -- takes a hit -- and another -- and another -- luring Sinclair into a false sense of security -- GRABS her by the neck and SLAMS her down!

GUNS AIM -- a canopy of barrels crowning Ellis from every angle -- SHOUTS -- THREATS -- but Ellis keeps choking Sinclair -- seeing nothing but red... until

CLICK. Ellis feels pressure below her breastbone -- softens her grip on reflex.

SINCLAIR

(coarse voice)

Think you'd survive it a second time?

ELLIS

Get out of my head.

Sinclair APPEARS with a gash on her nose. The dent in Ellis's chest: the barrel of her gun. Trimble inches closer, ready to blow a hole in Ellis's skull.

DAMASK  
 (calmly nears)  
 O'Halloran cannot afford to be  
 accused of nepotism. There will be  
 no concessions. No mercy. You are  
 your son's only hope.

He extends a gloved hand. A beat. Ellis takes it and rises.

Sinclair rolls to her feet -- spits blood at Ellis's -- strides  
 off.

**INT. FACTORY, BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Sinclair wipes the blood running down her face -- looks at  
 herself in the murky mirror.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
 Calm down. Just calm down!

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. SINCLAIR'S APARTMENT - DAY**

A younger Sinclair -- different hair -- CHROME uniform -- tries  
 to calm her panicked TWIN BROTHER, VENN.

VENN  
 They're framing me. I didn't dream  
 last night.

SINCLAIR  
 You don't remember every dream--

VENN  
 (grabs her)  
 Can't you see?! They targeted me!  
 I was onto them! They're--

SINCLAIR  
 (over)  
 Let me talk to them. I'll contest  
 the Dream--

VENN  
 (over)  
 For fuck's sake -- they're trying  
 TO SHUT ME UP!

Sinclair's eyes dart to the front door.

VENN  
 (rushes off)  
 Oh, *hell* no.

Sinclair stands frozen -- scared -- torn -- on edge -- spots her brother taking something out of his wall safe.

SINCLAIR  
 What is that?

A GUN. Venn storms the front door.

SINCLAIR  
 What are you-- Venn, DON'T!

The door unseals -- Venn draws -- BANG! -- blood splatters on the wall -- Venn drops with a hole in the back of his head.

Agents enter as Sinclair lowers her weapon.

AGENT  
 (into glowing jaw)  
 Code Blue. Agent-Instigated  
 casualty. I repeat...

His voice fades as Sinclair stumbles back against the wall and slides to the floor.

BACK TO:

**INT. FACTORY, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Sinclair swallows a sob, then receives a message. **TRIMBLE: YOU OKAY?** -- and another -- **I'M COMING IN.**

Trimble enters -- a sweet, scrawny, younger brother type.

TRIMBLE  
 (sign language)  
 That was amazing. So brave.

Sinclair drops her head. He comes close and hugs her.

SINCLAIR  
 I keep trying to forget.

Her POV reads: **WHAT?**

SINCLAIR  
 That we bleed.

**INT. FACTORY, STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT**

Ellis follows Damask into a dusty room full of boxes. He walks over to a filthy window -- peering out at Chrome City in the distance.

DAMASK

42 bodies were discovered at the Sculptor's burial site. Mostly women and children, per his M.O.. But like you just saw, the Dream was fake. So, how could that be?

He taps on the window and summons a SUMMARY DOCUMENT.

DAMASK (CONT'D)

This is the Coroner's report.

Ellis skims the content. Text -- graphs -- photos of the site -- unearthed human remains -- and lastly, **CONCLUSIONS**.

ELLIS

(puzzled)

I don't understand. Says here none of the excavated bodies were buried longer than a decade ago.

DAMASK

Which means the Sculptor died long before any of his victims did.

ELLIS

(Jesus)

It was all you from the beginning? You dug up women and children just to give your lie credibility?

DAMASK

If that was our goal we would've dug up bodies that *matched* the Sculptor's timeline.

ELLIS

(beat)

The Coroner was supposed to come to the HQ for a briefing.

DAMASK

And yet not a peep about the discrepancies in his report.

Ellis stares. He's right.

DAMASK (CONT'D)  
 We gave CHROME plenty of red flags  
 that would discredit your son's  
 DreamReel. And *nothing*.

Ellis spots a patched-up Sinclair entering with Trimble.

DAMASK  
 We suspect that -- for some time  
 now -- certain people at CHROME  
 have been using their access to  
 classified intel to target people:  
 business moguls, political  
 opponents, practically anyone  
 they'd want out of the picture.

Trimble glances at Sinclair who is barely containing her rage.

ELLIS  
 Lucien wouldn't do this.

SINCLAIR  
 Someone is.

ELLIS  
 And you need the Patient Archives  
 to prove it.

DAMASK  
 We need hard data. Something  
 irrefutable. Whoever's behind this  
 is making a very calculated play.

**INT. BLACKSMITH'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Lounging on an opulent chaise, Blacksmith receives a call.

BLACKSMITH  
 So late. Should I flatter myself?

LUCIEN (O.S.)  
 You've made your point, Beverly.

BLACKSMITH  
 And what is that?

**INT. LUCIEN'S HOME, MEDITATION ROOM - NIGHT**

Whiskey in hand, Lucien stands before his cherry blossom tree.

INTERCUT WITH BLACKSMITH:

LUCIEN

What's it going to take? To let the kid go?

BLACKSMITH

I'm not the one who arrested him. They were your men, following your laws.

LUCIEN

Just name your price.

BLACKSMITH

You know my price. I want to hand-pick from your inventory to build up my workforce.

LUCIEN

(ugly beat)

You know what I can't stop thinking about? The timing. You propose a new legislation the same day Ambrose's son is arrested?

BLACKSMITH

Convenient, isn't it?

LUCIEN

I know you had something to do with this. And when I prove it--

BLACKSMITH

You're not proving shit. You played your hand, and you lost. Tick tock, Lucien.

LUCIEN

These are people, Beverly. People I'm responsible for. People I've made promises to.

BLACKSMITH

Break them.

She hangs up.

Lucien flings his glass at the wall, making shards fly.

**INT. BLACKBOX - NIGHT**

With a restless leg, Levesque peeks over his shoulder at Ansel, then rises and heads for the exit.

ANSEL  
Where are you going?

LEVESQUE  
I'm, uh... I'm just going to  
check-- get something. Quick.

ANSEL  
(realizes, rising)  
We don't have the authority to  
enter the Catacombs. Beau, she's  
fine. You saw that she's fine.

LEVESQUE  
I'll be quick. I won't touch  
anything.

ANSEL  
Let me come with--

LEVESQUE  
(holds Ansel back)  
No. I need you here. As my proxy.  
(off Ansel's concern)  
Really, it's a maze down there.  
I'll need you to guide me.

ANSEL  
(beat)  
Okay.

A squeeze of Ansel's shoulders, and he's gone.

**INT. QUARANTINE, LEVESQUE AND ANSEL'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Levesque unseals his wall safe -- shoves vials of Elixir into  
his pockets -- spots Ansel's box of plants on the nightstand.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
Quarantine isn't an easy veil to  
pierce...

Levesque stares -- sweat breaking on his temple -- grabs the  
box -- pockets it -- heads for the door.

**INT. FACTORY - NIGHT**

Ellis, Damask and Sinclair surround a Hologram of CHROME HQ.

SINCLAIR  
But to get to The Hollow, we're  
going to have to find a way in.

ELLIS  
The Hollow?

SINCLAIR  
It's where HindBrain is located.

Ellis reads her -- distrust softening.

Sinclair scales up the model to show a massive UNDERGROUND CHAMBER below the HQ -- a vast open space with a deep DEAD-DROP around a rectangular column.

She points to the CUBIC CONFINEMENT crowning it.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)  
This here, is HindBrain. Inside you'll have access to *everything*.

ELLIS  
But only if I first break into Quarantine.

SINCLAIR  
Which won't be easy. The passcode changes every 12 minutes.

DAMASK  
Hence our need for an inside-man.

SINCLAIR  
And the only place to intercept this passcode is Callosum.

ELLIS  
As in Corpus Callosum? The bridge that connects the brain's two hemispheres?

SINCLAIR  
(looks up; smiles)  
The entire building is modelled after the human brain...

**EXT. CHROME PLAZA - NIGHT**

Ellis arrives at the Launch Zone -- parks her bike -- looks up at the barely detectable HQ.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
The layout is classified. Only Board Members and Quarantine Architects are privy to how everything's organized.

**EAST WALKWAY**

Ellis walks the grassy moat running along the HQ, gliding her hand over the glossy surface.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
Took me forever to figure it out.

Ellis pauses at an ideal entry point -- unseals the wall and vanishes into it.

**INT. WALL CAVITY - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis X-RAYS the HQ.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
But once I pieced together the  
bits we hacked over the years...

Ellis projects a DIGITAL ROUTE through a maze of halls, walls, and open spaces. It leads all the way up to a rectangular room at the heart of the HQ, several stories above.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
... there was no denying it.

Ellis embarks -- using code when necessary to aid her climb.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
There are dozens of sectors at  
CHROME...

**INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis emerges from a wall -- crosses to the other side -- vanishes into another wall just as guards turn the corner.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
But each sector knows virtually  
nothing about the others.

**INT. QUARANTINE, ELEVATOR - NIGHT**

Levesque enters a private elevator on **FLOOR -B6**.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
It's what gives employees the kind  
of freedom those in Quarantine  
can't afford.

He runs a code that overrides the wall panel -- activates **FLOOR -B12** -- and plummets.

**INT. PRIVATE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis emerges from a wall -- runs towards a dead end -- plants her palm on the smooth surface -- runs a Ghost Algorithm.

Glitchy, pulsating seams appear and vanish -- stabilize -- then grant entry into a BLEACH WHITE SPACE.

CALLOSUM (WOMANV.O.)  
Welcome to Callosum.

**INT. CALLOSUM - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis enters the bright, stretched, empty rectangle.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
Once you're in, you're on your own.

The entry seals behind her.

**INT. CATACOMBS**

Levesque enters a dark space from the elevator.

He summons a **10-DIGIT CODE** between his thumb and middle finger -- generates a ROUTE -- falls onto it.

He ventures deep into the honeycomb maze -- each vertical hexagon: the door to a CryoCrypt.

**INT. BLACKBOX - CONTINUOUS**

In boundless darkness, Ansel monitors Levesque as he arrives at his designated CryoCrypt.

INTERCUT between ANSEL and LEVESQUE:

Levesque raises a GLOWNG PALM to illuminate the woman inside. At the sight of the top of her head, he wells up.

LEVESQUE  
Are you cold, baby?

Ansel summons a LIVE FEED of the Crypt from multiple angles. It's a hard sight to see. A loved one, frozen in time. He runs diagnostics -- all seems well -- but then...

ANSEL  
(leans in, squinting)  
What?

He zooms in on a strand of hair on her head -- then waits, and waits, *don't blink, do not blink* -- the hair GLITCHES.

*It can't be.* He rises -- pacing, thinking, unable to accept it. He rushes back to his seat and runs a set of complex commands -- face aglow silver -- silver -- silver...

RED.

ANSEL  
Oh my God.

**INT. CATACOMBS - CONTINUOUS**

Levesque's earlobe glows.

ANSEL (V.O.)  
Beau, I'm opening her Crypt.

LEVESQUE  
What?

ANSEL (V.O.)  
I'm opening her Crypt and I need you to look inside.

LEVESQUE  
You can't open a Crypt in the middle of Resonance!

**INT. CALLOSUM - CONTINUOUS**

Within the white void Ellis summons a Halo with a BLACK GLOW -- runs an Algorithm -- the room's illumination wavers.

CALLOSUM (MANV.O.)  
Access denied.

Tense beat -- no choice -- she has to risk it.

She executes a command and BLACK DATA STARTS RAINING from above. She waits -- breath caught -- heart quickening.

**INT. BLACKBOX - CONTINUOUS**

Sweat runs down Ansel's temple. Before him, a prompt asks: **OPEN CRYOCRYPT?**

LEVESQUE (V.O.)  
Ansel! Don't!

Ansel taps: **YES.**

**INT. CALLOSUM -- CONTINUOUS**

A **PASSCODE PROMPT** appears -- LIGHTS TURN RED -- ALARMS BLARE!

CHROME (MANV.O.)  
 (looping)  
 WARNING: BREACH IN QUARANTINE.

The floor HOLLOWs under Ellis -- SHE FALLS THROUGH -- WHIPS A LASSO UP -- dangles from Callosum's ceiling over a black abyss.

Ellis looks down at a distant, glowing cube -- HindBrain -- looks up at Callosum as a CHECKERED PATTERN restores the floor.

She taps and CATAPULTS back up -- crosses the threshold -- PINNED as the last slab RESTORES THROUGH HER LEGS.

She SCREAMS -- bone and flesh throbbing -- DYING. She adjusts her neurotransmitters to numb the pain -- *think* -- *THINK!*

Trembling -- she executes a command on the floor -- changing its formula from SOLID to MESH -- perforations appear and expand -- turning the floor into a NET.

Ellis yanks her legs free -- planks to keep herself up as the floor restores -- then drops down -- recoiled -- panting.

**INT. CATACOMBS - CONTINUOUS**

Levesque stares at his wife as the Crypt barrier lowers -- scared, longing -- till she VANISHES with the barrier's rim.

LEVESQUE  
 What--

He reaches in for her -- pats the bed -- *nothing*.

LEVESQUE  
 She's not here.

**INT. BLACKBOX - CONTINUOUS**

Ansel skips to **INFRARED MODE** to watch Levesque's wife vanish -- back to **LIVE MODE** to see her reappear.

LEVESQUE (V.O.)  
 What did you do?

ANSEL  
 It's not real, Beau -- the live feed. It's a looping hologram.

**INT. CATACOMBS - CONTINUOUS**

Levesque notices the black rim lining the base of the chamber.

He glides his fingers along it -- feeling the micro-projectors from which a Hologram would render.

LEVESQUE

No. No, I watch her every day.  
*Every day.*

ANSEL (V.O.)

You need to get out of there.

LEVESQUE

(feels the bed foam)  
Was she ever here?

ANSEL (V.O.)

Beau, you need to get out, now.

**INT. CALLOSUM - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis stumbles over to the PASSCODE PROMPT that appeared right before she fell -- an odd cryptogram -- enigmatic -- familiar. Her eyes widen. *No... this can't be...*

**INT. CATACOMBS - CONTINUOUS**

Levesque sinks to his knees before his wife's Crypt. A **DIGITAL ROUTE** stems from him -- runs down the hall -- turns a corner.

ANSEL (V.O.)

I just sent you an escape route.  
(off the silence)  
Beau, they're coming for you. If you stay you'll never find out what happened to her.

*He's right* -- Levesque falls onto the path and runs -- faster -- faster -- FASTER -- DASHING through a maze of CryoCrypts -- till he arrives at a wall hatch.

INTERCUT Ansel running code -- unsealing the barrier.

**INT. VENTILATION DUCT - CONTINUOUS**

Levesque squeezes through a tight ingress -- drops into a long, concrete duct -- starts crawling.

**INT. BLACKBOX - CONTINUOUS**

On multiple HoloScreens, Ansel watches the ELITE GUARD swarming Quarantine from dozens of secured entry points.

It's over. He's done. They'll crucify him for this. THEN

An idea -- a stroke of genius? A death warrant? Doesn't matter. It's his only option, now.

He starts tapping -- WRITING CODE -- moving infographics -- numbers, symbols -- running algorithms till a prompt reads: **THIS ACTION CANNOT BE UNDONE.**

He stares at the warning, the gravity of what he's about to do sinking in. He reaches into his pocket -- grabs Levesque's Memory Elixir -- downs the whole thing.

ANSEL

Execute.

The system goes BATSHIT CRAZY.

INTERCUT the Elite Guard surrounding BlackBox as DISSONANT WARNINGS BLARE.

LEAD GUARD (V.O.)

ANSEL KEATS, YOU ARE UNDER--

Ansel **MUTES** and wipes everything. It's pitch black. Silent.

He rises -- stumbles back against a wall -- glides along it till he finds a corner -- sinks to the floor. He grips his throbbing head -- glowing Limbals his only source of light.

ANSEL

(commanding BlackBox)

Call Ellis Ambrose.

BLACKBOX (WOMANV.O.)

Calls prohibited from Quarantine.

Ansel pulls his folded legs up -- rests his head on his knees.

**INT. CALLOSUM - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis summons a COMMAND SCREEN that drapes from the ceiling -- summons a 10-digit code between her thumb and middle finger -- applies it to SEARCH.

CALLOSUM (MANV.O.)

Breach in Quarantine. All search temporarily suspended.

Ellis starts to back away from the prompt. It haunts her.

**INT. BLACKBOX ANTECHAMBER - CONTINUOUS**

Jericho circles BlackBox, when--

GUARD

Sir, we've detected a Thermal  
Reading down in the Catacombs  
ventilation ducts.

JERICHO

(smiles)

If Keats doesn't surrender in the  
next 5, activate the Argon Gas.

He marches off, thrilled for the hunt.

**INT. CATACOMBS, VENTILATION NETWORK - NIGHT**

Levesque appears from a vertical duct and collapses onto his chest. At the far end there is a glowing circle. He resumes his crawl till he arrives at a barred exit to the outside.

LEVESQUE

Ansel?

ANSEL (V.O.)

(beat)

I'm here.

LEVESQUE

Tell-- tell them it was all me.  
The alarms... everything.  
(off the silence)  
What are you going to do?

ANSEL (V.O.)

It's already done.

A sobering beat, then Levesque starts kicking at the barrier -- BANG -- BANG -- BANG -- till it pops out of the frame and drops into a wet, grassy moat outside.

Levesque looks down at the 30-foot drop when something pours on him from above. He wipes his brow -- smells his fingers.

Alcohol? He looks up to find someone standing above him on a perforated floor.

A flame crowns the man's thumb, illuminating JERICHO'S FACE.

Levesque stares -- frozen in terror -- as the flame plummets. The lighter strikes his face and he's ENGULFED IN FLAMES.

**INT. CALLOSUM / CORRIDOR**

Ellis heads for the exit, commanding it open...

GUARD

HALT!

... finds herself in the crosshairs of the Elite Guard.

From among them Lachlan approaches -- coming close enough that only Ellis can see his face.

Don't his eyes warn.

Silence swells. Tensions rise. She knows him. He knows her.

Ellis SNAPS UP a **FORCEFIELD** as Lachlan kneels, summoning his weapon as bullets fly past him and seep into the barrier.

Ellis THRUSTS the forcefield through Lachlan and SWIPES the Guards -- leaps out of Callosum and vanishes into a wall.

LACHLAN

FIND HER!

Guards disperse per protocol as he crosses into a corridor.

LACHLAN

(into his glowing jaw)  
She's coming.

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Sitting at his desk in a WHITE SUIT, Lucien startles when Ellis appears from a wall.

ELLIS

Where is he?

Guards attempt to enter, but Ellis seals the room.

LUCIEN

El-- sit down.

ELLIS

WHERE'S ANSEL?!

Lucien stares. *What?*

**INT. BLACKBOX - CONTINUOUS**

Ansel unmutes and hears

LEAD GUARD (O.S.)  
THIS IS YOUR LAST WARNING!

Lightheaded, he rises and stumbles over to the exit.

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis comes closer.

ELLIS  
7 years you've been hounding me  
about Quarantine. Saying I'm the  
only one who can tackle these  
glitches.  
(off his look)  
It wasn't Dendrites who were  
causing them, were they?

She leans forward on his desk.

ELLIS  
And you knew that. Didn't you?

A somber look from Lucien as a DARK SWIPE yanks Ellis back into  
a tight chokehold.

**INT. BLACKBOX - CONTINUOUS**

The instant Ansel unseals the room GLOWING STRINGS lasso around  
his neck -- sending SHOCKWAVES through his nervous system.

He drops to the floor -- convulsing as Guards converge.

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Struggling, Ellis reaches up, but Lachlan cuffs and forces her  
down to her knees. Darkness encroaches, and

FADE TO BLACK:

**INT. CHROME HQ, ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT**

Flanked by Guards, Lucien approaches a concrete wall in a BLACK  
SUIT. His Limbals glow GOLD as he unseals the room.

**INT. INTEROCELL - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis regains consciousness -- finds herself strapped to an armchair that's bolted to the ground. She's confined to a HoloCell inside a grand concrete space.

INTEROCELL (WOMANV.O.)  
Lucien O'Halloran. Entering  
InteroCell.

Lucien enters by himself in a WHITE SUIT. A beat, and he taps to evanesce Ellis's constraints. She looks up with contempt.

Lucien stares back in a BLACK SUIT. Not at Ellis, but at ANSEL who is sunken in his chair, held in place by his binds.

LUCIEN  
I give you the opportunity of a  
lifetime, and *this* is how you  
repay me?

Ansel looks up -- drenched in sweat -- nerves on fire.

ELLIS (V.O.)  
Where's Ansel?

**INT. ELLIS'S INTEROCELL**

Lucien -- WHITE SUIT -- watches Ellis rise from her chair.

ELLIS  
7 years ago -- the day Oliver was  
born -- Chrome had the biggest  
breach in history.  
(approaches)  
You practically begged me -- more  
than I can count -- to take on a  
position others would kill for.

She rests a hand on the HoloBarrier and waits. Lucien taps to grant her limited access, and she summons the passcode prompt she encountered in Callosum.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
Do you know what this is? It's the  
kind of security barrier you can't  
decode. Not in a million years.  
Not unless you know the passcode.  
(prompt vanishes)  
Where is Ansel?

LUCIEN (V.O.)  
What's the passcode?

**INT. ANSEL'S INTEROCELL - NIGHT**

Ansel can barely keep his head up. So, Lucien -- BLACK SUIT -- taps to deactivate his HoloCell.

INTEROCELL (WOMANV.O.)  
Deactivating Nucleus.

LUCIEN  
(steps onto the platform)  
We scoured your mind. Memories,  
fears, desires...

He lifts Ansel's chin, forcing him to look at him. There a distant memory of a doorbell, and...

FLASHBACK TO:

**EXT. LUXURY RESIDENCE - DAY**

A preteen Ansel watches the front door open to reveal a younger Blacksmith.

BLACKSMITH  
(off his ragged clothes)  
What can I do for you, my dear?

Ansel goes to speak when a boy his age -- Lachlan -- appears in the foyer, sees him, and walks over. Ansel stares at him -- at both of them -- then backs away and runs off.

On the second floor, a younger Lucien watches from the window, having always known this day would come.

BACK TO:

**INT. ANSEL'S INTEROCELL**

Lucien withdraws his hand, gazing at Ansel with remorse.

ELLIS (V.O.)  
He found something, didn't he?  
Something big.

**INT. ELLIS'S INTEROCELL**

Lucien listens. Solid. Unyielding.

ELLIS  
So big, he planted a virus in the  
system as an insurance policy.  
(MORE)

ELLIS (CONT'D)

A barrier no one could break  
through.

LUCIEN

Not even him.

(off Ellis's look)

It seems, there is no safer place  
to hide a secret than in someone  
else's mind.

Ellis stares, dread building. Lucien heads for the exit.

ELLIS

What did you do with him? Lucien--  
Lucien, WHERE IS HE?!

**INT. LACHLAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Watching remotely, Lachlan ends the live feed of Interocell.

LACHLAN

(as if to Ellis)

You know where he is...

He summons Ansel's infographics: Arrest Warrant from DREAMSCAPE  
-- snippets of Ansel's troubling DREAMREEL -- details of his  
SYNAPSE, and the duration of his RESONANCE.

Nothing out of the ordinary...

Lachlan leans back in his chair. Why is Ellis panicking over  
nothing? A long beat, then--

LACHLAN

(commands Chrome)

Memory Archives for Ansel Keats.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)

Due to the highly sensitive nature  
of work conducted in Quarantine,  
Architect Memory Archives are  
Board-Level Classified.

Lachlan squints. What does Ellis know that he doesn't?

**INT. BLACKSMITH'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Lachlan enters.

BLACKSMITH

If this is about Ambrose's kid--

LACHLAN  
I need your override.

BLACKSMITH  
(beat)  
Your father's security clearance  
is even higher than mine.

A beat, then she rises and walks over, crossing her arms.

BLACKSMITH  
What are you up to, Lachlan?

LACHLAN  
I just need to check something. It  
won't get back to you.

BLACKSMITH  
What?

LACHLAN  
(beat)  
Someone's last recorded memory.

Blacksmith reads him. Whatever he's up to isn't aligned with Lucien. She takes Lachlan's hand -- gives him her override.

**INT. ELLIS'S INTEROCELL**

Ellis paces about -- stir-crazy -- at wit's end, when

INTEROCELL (WOMANV.O.)  
Entering InteroCell.

Lachlan enters and seals the room.

Ellis turns to him -- full of rage, questions. But his contrite expression makes her balk.

LACHLAN  
I don't know how to tell you... or  
whether I even should.

ELLIS  
(beat)  
You're scaring me.

Lachlan SYNCs with her -- both their Limbals duplicating...

ELLIS  
What are you--

... and she's THRUST BACK INTO ANSEL'S MEMORY.

**INT. ANSEL'S INTEROCELL**

Ellis regains consciousness while trapped in Ansel's body -- spots Lucien in a BLACK SUIT outside of Nucleus.

A white swatch draws Ansel's attention -- he turns to a masked man in a lab coat standing next to him.

The man holds up a syringe containing a black serum and flicks it. Ansel turns to Lucien. Confused. Scared.

LUCIEN

You broke the law. And the law  
makes no exceptions.

ANSEL

Please. I'm going to be a father.

Lucien walks off, unable to bear what's to come.

ANSEL

Are you really doing this? DAD!  
ARE YOU ACTUALLY DOING THIS?!

The executioner pushes Ansel's head forward -- plunges the needle into the base of his skull -- Ellis's body **CLENCHES**, feeling the agony as the serum branches in Ansel's veins.

Darkness creeps in... the executioner now a blurry, white blotch shrinking into distance.

ELLIS (V.O.)

(feeling him dying)  
Oh, God. Oh, God, Ansel...

**INT. ELLIS'S INTEROCELL - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis emerges from Ansel's memory with bloodshot eyes -- seeing Lachlan where Lucien had stood 7 years ago... *moments ago...*

ELLIS

You knew...? You were going to let  
me wait all these years just to  
*lose him?!*

Lachlan stares, knowing nothing he says could ease her pain. He backs up and heads for the exit, leaving her to grieve.

**INT. LACHLAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Lachlan enters his office and just stands there, staring into space...

FLASHBACK TO:

**EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING - DAY**

Lachlan dashes over to Ellis behind a pony wall, taking cover.

LACHLAN  
What the hell are you doing?

ELLIS  
Caught the leader. 3 more inside.

She scans the vicinity -- analyzing, strategizing -- taps to direct Agents into new positions.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
(rising)  
Got my six?

LACHLAN  
(grips her shoulder)  
You're pregnant.

She slips from his grasp and circles toward the back. Lachlan follows, wracked with worry.

**INT. ABANDONED BUILDING - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis covers behind a wall. Lachlan catches up.

LACHLAN  
(whispering)  
I know you're pissed at Ansel, but  
you've got nothing to prove.  
Everyone knows you were Lucien's  
first choice for Quarantine.

ELLIS  
He was offered a job and he took  
it. I'm just doing mine.

LACHLAN  
(sharp whisper)  
You're 20-weeks along.

ELLIS  
And I'm cleared for one more.  
Split corridor at the end.

She sets down the hall. Lachlan follows to cover. Ellis peeks over the edge down a dark corridor.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
I'll take East.

She makes her way down the hall. A reluctant Lachlan goes West.

INTERCUT a devastated Ellis lying on the floor of Nucleus -- at the foot of her holding chair -- recalling the SAME MEMORY.

Nearing the end, Ellis takes cover ahead of entry to a dark space. She peeks inside -- panning POV switches to INFRARED -- DETECTS SOMEONE.

ELLIS  
(aims)  
HALT!

**INT. DARK ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A young Hostile with RED Limbals freezes against the wall -- gaping at Ellis's silhouette in the doorframe.

Ellis detects a gun in his trembling grip -- summons intel on him -- POV showing infographics for one **BRYCE PATTON**.

ELLIS  
Bryce, I'm not your enemy. I know  
you're scared, but I need you to--

BRYCE  
(stuttering)  
Fuck you!

Ellis steels herself -- willing to shoot if necessary -- when **ARREST WARRANT FOR ANSEL KEATS** flashes across her vision.

No...

Bryce watches her lower her weapon, staring at seemingly nothing -- BANG! -- Ellis jolts as a shot echoes in silence.

She looks down, removing bloody fingertips from a bullet wound in her stomach. Below her heart. Above her womb.

LACHLAN (O.S.)  
(distant cry)  
ELLIS?!

Her knees buckle, yielding her to gravity. She collapses to the floor, PARALYZED.

BACK TO:

**INT. LACHLAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Lachlan sits in his chair -- remembering finding Ellis on the floor -- scooping her up as blood ran down the corner of her mouth -- knowing no matter how tight his grip she could still slip away...

LACHLAN (V.O.)  
Stay with me!

**INT. INTEROCELL - CONTINUOUS**

Lying on the floor, Ellis's earlobe glows GOLD.

INTERCUT WITH LACHLAN IN HIS OFFICE:

ELLIS  
(long beat)  
I thought I was safe, working for Chrome. But after Ansel...

LACHLAN  
(knowing)  
You started writing code. In case one day they came for you.

ELLIS  
For Ollie.  
(beat)  
And you took him anyway.

Lachlan ends the call. He leans forward on his desk, breathing into his hands -- awakened to what his father is capable of.

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Lucien stares out his window at the artificial view of his cherry blossom. On the window pane -- he summons a countdown to Oliver's Synapse -- downs the rest of his whiskey.

**INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT**

Sinclair watches armed members of her team gear up -- the beginning of the end -- all these years in the making...

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
You should be grateful to have a sister for an Agent.

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. SINCLAIR'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Sinclair and Venn work at their desks -- backs to one another. She, a vision of structure and order. He, the poster boy for conspiracy theories.

VENN

Oh, 'cause now they're gonna look the other way?

SINCLAIR

Maybe they would if you stopped hacking them.

VENN

(swivels in his chair)  
It's called freedom of information sweetheart.

**ARREST WARRANT FOR VENN SINCLAIR** accosts Sinclair's vision.

Venn is quipping something in the background. She turns and looks at him -- at his RED LIMBALS -- knowing what she must do.

Venn's smile wanes as he reads her.

BACK TO:

**INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT**

Trimble approaches Sinclair.

TRIMBLE

(signs)  
We're all good to go.

SINCLAIR

Damask?

**INT. ABANDONED FACTORY, OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Sinclair enters to find Damask unboxing a vintage gun.

SINCLAIR

You ready for this?

DAMASK

If they Synapse her -- and they will -- they'll know everything.

He loads his gun. Stares at it. The day has finally come.

DAMASK (CONT'D)  
We do this... it'll be anarchy.

SINCLAIR  
It'll be an exorcism.

A knowing nod from Damask, and Sinclair walks to the middle of the room. Her green Limbals DUPLICATE, and she goes **LIVE**.

**EXT. CHROME CITY - DAY**

Among pedestrians gliding on a Transit Belt, a young man's Limbals FLICKER FROM CHROME TO GREEN. In his ear...

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
Members of the Brocade...

Thousands of others all over the city snap out of subjective realities -- SYNCING with Sinclair.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
... tonight has been forever in  
the making.

Everyone listens intently, careful not to rouse suspicion.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
We've sacrificed so much to get  
here. Lost far more than we ever  
bargained for. Freedom. Control.  
(beat)  
Loved ones.

People listen intently, waiting for their cue.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
It's D-Day.

From above, tiny specs segue off of major routes as Brocades bleed from the city's veins -- disperse -- cutting through the mindless clutter with purpose -- spotting others -- a terse nod here -- a knowing smile there -- grit over fear.

**INT. ABANDONED FACTORY, OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Sinclair ends the feed.

DAMASK  
Any news on Ellis?

SINCLAIR  
 (shakes her head)  
 We need to get her son out of  
 Limbo. We owe her that much.

Damask nods, then follows Sinclair out.

**INT. ABANDONED FACTORY, COVERED PARKING - PREDAWN**

Sinclair, Damask, and armed Brocades emerge from the building  
 -- enter dark, tinted vehicles -- speed off in orderly fashion.

**INT. SINCLAIR'S CAR - CONTINUOUS**

As Trimble drives, Sinclair looks out the window -- POV showing  
 hundreds of GREEN Holographic cubes popping up all over the  
 city -- activated by secret members of the Brocade.

DAMASK  
 How's it coming?

SINCLAIR  
 78 and counting.

DAMASK  
 (beat)  
 We need more.

Sinclair spots Chrome HQ -- the heart of the city -- the silver  
 mecca -- gleaming along a red, predawn horizon.

**INT. INTEROCELL ANTECHAMBER**

Lachlan approaches the Guards manning InteroCell. They look at  
 each other with unease -- one of them steps forward.

GUARD  
 Sir, we've been given orders not  
 to allow any--

LACHLAN  
 (over)  
 I will be conducting a Memory  
 Sweep of the insurgent. It will be  
 invasive, and I will not tolerate  
 any distractions. Are we clear?

**INT. INTEROCELL - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis stares into space -- artificially numbed.

INTEROCELL (WOMANV.O.)  
Entering Interocell.

Ellis rises as Lachlan approaches Nucleus. Once the room is sealed his Limbals GLOW GOLD, and

INTEROCELL (WOMANV.O.)  
Deactivating Nucleus.

The HoloCell vanishes -- Ellis DRAWS -- aiming at his head.

ELLIS  
Did you know about Ansel?

LACHLAN  
You'll have to shoot *them* too. And everyone else on your way to Limbo.  
(off her stare)  
No. I didn't.

A beat, and Ellis lowers her gun and crosses to the concrete wall -- finds a point of infiltration -- unseals an escape.

She lingers at the threshold, then looks up at him.

Lachlan walks over -- standing tall over her like a protective shield, and they both vanish into the wall.

**INT. WALL CAVITY - CONTINUOUS**

They maneuver through the cavity -- all the way to the far end, where there's a dark vertical shaft several stories deep.

LACHLAN  
Are you gonna tell me the plan? Or am I just here to cover your six?

ELLIS  
(beat)  
I need to get to HindBrain.

Lachlan's Limbals glow GOLD and a holographic floor-plate fills the gap between them. He steps onto it and pulls Ellis in.

As they descend the plate expands and shrinks to fit the evolving boundaries of their confinement.

ELLIS  
(impressed)  
You can do this, but not escape into walls?

LACHLAN

Never *had* to escape into walls.

The moment stretches. Ellis seeks out his hand to give him her Code, but he misreads it and intertwines his fingers with her.

Once the skin-to-skin transfer begins, he realizes his mistake and withdraws his hand as soon as it's complete.

Ellis looks up, but he avoids her eyes.

**INT. CHROME HQ - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis and Lachlan cut in and out of open spaces -- tracking and dodging employees with meticulous precision -- gaining ground till they hit a roadblock of lingering Board Members.

**INT. WALL CAVITY - CONTINUOUS**

ELLIS

Shit.

(backs into wall cavity)

Oliver's Synapse is in less than an hour.

She starts to calculate an alternate route when Lachlan summons a razor-thin SCREEN -- pushes it through the wall and out into the corridor.

He unseals the wall -- walks out into the open -- stands in the middle of the corridor, waiting on Ellis.

She peeks out at the Board Members just feet away -- talking amongst themselves -- completely oblivious.

From their perspective, the hall is empty.

Ellis steps out just as the flock starts towards them -- but the barrier ROTATES on a central axis -- concealing Ellis and Lachlan as they escape into the opposite wall.

**INT. CEREBELLUM - CONTINUOUS**

The duo enters a peculiar space -- a gargantuan room with cubic blocks extruding from the floor -- the walls -- the ceiling...

ELLIS

What is this place?

LACHLAN

Cerebellum.

He walks in

LACHLAN  
Try not to lose balance.

The system detects him and the blocks START TO SHIFT. Ellis gapes as the room comes alive -- rearranging like 3D TETRIS.

ELLIS  
Lachlan?

She dips down as a beam extends from the wall -- leaps off a sinking floor plate -- rises with an ascending surface...

She scans the space -- trying to decipher the Base Algorithm -- is YANKED by Lachlan before converging columns crush her.

LACHLAN  
Stay close.

He guides her through the deadly labyrinth -- clearly privy to whatever logic is driving the movements.

#### **INT. THE HOLLOW - CONTINUOUS**

The duo exits Cerebellum into a long corridor with an absurdly high ceiling -- beckoned by a bright light at the far end.

They walk right up to a DEAD-DROP -- where the space opens up to a MASSIVE CHAMBER.

LACHLAN  
Welcome to The Hollow.

Ellis looks beyond the chasm at a WHITE, GLOWING HOLOCUBE. It appears afloat in the dark, seemingly boundless space.

ELLIS  
HindBrain.

She squints, realizing HindBrain isn't actually floating -- but resting atop a column that dips down into the abyss.

No bridge. No ledge.

ELLIS  
(eyeing the column)  
And that's the spinal cord. The  
main conduit to everyone on  
CHROME's network.

Fascinated, Ellis summons a VIRTUAL BRIDGE to Hindbrain -- it collapses the instant it touches the holographic barrier.

LACHLAN  
It's no use.

ELLIS  
(knowing)  
Because Lucien's the only one who  
can override it.

LACHLAN  
Not even him. Not for the last 7  
years.

ELLIS  
(turns to him)  
But that would mean the system  
hasn't been upgraded since.

LACHLAN  
Why do you think he's been begging  
you to take on Quarantine?

Ellis stares -- mind racing -- pieces of the puzzle snapping  
together.

ELLIS  
He doesn't have the passcode to  
override the glitch...

LUCIEN (V.O.)  
(echoing memory)  
No safer place to hide a secret  
than in someone else's mind.

Ellis looks at HindBrain -- summons Ansel's PASSCODE PROMPT --  
applies **ZERO** to the cryptogram's blank slots and

GLITCH! She collapses as HindBrain VANISHES.

**INT. SINCLAIR'S CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Nearing Chrome Plaza, Sinclair sees the predawn filter vanish  
to reveal the real sky beyond.

SINCLAIR  
(muttering)  
Ellis...?

She looks at Trimble with a glint of hope.

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

The room re-illuminates with Lucien at his desk -- staring into space with his breath caught.

He summons a live feed of InterCell to find Ellis GONE -- takes a moment -- makes a call.

JERICHO (V.O.)  
Sir?

LUCIEN  
Extract Oliver Ambrose.

**INT. THE HOLLOW - CONTINUOUS**

The space brightens as HindBrain reappears.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
System restored.

LACHLAN  
What did you do?

ELLIS  
I entered the wrong passcode.  
(rises)  
Lucien never wanted me to fix the system. He needed me to undo what Ansel did...

LACHLAN  
What? How do you know this?

ELLIS  
(beat)  
Because the glitch's override is a love song Ansel wrote for me.  
(off his look)  
All these glitches since? They were caused by *Lucien* trying to enter HindBrain without it.

She heads back towards Cerebellum. A bewildered Lachlan follows and unseals the wall, but Ellis turns to HindBrain and crouches into a sprinting position.

LACHLAN  
What are you doing?

Ellis's POV calculates the distance, speed, and a parabolic leap to HindBrain.

LACHLAN

El--

Ellis summons Ansel's prompt at the dead-drop's threshold -- SPRINTS down the corridor.

LACHLAN

ELLIS!

Ellis runs right up to the edge and LEAPS through the prompt -- applies **ZEROES** midair to cause another GLITCH -- watches HindBrain VANISH as she arcs back down in TOTAL DARKNESS.

3... 2... 1...

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)

System restored.

Ellis CLASHES with the inside of the re-appearing HoloBarrier.

LACHLAN

(runs up to the edge)

YOU'RE INSANE!

Ellis's legs are restored with a small jolt. She rises -- looks at Lachlan with a blend of rush and relief -- centres herself in the confinement -- activates the system with GOLD LIMBALS.

The Hollow is FLOODED WITH DATA.

She can see everything from the complex layout of the cavernous Catacombs to the inside of civilian bedrooms. She can control traffic -- weather -- enforce a universal shut-down...

The omniscience is staggering -- euphoric -- but she wipes it all and summons a live feed of Oliver in Limbo.

**INT. OLIVER'S CELL - CONTINUOUS**

Oliver is curled up on the floor of his cell, when--

ELLIS (V.O.)

Ollie? Honey, it's mom.

INTERCUT WITH ELLIS:

Oliver sits up at the sound of her voice -- his excitement, fleeting. He swallows as he pulls his knees up to his chin.

ELLIS

Ollie, can you hear me?

It's obvious he can. He wells up, but pushes his feelings down.

ELLIS

I'm so sorry. I should've been home with you. I should've spent more time with you...

(off his silence)

Can you hear me? Honey, please say something. Please--

OLIVER

You LIED!

Ellis jolts -- blood draining from her face. *He knows...*

OLIVER

You said he was in Quarantine! You said I couldn't see him! You said you didn't know when he'll be out!

Ellis chokes on a sob -- burdened with a new truth far worse than the last -- tries to be strong -- to keep it together -- sees Ansel's smile in her mind -- breaks into tears.

Hearing his mother cry opens the floodgates and Oliver starts crying too.

Lachlan watches from afar -- completely helpless.

ELLIS

(as if coming up for air)

It's going to be okay. Alright, baby? I'm coming to get you--

Oliver ends the call and starts sobbing with abandon. Ellis mutes his voice, but the visual is no less bearable.

LACHLAN

El-- we don't have time.

Ellis wipes the feed. She swallows the pain -- secures herself against the HoloBarrier as she rises -- SENSES something...

A GREEN MESH encasing HindBrain.

ELLIS

(to Lachlan)

I'm trapped.

LACHLAN

What?!

Ellis taps and Lachlan's Limbals duplicate, linking them.

ELLIS

I'm sending you everything.

Lachlan's Limbals glow BLACK -- eyes flicker shut as a deluge of Algorithms flood his mind. He opens his eyes, astounded at Ellis's brilliance.

ELLIS  
He's in cell 0631.

*I got him* -- Lachlan runs down the corridor -- vanishes into Cerebellum.

**EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS**

Sinclair and Damask oversee the Brocades when Sinclair gets a call. She steps into a quiet corner and receives it.

SINCLAIR  
You're alive.

INTERCUT BETWEEN ELLIS AND SINCLAIR:

ELLIS  
You fucking bitch! You planted a lock on me?!

SINCLAIR  
(hopes confirmed)  
You're in HindBrain...

ELLIS  
Lift it! Now!

SINCLAIR  
Send me the Archives.

ELLIS  
My son is being Synapsed in 40 minutes!

SINCLAIR  
Then do it *quickly*.

Sinclair ends the call.

**INT. CHROME HQ, CORRIDORS**

Lachlan rushes to Limbo -- employing the smartest strategies he can to remain unnoticed.

Vanishing into a wall, he's spotted by a Guard.

**INT. INTEROCELL ANTECHAMBER - CONTINUOUS**

Notified of Lachlan's whereabouts, the Guards unseal Interocell to find it empty.

**INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Lachlan is closing in on Limbo when his Limbals TURN RED -- POV flashing his own Arrest Warrant.

GUARD (O.S.)

HALT!

Lachlan turns as armed Guards secure the hall, taking aim.

His Limbals TURN BLACK as he summons a tinted FORCEFIELD on either side of him.

The Guards FIRE as they close in -- RA TA TA TA TA TA TA TA -- the forcefields thickening as they absorb the digital bullets.

Lachlan STOMPS with one foot and a SHOCKWAVE THRUSTS EVERYONE BACK. By the time the men recoup, he's vanished.

**INT. HINDBRAIN**

Ellis hacks the system -- bypassing security measures far too complex for us to follow -- arrives at **PATIENT ARCHIVES**.

A beat. If she does this, there's no going back.

**INT. EMPTY NIGHTCLUB - CONTINUOUS**

Sinclair is centred in the room -- surrounded by Brocades -- when her Limbals DUPLICATE and she hears

ELLIS (V.O.)

I'm giving you my Proxy.

INTERCUT WITH ELLIS IN HINDBRAIN:

Ellis summons a BLACK HALO that flickers, pulsates, tilting as it struggles to expand against CHROME's safeguards. THEN...

DARKNESS FALLS. Her Halo stretches into a wide Orbit, extending beyond the boundaries of HindBrain.

A white spec starts to stretch along the Orbit -- a progress bar as the Archives are copied.

The influx of data starts to overwhelm Ellis's nervous system. She loses balance and drops to one knee, Orbit seesawing back to level.

It's too much -- frying her brain -- **COPY COMPLETE** -- she collapses.

SINCLAIR  
Ellis? Ellis, send me the files.

ELLIS  
(props herself up)  
So many...

SINCLAIR  
Send me Archives, now.

Ellis taps a code on the floor. Beneath her, a DOT-MATRIX MESH spills out through HindBrain, spreading boundlessly through the confines of The Hollow.

She summons a dot out of the matrix and scales it up -- a DIGITAL BRAIN.

SINCLAIR  
(eyeing the mesh)  
What are those?

Ellis looks at the millions of dots in the matrix.

ELLIS  
People...  
(rises)  
Everyone Archived down in the  
Catacombs.

SINCLAIR  
That can't be.  
(calculates)  
These dots outnumber the Crypts by  
at least 80 to 1.

ELLIS  
(commands HindBrain)  
Search Catacombs for Ansel Keats.

HINDBRAIN (MALEV.O.)  
Searching.

A Crypt appears before Ellis. Inside, Ansel sleeps peacefully.

SINCLAIR  
(watching by proxy)  
What are you doing?

Ellis runs a complex command.

ELLIS  
Looking for the marker.

SINCLAIR  
What marker?

ELLIS  
The one that flags empty Crypts.

SINCLAIR  
Send me the Archives!

ELLIS  
Ansel wasn't the only one... He  
couldn't have been.

SINCLAIR  
Ellis, the Archives!

Ellis executes a command and a RED, UPSIDE-DOWN CROSS glows  
above Ansel's Crypt. Sinclair balks at the disturbing visual.

ELLIS  
(commands HindBrain)  
Apply marker.

HINDBRAIN (MANV.O.)  
Applying marker.

A RED WAVE spreads out from HindBrain -- tainting the mesh like  
blood on bandage. Ellis kneels for a closer look -- watching  
each micro-brain turn into a cross. Thousands... MILLIONS...

SINCLAIR  
What's going on?

ELLIS  
(horrified)  
They're dead. They're all dead.

Ellis spots Lucien at the edge of the drop. He peers down at  
the red mesh -- knowing the truth has been spilled -- then back  
up at Ellis who's staring like she doesn't even know him.

LUCIEN  
I can explain...

She gapes. *Explain?*

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
We were running out of water. We  
couldn't mineralize the soil...  
(MORE)

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
 Climate catastrophes had done too much damage. We had to prioritize those who mattered. Those with promise.

**INT. CHROME HQ, SOMA - DAY**

Lucien oversees the design of ARTIFICIAL DREAMS. He walks by an AXON designing one for Quentin Caldwell.

LUCIEN (V.O.)  
 We were hanging by a thread. We needed a strategy to control the population. But people got too smart for war. Pandemics lacked specificity...

INTERCUT Caldwell jolting awake in bed with red Limbals.

**INT. HINDBRAIN - CONTINUOUS**

ELLIS  
 So, you started killing people?!

LUCIEN  
 I did no such thing. Each patient was given a choice a week into Synapse. Continue with Resonance, or sign a Euthanasia Waver.

INTERCUT Noemi's mother in desperate tears, refusing to sign.

Ellis stares, recalling her own experience with Synapse.

ELLIS  
 You-- you robbed people of the will to live, then had them sign their lives away?!

LUCIEN  
 (the truth)  
 I wanted to help people. I wanted to restore us to our best selves. But Resonance was a failure.

FLASHBACK TO:

**EXT. CALDWELL'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Caldwell's wife stares down at the ground with zero affect.

LUCIEN (V.O.)  
 What little the patients retained,  
 they were no longer attached to.  
 They were no longer people.

She throws herself over.

LUCIEN (V.O.)  
 They would not be missed.

BACK TO:

**INT. HINDBRAIN - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis stares -- writhing with rage.

ELLIS  
 I let you take Ansel.

LUCIEN  
 Ansel was a traitor.

ELLIS  
 He was your son!  
 (slams the barrier)  
 You framed him! You buried him!

INTERCUT WITH A FURIOUS SINCLAIR:

LUCIEN  
 (new tact)  
 And I'll bury more.  
 (off her dread)  
 It's not too late. Stop this while  
 we can still go back.

DAMASK  
 (to Sinclair)  
 If she leaves HindBrain we lose  
 our link to the whole system.

Lucien inches right up to the edge.

LUCIEN  
 I know you've copied the Archives.  
 Delete them right now, and I'll  
 forget any of this ever happened.

ELLIS  
 Let Oliver go.

LUCIEN  
 This is not a negotiation.

ELLIS  
You *killed* Ansel.

LUCIEN  
(beat)  
Ever wonder what we did with the bodies? You'd be surprised at how much a cannibal will pay for human flesh. How long a necrophile will wait for a ripe cadaver. Now, I'm used to selling corpses, but given the demand among pedophiles...?

DAMASK  
(to Sinclair)  
Do it. Now.

LUCIEN  
Oliver would rake in a hefty sum.

Ellis SCREAMS -- ready to rip him to shreds -- is HACKED with GREEN LIMBALS -- DROPS to the floor with eyes wide open.

Her Halo appears -- seesaws to level with the ground -- expands into a massive Orbit and SCANS DOWN the column.

LUCIEN  
No--

The plummeting Orbit activates Algorithms on the walls of the column.

LUCIEN  
NO!

**EXT. CHROME PLAZA - DAY**

As Brocades surround Chrome Plaza all digital life comes to a halt -- ads, traffic lights, Transit Belts -- EVERYTHING.

People look at one another. See one another. Then EVERYONE COLLAPSES -- entering a trance with green Limbals.

Dead silence -- a twitch here -- a jerk of the head there -- brows knitting -- tears streaming -- everyone DREAMING.

**INT. HINDBRAIN - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis gapes into space, dreaming of...

... the Sculptor dragging a naked, screaming woman along narrow scaffolding -- pushing her over the edge into a vat of HOT, MOLTEN PLASTIC -- watching her thrash and claw at nothing as she sinks -- drowns -- dies -- suspended in eternal horror...

... dreaming of the Sculptor prying the molds open -- riving the burnt bodies -- filling the molds with bronze -- burying corpses -- being praised by elitist attendees toasting his unprecedented genius...

Ellis wakes from the Dream with a GASP.

**INT./EXT. CHROME CITY - DAY**

Lachlan pulls himself up by a pipe inside a wall cavity. Blacksmith sits up on her bathroom floor, gripping her mouth.

People everywhere awaken from the SAME NIGHTMARE -- gape at one another -- expecting doom -- Agents -- arrests -- when

Sinclair's voice blares not just in their ears, but out through public speakers.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
 What you just saw -- what you all  
 just experienced with your every  
 sense -- was not a Dream.

Looping Dream snippets appear on virtually every vertical surface -- not just inside Chrome Dome -- but EVERY major Domed city around the world.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
 Because how can a Dream be real  
 when it is dreamt by everyone?

Horror ripples through the masses. People look at one another -- confirming with words and glances -- this shared reality.

The Dream pauses and explodes into its digital components.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
 These Dreams are lies manufactured  
 by CHROME to serve their hidden  
 agenda. Lies designed to convince  
 you of your guilt. So that you  
 sign away your lives.

People stare -- divorced of delusion -- fear and shock paving the way for angst and anger.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)  
 It's time to reclaim what's ours.

The broadcast ends. One by one, people start to SIGN OFF. Some run at the sight of armed Brocades -- others join the march, mobilizing towards Chrome Plaza.

**INT. HINDBRAIN - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis struggles to her feet and sees the rage in Lucien's eyes.

ELLIS  
I didn't do this.

LUCIEN  
(commands HindBrain)  
Inundate.

Ellis looks down as water spills from HindBrain's base frame -- glosses the floor -- rising at an alarming rate.

She looks up as Lucien walks off.

ELLIS  
Lucien-- Lucien, DON'T HURT HIM!

And he's gone.

**INT. LIMBO**

Deep inside Limbo, Lachlan arrives at Oliver's cell -- EMPTY -- senses someone behind him -- puts Paisley in his crosshairs.

LACHLAN  
You're early.

PAISLEY  
(unshaken)  
You're late.

Lachlan stares with Black Limbals -- Paisley with Green -- both and neither, Agents of CHROME.

LACHLAN  
(lowers his weapon)  
Where's the kid?

PAISLEY  
Jericho took him.

They exchange a knowing look, then part ways.

**INT. HINDBRAIN**

The water is already up to Ellis's neck. No matter what code she runs, she can't break through.

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Lachlan bursts in from a wall to find Lucien gone. A call--

ELLIS (V.O.)  
Lachlan, I need help.

Lachlan summons a live feed of HindBrain. Ellis is treading water -- only 2 feet of air left.

LACHLAN  
Jesus.

**INT. HINDBRAIN - CONTINUOUS**

INTERCUT WITH LACHLAN:

ELLIS  
Listen. In a minute, I'll need you to cause a glitch.

Lachlan receives Ansel's prompt.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
I can't do it from in here 'cause I'm already in.

LACHLAN  
What are you going to do?

ELLIS  
Just wait on my mark.

She looks way up at a WHITE RECTANGLE glowing in the ceiling: CALLOSUM.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
I can't deactivate HindBrain, but I can change its dimensions.

She taps -- Hindbrain's ceiling rises as the walls close in.

As the HoloCube grows into a SLENDER COLUMN, Ellis soars with the water level towards Callosum -- closer -- closer -- CLOSER

ELLIS  
NOW!

Lachlan applies a false passcode and -- GLITCH!

HindBrain VANISHES -- the water spills -- Ellis FLINGS A LASSO up to Callosum and soars with it THROUGH the checkered floors.

Lachlan breathes a sigh of relief as Callosum's floor reseals.

ELLIS  
(drops down; panting)  
Do you have him?!

LACHLAN  
He was extracted from Limbo.

SHIT -- Ellis locates Lucien -- SPRINTS OUT OF CALLOSUM.

**INT. CHROME HQ, VARIOUS HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis runs at full speed -- cuts corners -- spots Guards -- BANG! BANG! BANG! -- kills them without slowing down.

**EXT. CHROME CITY - DAY**

CHAOS. Mothers run away with children encased in protective barriers. People take in their surroundings without filters -- the naked city -- bones without the flesh. It's terrifying.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
(looping)  
An emergency curfew is now in effect. Return to your homes immediately.

**EXT. CHROME PLAZA - DAY**

Crowds surround Chrome Plaza -- spearheaded by armed Brocades.

Agents guard the HQ -- protected by layers of forcefields -- skim the crowd -- POVs showing civilians ONLY.

JERICHO  
MARCH!

Agents assemble in a complex formation -- varying their speed and displacement as they approach the crowd.

SINCLAIR  
Go.

The Brocades spread along the plaza -- surrounding unwitting Agents shifting towards the centre.

Jericho starts to grow uneasy. *Why is the crowd staying put? What are they looking at?*

Sinclair's POV calculates the best strategy in real time.

SINCLAIR  
Hold... hold...

The Brocades arrange per Sinclair's infographics -- weapons aimed -- waiting on her mark -- THE STRATEGY LOCKS.

SINCLAIR  
FIRE!

They SHOOT -- RA TA TA TA TA TA TA TA -- taking Agents down.

People SPOOK -- SCREAM -- RUNNING at the sound of GUNFIRE -- Trimble and others encapsulate them in Holographic GreenQubes -- guiding them away from harm.

Jericho panics as Agents drop all around him -- summons an advanced shield -- hearing a chaotic barrage he CANNOT SEE!

BANG! An Agent drops next to him -- HoloHelmet flickering off. Jericho gapes at his GREEN Limbals.

They're HACKED -- he goes **OFFLINE** -- the numbers TRIPLE!

JERICHO  
MOTHERF--  
(commands all Agents)  
GO OFFLINE! ALL AGENTS GO OFFLINE!

It's a massacre -- a storm of bullets and blood. Sinclair kills one Agent after another with lethal precision -- no fear -- no hesitation -- she was made for this.

#### **INT. CHROME HQ - CONTINUOUS**

Employees scatter -- taking cover as Agents and Guards rush by.

CHROME (WOMANV.O.)  
(looping)  
All armed forces to the plaza.

Ellis dashes through panicked employees -- SHOOTS Guards -- cuts through a wall into a private corridor -- rushes to the elevator at the far end.

She can't activate it -- raises a palm with a BLACK GLOW -- CRUMPLES THE DOOR with magnetism.

CLANG -- it drops out of the frame -- Ellis runs in -- racing up to the roof.

**EXT. CHROME HQ ROOFTOP / INT. CHOPPER - DAY**

Lucien steps up and into the chopper -- sits next to Oliver.

PILOT

Sir, perhaps it's not the best  
time to fly.

Lucien detects Ellis running towards them from the elevator.

Agents BLOCK and OPEN FIRE.

Ellis INVERTS THEIR BARRIERS -- bullets ricochet -- killing them instead.

The chopper lifts -- Ellis speeds up -- summons a BLACK MESH around her forearm -- SLAMS IT DOWN and unrolls a DIGITAL CANTILEVER that extends the rooftop.

She sprints onto it -- running on air above the plaza.

**INT. CHOPPER - CONTINUOUS**

Looking down at Ellis -- Lucien summons a WEIGHT ALGORITHM and applies it to the cantilever.

**EXT. CHROME ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS**

The pressure builds on the South-West corner of the HQ till it CRUMPLES like an accordion.

Ellis loses balance as the cantilever TILTS -- sliding down the steep slope as it CUTS THROUGH surrounding trees like a blade.

She deactivates it before crashing into the greenery -- then dives from under falling wall panels and rubble.

With the echo of the crash ringing in her ears -- she struggles to her knees amidst the wreckage -- beaten and bruised.

She tracks the chopper in the sky -- stumbles out onto the plaza -- eyes on the Launch Zone -- when A HAZARD DOME CLASPS AROUND HER -- sealing her off.

She's GRABBED by the hair -- SWOOSH -- she SWINGS BACK with a HoloKnife -- cutting a shallow gash across Jericho's chest.

He looks down at the wound -- smiles.

ELLIS

Unseal me.

He charges -- SWINGS -- fist planting a CRATER in the ground. Ellis rolls -- anchors herself -- draws her weapon -- BANG BANG BANG BANG -- bullets bounce off Jericho's protective suit.

JERICHO  
(did you forget?)  
You no longer outrank me, Agent  
Ambrose.

Ellis tries to unseal the Dome but Jericho flings a magnetic blow and THRUSTS her back against the barrier. He charges -- over and over -- not giving her a chance to think her way out.

No choice -- Ellis takes a hit to throw him off -- maneuvers him into a chokehold -- wraps her legs around his torso and locks him in position with a Ghost Algorithm.

She SQUEEZES -- trying to snap his neck -- Jericho grips her and FALLS BACK -- crushing her.

Her shield absorbs the blow, but Jericho slips from her grasp. She gets out from under -- KNOCKS HIM DOWN with Holographic KNUCKLES -- gets onto him and starts POUNDING HIS FACE.

Jericho draws a HoloKnife -- STABS HER in the flank. Ellis SCREAMS but doesn't relent -- POUND POUND POUND -- till the Hazard Dome vanishes and the outside chaos pours in.

Ellis slips off of him -- panting on all fours as she weaves DIGITAL STITCHES over her wound.

She looks up at the sky where she last saw the chopper.

JERICHO  
He's gonna kill him, you know. If  
he hasn't already.

Ellis stumbles toward the Launch Zone -- gaining speed as her neurotransmitters numb the pain.

As she rides off, Jericho spots a man standing dead-still in the middle of the plaza, staring at him.

Jericho squints. *Levesque?!*

He watches Levesque walk off into the park framing the plaza, stumbles to his feet and chases him into the dense foliage.

#### **EXT. CHROME HQ - CONTINUOUS**

Jericho races through the trees. *Where is he? Was that him?*

He runs along the length of the HQ -- stops when he spots the hatch Levesque had tried to escape from 7 years ago.

Toughly 30-feet below -- inside a wet, grassy moat -- he spots Trimble guiding women and children into a water pipe.

Jericho creeps into the shadows -- fixated on his new target -- ready to sink his teeth into the unwitting prey.

### **PIPE OPENING**

Trimble picks up a little girl -- hands her over to her mother in the water pipe.

She SCREAMS! Trimble turns and is KNOCKED DOWN by a punch.

JERICHO

Hey kids.

He grabs Trimble's hair -- yanks him onto his knees -- exposing his neck.

JERICHO

Wanna see something cool?

Jericho brings a serrated HoloKnife to Trimble's throat -- BANG -- is FLUNG BACK with a bullet hole in his neck.

Trimble drops to the ground -- spots the shooter -- dashes into the pipe after the others.

Jericho grips his neck -- choking on blood as the shooter -- Levesque -- stands over him with a vintage gun in his hand.

Jericho stares, scared, confused. Distant SCREAMS echo and we

FLASHBACK TO:

### **EXT. CHROME HQ - NIGHT**

Ablaze, Levesque falls from the hatch into a wet moat -- crawls into the same water pipe -- taps a code to encase himself in a Holographic enamel -- trembling as it binds to his raw flesh.

BACK TO:

Jericho stares as Levesque's face glitches -- PIXELATES -- revealing a quilt of skin grafts and burn scars underneath.

Levesque pulls out his flask from his pocket -- then holds up a lighter and flicks a flame.

Jericho tries to summon a shield -- starts convulsing -- eyes rolling into his head as he dies a miserable death.

A beat, then Levesque pours alcohol on Jericho's corpse -- drops the lighter on him, and watches him burn.

Levesque looks up at the hatch he escaped from -- at CHROME HQ in its shameful glory -- at his former home -- then summons a DAMASK MASK and walks off.

**EXT. CHROME CITY - DAY**

Ellis cuts through chaos -- congestion -- through focused rage and discordant panic -- overriding security barriers as she ventures deep into a posh, gated neighbourhood.

**EXT. LUCIEN'S MINIMALIST MANSION - DAY**

Ellis skids to a rough stop -- drops her bike -- runs to the entrance to Lucien's home.

The security system recognizes her and unseals the front door. Her pace dissipates as she enters -- shield up -- weapon drawn.

**INT. LUCIEN'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis approaches a massive aquarium -- a colourful, living wall separating the foyer from the main space.

She walks along its length -- peering through for signs of movement. She scans around. Is she alone? She can't be.

OLIVER (O.S.)

Mom?

Ellis snaps her head at the guest bedroom and dashes into it.

Empty.

ELLIS

Ollie?

She heads back out into the corridor -- walks the length to the library -- pushes on the door -- SCREAMS at the sight of Oliver hanging from a noose.

ELLIS

GOD--

She runs to him and SLASHES the rope. Oliver drops into her arms and she GASPS at the plastic smile of a DUMMY.

ELLIS

OH--

(drops it; backs away)

Ollie?! OLLIE!

OLIVER (O.S.)

MOM!

Ellis dashes out -- following his voice to the dining room. She looks around -- JOLTS at the sight of Oliver's torso mounted on the wall inside a golden frame.

She shrieks in horror and drops to the floor -- gripping her head -- rocking back and forth.

LUCIEN (V.O.)

Did you think you were the only one with one foot out the door?

Ellis stares into space -- shaking.

LUCIEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Did you think I wouldn't press on your wound?

Tears stream as Ellis looks up at the frame -- EMPTY -- looks around for Oliver -- for Lucien...

ELLIS

Please! *Please* don't do this!

LUCIEN (V.O.)

You did this to yourself.

OLIVER (O.S.)

MOM!

Ellis leaps to her feet -- dashes into the main space.

ELLIS

Ollie?!

LACHLAN (V.O.)

(muffled)

ELLIS! WAKE UP!

ELLIS

I can't find him! Lachlan, I can't find him!

LACHLAN (V.O.)

WAKE UP! YOU'RE SLEEP-WALKING!

OLIVER (O.S.)

MOM! HELP ME!

LUCIEN (V.O.)

Tick, tock, El.

ELLIS  
 (panting; trying to get  
 offline)  
 Get out of my head.

LUCIEN (V.O.)  
 You thought you could outsmart me?  
 Cheat a program I wrote? I *made*  
 you. You're nothing without me.

*He's right.* Ellis DEACTIVATES HERSELF and drops to the floor,  
 paralyzed.

Lachlan BURSTS into the living space -- swoops down to Ellis --  
 throws her arm over his shoulder.

ELLIS  
 Where is he?!

**INT. LUCIEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Lachlan brings Ellis in. She spots Oliver on Lucien's desk --  
 curled up and unconscious -- gift-wrapped inside a HoloBox.

Ellis's eyes dart to a glowing Hologram directly above him -- a  
 LIVE NUMERUBIX!

ELLIS  
 Oh, God--

LACHLAN  
 (brings her over)  
 It started growing the second I  
 saw it. I chipped away as much as  
 I could, but...

Ellis plants a palm on Oliver's encasement. It's SHRINKING.

ELLIS  
 (laboured breaths)  
 Okay. Okay.

Lachlan holds her up -- but Ellis just watches the mass grow.  
 He gives her a moment to calm her nerves. And nothing.

LACHLAN  
 What are you waiting for?

Ellis rotates the Tumor -- chips at it -- rotates again -- does  
 nothing. The mass is rapidly outgrowing her efforts -- Oliver's  
 box shrinking at the same rate.

LACHLAN  
 He'll run out of oxygen--

ELLIS

*I know!*

Lachlan shuts up -- watching her chip at the Tumor -- not to reduce its size -- but as though trying to mold it.

ELLIS

The instinct is to rush. So you miss the pattern -- the Base Algorithm driving the growth.

Lachlan looks at her -- at the Tumor -- trust in her strategy surging as the mass starts to display SPHERICAL SYMMETRY.

Ellis rotates it -- chips -- waits -- then taps a mathematical sequence along its surface and the mass STARTS TO IMplode.

INTERCUT the Exam Hall as **ELLIS AMBROSE** races up the Ranking Chart from LAST PLACE to FIRST.

Ellis drapes over Oliver's confinement. It keeps shrinking -- coming in contact with him -- squeezing his little body -- fogging up from inside...

Lachlan stares at the Tumor -- come on -- come on -- ONE CUBE.

The box VANISHES and Ellis GRABS Oliver -- dropping to the floor with him firmly in her arms.

Lachlan dips down -- hand on Oliver's back -- his relief short-lived when Ellis's eyes widen in terror.

ELLIS

He's not breathing. Lachlan, he's not breathing!

Lachlan yanks Oliver from her grasp and onto the floor -- breathes into him -- presses on his chest -- breathes in again.

Ellis stares -- unblinking -- ready to die if she's lost him.

Oliver GASPS for air -- eyes opening.

ELLIS

(screams)  
OH, GOD!

She grabs him -- laughing and crying at the same time. Oliver hugs her back like he's never letting go.

Lachlan leans back against Lucien's desk -- wipes his brow with a bloody hand -- looks at Ellis -- spots her open stab wound.

LACHLAN

Ellis?

Her cries grow faint -- limp arms drop to the floor.

LACHLAN (V.O.)

ELLIS!

CUT TO BLACK:

**INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Ellis snaps awake in bed -- finds Oliver fast asleep next to her. She reaches out and touches him gently, then looks up at Lachlan who's just finished patching her up.

LACHLAN

He's fine. Just tanked.

Still full of adrenaline, Ellis tries to sit up.

LACHLAN (CONT'D)

(helps her)

Easy. Easy.

They look at one another -- Green Limbals -- broken shells of their former selves.

ELLIS

(knowing)

He got away, didn't he?

LACHLAN

Don't -- you don't have to worry about that right now.

ELLIS

I have to find him.

LACHLAN

You haven't slept in days. And you've lost a lot of blood.

Ellis shuts her eyes as if it could erase reality.

Lachlan runs a hand through her hair -- leans in -- skin to skin -- inching closer to her lips...

Ellis bursts into tears.

LACHLAN

I'm sorry.

She sobs into her hand -- can't wake up Oliver -- then quickly gathers herself.

ELLIS

He'll come for us. Lucien's not the type to let things go.

LACHLAN

He lured you to his house to buy time. He wasn't even there. El. Listen to me. The Brocades have dismantled all of his escape strategies.

ELLIS

Which means he's still here.  
(looks around, wide-eyed)  
He could be anywhere. He could be in the walls.

LACHLAN

You're on Sinclair's system now. He won't be able to find you.

A tiny hand reaches out. Ellis looks to Oliver as he crawls into her arms.

ELLIS

Hi baby-- I'm here. I'm here.  
(rocks him back and forth)  
I love you so much. I love you so much...

Lachlan watches them as though yearning for his own childhood -- rises without saying a word and leaves. Ellis looks up.

**INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Lachlan walks past Sinclair and Damask towards the front door.

SINCLAIR

Where are you going?

Lachlan ignores her and exits the building.

**EXT. CHROME CITY - TWILIGHT**

Lachlan rides through the aftermath -- through road blocks and security barriers angry civilians can't penetrate.

**POSH NEIGHBOURHOOD**

He arcs into the driveway of his childhood home -- where he first met Ansel all those many years ago -- walks to the front door a disheveled Blacksmith opens before he can knock.

LACHLAN

Hey, mom.

She grabs and pulls him into a tight hug. He hugs her back.

LACHLAN (CONT'D)

(teasing)

You gonna invite me in?

She pulls away, indicating her unkempt hair as if to apologize.

BLACKSMITH

Of course.

He follows her in.

**INT. BLACKSMITH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Blacksmith puts the kettle on.

BLACKSMITH

Tea?

LACHLAN

Uh... sure.

He sits at the nook table -- watching Blacksmith take out her gold-rimmed porcelain tea set from inside her breakfront.

LACHLAN

(looks about the space)

Feels so much smaller than I remember.

BLACKSMITH

(drops tea bags into cups)

Things do, with time.

LACHLAN

(beat)

You were right about him.

Blacksmith shakes her head as if to disagree.

LACHLAN

You were. I just didn't want to see it. The things he's done--

BLACKSMITH

Let's not talk about it. Okay?

Lachlan studies her as she pours hot water into the cups -- sets them on the table -- sits across from him.

LACHLAN  
Are you okay?

BLACKSMITH  
I think it's best...

She takes a teaspoon -- puts sugar in her cup -- doesn't stir -- puts the wet spoon on the table, NOT in the saucer.

BLACKSMITH  
... that we focus on the future.

Lachlan waits but she doesn't meet his eyes.

His gaze drops back down to the spoon. She's turning it -- a compass -- pointing to something... *HE'S HERE.*

Lachlan CLASPS A GREEN BARRIER around them -- turns and puts Lucien in his crosshairs.

Lucien calmly emerges from the dark living space -- aiming back with a GOLD HOLOGUN.

LUCIEN  
Do you really think there's any  
barrier I can't break through?

Lachlan remains fortified.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
(to Blacksmith)  
And you thought you wouldn't make  
a good hostage.

BLACKSMITH  
The blizzard should've passed by  
now. You don't need us.

*Blizzard?* Lachlan looks at Lucien.

LUCIEN  
(scoffs)  
You think you're being smart?  
(beat)  
Get upstairs and change. Now.

LACHLAN  
Don't listen to him.

Blacksmith goes to leave but Lachlan shifts in front of her, shielding.

Lucien nods -- BANG!

Blacksmith SCREAMS as Lachlan is thrust back against the wall.  
He sinks down to the floor with a bullet wound in his shoulder.

BLACKSMITH  
Lucien-- Lucien, please--

LUCIEN  
Upstairs, NOW!

Blacksmith looks at Lachlan -- *do as he says* -- runs to the back and up the stairs.

Lachlan tightens his grip on his bleeding shoulder as Lucien walks up, towering over him.

LACHLAN  
The things I did to make you proud.

LUCIEN  
Oh, I was proud. Just not of you.

He plants a GLOWING THUMB on Lachlan's forehead and...

CUT TO:

**EXT. NEGATIVE SPACE - DAY**

No armour. No protective barrier. Lachlan looks down at his hands as they turn blue, blister, shrink... and he's a child, surrounded by his own corpses at varying stages of decay.

He looks up -- spotting a younger Lucien as he takes little Ansel's hand and guides him away from this awful place.

YOUNG LACHLAN  
Dad--

He tries to rise -- to run after them -- but the sand claws at his feet and he sinks back down.

YOUNG LACHLAN (CONT'D)  
Dad, I'm sorry!

The louder he yells, the weaker his voice. Till he has none.

He wilts as Lucien and Ansel vanish into obscurity -- painful sobs racking his frail body.

BACK TO:

**INT. BLACKSMITH'S HOME - CONTINUOUS**

A tear runs down Lachlan's cheek as he stares at nothing -- dreaming with eyes wide open.

Lucien's face breaks -- for a moment -- then he crosses to the back of the house.

**BACK ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS**

Blacksmith emerges from the stairs in a thick fur coat -- sees Lachlan sunken on the ground -- suspended in a trance.

BLACKSMITH  
Oh, God... Lucien, please--

Lucien grabs and forces her out the back door.

**EXT. BLACKSMITH'S HOME - NIGHT**

BLACKSMITH (CONT'D)  
Please -- he'll die -- you can't  
leave him like this!

Lucien unseals the car, forces Blacksmith into the passenger's seat -- gets in himself.

The car pulls out the back driveway -- speeding off towards outer city limits.

**EXT. CHROME DOME - CONTINUOUS**

Lucien takes a ramp into a private underground highway -- speeds through holographic barriers towards Negative Space.

**EXT. NEGATIVE SPACE - NIGHT**

Lucien's car emerges above ground -- cutting through an ashen flurry of snow and wildfire soot.

**INT. BLACKSMITH'S CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Lucien summons a FILTER of RURAL ITALY to shroud reality.

BLACKSMITH  
Where are you taking me?  
(beat)  
You can't fly in this weather.

LUCIEN  
This weather is all we've got.

BLACKSMITH  
 There's nowhere to go, Lucien.  
 It's over.

He says nothing -- driving as though completely unfazed.

Blacksmith looks out at the artificial view -- sickened by it.

BLACKSMITH  
 How could you do this? You preach  
 about healing... second chances...  
 and this whole time you've been  
 playing Darwin with our species?

LUCIEN  
 You'd have done the same.

BLACKSMITH  
 Commit *genocide*?! Cherry-pick  
 innocent people for extermination?

LUCIEN  
 We were at the brink of extinction  
 and people kept sprouting up like  
 WEED!

(exasperated sigh)  
 We ignored the warnings and now  
 here we are -- and even *that* is a  
 miracle. Within centuries we've  
 destroyed what took billions of  
 years to grow -- in seconds we've  
 eradicated a lifetime. If not  
 cancer then what are we?

(long beat)  
 I should've killed us all...

BLACKSMITH  
 (Ellis's voice)  
 I will spit on your grave.

Lucien looks at Blacksmith as her face PIXELATES -- GLITCHES  
 OFF -- revealing ELLIS beneath the mask.

INTERCUT Ellis on her bike following Lachlan to Blacksmith's --  
 intercepting her in her bedroom -- copying her face onto her  
 own -- throwing on her coat -- heading down the stairs.

Lucien stares at Ellis's GREEN LIMBALS. He can't stop her.

Ellis looks at the steering wheel and FORCES A SHARP TURN.

The car FLIPS and Lucien is THROWN through the windshield --  
 flying through swirls of toxic snow, STRIKING the remains of a  
 demolished building.

The mangled car rolls to a stop. Ellis crawls out -- encased in a protective shield.

Lucien props himself up amidst the wreckage -- bleeding from the temple. He spots Ellis and tries to summon a weapon -- but the blow to his head keeps impeding him.

Ellis looks at him as though for the very last time.

LUCIEN  
(moment of truth)  
Out of all the futures I pictured  
for us... this was not it.

ELLIS  
(summons a HoloGun)  
You killed Ansel.

LUCIEN  
I was dealt a hand I couldn't win.

INTERCUT Lucien in his meditation room -- staring at a fresh patch of earth with bloodshot eyes.

LUCIEN (V.O.)  
A hand I was forced to play --  
without hesitation.

INTERCUT Sinclair on the floor of her old apartment -- where she sunk after killing her own brother -- staring at the blank wall his blood once painted.

LUCIEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Because nature is uncompromising;  
fanning the flames of wild fires  
to make room for new beginnings.

INTERCUT a bare-faced Damask -- looking at a picture of his wife in the arms of the man he used to be.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
I don't expect you to understand.  
At least not since Ansel. And I'm  
afraid I didn't grasp the weight  
of his loss till I planted a white  
Cherry Blossom and it bloomed red.

INTERCUT Lucien in his meditation room, holding an empty vial: the one Ansel left behind after his pitch. The one with a cherry blossom seedling that would one day grow from his ashes.

Ellis's vision blurs as the horror sets in.

Lucien's Limbals GLOW -- he draws -- BANG!

Ellis JOLTS as Lucien's head snaps back -- his blood spraying.

She watches him drop dead as RED SNOW peppers down on him -- looks down at her HoloGun -- it wasn't *she* who shot him -- SWATS AWAY the hand on her shoulder.

LACHLAN  
It's me! It's me.

He helps Ellis up and pulls her into his blood-soaked arms.

LACHLAN  
It's over. It's done.

Shellshocked, Ellis watches Lucien's unprotected skin turn blue and blister.

It's over. It's finally over. She shuts her eyes as Lachlan guides her away... and they fade into obscurity.

FADE TO BLACK:

**EXT. LUCIEN'S MANSION - DAY**

Men carry Lucien's possessions out the front entrance, loading them onto trucks as onlookers watch from beyond a barricade.

**INT. LUCIEN'S MANSION, MEDITATION ROOM - DAY**

Lachlan enters to find Ellis sitting beneath Lucien's pink cherry blossom -- on Ansel's grave -- gazing down at the priceless Amalphi violin in her lap.

ELLIS  
Ansel sold it before signing into Quarantine. I searched *everywhere* for it. And Lucien had it this whole time...

A part of Lachlan splinters. Perhaps -- even in death -- Ansel meant more to his father than he ever could.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
I know he was a monster. I know.

LACHLAN  
It's okay to mourn the man you thought he was.

**INT. CHROME HQ, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Ellis sits at the head of the desk with Lachlan by her side -- skimming the digital report draped from the ceiling.

On the opposite end, Blacksmith taps the table -- shifting from one infographic to another.

BLACKSMITH

Lucien used thousands of Dendrites to hack a person's mind, then used his algorithms to calculate their inherent worth. Those who didn't make the cut were plucked out of society in a way that made the smallest dent.

LACHLAN

How could people not find out? Did no one request a visitation all these years?

Blacksmith glances at Ellis, who avoids her gaze.

BLACKSMITH

Visitations were brief. And in time, less and less frequent.

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. VISITATION ROOM - DAY**

Ellis sits across from Ansel who's wearing a white jumpsuit. She rests her palm on the barrier between them and says something we can't hear.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)

There was no physical contact, so visitors had no way of realizing that their loved ones on the other side aren't... real.

Ansel half-heartedly brings his hand up to the barrier but reneges -- saying something to Ellis that crushes her.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)

Lucien used what he extracted in Synapse -- the patient's memories, personality, inside jokes -- to generate a Hologram of them. The kind that can fool anyone, because it's designed to prey on emotions.

Ansel rises -- lips easy to read as he tells Ellis don't come back -- walking away to be re-Synapsed.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)  
With time... people let go.

BACK TO:

**INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

ELLIS  
And you had absolutely nothing to do with this. You found out *all* of this after CHROME's downfall.

Lachlan glances at his mother.

BLACKSMITH  
Do you really believe me capable of such a thing?

ELLIS  
You buried the Coroner's report. It would've exonerated my son and you used it as leverage.

BLACKSMITH  
I thought Lucien would concede. I didn't -- I couldn't have imagined him capable of--

LACHLAN  
Look, you don't obliterate a third of the global population on your own. You need help to conceal such a sharp decline in numbers. This must've been a concerted effort. We have a lot of people in queue for a thorough investigation.

ELLIS  
What did he do with the bodies?

BLACKSMITH  
He most likely disposed of them somewhere outside city limits. A remote location out in Negative Space no one would dare go.

Something clicks. Ellis rises and leaves the room.

**INT. STEMCELL - CONTINUOUS**

Damask sits under a tree inside a serene micro-forest, watching children play in the near distance. He receives a call.

DAMASK  
Agent Ambrose.

INTERCUT WITH ELLIS IN THE HALL:

ELLIS  
When Ansel left for Quarantine he took his bioengineered plants with him. He had these dreams of re-greening the Earth. Clearing up the skies. Reinstating travel.  
(off his silence)  
The future he painted for me... I saw it the day I met you inside StemCell. I heard it in the music.  
(beat)  
You knew Ansel, didn't you? Why didn't you tell me?

DAMASK  
It would've broken you. We needed you to finish what he'd started.

A long beat, and Ellis hangs up.

**INT. MAISON VERT, BEDROOM - DAY**

Sinclair enters to find LEVESQUE staring at himself in the mirror.

He turns to her -- smiles -- mask vanishing.

DAMASK  
Was just trying it on for size.  
(beat)  
It's strange: outgrowing yourself.

**INT. MAISON VERT, LIVING ROOM - DAY**

A bare-faced Damask sits down in his armchair -- across from Sinclair -- surrounded by everyone. He nods, and she goes LIVE.

DAMASK  
It's been said that "the origin of every great fortune is a crime."

People all over the world tune into the public broadcast.

## DAMASK (CONT'D)

But CHROME's heinous crimes  
against humanity were the symptom,  
not the cause. And this dark truth  
we can no longer afford to ignore:

Ellis and Lachlan exchange a heavy glance.

## DAMASK (CONT'D)

We walled ourselves in. We ran out  
of space, so we sought freedom in  
time -- reminiscing about the past  
-- daydreaming about the future.  
We live inside memories of places  
that no longer exist -- long for  
people we no longer have. And in  
our ignorance -- the unspeakable  
crept into the realm of reality.  
We grew accustomed to misery --  
reduced to mere drops, destined to  
wash away in the tidal wave of our  
own making.

People everywhere listen with reverence. Sober. Present.

## DAMASK (CONT'D)

But I don't want us to perish. I  
don't want the future to have to  
dig for us in the dirt -- our  
history a broken puzzle that can  
never be solved.

Ellis rests her cheek to Oliver's temple.

## DAMASK (CONT'D)

As long as we retain our humanity,  
we have a chance to start anew.  
For no matter how dark the clouds  
that eclipse the sun, it will  
always rise.

We soar from Maison Vert's rooftop -- up through StemCell --  
higher -- above Negative Space sprinkled with countless other  
StemCells -- higher -- the state -- higher yet -- the country  
-- the continent -- the BROWN PLANET.

## DAMASK (V.O.)

And so -- from the ashes of our  
sins -- we too shall rise.

The atmosphere grows clearer -- and clearer -- until in time,  
the planet is quilted with teal lands and turquoise waters.

**THE END**