

V I C I O U S

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Based on the Novel *VICIOUS*
By V.E. Schwab

03.30.2016

FADE IN:

INT. VICTOR AND ELI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

BBBBBBBBBBBBEEEEEP... CLOSE on a flatlined ECG monitor. Its ominous monotone surrounds us.

REVERSE ANGLE on VICTOR VALE (25) looking rangy, almost avian as he crouches over ELI CARDALE (26). Eli's look is athletic, All-American -- or it would be if he weren't splayed out on the floor, pale and unconscious.

Victor is grim-faced, drenched in sweat, his eyes pink-and-black smudges. He tugs at Eli's hair, slaps his face.

A shaky hand guides a noradrenalin syringe into an IV spike. Depresses the plunger.

Eli's still a ragdoll. That ECG monotone like tinnitus now, growing louder, shriller...

Victor knits his hands together and begins CPR compressions, bearing down on Eli's sternum with all his weight. Arms, locked into position, pump up and down like pistons.

Victor glances at the ECG monitor, then leans in and breathes for Eli. That monotone is now an unbearable shriek.

Victor scrambles for a nearby Epipen and jams it into Eli's thigh. Bated breath as he glances at the ECG monitor. It remains as lifeless as Eli.

Victor, at the end of his tether, knocks over a tray of medical supplies as he clamors for an AED (Automated External Defibrillator).

He tears Eli's shirt open, sticks the defib pads onto Eli's bare chest, and jams down on the AED's power button.

WE PUSH IN through Victor's index finger, past tissue, bone, and into deep nerve fibers that pulse with energy.

We arc like static electricity, bridging the gap from Victor's fingertip into the AED unit itself.

Circuitry fires to a motherboard, past a relay switch, and back out to --

INT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - VICTOR'S CELL - DAY

Victor's eyes flash open, rocketing him out of sleep. He sits up, drenched in sweat, to find himself inside a bare cell.

The lights flicker overhead as he regains his bearings. Annoyed, he turns his attention upward.

PUSH IN ON: The flickering bulb as Victor studies it. He crooks his head, and the bulb's glow steadies.

Suddenly, he's shaken from thought by the heavy clanging of a GUARD unlocking his cell door.

GUARD
Vale, you have a visitor.

Victor eyes him quizzically. He doesn't get visitors.

INT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

The Guard leads a handcuffed, jumpsuit-clad Victor through a series of depressing grey hallways.

Lights flicker and buzz as they move through the corridors.

GUARD
Thought maintenance fixed that.

VICTOR
Everything breaks eventually.

INT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

The Guard locks Victor's handcuffs to the table then leaves, giving Victor a chance to take in his surroundings. Spartan. Every surface is hard-edged, worn, and scuffed.

Seated across from him: DETECTIVE SABRINA "STELL" STELLMAN (36). She has sharp, intense eyes and a stonecutter's jaw. She leafs through an inch-thick dossier, ignoring Victor.

Stell brings a mug of coffee to her lips, and a charm bracelet on her wrist catches the light. It's a little girl's bracelet, with cupcake, pony, and butterfly charms.

VICTOR
Who are you?

Stell holds up a finger, turns another page in her dossier.

STELL
What are your thoughts on Claire
Rosen and Sebastian Lyne, Victor?

VICTOR
Nothing flattering.

STELL
Could you elaborate?

Victor eyes her suspiciously.

VICTOR
 Lyne was a conniving backstabber
 who passed off other people's work
 as his own. Claire fancied herself
 a soldier on the front lines of
 scientific discovery but didn't
 have the stomach to fight in the
 trenches. Why do you care?

STELL
 Because they're dead.

Stell reads Victor's expression: *he wasn't expecting that.*

VICTOR
 And you came to me because...?

Stell tosses a leatherbound badge over to Victor. He flips it
 open and reads it aloud.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
 "Detective Stellman, Boston PD.
 Homicide Division."

Victor tosses the badge back.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
 How did they die?

STELL
 Apparent suicide.

VICTOR
 Badge says you're with homicide.

STELL
 When two people who know each other
 die within 24 hours of each other
 under mysterious circumstances, we
 tend to look into it. It's a
 strange coincidence, wouldn't you
 agree?

VICTOR
 You think someone murdered them?

STELL
 Do you?

VICTOR
 Not sure what they've been up to.
 Or who they've been talking to.

Victor raises his handcuffs.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
 I don't get out much.

STELL
You don't sound too broken up.

VICTOR
Didn't really care for either of them.

STELL
But you knew them pretty well, before you ended up here. Tell me, what they were like.

VICTOR
Why should I tell you anything?

STELL
The state rewards prisoners who cooperate with the police.

VICTOR
We both know I'm never getting out of here.

STELL
But I can talk to the warden, make sure your time here is more comfortable.

Victor's face hardens.

VICTOR
I don't deserve comfort.

STELL
Then consider this interview part of your sentence.

VICTOR
I haven't seen Claire or Lyne since I came inside. What could I possibly tell you that you don't already know?

STELL
You could start by telling me about the research you were doing under Professor Lyne. The...

Stell flips through her notes.

STELL (CONT'D)
..."NDE cohort"?

VICTOR
Brainless job for a glorified lab tech.

STELL

You were summa at MIT, on-track to get your PhD from Harvard by 25. Why would a hotshot like you waste your talent on a "brainless" gig?

VICTOR

I needed lab hours on something pedestrian, something the half-wits in post-doc could wrap their heads around.

STELL

That's not the way Eli Cardale described it.

The name hits Victor like a bolt.

VICTOR

You spoke with Eli?

STELL

Of course. He knew Claire and Lyne, too, didn't he?

VICTOR

How is he?

STELL

How do you think?

Victor pauses, processes.

VICTOR

What does any of this have to do with Claire and Lyne's suicides?

STELL

Nothing, maybe. I won't know until you tell me everything.

VICTOR

About a year ago, Professor Lyne tapped me and Eli to work on a new program he had gotten funded through a Harvard bio-med grant...

FLASHBACK - INT. CHANNING RESEARCH LAB - NIGHT

A state-of-the-art medical lab with the smooth lines and shiny surfaces of an Apple store.

Victor takes notes as Eli draws blood from SYDNEY CLARKE (11), a precocious girl with barley-colored hair and marble black eyes.

This earlier version of Victor is together, if impatient -- only the barest hint of the jealous twitchball he'll become beneath the surface.

Eli is full of life, a stark contrast to the limp, bloodless victim we saw at the opening.

VICTOR (V.O.)

We were studying the long-term effects of Near-Death Experiences. Medically verified NDE's are extremely rare, so the cohort was small, only four patients. But the work was important.

Eli finishes with Sydney and helps her off the examination table, then hold up his hand for a high-five.

ELI

Great job, Sydney.

Smiling, she slaps him five. Victor looks on with a mix of boredom and disgust.

SYDNEY

Do you know what Saturday is?

Eli looks around in a mock panic.

ELI

Oh no, did I forget Arbor Day again?

Sydney giggles. The girl's got a crush.

SYDNEY

No!

ELI

Flag Day?

Sydney shakes her head. Eli glances at her file, notes the birth date, then gasps.

ELI (CONT'D)

Ohmigod, your birthday.

Victor rolls his eyes.

SYDNEY

Uh-huh! Did Serena tell you about going to the aquarium? She's taking me to the Giant Ocean Tank! It houses over a hundred different species of starfish. Did you know that starfish can regenerate entire limbs?

ELI
That's impossible!

SYDNEY
It's true, I swear! Can you come?

ELI
Vic and I are going to be tied up
in a science conference all
weekend, kiddo.

Sydney's mood drops.

ELI (CONT'D)
But when you come in for vitals
next week, we'll have a surprise
for you, okay? Promise.

She brightens back up. Without even glancing in Victor's direction, she reaches up and hugs Eli around the neck, then runs out of the room.

VICTOR
What would you say your ratio of
small-talk to actual work is on any
given day?

Eli starts packing away their medical equipment.

ELI
Bedside manner matters. You're just
mad she likes me more.

VICTOR
We're supposed to be impartial.

ELI
Impartial, not impolite. I treat
all my patients the same way.

VICTOR
Subjects, not patients. We're
studying them, not treating them.

ELI
Why are you so wound up?

VICTOR
We have real work to do, and you're
planning a pre-teen's birthday
party.

ELI
This is real work.

VICTOR

This study is bullshit, just confirmation of a bunch of things we already know. You can't pretend that checking Lynch's blood pressure and Rusher's resting heart rate is cutting edge science. A nurse could do this.

ELI

Working on this "bullshit study" is what gives us access to the resources we need for our own research. I'm not going to jeopardize that by biting the hand that feeds us.

VICTOR

We have everything we need to start working on the serum full-time.

ELI

We signed on to do a job. I'm willing to sink our free time into perfecting the serum, but we still have a duty to Lyne -- and to the cohort.

VICTOR

With all the time we spend on Lyne's project, we don't have any free time --

He's interrupted by a knock at the door. After a brief pause, it opens and SERENA CLARKE (23) enters. Unlike her sister Sydney, Serena's features are Nordic: platinum blonde-hair, glacier-blue eyes.

SERENA

Sorry to interrupt.

ELI

You're not. Come on in, Serena.

She smiles at Eli, gives a tacit nod in Victor's direction.

SERENA

I just wanted to thank you for the way you've treated Sydney. She actually looks forward to coming here. I've never seen a kid excited about a doctor's visit.

ELI

She's a great girl.

SERENA

Yeah, she is. It's just... she's been having trouble at school. The other kids tease her, she doesn't have many friends. She tells the other kids about the accident. She describes what it was like to drown. They think she's... morbid.

She pauses. It's a weight on her shoulders.

ELI

I know the rafting accident was traumatic, for both of you. And I know from experience what it's like to lose your parents so suddenly. But the two of you still have each other. Hold on to that.

SERENA

After our parents passed, I've tried to fill their role the best I can.

ELI

You can talk to me. You can think of me as a friend. Both of you.

Victor grows impatient. Serena tenderly touches Eli's arm.

SERENA

I'm glad she has someone else that she can trust.

STELL (PRE-LAP) (V.O.)

I'm sorry to intrude on your time, Mr. Cardale. I know you've been through a lot.

INT. ELI'S APARTMENT - DAY

BACK IN THE PRESENT, Stell sits opposite Eli in a packed-up two-bedroom, the same apartment from the opening scene. It's just Eli, Stell, and some boxes.

He's a far cry from the vivacious person from the flashback. His face is drawn, eyes sunken. He looks like death.

STELL

Did you and Victor first meet each other working for Lyne?

ELI

No, that was years ago.

STELL
When you first got to Harvard
Medical?

ELI
Yes.

Stell looks around the apartment.

STELL
Moving?

ELI
This place holds a lot of painful
memories.

STELL
But you're so close to graduating.

ELI
I'm on-track to flunk out anyway.
Might as well speed things along.

STELL
The school must be willing to give
you some time off. Have you tried
applying for a... What do you call
it? Sabbatical?

ELI
The leave of absence policy at
Harvard is not a lax one.

STELL
But considering your past
performance--

ELI
You aren't my academic adviser,
Detective Stellman.

Stell takes a breath, treads carefully.

STELL
I want to go back to the first time
you met Victor.

ELI
First year of post-grad. Victor was
presenting a note he'd prepared for
an article in the student review.
Audience didn't think much of it.

STELL
Victor's work was a little
lackluster?

ELI
On the contrary-- it was
brilliant...

FLASHBACK - INT. HARVARD LECTURE ROOM - DAY

Victor flits about the dais, scrawling incomprehensible symbols and graphs onto the wall of white boards behind him.

VICTOR
Every year, millions worldwide die
from traumatic injuries, but the
problem with our current data set
is that few emergency medical
personnel record non-vital
physiological changes.

The gallery is nearly empty. Most attendees are only half-engaged, except for Eli, who sees some spark in Victor.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
So once we limit ourselves to the
still-significant collection of
cases in which environmental
factors can be taken into account,
we are left with one inexorable
factor for survivability, vis-a-vis
traumatic injury and other acute
threats to life: Time To Treatment--
or, as I call it, "T3."

Victor writes out "Time To Treatment," circling the T's.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
In layman's terms, the most
important determinant of whether a
person survives an accident is the
time it takes for them to receive
professional medical treatment.

He draws two axes on board, "T3" and "Survival," then traces a sloping line over them to illustrate his point.

He turns to the audience dramatically.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
But the effect is geometric, not
linear. Survivability plummets over
a span of minutes, not hours. This
isn't an issue of faster
ambulances. What we need is a way
to stretch time, physiologically,
for the patient-- so that minutes
pass by like hours. This is how we
will save lives.

No reaction. Some people rise and exit; Eli is captivated.

FLASHBACK - INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Victor stomps out of the lecture room, stacks of papers and notebooks bundled in his hands. He's muttering to himself. He looks like a lunatic.

Eli calls out as he passes, but Victor doesn't hear him. Eli runs up and taps him on the shoulder. He spins around.

VICTOR

What?!

ELI

I saw your presentation.

Victor's face remains twisted up in a dismissive sneer.

VICTOR

So?

ELI

I liked it.

Victor eyes him. Is this a joke?

VICTOR

The presentation was a cursory overview. The research note is more... specific.

ELI

I'd love to read it.

VICTOR

Then look for it in the Harvard Medical Student Review next month.

Victor turns and tries to escape, not sure how to handle actual human interaction.

ELI

Mammalian diving reflex.

Victor stops. Turns back around.

VICTOR

What?

ELI

It optimizes respiration to allow some animals, including humans, to stay underwater for extended periods of time.

VICTOR

I know what it is.

ELI

Then you know that it causes bradycardia, peripheral vasoconstriction, and blood shift from the extremities to the thoracic organs. Pediatricians can trigger it artificially by placing a towel soaked in cold water over a patient's face--

VICTOR

-- slowing down their physiological processes. You can treat supraventricular tachycardia with a wet towel; the sensation of cold and moisture causes the body to go into survival mode. It automatically starts conserving its resources.

ELI

Effectively "stretching time" for the patient. Imagine if you could refine and enhance the reaction, and trigger it with an injection.

VICTOR

A panacea in the form of an Epipen?

ELI

A T3 serum.

Victor extends his hand slowly, like an abused dog learning to shake hands.

VICTOR

Victor Vale.

Eli takes his hand.

ELI

Eli Cardale.

INT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Stell and Victor still sit across from each other, each tensed up, trying to feel the other one out.

STELL

Why did you agree to work with Lyne?

VICTOR

What do you mean?

STELL

You and Eli were top of your class. Any professor would have been thrilled to have you working for them. I spoke with the other faculty, and they said Lyne was something of a lightweight. Sparse publication history, no tenure.

VICTOR

He was unproven, but he was young. Eli and I expected him to go places. He had big ideas.

STELL

You didn't feel that your talents were being wasted on the work he had you doing?
(setting the trap)
You never pursued your own "off-book" activities?

Victor shakes his head.

VICTOR

His lab, his research.

STELL

So you respected him?

VICTOR

Of course. He was our mentor.

INT. ELI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Eli leans forward in his seat.

ELI

Victor hated Lyne.

STELL

Why?

ELI

Victor hates anyone he sees as intellectually inferior -- which is pretty much everyone. Lyne was no exception. But Victor thought of him as a useful idiot. He had the resources, but lacked the vision to use them properly.

STELL

Did you agree?

ELI

With which part?

STELL
That Lyne "lacked vision"?

Eli sighs.

ELI
There's a popular misconception
that scientific progress is a
series of earth-shattering
discoveries. Archimedes running
naked through the streets, Ben
Franklin bottling up a lightning
bolt in a thunderstorm. It doesn't
work that way. Scientific progress
is based on repetition.

STELL
And Lyne was the repetitive type?

ELI
Victor thought so.

Eli starts to lose himself, his hatred of Victor bubbling to
the surface.

ELI (CONT'D)
Science is a journey, each step
measured before and after it's
taken. Victor wanted to run blindly
forward, tripping over his own
feet. If you tried to slow him
down, he'd just knock you out of
his way.

STELL
Did he have a major problem with
authority?

Eli catches himself, re-centers.

ELI
No. There were things that could
set him off, but once he cooled
down, he was as good a lab tech as
anyone. Better, in fact.

Stell latches onto that.

STELL
What kind of things set him off?

FLASHBACK - INT. ARMENISE BUILDING - DAY

*Scientist-types bustle around each other inside of a large
lecture hall as Eli and Victor help PROFESSOR SEBASTIAN LYNE
(40s) prep for his presentation.*

Lyne is too young for tenure, too old for his black cardigan and fashion-forward wire-rim frames. A pseudo-intellectual clinging to the last scraps of his youth.

ELI

We'd be better prepared to help if you'd let us look over your presentation.

LYNE

You collated the data for me. The slides just put it in a digestible format.

VICTOR

Is this all really necessary? Nothing that we've gotten from the NDE cohort is all that mind-blowing.

LYNE

I think I might surprise you.

A TECH walks up to Lyne and touches his shoulder.

TECH

Ready when you are.

Lyne nods.

LYNE

(to Eli and Victor)

You two take your seats. And wish me luck up there.

ELI

Good luck, Professor.

Victor says nothing. He and Eli grab their seats, up in the front row of the lecture hall.

VICTOR

He's going to need it with this snooze fest.

Lyne takes the stage and clears his throat.

LYNE

(into microphone)

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid I'll be starting off this presentation in a quite unorthodox manner. Forgive my flair for the dramatic, but I will not be presenting my work on "Long-Term Physiological Effects of Survival after Clinical Death."

Victor and Eli share a look. What is Lyne doing?

Lyne clicks on his first slide: "Enhancing Survivability through Pharmacologically-Induced Time-Stretching: Building a 'Survivor Serum.'"

Eli's jaw drops. Victor seethes. The rest of the attendees sit up in their seats, interested.

LYNE (CONT'D)

As we all know, the most fundamental factor in survivability across acute mechanisms of fatality is Time To Treatment-- what I have coined "T3..."

Victor moves to stand, but Eli grabs his arm.

ELI

Victor, wait.

LYNE

...the "Lyne Survivor Serum" is an intramuscular injection that triggers the body's own natural survival mechanisms to slow a patient's physiological processes and extend the T3 treatment window.

VICTOR

(sotto, to Eli)

That's our research! How the fuck does he have our research?!

Excited murmuring from the audience.

ELI

I don't know, but making a scene here won't help.

LYNE

The effect on emergency medicine will be nothing short of revolutionary.

Behind Lyne, polished versions of Victor's maniac scrawlings slide across the projection screen to Lyne's narration.

VICTOR

He's taking credit for my work!

Victor's outburst is a little too loud. Several attendees turn to glare at him. Lyne glances in his direction and smirks, almost imperceptibly.

Eli looks around and pulls Victor out of the lecture hall.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ARMENISE BUILDING - DAY

With Lyne's presentation in session, the front of the building is almost deserted. Eli walks out holding Victor's arm. Victor snatches it out of Eli's grip.

VICTOR

We should go back in there and expose that asshole for the fraud he is.

ELI

And say what? That we used his lab, his equipment, his data for our own research? Without his knowledge?

VICTOR

Yes!

ELI

We'd be admitting to misusing university funds.

VICTOR

We always knew we'd get a slap on the wrist from the administration-- "better to ask forgiveness than permission."

ELI

That was before Lyne had his own claim on the research, when we were the only ones with the data necessary to actually make the serum a reality. If he has a copy of our research, we have no way of proving we developed the serum in the first place.

Victor screams in frustration and kicks a trash can over, spilling garbage all over the walkway.

Eli grabs his shoulder, tries to calm him.

ELI (CONT'D)

Calm down. We can talk to Lyne after his presentation, see what he wants. This might not be the disaster we think it is.

FLASHBACK - INT. ARMENISE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Eli and Victor stand waiting in the corridor outside the lecture room as invigorated scientists stream out, excitedly chatting about "Lyne's hypothetical serum" to one another.

Finally, Lyne exits in a cloud of glad-handers and congratulators. His eyes meet Victor and Eli's.

LYNE

*(to his sycophants)
Pardon me, I need to speak with my
research assistants. We have a lot
of work to do in the next few
weeks.*

FLASHBACK - INT. ARMENISE BUILDING - MEETING ROOM - DAY

*Lyne, Eli, and Victor sneak off to a meeting room away from
the chaos of the conference.*

LYNE

I said it would surprise you.

VICTOR

Go fuck yourself, Lyne.

Eli motions to Victor to stay calm.

ELI

*How did you find our research? We
never kept a copy on the lab
computers.*

LYNE

*I knew the resources you
requisitioned couldn't be for the
NDE cohort-- not all of them,
anyway. I realized early on that
the two of you were pursuing
some... extracurricular activity.*

ELI

You broke into our private files?

Lyne holds his hands up: "Do you need to ask?"

ELI (CONT'D)

That's our research.

LYNE

*You conducted it under my nose.
With my equipment and materials.
(then)
It's a shame, really. This is
brilliant work-- I found several
additional discoveries in here that
would each be worth their own
grant. The trigeminal nerve
actuator you developed was a stroke
of genius.*

VICTOR

Then how can you justify taking it from us?

LYNE

This discovery doesn't belong to you. It belongs to the world.

VICTOR

Spare me the humanitarian act. You don't care who it helps as long as your name is on the check you get from Pfizer.

LYNE

Pfizer? You're thinking too small. NASA, DARPA, the Pentagon-- there are much more powerful organizations that would do anything to get their hands on this. It's one of the most important discoveries of our time.

INT. ELI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Stell scribbles something in her notes, then looks up to see Eli staring through her.

STELL

Something wrong?

He snaps out of it.

ELI

What?

STELL

You blanked out for a second.

ELI

It happens. I don't-- I, uh, haven't been sleeping.

STELL

How long has that been going on?

No answer. A look of realization on Stell's face.

STELL (CONT'D)

Angie.

Eli's tired, bloodshot eyes flash hate at Stell.

ELI

I don't want to talk about her.

STELL (PRE-LAP) (V.O.)
Were you jealous of Eli?

INT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

The question jolts Victor.

VICTOR
Jealous?

STELL
Of his relationship with Angie?

VICTOR
What does any of that have to do
with Claire and Lyne's deaths?

STELL
She knew both of them, after all.
She and Claire were best friends.
Angie was Lyne's T.A. Her death is
one of the things that makes their
suicides so suspicious.

Victor is visibly shaken.

VICTOR
Unless you have questions about
Lyne--

STELL
Did you murder Angie because she
chose Eli over you?

VICTOR
(losing control)
I didn't murder her.

STELL
The confession you signed says
otherwise.

VICTOR
Murder involves intent. I would
never intentionally hurt Angie.
Never.

STELL
But you did kill her.

Victor stands up, straining against his handcuffs. A deep,
far-off hum emanates from somewhere within the prison.

CLOSE ON: The hair on Stell's arm, raised up as if by static.

Victor collects himself and sits back down.

VICTOR
No. I wasn't jealous.

FLASHBACK - EXT. HARVARD QUAD - DAY

Victor watches from afar as Eli and ANGIE (26), a ball of sunshine with long blond curls and big, hopeful eyes, coo at each other lovingly and share a kiss before Angie skips off to class. Pure jealousy.

NOTE: The following Voice-Overs intercut between Stell's interrogations of Victor and Eli.

VICTOR (V.O.)
I was happy for the both of them.

STELL (V.O.)
Did you ever feel torn between the two of them, Victor and Angie?

ELI (V.O.)
It wasn't like that. There were no sides, no jealousy.

STELL (V.O.)
No secrets?

Eli flashes Victor a smile as he walks over. Victor forces himself to smile back.

ELI (V.O.)
Never. We shared everything with one another...

Eli and Victor shrug their shoulders to keep warm as they walk across patches of speckled grey snow.

ELI
So what's our next move?

VICTOR
We go forward with our research.

ELI
But Lyne's already claimed it as his own.

VICTOR
Human trials.

ELI
You can't be serious.

VICTOR
It's our only play, unless you want Lyne to become famous for stealing our discovery...

(MORE)

VICTOR (CONT'D)
a serum that could completely
revolutionize modern medicine.

ELI
I don't want to be famous.

VICTOR
You don't want to become a footnote
in the history of your own
discovery, either. And think about
the lives this will change. Think
about the millions of people our
serum will save. We can change the
world forever.

ELI
But human trials... that's--

VICTOR
Easy compared to what we've already
achieved.

ELI
Let's say it works. What then? Who
would publish the results? It's
unethical.

VICTOR
It's not immoral. I don't care if
we don't get into the New England
Journal of Medicine. This is about
proving something to ourselves:
that we took this all the way. When
everyone else told us to stop, and
even after Lyne tried stealing our
research, we kept going. If we pull
this off, we won't be famous, we'll
be legendary.

Eli ponders for a long moment, Victor's words hitting all the
right buttons.

ELI
Alright. But we can't tell Angie.
She's Lyne's T.A.; we can't put her
in a position where she has to lie
to him.

VICTOR
Sure. Plausible deniability.

FLASHBACK - INT. GOLDENSON BIOMEDICAL LAB - NIGHT

A fully stocked medical lab packed to the gills with
expensive equipment. Clinical compound microscopes. Mass
spectrometers. High performance liquid chromatography rigs.

Victor and Eli, wearing lab coats and nitrile gloves, work at one of the two workstations at the center of the lab.

VICTOR
Did you double check the excipient ratios?

ELI
(typing)
Triple checked. We're golden.

Suddenly, Eli stops in his tracks, removes his eyeglasses, and looks around.

Without looking up, Victor addresses him.

VICTOR
You stopped.

ELI
This feels strangely normal.

VICTOR
Contradiction.

Victor removes a beaker from an ice bath and pours its contents, a thick amber liquid, into several test tubes.

ELI
(puts his glasses back on)
Before today, this was all theoretical. Visualizations on paper and chalkboards. Today it becomes real. Or not.

VICTOR
Your optimism overwhelms me.

ELI
I just never thought I'd do something this... transformative. That I'd change the world.

VICTOR
I always knew I would.

ELI
Are you telling me it hasn't crossed your mind that this might not work?

Victor caps the test tubes and hands them to Eli, who places them in a centrifuge and turns the machine on, causing it to whir up.

VICTOR
Has it crossed yours?

ELI

Well, you don't do something that
has the potential to change history
every day.

VICTOR

Not every day. Just this day.

LATER

Victor sits in front of the incubator waiting for the last few seconds to tick down, gazing ahead with a thousand-yard stare. Eli stands nervously behind him.

ELI

Now that we're done with the larger equipment, we have to move the whole operation back to the apartment.

VICTOR

Don't want the janitor walking in on us.

ELI

Or Lyne.

An alarm goes off. Victor removes a fresh batch of serum from the incubator and holds it up to the light.

ELI (CONT'D)

Hard to believe two years of research comes down to something so small.

VICTOR

Nothing small about it.

Victor withdraws the contents of one of the test tubes into a syringe, caps it, and places it onto the table between him and Eli.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Whichever of us it stops on gets the injection. Agreed?

Eli nods. Victor spins the syringe. Before it stops, Eli and Victor are interrupted by a loud **KNOCK** at the door--

It's Angie. They turn their attention back to the spinning syringe, which slows, then stops. It points at Eli.

ELI

Hide it.

Victor slips the syringe into his lab coat pocket and starts cleaning their workstation as Eli swipes his access key and opens the door for Angie.

ANGIE
Hey. I've been calling.

Eli checks his phone.

ELI
Sorry. Had it on silent.

They kiss. Victor watches, a glint of jealousy in his eyes.

ANGIE
What are the two of you doing tonight?

ELI
We have a lot of work to do.

ANGIE
Trick question. You're coming out with moi.

VICTOR
Eli's right, Angie. And we're pretty beat already.

ANGIE
Beat? Victor, I remember in eighth grade you stayed up for a week straight finishing your science fair project. And you...

Angie moves in and grabs Eli's belt suggestively.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
...I have ways of keeping you awake.

Eli glances over at Victor, who shakes his head.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
Fine. What are you working on? I'll help you finish.

VICTOR
You two go ahead. I'll wrap up here.

ANGIE
No way. You're coming, too. The two of you have been cooped up in here for days. It isn't healthy.

Angie charges over to Victor.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
Do I need to break out the puppy
dog eyes?

Hint of a smile on Victor's face. Angie places her hands on his shoulders.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
I'll do it. You're forcing my hand.

Angie widens her eyes. Pouts her lips. Hits Victor with the full puppy dog. It's ridiculous.

VICTOR
(smiling)
Alright. Alright. Let us finish
some stuff here, and we'll meet up
with you in half an hour.

Angie squeals in delight, pecks Eli on the lips, and heads for the door.

ANGIE
(teasing)
If I have to hunt you two down
again, there's gonna be hell to
pay.

She leaves. Eli walks back over to Victor.

VICTOR
That was close.

Eli sits down, hard. Lost in thought.

ELI
I guess I get to be the guinea pig.

VICTOR
I have your back. You know that,
right? I'll be there with you the
whole time.

Victor grasps Eli's arm reassuringly.

ELI
I know.

FLASHBACK - INT. R&D BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Victor and Eli trudge into R&D, a college hangout style restaurant. Angie walks ahead of them.

ELI
Let's just grab a bite, have a
couple of beers, then tell Angie...
Ah, shit.

Victor scans the restaurant off Eli's reaction and sees Angie sitting at a table with CLAIRE ROSEN (24). Claire is all blue hair, tattoos, and cat's eye glasses: a Suicide Girl-cum-librarian.

VICTOR
Who's that?

ELI
Angie's new lab partner.

VICTOR
Did you know about this?

ELI
Angie mentioned something about setting you two up, but I had no idea she planned to do it tonight.

VICTOR
I'm out of here.

ELI
Just stick to the plan. We need to keep Angie happy if we don't want her snooping around. Let's just get through this.

Victor watches from afar as Angie throws her head back with laughter.

VICTOR
Fine.

Eli and Victor head over to Angie and Claire's table.

ANGIE
Victor, Claire. Claire, Victor.

Claire looks Victor over as they shake hands and likes what she sees: quiet, brooding, inscrutable.

LATER

The group has settled in, the tabletop covered in the remnants of everyone's meals.

Angie is rosy-cheeked and giddy, recounting a story.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
It was about five years ago. I had just transferred here, but Victor didn't know I was already in town, and I wanted to surprise him. So when I find out that he has an afternoon lab, I decide to do it there.

CLAIRE

No better place to surprise someone than a room full of dangerous chemicals.

ANGIE

Well, I realize that now. That day, however, I sneak in a few minutes early and snag some safety gear, including a splash mask-- covers the whole face, right? And Victor is in there with his lab partner working on... something, I don't know.

VICTOR

We were making 10M sodium hydroxide.

ANGIE

I have no idea how you remember that. Anyway, he dumps the pellets into a Falcon tube and caps it. Like an idiot, I reveal myself at that exact moment. He drops the tube, and it rolls underneath the table. It's now a pipe bomb. We all freak out, it explodes, and the fire alarm goes off. The whole building was evacuated.

VICTOR

That wasn't my fault. There was nothing dangerous about that solution.

ANGIE

There is if you drop it! Once we get outside, I notice Victor has this sour look on his face, so I try to cheer him up. Victor's always been obsessed with grades, and he's always complaining about this guy I've never met named Eli. So I jokingly say, you know, don't worry about it-- we'll just tell your professor that asshole Eli is the one who did it. And then Victor's lab partner sticks his hand out and says
(deep voice)
"Hi, I'm Eli."

Angie, Claire, and Eli all burst out laughing. Victor takes a giant swig of beer.

ELI

*My first memory of the woman I love
is her calling me an asshole.*

CLAIRE

*So Eli started out as your nemesis,
huh, Victor?*

ELI

*Friendly rivals at worst. We had
almost every class together, always
the top two.*

VICTOR

*You were always number one. I was
always number two.*

ELI

*My point is that no one could ever
touch us. Especially once we became
a team.*

Claire points to Eli and Angie.

CLAIRE

*How long before you two started
dating?*

ANGIE

*I played it cool, but I was already
into him when he was just "Victor's
hot lab partner."*

CLAIRE

Did you and Victor ever...

ANGIE

What? No, no, no.

VICTOR

We went on one date.

ANGIE

*In fifth grade-- not that it
counts. Oh, but he did have a cute
look back then. Total "emo swoop"
and everything.*

CLAIRE

I can imagine it.

*Victor polishes off his beer. Eli looks after him, worried.
Angie stands up, oblivious to the tension at the table.*

ANGIE

*I'm gonna get us another round.
Claire? Come with?*

Claire leaves with Angie. As soon as they're out of earshot, Eli slides over to Victor.

ELI
You want to ease up on the brews?

VICTOR
Just trying to keep up with Angie.

ELI
I don't want to have to carry you both home.

Victor makes a mocking gesture with his hands.

VICTOR
Shouldn't be a problem for someone as strong as you.

ELI
Just keep it together.

VICTOR
You need to loosen up, Captain America, or Angie's gonna get suspicious.

Claire and Angie return from the bar with fresh beers and a tray of shots.

ANGIE
What are you two talking about?

ELI
Nothing important.

Angie and Claire share a conspiratorial glance.

ANGIE
If you say so.

Angie moves behind Eli and wraps her arms around him.

ELI
We should start thinking about heading home.

ANGIE
But I just bought shots!

ELI
I'll pass. Vic and I have a busy day tomorrow.

ANGIE
We'll leave after this round.

Eli shoots Victor a look, but relents.

ELI
I'm gonna close out my tab.

Eli makes for the bar, and Angie plops down into his seat.

ANGIE
You and Eli are hiding something,
Victor.

Victor sobers up almost instantly, but feigns confusion.

VICTOR
What are you talking about?

CLAIRE
Don't worry, we won't tell Eli you
said anything.

VICTOR
Nothing to say.

ANGIE
Please, we know your deep, dark
secret. There's no point in playing
dumb.

VICTOR
You guys are drunk. And paranoid.

Angie glances at Claire, grins, then grabs Victor's wrist.

ANGIE
I already found the ring!

Victor's faux-confusion gives way to the real thing.

VICTOR
What ring?

Victor looks back at Eli signing the tab.

CLAIRE
He's still pretending he doesn't
know what you're talking about.

ANGIE
Victor's always been a terrible
liar.

Eli returns and immediately feels the weird energy at the table.

ELI
What's with everyone?

ANGIE
Just figuring out our next move.

ELI
I thought we were heading back
after this round.

ANGIE
I said we'd leave, I didn't say
where we'd go.

ELI
Angie...

ANGIE
Shh... It's a secret.

Angie kisses Eli deeply. Victor gives them the side-eye, but then catches Claire watching him. Angie offers up a toast.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
To secrets.

They clink glasses.

FLASHBACK - INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

The bass-heavy music thumps like a war drum while a horde of twenty-somethings dance with sweaty abandon.

STELL (V.O.)
Tell me about Claire.

VICTOR (V.O.)
What about her?

Victor stands separate from the crowd, holding up the wall. Across the dance floor, he watches Eli and Angie making out on a semi-secluded couch.

Frustrated, he grabs his coat and heads for the exit.

STELL (V.O.)
What was your relationship to her?

VICTOR (V.O.)
Met her a few times. I didn't
really know her.

FLASHBACK - EXT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Victor walks out a side exit and into the snow.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
You look like your goldfish just
died.

Victor turns to see Claire smoking a cigarette. She's not wearing a jacket.

VICTOR
Aren't you cold?

CLAIRE
Yes.

VICTOR
Then you should go back inside.

CLAIRE
Nothing for me in there. You
either.

VICTOR
What does that mean?

CLAIRE
Please. A blind person can see how
you feel about Angie.

VICTOR
Angie and I are just friends.

CLAIRE
The thing I can't figure out is
whether you're jealous of Eli
because he has Angie, or you want
Angie because you're jealous of
Eli.

VICTOR
I'm not jealous of Eli.

CLAIRE
Bullshit. You think he's smarter
than you. And you're right, he is.
It shouldn't embarrass you.
Everyone wants to be number one.

VICTOR
Even you?

CLAIRE
Especially me. But I'm not
delusional. I mean, look at her:
top of her class, perfect
boyfriend, Angie has it all. Except
for one thing...

VICTOR
What's that?

Claire tosses her cigarette into the snow and saunters over
to Victor.

CLAIRE

An appetite. Second place keeps you hungry. You know it as well as I do.

VICTOR

You don't have any idea what I know. You think you can read my mind?

Claire moves in close.

CLAIRE

I know what you're thinking about right now.

Claire kisses Victor in the snow.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Ten years from now, Angie and Eli will be in the suburbs, with cozy jobs in academia. They'll get fat and happy, while we keep scraping by, hungry and lean. And that hunger will be what drives us to find the thing that proves, once and for all, that we belonged on top all along.

FLASHBACK - INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Victor and Claire slam into the wall, tearing each other's clothes off, two people possessed.

Claire bites Victor's lip, hard, and he throws her onto the bed.

FLASHBACK - INT. ANGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eli and Angie are together as well, but their lovemaking is softer.

CUT BETWEEN both apartments: Victor and Claire are animalistic and unleashed, while Eli and Angie are sweet and sensual.

Eli and Angie make love; Victor and Claire fuck.

FLASHBACK - INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Post-coital. Victor puts his clothes back on. Claire lays on the bed, naked except for the bed sheets wrapped around her.

CLAIRE

Headed home?

VICTOR
I have work at the lab.

CLAIRE
You don't need to make excuses.

VICTOR
I'm not. I'll see you later.

CLAIRE
Stay hungry.

FLASHBACK - INT. ANGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The mirror image of the previous scene. Eli sits on the edge of the bed, lost in contemplation. Angie sleeping.

Eli nervously turns the engagement ring over in his hands. Angie stirs slightly, and Eli puts the ring back into its case and stashes it inside his coat.

FLASHBACK - INT. VICTOR AND ELI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A palpable sense of excitement and anxiety permeates the air as Victor finishes setting up a makeshift "emergency room" with an assortment of gear from his backpack: digital thermometer, Epipens, norad syringes, smelling salts.

The serum sits atop a medical tray between a 12-lead ECG and an IV rig. Eli enters carrying an AED as Victor sets up a video camera in the corner of the room.

Eli, visibly nervous, inspects the emergency countermeasures. Victor steps out in front of the camera and takes the AED from Eli.

VICTOR
I've never seen you this nervous before.

ELI
I've never been on this side of the needle before.

VICTOR
There's nothing to worry about.

ELI
Easy for you to say.

Eli's a nervous wreck. Victor, sensing this, rests a hand on his shoulder.

VICTOR
I won't let anything happen to you.

ELI
I know, Vic.

TEN MINUTES LATER

LIVE VIDEO FEED FROM VICTOR'S CAMERA:

Eli lays on the couch, shirtless and rigged up to the ECG, while Victor inserts the IV spike into Eli's arm.

VICTOR
(to the camera)
This is Victor Vale. I'm with the,
uh... patient...

Victor turns to Eli and they both laugh nervously.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Holy shit, I can't believe we're
doing this. This is the first
administration of the T3 serum.
Code name: CarVale.

ELI
"CarVale"?

Victor turns to Eli with a big shit-eating grin.

BACK TO REGULAR POV:

VICTOR
You don't like the name?

Eli chuckles. The tension cracks, but doesn't break.

ELI
I hate it.

Victor takes Eli's pulse.

VICTOR
Breathe normally. Try and relax.

ELI
Remember to pull me out if my ox-
sat drops below 78%.

VICTOR
I've got this, Eli.

Victor uncaps the syringe containing the serum. Eli takes a deep breath.

ELI
I'm ready.

Victor nods, spikes the syringe into Eli's IV line, and slowly depresses the plunger.

ELI (CONT'D)
I feel... cold.

VICTOR
It's the saline.

ELI
No. This is different.

Victor takes Eli's temperature with the digital ear thermometer.

VICTOR
Your temp is normal. Vitals look good. Just keep describing what you feel.

Eli starts to shiver.

ELI
Feels like ice in my veins.

Victor checks the pulse oximeter on Eli's finger.

VICTOR
Your pulse is slowing, but your ox-sat is holding steady. Temp should drop at a nice, steady rate.

ELI
My chest feels heavy.

Eli's breathing slows.

VICTOR
Heavy how?

ELI
I feel like I'm drowning.

VICTOR
You're fine. Just settle into it. Relax. I'm right here.

ELI
(teeth chattering)
I... can't... breathe.

VICTOR
If you can talk, you can breathe.

Victor checks Eli's temp and pulse ox again.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Vitals are slowing at a smooth,
steady rate. You just aren't used
to the feeling.

Eli's lips take on a bluish tinge. His eyelids droop.

ELI
Something... isn't right.

Eli chokes and gasps. Blood vessels crack in the whites of
his eyes. He dry heaves.

VICTOR
Eli?

Eli's back arches at a sharp angle and his vitals tank.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Eli!

Victor checks Eli's pupillary response with a pen light. His
pupils are completely dilated, like black voids.

His oxygen saturation takes a nosedive. 82. 74. 61. 48.

His pulse plummets so low the pulse oximeter flags an error
code. Victor feels for a pulse at the jugular.

BEEEEEEEEEEEP... He whips his head up at the ECG monitor.

And we're back where we started, with the sound of the
flatlined ECG surrounding us.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Fuck! Eli!

Victor springs into action. He jams a noradrenalin syringe
into Eli's IV spike. Depresses the plunger. Grits his teeth.

Eli's a ragdoll.

BEEEEEEEEEEEP... The ECG grows louder, shriller.

Victor cracks a packet of smelling salts. Holds it under
Eli's nose. Nothing.

He begins CPR compressions, his arms pumping up and down like
pistons.

Victor glances up at the ECG monitor. Leans in and breathes
for Eli.

BEEEEEEEEEEEP... The ECG is now an unbearable shriek.

Victor scrambles for an Epipen and jams it into Eli's thigh.
Bated breath as he glances at the ECG.

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEP... Louder than ever. Victor covers his ears, shuts his eyes, tries to get his wits about him.

Victor's eyes shoot open and he knocks over the tray of medical supplies as he clamors for the AED.

He tears Eli's shirt open, sticks the defib pads onto Eli's bare chest, and jams down on the AED's power button.

The AED runs through its analyzing sequence. After what seems like forever, it makes a buzzing sound:

*A.E.D.
(filtered/digital voice)
SHOCK NOT ADVISED. CONTINUE CPR.*

*VICTOR
Fuck!*

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEP... Victor glances up at the ECG flatline. Slaps Eli a few times.

*VICTOR (CONT'D)
Eli! Wake up!*

Victor jams a second Epipen into Eli's thigh. Continues CPR. He spikes Eli with more norad as the AED goes through its analyzing sequence again...

*A.E.D.
(filtered/digital voice)
SHOCK NOT ADVISED. CONTINUE CPR.*

*VICTOR
What the fuck!*

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEP... Victor grabs Eli by the shoulders and shakes his entire body.

*VICTOR (CONT'D)
Wake up, Eli! Wake the fuck up!*

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEP... Victor slams his fist onto Eli's chest.

*VICTOR (CONT'D)
C'mon, you asshole! Don't make me explain this to Angie!*

Victor slams his fist onto Eli's chest again. And then it happens. Eli rockets awake, gasping for air like he just burst through a sheet of ice.

*VICTOR (CONT'D)
(exhausted)
Holy shit! Holy shit!*

Eli, covered in sweat, hyperventilates. His eyes dart frantically around the room.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Eli! It's me! It's Victor!

Eli tries to say something, but can barely whisper. Victor grabs a nearby bottle of water and lifts it to Eli's mouth.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
It's okay! I'm with you! Here,
drink this.

Eli sips some water. Collects himself. Slowly comes to.

ELI
(hoarse)
What... happened?

Victor lets out a fit of nervous laughter. Buries his face in his hands. Runs his fingers through his hair.

VICTOR
(shaking his head)
You died.

ELI
What?

VICTOR
You flatlined.

ELI
For how long?

VICTOR
We'll have to check the tape. You
scared the shit out of me. Jesus
Christ.
(laughs)
Jesus fucking Christ.

Eli and Victor sit in silence for a long moment. Victor lets out a short chuckle. It passes like a contagion to Eli. Before long, they're doubled over in hysterics, anxiety and relief bursting out in fits of laughter.

Then, the laughter dies as quickly and mysteriously as it started.

ELI
I need some fucking air, man.

Eli yanks the IV spike out of his arm. A trail of blood snakes down and drips onto the couch.

Victor grabs gauze and a band-aid. He wipes the blood from Eli's arm and looks for the puncture mark. He squints. Leans in.

ELI (CONT'D)
What is it?

VICTOR
I... can't find the puncture mark.
I don't see it.

ELI
What are you talking about?

Eli raises his arm to his face, inspects the crook of his elbow.

ELI (CONT'D)
I just pulled the needle out.

VICTOR
I know. Do you see the puncture?

ELI
I mean... no.

VICTOR
Lift it up, put it in the light.

Eli lets Victor inspect his arm.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
There's no mark. Not even a blemish.

Eli removes his car keys from his front pocket. Attached to them is a miniature Swiss Army knife.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

Eli doesn't answer. He flicks open the knife...

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Eli...

...and doesn't even flinch as he cuts a tiny incision into the palm of his hand.

ELI
I can't even feel it...

Victor grabs some gauze and hands it to Eli.

VICTOR
Probably the adrenalin.

They both lean in as Eli wipes the blood away-- and watch the cut heal before their eyes.

ELI
What the...

VICTOR
No fucking way...

Victor reels back. He blinks a few times, then grabs Eli's wrist and holds his palm up to his face, inspecting it.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I don't... how is that... there's no cut. I just saw you cut yourself.

ELI
(shaking head)
This isn't happening. This isn't possible.

Eli snatches up his peacoat.

VICTOR
Wait, Eli, this is incredible. We need--

ELI
I need to be alone for a minute. I'm going... I don't know where.
(then)
The roof.

VICTOR
(unsure of how to react)
Sure. I'll clean up and meet you up there afterwards.

Eli leaves. Victor surveys the aftermath of their experiment, overcome with relief, excitement, and awe.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT (DAWN)

Victor walks over with a bottle of Lagavulin 16-year-old scotch. Eli leans against the guardrail on the edge of the roof, gazing out over the desolate winter morning.

VICTOR
I brought you a drink. Figured you might need it.

ELI
How long do you think this will last?

VICTOR
Any prognosis would be premature. We don't even know how it happened.

ELI
Any theories?

VICTOR
They would be pure conjecture.

ELI
Humor me.

VICTOR
The serum is designed to slow down your metabolism. Once it worked itself out of your system, your adrenaline throttled back up. Maybe that... I don't know, supercharged your immune system. Do you feel any different?

Eli stares at his arm, where the puncture mark should be.

ELI
No. Except... It's cold up here, right?

VICTOR
Yeah, pretty cold.

ELI
Not to me.

VICTOR
If you want, we can go through some questions. That's the best way we have to get good data.

ELI
Don't treat me like a patient with some weird disease you're trying to diagnose.

VICTOR
I'm just doing what I know how to do, Eli. Have faith in the process.

Eli considers this.

ELI
Give me that bottle.

Victor hands Eli the scotch. Eli checks the label.

ELI (CONT'D)
Lagavulin 16? Where the hell did you get this?

VICTOR
*I remember you talking about it.
Thought it would be a good way to
celebrate.*

Eli unscrews the cap.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
*This is unbelievable. Our serum was
going to revolutionize emergency
medicine. Your abilities will make
it obsolete.*

*Eli tosses the cap aside and sucks down a massive gulp of
scotch, then stares at the bottle it in disbelief.*

VICTOR (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

ELI
I can't taste it.

INT. ELI'S APARTMENT/PRISON INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

CUTTING BETWEEN Stell's interviews with Eli and Victor--
their lies are so similar, so seemingly practiced, they might
as well all be in the same room.

STELL
*I want to go over what happened in
the last couple of weeks before
Angie's death. Your grades started
slipping. You skipped virtually all
your classes.*

VICTOR
*The research we were doing with the
cohort was at a crucial juncture...*

ELI
*...we had established a high level
of trust with Lyne...*

VICTOR
*...and he expanded the goals of the
program to take advantage of the
data we were collecting...*

ELI
...it was a very exciting time...

FLASHBACK - INT. GOLDENSON BIOMEDICAL LAB - DAY

Victor draws blood from Eli's arm.

Out of habit, Victor unwraps a band-aid. Eli waves him off.

Eli preps a slide, and Victor smears a bit of blood onto it, then mounts it under a microscope.

ELI

How do we even know what to look for?

Victor stares into the microscope.

VICTOR

We don't. This is a fishing expedition. At first I thought you were just healing at an accelerated rate, but there's nothing accelerated about it. Something else is happening-- healing happens in stages. The body expends energy to break down molecular stores of basic components, then transports them through the blood to the site of the wound where they repair the damage. It's a physical process that takes time, and your body isn't taking it.

ELI

That's impossible.

VICTOR

Everything starts out impossible.

Victor clicks over to a high power lens and works the fine focus knob.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Saying you "heal fast" is like saying a person who can run a ten-second mile "runs fast." That person is moving with so much speed that, however they're getting across that finish line, you can't call it running.

ELI

That would mean that any change that could explain my new... condition, should manifest as a fundamental change in morphology.

ANGIE (O.S.)

What kind of fundamental change?

Eli and Victor look up to see Angie staring at them.

ELI

What are you doing here?

ANGIE
I was dropping some papers off in
Lyne's office and saw the light.

She places Eli's lab access keycard on the table.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
And you left your lab key at my
place. What are you two working on?

ELI
Just double-checking some of our
earlier calculations.

ANGIE
(skeptical)
Didn't sound like that.

Off their silence, Angie reaches for a stack of test results
on the table; Victor slaps his own hand on top of the pile.

Angie glares at him, then snatches the papers out from under
his hand and scans them.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
What the hell is this?

ELI
(to Victor)
We have to tell her.

VICTOR
You were the one who wanted to keep
her in the dark.

ANGIE
Hey! Don't talk about me like I'm
not standing right in front of you!

ELI
It's about our research. We-- I
haven't been honest with you about
how far Vic and I have taken it.

ANGIE
I don't understand.

VICTOR
Human trials.

Angie pulls her hands away from Eli.

ANGIE
Are you both insane?

VICTOR
We have our reasons.

ANGIE
It's unethical-- people go to
prison for that. You could kill
somebody.

ELI
We didn't hurt anyone.

Angie's gaze twitches between the two of them. Eli hangs his
head, eyes downcast.

Victor stares back, his expression almost a challenge.

ANGIE
(realizing)
Oh my god... you tested it on
yourselves.

ELI
On me.

Angie slaps Eli hard across the face. Eli doesn't react.

ANGIE
You injected yourself with
something you cooked in a lab? Do
you have any idea how stupid that
is? You could have died, Eli.

VICTOR
He's alive.

ANGIE
Shut up, Victor. I know this was
your idea.

VICTOR
Eli and I made the decision
together.

ANGIE
And you didn't want to ask what I
thought about it?

ELI
That's why we're telling you now.

ANGIE
After I caught you.

Eli doesn't say anything.

VICTOR
You just have to show her.

ANGIE
Show me what?

Victor walks over and hands Eli a razor. Eli hesitantly puts it to the top of his forearm.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
(horrificed)
Eli, what are you--

Angie moves to stop him, but Victor lightly grabs her shoulder.

VICTOR
You need to see this, Angie.

Eli slices into his own flesh. Angie screams. Eli quickly wipes away the blood.

ELI
Look...

Victor lets Angie go, and she rushes to Eli to inspect his arm. Her look says it all: "How?"

FLASHBACK - INT. VICTOR AND ELI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Angie, Victor, and Eli sit around the living room table with Victor and Eli's research spread out over every surface.

It's been a long night, and Angie and Victor, running on fumes, nurse mugs of coffee.

ANGIE
There are just too many factors here. How can we figure out where these abilities came from if we can't even tell how they work?

VICTOR
We need more data.

ELI
We're swimming in data. We just don't know which parts of it to focus in on.

ANGIE
We can narrow it down, though.

Angie crosses over to a large whiteboard on one wall of the room and draws a horizontal line across its length.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
If we make a timeline of the events, then we have several key moments. First, there's the administration of the serum.

Angie writes "ADMIN" on the timeline.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
 Followed by loss of consciousness
 and flatline.

Angie writes "L.O.C" and "FLAT," then fills in a large bar of ink starting from "FLAT."

ANGIE (CONT'D)
 That state lasts for four minutes,
 during which norad and epi are
 administered here, here, and here,
 before Eli comes out of it.

Using her marker, she punctuates each "here" with a slash on top of the bar of ink.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
 The "healing factor"-- whatever you
 want to call it-- manifests itself
 right after he recovers from the
 flatline. Unless...

VICTOR
 Unless coming out of the flatline
 itself was the first manifestation
 of Eli's powers.

ANGIE
 Which means that whatever gave Eli
 his abilities, or however they
 work, he got them here:

Angie circles the bar representing the time that Eli was flatlined.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
 (to Eli)
 Do you remember anything from when
 you were under?

ELI
 You mean when I was dead?

Stunned silence.

VICTOR
 Eli, don't you see it? We've been
 trying to figure out how the serum
 could do this to you when it wasn't
 the serum. Or at least not just the
 serum. We designed it to mimic the
 effects of an NDE; but it caused a
 real one, and that's what gave you
 your powers.

ELI

None of that explains how my body can do this. I want to reverse the phenomenon, not replicate it.

VICTOR

Why? This is even bigger than we could have imagined. If we can repeat the process, we'd be the first people to conquer death itself.

ELI

I can't feel anything, Victor. I can't sleep.

VICTOR

I'm not saying there aren't drawbacks, but we'd have an eternity to fine-tune the formula.

ANGIE

This is too big. These abilities contradict everything we know about medicine, chemistry-- they're not even operating by the laws of thermodynamics.

VICTOR

So think about the other mysteries we could unlock-- this is more revolutionary than germ theory, relativity, and the discovery of the atom combined.

ANGIE

And what have we done with those discoveries? Biological warfare, atomic weapons... Discovery always brings danger.

VICTOR

We can make it so that no one ever dies again.

ELI

And how far do you think some people would go to make sure that doesn't happen? Immortality would become another commodity people kill each other over.

VICTOR

It's not our job to worry about that.

ELI
We discovered it. If it's not our
responsibility, then whose?

Victor shakes his head, opens his mouth to argue, but thinks better of it. Without a word, he grabs his coat and heads out the door.

ANGIE
Victor, wait--

The door slams shut. Angie grabs her coat to go after Victor.

ELI
(frustrated)
Just let him go. We can sit down to
talk about this once he's had time
to clear his head. He won't do
anything rash.

VICTOR (PRE-LAP) (V.O.)
If you made a discovery that could
change the world, would you show it
to people?

FLASHBACK - INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire shares her couch with Victor.

CLAIRE
Why wouldn't I?

VICTOR
What if there were a chance someone
could misuse your discovery?

CLAIRE
Science is about what is and what
can be, not what should be.

VICTOR
Agreed.

CLAIRE
What did you find?

VICTOR
I can't tell you, I can only show
you. But I need to be sure you'll
see it the right way.

CLAIRE
My vision's clear, Victor.

She moves in close to him.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Just lead the way.

FLASHBACK - INT. VICTOR AND ELI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire watches expectantly as Victor and Eli engage each other in a vicious yelling match, with Angie trying desperately to calm them both down.

ELI
(sputtering with anger)
You had no right, Victor!

VICTOR
She knows we found something! You
have no reason not to show her now!

Eli sticks his finger in Victor's face.

ELI
Fuck you, Victor.

Victor snaps and shoves Eli. Eli goes toppling backwards over the coffee table, shattering it.

ANGIE
(horrified)
Victor!

Claire watches as Victor climbs on top of Eli and starts swinging. She seems almost excited until blood streaks across the floor.

Claire and Angie run to Victor and pull him off Eli.

VICTOR
Look! Look at him!

Eli crawls to his feet, and the gash that Victor opened above his eye slowly knits together. Eli's seemingly ashamed that he isn't injured.

Curious, Claire moves forward to inspect his face, gently wiping the blood away with her hand.

CLAIRE
This is...

She turns back to Angie and Victor

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
...incredible.

LATER

The four of them sit in the living room. The glass shards and blood have been cleaned up.

ELI

...it isn't just a... supercharged immune system or something. Healing takes energy, mass, and time. I haven't had anything to eat or drink since the accident. I don't even sleep.

ANGIE

He's not healing... it's like he's resetting. His body is constantly reverting to a previous state. This new physiology isn't possible. It's not...

ELI

It's not human.

Angie's mask of scientific detachment crumbles away, and she wipes away the tears that start to escape.

ANGIE

I'm sorry... I'm just tired...

Eli stares ruefully at her suffering, then looks down in shame. Claire notices, grabs her mug and walks over to the coffee maker.

CLAIRE

I'll get you more coffee.

She's about to grab the coffeepot when she focuses in on the tiny, circular waves made by drips from the filter.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Claire drops her mug and it shatters on the floor.

VICTOR

You okay?

Victor rushes over to find Claire staring at the coffeepot.

CLAIRE

Waves.

Victor kneels and collects the pieces of broken mug.

VICTOR

What about them?

CLAIRE

People. We're waves, not atoms.

VICTOR

Of course we're made of atoms.

CLAIRE

Yes, we're made of atoms, but that's not what we are. The entire human body is in a constant state of destruction and replacement, right? We shed skin cells, we tear up muscle fibers, and we rebuild them with new matter. The atoms our ten-year-old selves were made of are not the same atoms we're made of now.

ELI

So what?

CLAIRE

So we're not the atoms themselves, but the pattern of changes those atoms go through as they're combined, assembled, broken down, and replaced. Your physical self is stuck in one moment of that pattern, like a needle skipping on a record.

Victor sighs.

VICTOR

I didn't bring you in on this to rattle off pseudoscientific bullshit.

CLAIRE

This isn't science fiction. Physicists have theorized dimensions with exotic forms of energy for decades. What if Eli accessed one of those dimensions when he flatlined? We know Eli's NDE is the key to his abilities, and we know that people experience impossible phenomena when they have NDEs. What if Eli's pulling those phenomena back with him, into our world?

VICTOR

You're right, it's not science fiction, Claire. It's fantasy.

CLAIRE

We've all seen Eli's abilities. So unless you have a better hypothesis, this is all we have to go on.

INT. ELI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Eli shifts in his seat. Growing restless.

STELL
Anything happen in the last couple
of days before Angie's death?

ELI
Like what?

STELL
Did she say anything strange?
Change her behavior or routine?

Eli pretends to think for a moment, then slowly shakes his head.

ELI
Things were better than ever.

FLASHBACK - INT. ANGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eli sits on the edge of Angie's bed, cradling his head and sobbing. Angie tries to comfort him.

ANGIE
*There are still other avenues to
explore. We can find a way to undo
this.*

ELI
*I'm so fucking tired, and I still
can't sleep...*

She strokes his hair. He sits up and grabs her hand.

ELI (CONT'D)
(breaking)
*Do you know what it's like to be
afraid that I'll never feel you
again?*

Angie kisses him on the lips.

ANGIE
I'm afraid, too.

Eli stands up and throws a tantrum, punching a hole in the wall and startling Angie.

He looks at his bloody knuckles as they knit themselves back together. Then he flies into a rage, tearing himself apart against everything in Angie's apartment like an angry bull.

She stands to stop him, and before he see her coming up behind him, he spins around and accidentally elbows her across the face.

She goes down, hard, and blood trickles from her nose. Instantly snapped out of his blind rage, he takes in all the destruction he's just wrought on Angie's apartment.

ELI
(apologetic)
Jesus, Angie... I...

ANGIE
It's okay, I'm okay...

Eli backs away, horrified at what he's done. He turns and runs from the apartment, leaving Angie on the floor, alone.

FLASHBACK - INT. VICTOR AND ELI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (DAWN)

Eli returns and quietly enters his bedroom. He opens the top drawer of his nightstand and removes the small velvet box containing Angie's engagement ring. He opens the box, his eyes glazing over as he stares at the ring.

VICTOR (O.S.)
Where have you been?

Eli sighs.

ELI
With Angie.

He snaps the ring box shut and brushes past Victor.

ELI (CONT'D)
Why are you still up?

VICTOR
I'm planning out next steps. Claire and I are going to prove Angie's hypothesis that your powers were caused by your NDE.

Eli whips around.

ELI
(confused)
How? You'd have to--

VICTOR
Repeat the process on myself, with the rest of the serum.

ELI
Victor, listen to me: you don't want this.

(MORE)

ELI (CONT'D)
Even if Angie is right, you have to die for this to work, and my outcome could be one in a million-- a billion.

VICTOR
Don't you see what you have, Eli? There's never been another human-- another being-- like you. "One-in-a-billion" is an understatement. You are completely and utterly unique.

ELI
We don't know what this is doing to me long-term.

VICTOR
I'll take my chances.

ELI
We can go public, get support from the university, the scientific community--

VICTOR
No, you were right. As soon as we go public with this, it gets taken away. We need to be in control of our own destiny.

Victor holds up a capped syringe. Eli lunges for it, but Victor pulls it away.

ELI
You can't take back this decision!

Victor stiff-arms him.

VICTOR
It's still my decision to make!

They struggle, and the syringe goes flying from Victor's hand, clattering across the floor and underneath the sofa.

Victor and Eli both go after it, scuffling with each other on the ground. The fight grows more violent, and Eli ends up on top of Victor, choking him.

But Victor squeezes Eli's wrists, tightening Eli's grip around his own throat. And then his lips crease into a smile. This is what he wants.

Eli realizes just as Victor is about to black out, and he pulls his hands away in horror. Victor violently coughs.

Eli scrambles to his feet, grabbing his coat on the way out.

STELL (PRE-LAP) (V.O.)
Where were you the night Angie
died?

FLASHBACK - INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Eli enters a mid-tier jewelry store.

ELI (V.O.)
That was the night I was going to
propose. I was going to surprise
Angie with the ring I'd bought.

*He crosses to the jewelry counter and sets the box containing
Angie's engagement ring in front of the STORE OWNER, a heavy-
set woman in her 50's with frosted hair.*

ELI
I want to return this.

The store owner looks inside the box.

STORE OWNER
I'm sorry, hun. She said no?

Eli clears his throat.

ELI
I didn't ask her.

*The store owner tries to look him in the face, but Eli averts
her gaze.*

STORE OWNER
*I normally don't ask in situations
like this, but... why not?*

Eli hangs his head.

ELI
I was afraid she'd say yes.

STORE OWNER
Why would that be so bad?

ELI
Because she deserves better.

The store owner slides the ring box back to Eli.

STORE OWNER
*You should let her decide that for
herself.*

FLASHBACK - EXT. HARVARD QUAD - DAY

Rubbing his throat, Victor trudges across the quad toward the lab building. He pulls his phone out and dials a number.

STELL (V.O.)

Here's what isn't adding up for me:
Why have Angie meet you at the lab?
According to the 911 tapes, you
were in the middle of a suicide
attempt.

VICTOR

(into phone)

Claire, it's me. It has to be now.

VICTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I wasn't the one who called Angie.
And I wasn't trying to kill myself.
Not permanently, anyway.

FLASHBACK - INT. LAB - DAY

Victor sits amidst a full setup of the gear from his and Eli's previous experiment. Claire is standing by in the role that Victor had played before. She looks nervous.

CLAIRE

I'm not sure about this Victor.
Maybe we should try to talk Angie
and Eli into helping. It would be
safer with extra hands.

Victor preps his arm for the injection.

VICTOR

We don't need them, remember?

CLAIRE

What if you die?

VICTOR

That's the plan. But you can bring
me back. I trust you.

Before Claire can protest, Victor spikes himself with the syringe and depresses the plunger. His body almost instantly goes slack, like he just mainlined a massive hit of heroin.

Claire shakes him, then delivers several hard slaps to his face. Victor's eyes flutter shut as he goes completely limp.

CLAIRE

No!

She shakes him again. His vitals plummet on the monitors. Claire freaks out; she's in way over her head. Shaking, she takes her phone out and calls Angie.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Angie, it's me.

FLASHBACK - EXT. HARVARD QUAD - MOVING - NIGHT

Angie hangs up with Claire and dials 9-1-1. Trees and buildings wipe the frame in a frenetic blur as she sprints across campus.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
911. What is your emergency?

ANGIE
(into phone)
My friend is trying to kill himself!

FLASHBACK - INT. GOLDENSON BIOMEDICAL LAB - NIGHT

Angie rushes into the lab to find Claire standing over Victor's lifeless body.

CLAIRE
I put the AED pads on and injected the Epipen. He still isn't moving.

ANGIE
Get out of the way!

Claire watches as Angie performs CPR on Victor.

CLAIRE
I can't be here. I'm not a part of this.

ANGIE
Claire, I need your help! I need you to focus!

Claire is a deer in headlights.

CLAIRE
I can't, I'm sorry...

Claire turns and bolts.

ANGIE
Claire! Claire!

Angie kneels over Victor and activates the AED.

CLOSE on a digital readout: ANALYZING...

She holds Victor's limp head in her hands. Two defib pads connect Victor's shirtless chest to the AED.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Victor!

The AED makes a beeping sound.

A.E.D.

(digital/filtered voice)

SHOCK ADVISED. CLEAR THE PATIENT.

*Angie removes her hands from Victor as the AED counts down:
3...2...1...*

Victor's body convulses as the AED administers a shock, then he goes limp.

ANGIE

(wiping tears)

Victor... please don't do this....

Angie administers CPR while the AED goes through its analyzing sequence, again. It beeps.

A.E.D.

(digital/filtered voice)

SHOCK ADVISED. CLEAR THE PATIENT.

Once again, the AED administers a shock and Victor's entire body convulses.

Angie leans in to continue CPR, but Victor's eyes shoot open and he clamps his hand around her shoulder.

Air crackles with the sound of electricity. Angie's hair stands on end and her pupils instantly dilate as she violently seizes.

Her back arches at an ungodly angle and her fingernails dig deep into the meat of her palms, drawing blood.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Paramedics!

Victor fully awakens and, at the sight of Angie writhing and foaming at the mouth, yanks his hand off her shoulder as PARAMEDICS and EMTs flood into the room and surround her.

TIME DILATES as Victor rips the leads from his chest and rushes to help Angie, but he's boxed out by the paramedics.

PARAMEDIC

Stay back!

VICTOR

Angie!

Victor watches in disbelief as the paramedics struggle to revive her.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Eli slams Victor up against the side of a vending machine.

ELI
You fucking asshole!

Eli slugs Victor across the face, and he crashes to the floor.

VICTOR
(regaining his bearings)
I was doing this for both of us.

ELI
Bullshit! You did it for you!

Victor crawls to his feet.

VICTOR
I never wanted Angie involved.
Claire called her when I flatlined.
(pleading)
It wasn't my fault!

Victor slumps to the ground.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I didn't know she was in any
danger. Please believe me. What was
I supposed to do?

ELI
You were supposed to stay dead.

They're interrupted by a SURGEON approaching them.

SURGEON
(to Eli)
I'm sorry, Mr. Cardale. She's gone.
She passed on the way here. Despite
our best efforts, we were unable to
revive her.

The weight of this hits Eli and Victor like a fucking hurricane. Devastation beyond belief.

INT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Victor rubs the nape of his neck as Stell leafs through his file. She flips to a photocopy of his signed confession.

STELL
In your original confession, you
said you entered a fugue state when
Angie died.

VICTOR
Yes.

STELL
And you've been taking weekly
therapy sessions since that time.

VICTOR
That's correct.

STELL
Has the therapy jogged your memory
in any discernible way?

VICTOR
No, but I've learned a lot about
myself during my time here.

FLASHBACK - VICTOR'S CELL

CLANK. A metal gate with bars slides shut behind Victor as a GUARD locks it and walks away. Victor sighs, sits on the edge of his new bed: a narrow metal cot bolted to the floor.

CLOSE ON Victor's face as he notices the ceiling light flickering. Intrigued, he stands on the bed to get a closer look. The fluorescent tube flickers more erratically.

He reaches towards the light, and it strobes on and off, its irregular tempo intensifying as Victor's hand nears.

FLASHBACK - PRISON LIBRARY

Victor, seated at a table next to a janitorial cart, reads a book about electromagnetic fields. A stack of books sits in front of him: superconductors, thermodynamics, generators, and electrical engineering.

He sets the book down. Scans the mostly empty library. Lowers his hands under the table.

Teeth grit. Eyes narrow.

His hands begin to vibrate as he brings them closer to one another. A tremor at first. Then a quake. They pulsate uncontrollably and the air around him crackles just as--

CLANG! A PRISON GUARD slams his hand onto the table. Victor bolts upright, nearly knocking over the stack of books. The guard motions to the cleaning cart. Victor nods, wipes his brow, and begins cleaning the library.

FLASHBACK - PRISON YARD

Victor's face smashes into hard packed dirt. Two INMATES cackle like hyenas as a third, the RINGLEADER, slams a massive boot into Victor's ribs.

It begins to rain. His tormentors turn to leave, and Victor's eyes harden as the rain washes the blood and dirt away.

The rain becomes a downpour as Victor pulls himself to his feet. Drenched. Invigorated. The humid air crackles.

The Ringleader peeks over his shoulder, surprised to see Victor standing. Victor starts towards him.

First a walk, then a jog. Electricity skitters down Victor's rain-soaked arm and towards his fist as he breaks into a run.

INT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Stell removes a bottle of Excedrin from her purse and pops a few, washes them down with her now cold coffee. She massages her temples as a bleary-eyed Victor folds his arms.

STELL

"You've learned a lot about yourself during your time here." Could you be more vague?

VICTOR

I'm not sure what you were expecting, but last I checked, I'm cooperating. I'm trying to help.

Stell lets out a frustrated sigh as she studies Victor.

STELL

You're right. I'm sorry. It's been a long week.

Stell tosses her phone into her purse and packs up her things.

STELL (CONT'D)

I think we're done here, Victor. I appreciate your cooperation.

INT. ELI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Stell looks around at the apartment, at the rotting food and the holes punched into walls.

STELL

Have you sought out... professional help? To deal with Angie's death?

ELI
No one can help me "deal."
Professionally or otherwise.

STELL
I lost someone, too...

Stell absentmindedly fingers her charm bracelet.

STELL (CONT'D)
It helps to talk about it.

ELI
I grieve in my own way.

FLASHBACK - INT. PAWN SHOP - NIGHT

The door chimes. Eli, a grizzled bundle of nerves, enters.

The PAWN SHOP OWNER stands behind the counter, shoveling a microwave dinner into his mouth.

The shop's display cases are filled with jewelry, weapons, and collectibles.

As Eli eyes the display cases--

PAWN SHOP OWNER
Looking for something specific?

ELI
Yes.

The man waits for Eli to tell him. After a few moments...

PAWN SHOP OWNER
Can I help you find it?

ELI
No.

The store owner harrumphs, watching Eli like a hawk as he peruses the display cases. Eli stops in front of a case filled with guns.

He points at one.

ELI (CONT'D)
This one.

The store owner lumbers over, leans on the display case.

PAWN SHOP OWNER
Good choice. I'll set her aside while I run a background check and get all your paperwork in order.

ELI
I need it tonight.

PAWN SHOP OWNER
That's not how it works.

Eli removes Angie's engagement ring from his coat. He stares at it for a long moment before setting it on the counter.

The shop owner removes a loupe from his pocket and studies the ring.

ELI
*Give me what I need, you can keep
the difference.*

The shop owner raises an eyebrow. Studies Eli for a long moment. Sets the ring down.

He removes a hidden shoebox from under the display case, and sets it in front of Eli.

He blows dust off the lid and opens it. Eli reaches in and removes a tired old workhorse of a revolver. Drilled-out numbers. Taped-up grips. Untraceable.

He feels the weight of the gun in his hand and eyes the handful of loose bullets scattered inside the box. Runs a trembling hand through his hair, the decision eating him up.

The shop owner slides the ring toward his side of the counter, pausing at the edge. They lock eyes.

Suddenly, Eli makes his decision: he puts the gun back, closes the lid, and leaves with the box tucked under his arm.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ELI'S CAR - NIGHT

Eli parks his car on the side of the desolate freeway. Outside, the night is peaceful and still.

FLASHBACK - INT. ELI'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Eli stares at the box with the revolver and bullets sitting on the passenger seat.

He takes the revolver, loads a single bullet, and puts the gun to his temple.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ELI'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Crickets chirp, and then.... BOOM!

Eli's driver's side window explodes, scattering a torrent of crimson-colored glass across the freeway.

Eli's deformed head smashes clear through the ruptured window. It hangs at an unnatural angle as blood seeps out of the exit wound and runs down the driver's side door.

After a few moments of deafening silence, Eli's head stitches back together. He stirs, gurgles, coughs, then opens his car door and spills out onto the shoulder of the freeway.

Amidst blood-splattered fragments of glass, chunks of his own skull and brain, and the quiet hum of his car's engine idling, Eli breaks down sobbing. His sobs morph into screams.

FLASHBACK - EXT. PROFESSOR LYNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Eli walks up the steps to a modest suburban home and knocks on the door.

STELL (V.O.)
I understand if you want to stop,
Mr. Cardale, but I'd like to
continue, if you're willing.

ELI (V.O.)
I can keep going.

STELL (V.O.)
When was the last time you saw
Claire or Professor Lyne?

ELI (V.O.)
Angie's funeral.

The door opens to reveal Lyne.

LYNE
Eli! What a surprise!

FLASHBACK - INT. PROFESSOR LYNE'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Lyne sits at his desk and motions for Eli to sit opposite him. Eli looks drawn and dead-tired.

LYNE
(hesitant)
So how are you doing?

ELI
How do I look?

LYNE
You've looked better. Are you
eating well? Getting enough sleep?

Eli laughs.

ELI

No.

An awkward moment of silence. Lyne stands up and grabs a bottle of fancy scotch off his book shelf.

LYNE

What the hell, sometimes "healthy" isn't all it's cracked up to be. Can I pour you a drink?

ELI

It would be a waste of good scotch.

Lyne pours a glass.

LYNE

I'm going to have one in any case.

He sets the bottle on his desk.

ELI

How's your work coming? Still figuring out the specifics of your world-changing Lyne Serum?

LYNE

I've put that aside while I take a sabbatical. You may not believe this, but losing Angie, Victor, and yourself so quickly was quite difficult for me.

ELI

I'm sure it was.

LYNE

Whatever you might think of me, I wouldn't try to profit in the wake of such a horrible tragedy. I'm not a monster.

Eli laughs again, almost a cackle. The cackle slows into deep sobs, and he breaks down. Lyne moves in and awkwardly pats him on the back.

ELI

I need your help, Professor.

LYNE

Just tell me what I can do.

ELI

I want to die.

LYNE
I know things feel hopeless right
now, but--

Eli grabs Lyne by the shirt.

ELI
You don't understand: I can't die.

LYNE
What are you talking about?

ELI
Victor and I tested the serum on
ourselves. It triggered an NDE and
I came back... different.

Lyne steps back, removing his hand.

LYNE
That doesn't... what?

Eli stands up, still crying.

ELI
Don't worry, I'll skip the part
where I try to convince you.

He grabs the bottle of liquor and chugs it down like water.

LYNE
Eli, slow down.

*Eli holds him back with one hand, and, with the other,
smashes the now empty bottle against the edge of the desk.
Lyne looks on in horror as Eli puts the broken glass to his
own throat and slices it open.*

*Blood spurts down Eli's shirt, and Lyne turns away. Eli grabs
him by the jaw and turns his head back.*

ELI
No, I want you to watch. You need
to see this if you're going to help
me stop it.

Eli's throat heals before Lyne's terrified eyes.

LYNE
Jesus Christ. How?

ELI
That's what I need you to help me
figure out. So I can reverse it.

LYNE
Why would you want to reverse it?

ELI

Because it's wrong. It's dangerous.

LYNE

But this could change the world. If we could only recreate--

Eli smashes his fist against Lyne's desk.

ELI

No! You're making the same mistake he did!

LYNE

Who?

ELI

Victor!

Eli puts the bottle to Lyne's throat.

LYNE

Eli, please...

ELI

This is what the two of you don't get: Life is about quality, not quantity. I can't die, but I still suffer. And I have an eternity to do so. That's what humanity has in store if this curse is ever revealed to the rest of the world: endless life, endless pain. Science exists to help humankind, but look at me: I'm not even human.

LYNE

(calming)

Let me help you.

Eli shakes his head, defeated.

ELI

No... The world will react the way you and Victor did. Maybe not everyone, but enough that it won't matter.

Lyne's eyes keep darting to the bottle. Eli drops it, resigned and defeated. Lyne lets out a sigh of relief.

ELI (CONT'D)

There's no way around it. I have to put the genie back in the bottle. No one can ever learn about what I've become.

(MORE)

ELI (CONT'D)
I have to destroy every trace of me
and Victor's experiment. Including
you.

Eli pulls his revolver from inside his coat. Lyne fights against him, but Eli puts the gun under Lyne's chin and fires, point blank. The back of Lyne's head explodes onto his bookcase.

Lyne slumps down, dead. Eli wipes his prints off the gun and places it in Lyne's lifeless hand, positioning him so it looks like a suicide.

FLASHBACK - EXT./INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eli, wearing leather gloves and a backpack, knocks on Claire's door.

Claire opens the door just a crack; Eli obviously woke her.

CLAIRE
(groggy)
Eli? I haven't seen you in weeks.

ELI
I know it's late. I just... needed
someone to talk to.

She opens the door all the way. Eli brushes past her.

Claire shuts the door behind him. She looks at her feet, as if she's ashamed to look Eli in the face.

ELI (CONT'D)
I came to ask you a favor.

CLAIRE
Anything.

ELI
I need you to destroy your copies
of the research. The recipe for the
T3 serum. Everything Victor gave
you. It needs to be erased.

CLAIRE
Why? You, Victor, Angie... you all
worked so hard, and... sacrificed
so much. If the formula were
perfected--

ELI
The world isn't ready for that kind
of change. Look what happened to
Angie. To Victor. To me. It
destroyed our lives, Claire.

CLAIRE

But if we pass it along to someone
with the right resources, maybe we
can still do some good.

ELI

People will fight wars over it.

Claire thinks for a long moment. On the fence.

ELI (CONT'D)

If Angie were still here, she'd be
telling you the same thing.

Claire nods. Walks over to her desk, opens her laptop.

CLAIRE

It's all on here.

ELI

Do you have a backup?

Claire removes an external hard drive from her desk drawer.
Connects it to her laptop.

CLAIRE

I'll wipe it, too.

Eli, standing behind her, silently removes a bundle of black
nylon rope from his backpack. Dangling at the end of the rope
is a pre-tied noose.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

(oblivious)

This could take a while.

Without warning, Eli slings the noose around her neck and
violently yanks it, snapping her entire body backwards as her
chair slams onto the carpet.

ELI

I'll be quick, I promise.

Claire can't muster anything but gurgling sounds as Eli drags
her across the floor towards her bedroom, where he throws the
rope over the top of the door, walks around to the other
side, and pulls.

ELI (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Claire.

Claire's face goes from red to purple as her body is pulled
up against the bottom of the door.

Eli grunts as he pulls on the rope from the other side of the
door, lifting Claire off the ground, her feet writhing and
flailing against the door.

With Claire's head now about a foot from the top of the door, we follow the moving rope into--

CLAIRE'S BEDROOM

where Eli, using his foot as a doorstop, finally stops pulling and cinches the rope into a tight knot around the doorknob.

With the rope secure, Eli stalks back through the open door, past Claire, and into the living room.

Claire watches as, a moment later, Eli returns from the living room with a desk chair and lays it on its side, under her feet, so it looks like she kicked it out from under her and hung herself.

As the darkness takes her, Eli stuffs her laptop and external hard drive into his backpack.

STELL (PRE-LAP) (V.O.)
Mr. Cardale?

INT. ELI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Eli, lost in memory, brow furrowed. Stell leans toward him.

STELL
Mr. Cardale?

He shakes himself out of the memory.

ELI
Sorry. I fade in and out sometimes.

Stell gathers up her paperwork and stands.

STELL
I think I have everything I need for now. Thank you for your time.

ELI
Of course. Only...

STELL
Yes?

ELI
You mentioned earlier that you'd lost someone.

Stell tenses up. She fishes through her wallet.

STELL
I did.

She hands Eli her card.

STELL (CONT'D)
Call me if you remember anything
else. Or if you want to talk.

As he takes the card, Eli glances at the charm bracelet on the arm offering it.

ELI
Are you going to tell me it gets
easier?

STELL
No. I'm not.

Stell turns and leaves.

INT. VICTOR'S CELL - DAY

A GUARD approaches Victor's cell, where Victor scribbles electrical engineering equations into a notebook.

GUARD
Vale. Visitor.

VICTOR
If it's the Detective, tell her I
don't have anything to append to my
previous statements.

GUARD
It's not.

INT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - VISITATION ROOM - DAY

Victor is led in handcuffs to a bank of telephone receivers allowing communication between two sides of a Plexiglas wall.

The person on the visitors' side wears a large jacket and baseball cap pulled low.

Victor takes a seat and picks up the phone.

VICTOR
Hello?

The visitor looks up. It's Eli.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
(shocked)
Eli, I... I've thought every day
about what I'd say when I saw you
again... I want you to know that
Angie's death was an accident. I
need you to believe that.

ELI

I didn't come here for an apology or an explanation. You know, there was nothing in that lab that could have caused Angie's injuries. I racked my brain on that one for a long time, until I realized the obvious: you have powers of your own, they just aren't the same as mine. Am I right?

Victor swallows hard.

VICTOR

Yes. As usual.

Eli sighs.

ELI

Just makes my mission all the more important, I guess.

VICTOR

You killed Claire and Lyne, didn't you?

Eli nods his head in shame.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

They didn't have to die.

ELI

I wish there was another way.

VICTOR

There is. You can turn yourself in. Don't go through this alone.

ELI

Claire should have been the last.

VICTOR

She can be. You can end this.

ELI

Not yet. Our discovery was dangerous enough when there was a chance I was a unique case. We drew blood from everyone in the NDE cohort, and they didn't heal instantly, so we know they don't have my powers. But if you have powers of your own-- different ones-- then the same might be true of every single person in the cohort.

(MORE)

ELI (CONT'D)

Maybe everyone who's ever had a near-death experience. The possibilities are endless.

VICTOR

That's not a reason to kill anybody.

ELI

Don't you get it? I'm trying to save the human race. If the public discovered that death could give you powers, think about what that would do to society... a world populated by superhumans with inexplicable, unpredictable abilities.

VICTOR

You don't know how many would come back with powers. We don't know for sure what caused these abilities.

ELI

Doesn't matter, all the public needs is one, a proof of concept, and hundreds of millions would take their chances. In the best-case scenario, powers are rare, and we end up simply losing those people to a wave of suicides.

(then)

No one can ever find out what we've become, or replicate our experiment. I need to destroy every trace of this discovery, every single clue on the path toward it, including anyone who might already have powers.

VICTOR

Then why come here to tell me?

ELI

Because you're locked in here and there's absolutely nothing you can do about it. If you tell anyone, nobody will believe you. This is what it's like to feel powerless, Victor. This is how I feel every time I realize I'll never see Angie again.

There's a long pause before Victor responds.

VICTOR
I know you're hurting right now,
but this isn't what Angie would
want you to do.

Eli glares at Victor.

ELI
Then I guess it's a good thing she
isn't here to watch me do it.

VICTOR
Eli, wait.

Eli hangs up the phone and charges towards the exit. Victor calls after him, then jumps to his feet, banging on the glass divider.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Eli! Eli!

The guards take notice and pounce on Victor, trying to restrain him. Victor yells out as they pin him against the wall, the overhead lights flickering like crazy. He watches futilely as Eli turns the corner and walks out of sight.

And then, amidst the chaotic struggle, a look of realization washes over Victor's face.

INT. BOSTON P.D. BULLPEN - NIGHT

Stell sits at her desk clicking through crime scene photos. Aside from a framed photograph of herself laughing and eating cupcakes with a young girl, both their faces covered in icing, her desk is clutter-free.

As we hover past the photo, we notice the little girl is practically a carbon-copy of Stell, and wears the same charm bracelet Stell now wears.

DYLAN ROURKE (50's), a Detective with seen-it-all eyes, slows his stride as he passes her, struggling with his coat.

ROURKE
Coming for drinks?

STELL
(raising coffee mug)
Got mine right here.

ROURKE
It's late.

STELL
I've got two bodies to clear.

ROURKE
They're suicides.

STELL
Something about Eli Cardale and
Victor Vale tells me I'm not seeing
the whole story.

Rourke shakes his head. Before he turns to leave...

ROURKE
Take the wins where you can, Stell.

Stell considers his advice. Lets out a frustrated sigh and
buries her head in hands.

Her phone rings. Then again. Finally, on the third ring...

STELL
(into phone)
Stellman.

INT. OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER - DAY

The CORONER, a tall, silver-haired man in his 60's, escorts
Stell through frosted double doors and into the --

MORGUE

where Angie's body lies on an autopsy table. Behind it are
half a dozen rows of stainless steel cold boxes.

The coroner hands Stell a set of latex gloves and dons a pair
himself.

He pulls back the lower corner of a modesty blanket, exposing
Angie's leg to reveal a series of branching red streaks.

STELL
What are they?

CORONER
Lichtenberg figures -- sometimes
called "lightning flowers."

STELL
(skeptical)
You think she was struck by
lightning?

CORONER
It's the only explanation. They're
formed when a massive amount of
electricity travels through the
body and ruptures the capillaries
under the skin.

STELL

But she was indoors at the time of death.

CORONER

I don't know what to tell you. These markings are a telltale indicator of death by lightning strike.

STELL

What about a malfunctioning piece of machinery? That lab was filled with all kinds of shit.

CORONER

Not a chance. Lightning is the only thing that can produce high enough voltages to do this.

Stell throws her latex gloves into a bin across the room and turns to leave.

CORONER (CONT'D)

Sorry I couldn't give you anything useful.

STELL

Don't be. You just figured out the murder weapon.

CORONER

How the hell do you kill someone with a bolt of lightning?

STELL

That's what I'm going to find out.

INT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - NIGHT

Victor, wearing a handyman tool belt and pushing a laundry cart, unlocks the door that leads to the maintenance wing, mostly empty at this time of night.

Lights flicker overhead like a rolling brownout as Victor trundles down the long, desolate hallway, towards a jaded guard by the name of RODNEY (40's).

Rodney splits his time between reading a comic book and guarding the door to the prison's generator room.

He cranes his head up at the flickering lights as Victor approaches.

VICTOR

Hey, Rodney.

Rodney stands, sets his comic book down on his chair. He levels his gaze at Victor.

RODNEY
You're not allowed on this side of
the prison.

VICTOR
(nervous)
Lights have been acting crazy all
night. Warden wanted me to check
out the generator room.

Rodney studies Victor more closely and realizes that something's off.

RODNEY
No one told me.

VICTOR
You know how the warden forgets
sometimes.

Victor tries to sidestep Rodney, but Rodney bellies up against him.

RODNEY
Warden doesn't get in trouble for
breaking protocol. I do. So cool
your heels while I call this in.

Rodney pulls his walkie from his belt, but Victor's hand shoots out and clamps around Rodney's wrist. Rodney seizes and crumples to the ground, like his brain just turned off.

Victor kneels and starts removing Rodney's uniform.

QUICK CUTS as:

- Victor finishes removing Rodney's uniform.
- Victor, wearing Rodney's uniform, ties his shoe.
- Victor hoists Rodney, stripped down to his boxers, into the laundry cart.

Victor, using Rodney's key, unlocks the generator room. Opens the door. Four massive generators thrum. Victor steps inside.

Victor strolls to the middle of the chamber-like structure, tracing his fingertips along the generator housings. Electricity crackles and swirls up and around his arms.

He fans his fingers out. The generators rumble with growing volume as electricity arcs into them from Victor's hands.

Victor trembles, electricity surging through him: he's a human lightning rod.

He lets out an earth-shattering scream as a massive electrical storm rocks the entire room.

PRISON CELLS, THE CAFETERIA, THE WARDEN'S OFFICE

Are plunged into total darkness as overhead lights flicker, quiver, then die.

FINDING TWO GUARDS as they sprint down the hall towards the main generator room with flashlights.

FOLLOWING Victor, wearing his guard uniform, as he sees the guards from down the hall and ducks into a storage closet until they pass by.

Victor stops for a moment and stares at the concrete wall in front of him. His irises glow silver.

VICTOR'S "SUPERCHARGED" POV: Like thermal vision on steroids.

We see electricity as it flows through power lines inside the wall. Behind that, on the other side of the wall, are faint, blue-hued outlines.

We stay with Victor's POV as he exits the storage closet and rounds the corner, making his way toward the cluster of blue outlines in the distance.

The outlines are arrayed like the inmates in the cell block, and we realize Victor is sensing "AURAS," each one representing a different person's bio-electric field.

Victor looks down at his hands, then the rest of his body-- instead of blue energy, his AURA glows bright red.

Without warning, the overhead lights flicker back on, dimmer than before, as the backup generator kicks in.

EXT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - FRONT GATE

Wind howls and sheets of rain pour down. Victor, his uniform drenched, jogs up to the two poncho-clad guards at the front gate.

The SHORT GUARD in front squints through the rain and darkness.

SHORT GUARD

Who's there?

Victor holds his arm up to hide his face and closes the distance, as if trying to shield himself from the rain.

VICTOR
It's me, Rodney!

The TALL GUARD steps forward and illuminates Victor with a flashlight.

TALL GUARD
Fuck, that ain't Rodney!

Victor shoots his hand out and the bulbs in the guards' flashlights explode.

Without breaking stride, he pulls out his own Maglite and, wielding it like a cattle prod, tags both of the guards, knocking them out.

EXT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Victor stalks past rows of cars until he spots one he likes: a sporty, black coupe.

He runs his hand along the length of its hood-- its engine roars to life and the door locks click open.

He climbs inside, shifts into drive, and vanishes into the night.

EXT. GOLDENSON BIOMEDICAL LAB - NIGHT

Victor, now back on the Harvard campus, exits his car and disappears inside the lab.

INT. GOLDENSON BIOMEDICAL LAB - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Victor approaches the lab. He narrows his eyes, rests his hand on the card reader, and the electronic lock clicks over.

INSIDE THE LAB, at his and Eli's old workstation, Victor prints out the contact info for Lyne's NDE cohort.

EXT. SANTANDER BANK - NIGHT

Victor, holding a plastic shopping bag and wearing a hoodie, sidles up to an ATM on a mostly deserted street.

VICTOR'S POV: *Pushing through the front of the ATM*, a neon blue electrical array pulses to life. Circuitry fires past switches, relays, transistors, capacitors, and microcontrollers.

The ATM spits a stream of cash into Victor's bag.

INT. BAY STATE CORRECTIONAL CENTER - GENERATOR ROOM - DAY

Crime scene investigators sift through heaps of debris as Stell and Rourke inspect mangled generator assemblages.

ROURKE
Equipment malfunction?

STELL
It's like a fucking EMP went off in here. We pull security footage?

ROURKE
The cameras were fried, too.

STELL
And Vale was the only one who escaped.

ROURKE
The kid's smart. He saw an opportunity, he took it.

Stell shines her pen light onto a charred circuit breaker. Inspects the tangled mess of wires.

STELL
Guards said the last thing they remembered was Vale tagging them with some sort of stun gun. Bulbs in their flashlights exploded.

ROURKE
Kid was a Harvard-trained genius with nothing but time on his hands. I'm sure he'd figured out a hundred different ways to MacGyver a taser.

A GINGER-HAIRED COP rushes over, out of breath.

STELL
(to Ginger)
What's up?

GINGER
They found a stiff over by Arlington Heights. Guy by the name of Dominic Rusher. And get this: they found a finger at the scene. It belongs to Eli Cardale.

STELL
You mean a print? A fingerprint?

GINGER
No. A finger.

EXT./INT. ECONO LODGE - DAY

A dingy motel in the sparsely populated town of Danvers, Massachusetts, about half an hour outside of Boston.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Victor parks his car.
- Victor peels cash off the top of a thick wad. Motel clerk hands him room keys.
- Victor, sitting on the bed inside the shabby motel room, tears open a plastic package and removes a burner cellphone.
- Victor, holding a printout of Sydney and Serena's file, dials a number.

After a few rings...

WOMAN (V.O.)
Hello?

VICTOR
(into phone)
Hello, is this Serena Clarke?

INTERCUT with a WOMAN standing in a spacious kitchen surrounded by cleaning supplies.

WOMAN (V.O.)
No, Mr. and Mrs. Reardon aren't home right now.

VICTOR
Reardon? I'm looking for Clarke. Serena Clarke.

WOMAN (V.O.)
I'm afraid you have may have the wrong number. Would you like me to pass a message along to--

VICTOR (V.O.)
No, that's fine. Thank you.

Click. Victor sighs. Pushes Serena and Sydney Clarke's files aside. Grabs the next one in the stack: a man by the name of Dominic Rusher.

Victor dials the phone number listed on his contact info. After a few rings...

VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
It's Dom from the past. Leave a message for Dom from the present, and Dom from the future will call you back. Unless you're a bill collector, in which case go fuck yourself. BEEP.

VICTOR

Mr. Rusher, I'm calling about the Harvard medical study you participated in last year for Professor Sebastian Lyne. Some critical information has come to light, and it's imperative you call us back as soon as you receive this message...

INT. DOMINIC RUSHER'S HOUSE - DAY

The living room is caked in the dried remnants of an explosion of gore.

A police FORENSICS TEAM picks through the debris, documenting the signs of an animalistic struggle.

Stell steps daintily around Dominic Rusher's stiff and contorted corpse. His bugged-out eyes and the purple marks on his neck confirm that he was strangled to death.

Rourke hands Stell a plastic evidence bag with a human finger inside of it.

ROURKE

They found shotgun pellets in the far wall. No weapon, though. Cardale's accomplice probably took it when they fled the scene.

Stell crouches down and finds a spent shotgun shell. She picks it up with a pen and inspects it.

STELL

Accomplice?

ROURKE

The amount of blood and tissue in here indicates that the blast from the victim's gun destroyed most of Cardale's arm. He would've bled out in a matter of minutes. His partner's probably a large male, considering he was able to carry Cardale out of here.

Stell places the empty shotgun shell back down.

STELL

Eli Cardale doesn't have a partner.

She stands up and walks over to investigate a row of medals on the mantel. Specks of dried blood pepper photos of Rusher from his military days.

Stell motions towards Rusher's Purple Heart.

STELL (CONT'D)
What did he get this for?

Rourke flips through some papers.

ROURKE
(reading)
He jumped on a grenade with a fire blanket. Saved five of his platoon-mates. After that he was in and out of a coma for 11 months. You think there's a connection there?

STELL
I think Cardale and Rusher have more in common than we think.

A blinking red light grabs Stell's attention. It's Rusher's phone, which sits on an end table adjacent the sofa. She presses play.

VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
Mr. Rusher, I'm calling about the Harvard medical study you participated in last year for Professor Sebastian Lyne...

STELL
(realizing)
That's Victor Vale.

EXT./INT. STELL'S CRUISER - MOVING - DAY

Stell's cruiser speeds past a rolling greenbelt, with the partially demolished facade of Danvers State Mental Hospital visible in the background.

ROURKE (V.O.)
The number he left on Rusher's voicemail connects to a burner cell. We triangulated the signal to a five mile radius.

STELL (V.O.)
Where?

ROURKE (V.O.)
Danvers.

STELL (V.O.)
Perfect place to stay off the radar. How many motels in the area?

ROURKE (V.O.)
Two.

EXT. MOTEL 6 - DAY

Stell exits the motel lobby and gets back into her cruiser. Pulls onto the freeway.

STELL (V.O.)
Good. I'll canvas the motels. I need you to get me the names of anyone else who took part in that medical study. Vale may have reached out to them, too.

ROURKE (V.O.)
You sure I shouldn't tag along?

EXT. ECONO LODGE MOTEL - DAY

Stell's cruiser pulls into the parking lot. She parks and walks towards the lobby.

STELL (V.O.)
I can look after myself. Divide and conquer.

INT. ECONO LODGE MOTEL - DAY

The front door chimes as Stell enters. The place is a dump, nobody behind the service counter.

STELL
Hello?

SERVICE CLERK (O.S.)
(muffled)
Jush a shecond.

Moments later, the SERVICE CLERK, a young woman wiping her mouth with a greasy napkin, enters from the "employee lounge" in the back.

SERVICE CLERK (CONT'D)
Help you?

STELL
(flashing badge)
I'm Detective Stellman.

Stell places Victor's mugshot on the counter top. Slides it across the service counter.

STELL (CONT'D)
This man just escaped from prison. I have reason to believe he may be staying here.

The clerk lifts the photo, examining it. Her eyes go wide.

STELL (CONT'D)
Look familiar?

The clerk nods.

INT. VICTOR'S ROOM - ECONO LODGE - BATHROOM - DAY

Victor, leaned over the sink, shuts the water off and examines his haggard reflection in the vanity mirror. His hair is no longer strawberry blonde. It's jet black. He towel-dries his hair, tosses an empty bottle of hair dye into the wastebasket, and exits the bathroom.

Something's off, though: he snaps into high-alert mode, as if he can sense someone else's presence.

VICTOR'S POV: Stell's glowing blue aura pulses, visible through the wall.

Victor silently crosses the room. Nestles right up against the door. He stares through the peephole.

As soon as Stell approaches the outside of his door, he rests his hand on the inside door handle.

EXT. VICTOR'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stell unbuttons her pistol guard. Hand at the ready. Steels herself. Swipes the keycard she obtained from the motel clerk.

As soon as she hears the lock click over, she grabs the door handle, then-- BZZZZT!-- she seizes and crumples to the ground.

The door opens, and her unconscious body is dragged

INSIDE

Where Victor quickly frisks her. He removes her pistol, stuffs it into his waistband, and handcuffs her. He peeks out the window-- no other cops in sight. He hoists Stell over his shoulder and exits the room.

EXT. ECONO LODGE MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Victor, carrying Stell, charges towards her cruiser. He notices the motel clerk peeking out from the front lobby. He points Stell's gun at her.

VICTOR
Get back inside!

She does, shutting and locking the lobby door. He sets Stell down next to her unmarked cruiser, unlocks the car, then hoists her into the passenger seat. He walks around to the driver's side, gets in, and speeds off.

EXT. ROCKPORT TRAIN STATION - DAY

Eli steps out of a commuter train and onto the platform of a train station in a quiet, rural fishing town. The sign behind him reads: ROCKPORT STATION.

INT. STELL'S CRUISER - DAY

Stell, in the passenger seat, gasps awake. Victor lowers a packet of smelling salts from under her nose. Places them back inside a standard issue police first aid kit.

Stell sports a fresh butterfly bandaid on her forehead. Touches it. Winces.

STELL

Christ.

Victor turns to face her.

VICTOR

I removed your cuffs. I know you have questions, so we're going to have a candid chat. Afterwards, I'm going to give you your gun back. What you decide to do at that point is up to you.

EXT. REARDON HOUSE - DAY

Eli, wearing a navy suit, rings the doorbell. His gaze and demeanor are cold. Detached. Hardened by loss and suffering. A broad-shouldered FRECKLED MAN (40's) answers the door.

FRECKLED MAN

Can I help you?

ELI

I'm Agent Eli Ever, with the IRS. I'm looking for a Ms. Serena Clarke. Does she live here?

The man's WIFE (40's) walks up, a worried look on her face.

FRECKLED MAN

Oh. Uh, no. We're the Reardons. We moved in about a month ago. Ms. Clarke was the previous owner.

ELI

(disappointed)

I see... Did she leave a forwarding address?

EXT. SAUGUS IRONWORKS - DAY

Stell and Victor walk through the Saugus Iron Works, a national historical site that's been converted back to the way it was upon its founding in the 1600's.

The whole place is closed for the winter, deserted and covered in snow.

VICTOR

We were perfecting a serum to extend the treatment window for critically injured victims. That part you already know. What I didn't tell you was that we tested the serum on Eli, and he came back...

(searching)

Invincible. He can heal from physical trauma, no matter how lethal, in seconds.

STELL

That's impossible.

VICTOR

I took the serum, too. And I died and came back... different. Able to do the impossible.

STELL

I don't understand...

Victor stops walking. Turns to face Stell. He extends his hands, his irises burn silver, and electricity arcs between his palms like a Tesla coil, bathing his face in neon blue. Stell goes pale and steadies herself on a nearby bench. Sits.

VICTOR

I broke out of prison because there are others like us. Eli killed Lyne and Claire, and he's going to hunt and kill more people.

Stell looks up.

STELL

Like Dominic Rusher?

VICTOR

How do you know Rusher?

STELL

How do you?

VICTOR
Rusher was part of Lyne's NDE cohort. He was one of our original research subjects.

STELL
He's dead.

Victor sits down next to her.

VICTOR
I wasn't sure he'd actually go through with it.

STELL
Why is he killing people?

VICTOR
He blames Angie's death on our experiment. If he hadn't come back the way he did, none of this would have happened. He wants to prevent the research from ever being duplicated, so he's destroying every scrap that we collected.

STELL
Killing the people on that list won't bring Angie back.

VICTOR
It runs deeper than that. Power always made Eli uncomfortable. He said if our discovery was ever revealed, entire nations would wage wars over it. Countless people would induce NDE's for the chance to come back with superhuman abilities. He's on a one-man crusade, now. He thinks killing a few will save millions.

STELL
How many others are in danger?

VICTOR
If Rusher's already dead, then three more that I know of.

Victor removes the NDE cohort printout from inside his coat. Hands it to Stell.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
We were too late to protect Rusher, but maybe we can still save the others. Barry Lynch and the Clarke sisters.

STELL
You left a voicemail for Rusher.
Were you able to contact the
others?

VICTOR
No. Lynch's number was
disconnected, and Sydey and Serena
Clarke have moved.

Stell thinks for a moment.

STELL
If I decide to help you, what
happens afterwards?

VICTOR
All I care about is stopping Eli.
If I survive-- you can do whatever
you want with me.

Victor removes Stell's pistol and car keys. Holds them out.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
These belong to you.

Stell takes them.

STELL
I'll get contact info for Lynch and
the Clarke sisters.

Victor nods. He stands and hands Stell a burner like his own.

VICTOR
I know you can't be seen with me in
public. My number's in there. Call
me once you have something.

Stell nods, then Victor turns to go. As he leaves--

STELL
How do you expect to stop a man who
can't be killed?

VICTOR
(over his shoulder)
That's what I need to figure out.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Recess. A mob of children, circled up, bloodthirsty mad,
screaming over one another in the snow. Sydney pushes past
them, to the center of the circle, where she sees several
kids poking a motionless sparrow with a sticks and branches.

She rushes over to the bird and falls to her knees.

SYDNEY

Stop it!

She leans in, and, with cupped hands, tenderly scoops up the bloodied bird.

BOY #1

We didn't do anything.

BOY #2

It's already dead, freak!

SYDNEY

(sotto)

No it's not.

TEACHER/MS. AMES (O.S.)

Sydney Clarke! Sydney!

SYDNEY

(over her shoulder)

Coming, Ms. Ames!

Sydney lifts the sparrow and brings it in close, like a protective mother, as she pushes her way through the frenzied group of children.

She trudges towards her teacher, MS. AMES, who stands next to a POLICE OFFICER at the rear entrance of the school.

Before going inside, she gently places the bird in the safety of a small bush. It meekly rises to its feet. Chirps. Maybe it wasn't dead after all?

STELL (PRE-LAP) (V.O.)

I pulled those records.

EXT./INT. STELL'S CRUISER - MOVING

Stell, talking into her burner cell, steers onto the freeway on-ramp.

STELL

Barry Lynch drove into a guardrail a week ago. Died on impact. He'd already had a previous DUI, but I pulled the crime scene records, and the facts don't quite add up. I'm not saying it was Eli, but I'm not ruling him out, either.

EXT. MOTORCYCLE - MOVING - SAME

Victor flies down the highway on a bright red crotch rocket.

STELL (V.O.)
 As for the Clarke sisters, they
 moved to Boston from Rockport about
 a month ago.

VICTOR (V.O.)
 We need to get to them before Eli
 does.

STELL (V.O.)
 I already sent a black-and-white to
 pick Sydney up from school. They're
 holding her Downtown. Precinct A-1.

VICTOR (V.O.)
 What about Serena?

STELL (V.O.)
 Had a beat cop swing by the house,
 but she wasn't home. Left a
 voicemail on her cell. I'm headed
 her way now.

VICTOR (V.O.)
 Text me the address. I'll meet you
 there.

EXT. CLARKE HOUSE - DAY

Eli, wearing a thick jacket and beanie, cases the house from
 under a leafless hickory across the street.

Serena Clarke emerges from a nearby trailhead in winter
 running gear. She jogs up to the front door, unlocks it, and
 walks inside.

INT. CLARKE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Serena makes a beeline for the kitchen, grabs a water from
 the refrigerator, and chugs it as she checks her phone, which
 sits, charging, on the kitchen counter. Five missed calls.

Before she can listen to her voicemail messages, there's a
 knock at the front door.

Serena walks over and opens the door. Eli stands there, eyes
 hollow. Smile plastered on.

ELI
 Serena.

SERENA
 (delighted)
 Eli?

They stare at each other awkwardly for a few moments. Serena
 snaps out of it. She steps aside and opens the door.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Come in. Sorry about the mess.
We're still unpacking and I wasn't
expecting guests.

Eli looks around. Ikea furniture. Cardboard moving boxes.
Fireplace with some pictures on the mantel.

ELI

It's my fault. Sorry for surprising
you like this. I actually stopped
by your old place.

SERENA

Oh. Well... with everything that
happened, I decided it was time to
move on. Move into the city, become
a part of society again.

ELI

I see. How's Sydney taking it?

SERENA

She's... adjusting.

ELI

Did you hear about what happened to
Professor Lyne?

SERENA

It was plastered across the news.
Terrible, he was such a nice man.

ELI

Well... that's the reason I came to
visit. The cops are still
investigating, but I think there's
a chance his death wasn't a
suicide.

SERENA

Why would someone want to hurt him?

ELI

Can I ask you and Sydney a few
questions? I'm just trying to
gather as much information as I
can.

SERENA

About what?

ELI

I think Lyne's death is related to
the NDE study.

Eli takes a seat on the couch.

ELI (CONT'D)
 After your family's rafting
 accident, did you notice anything
 different?

SERENA
 Different how?

ELI
 About yourself or Sydney. Weird
 visions? Sensations? Occurrences?

Serena studies Eli for a long beat-- like he isn't the same
 person she remembered.

Her phone rings. She walks over and picks it up.

SERENA
 Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

Stell, in her car, phone pressed to her ear.

STELL
 Serena Clarke?

SERENA
 Yes.

STELL
 My name is Detective Sabrina
 Stellman. I'm calling because I
 think you and your sister, Sydney,
 may be in danger. I'm on my way to
 your house right now. Are you home?

SERENA
 Yes.

STELL
 I need you to lock your windows and
 doors. Don't let anyone inside.

Serena glances up at Eli. Gears turning.

SERENA
 ...Tell Sydney she's in big
 trouble.

A beat.

SERENA (CONT'D)
 I've warned her about fighting with
 the other kids.

STELL
Is... someone there? Now?

SERENA
That's right. What's his name? The
boy she was fighting with?

STELL
Eli. Eli Cardale. Is he there with
you?

SERENA
Of course.
(checks her watch)
I'll be waiting when she gets home.

STELL
Keep him talking, Serena. Don't let
on that you know anything. I'll
call for backup. We'll be there
soon.

Click.

EXT. MOTORCYCLE - MOVING - SAME

Trees fly by in a green blur as Victor rockets down the
highway. He bears down, assumes a more aggressive position,
and hammers the bike's throttle.

INT. CLARKE HOUSE - DAY

Eli scans Serena for a tell. She's got a hell of a poker
face.

SERENA
Sorry about that. Sydney's been
getting into fights lately.

ELI
Kids'll look for any reason to pick
on someone at that age. Especially
if they're the "new kid." She go to
school nearby?

SERENA
Yeah. The thing people don't
realize about bullies, though, is
that they're just sad, lonely,
desperate people.

ELI
How so?

Serena crosses the room. She walks towards her purse, which
sits atop the kitchen table.

SERENA

People who love themselves don't hurt other people. The more someone hates themselves, the more they want others to suffer. So they prey on those who are different.

ELI

In society's eyes, being different is the worst kind of weak.

Serena reaches her purse. She opens it. Removes something.

SERENA

Then I pity society. Being different can be the most empowering thing in the world.
(turns to face Eli)
Why are you really here?

Eli stands up. He drops the pretense.

ELI

You tell me.

SERENA

You need to leave. Now. And if you go anywhere near my sister, I'll fucking kill you.

Eli starts towards Serena.

ELI

I'm sorry, I don't have a choice.

SERENA

Then neither do I. No one comes after me and my sister.

Serena, clutching mace, straightens her arm. She squeezes the actuator, and a jet stream of pepper spray shoots out of the nozzle.

Despite being hit square in the eyes, Eli doesn't so much as blink. He closes the gap between himself and Serena, a look of sinking horror flashing across her face as she backpedals away from him.

She backs into the wall just as Eli swats the mace out of her hand. He clamps his hands around her throat and starts to squeeze. Her legs buckle as she gasps for air, Eli's grip tightening like a vice.

She tries prying his hands from her throat, and when that doesn't work, she claws at his face, which proves equally ineffective.

She slides down the wall, Eli hovering over her as she coughs and gurgles. A vein bursts inside her nose and a gush of blood runs down her face and onto Eli's wrists.

Eli forces her to the ground, her legs flailing as she writhes around on the carpet, struggling against him. He finishes squeezing the life out of her, and she lies there, motionless. Peaceful.

Eli stands up, face drenched in mace. He rounds his shoulders. Cracks his knuckles. Exhales loudly. He hears hushed voices and quiet footsteps in the hallway.

He nabs Serena's cell phone from the kitchen counter, stuffs it into his pocket, and, without a care in the world, strides into the hallway, where he's confronted by Stell and two POLICEMEN.

Eli holds his hands up.

ELI
I'm not armed!

Stell holds a bead as the policemen move to engage, but Eli grabs one by the wrist and twists it, shattering his arm. The cop drops his sidearm, and as he screams out, Stell and the other cop fire into Eli, but he barely notices the bullets.

Grabbing the first policeman's pistol from the floor, Eli shoots both cops in the face at point blank range, blowing their brains across the ceiling.

Eli drops the pistol as Stell fires into him, but the bullet holes knit back together almost as quick as they appear.

Eli closes the distance between himself and Stell and lashes out with a brutal front kick, hitting Stell square in the solar plexus. She slams into the wall behind her, cratering it, and crashes onto the floor.

Gasping for air, Stell crawls away from Eli. Eli snatches up her piece and grabs her by the hair. She tries to regain control, but Eli pistol-whips her across the face and leans over her.

ELI (CONT'D)
How did you know where to find me?

No answer. Eli strikes her again. And again.

ELI (CONT'D)
How?

STELL
Go fuck yourself.

She spits a bloody tooth into his face. Eli nestles the tip of Stell's pistol into her thigh.

ELI

Tell me!

BANG! Stell screams in agony as an avalanche of blood soaks through her jeans and streams down her leg.

EXT. CLARKE HOUSE - SAME

Victor arrives at the house on his motorcycle and jumps off, dumping it to the ground. Without losing momentum, he dashes up the steps to the open door.

INT. CLARKE HOUSE - SAME

Stell looks up at Eli. If her face weren't so bloodied and swollen, you'd swear she was smiling.

STELL

(slurred, mumbled)

I hope when Victor figures out how to kill you, he does it slow.

Eli's eyes go wide with surprise when he hears Victor's name. He crawls off of Stell as blood gurgles out of her mouth.

BOOM! Out of nowhere, Victor, screaming, his entire body pulsing with electricity, plows into Eli like a supercharged freight train.

The lights inside the house go haywire as Victor and Eli hurtle over the back of the couch and slam into the wall.

Stell moans and rolls onto her stomach. She crawls towards the front door, leaving a thick trail of blood in her wake.

Victor lifts Eli up by the scruff of his collar, plants his hands on both sides of Eli's face, and pumps him full of electricity.

VICTOR

Look at yourself, Eli! You killed all these people!

Eli, the skin on his face blistering, peeling, and healing over and over, finally wrenches Victor's hands away.

ELI

You killed Angie.

With that, Eli savagely head butts Victor. He follows it up with a punch to the throat, and Victor staggers back and slumps onto the floor.

Eli closes the distance between them and lifts his boot, but, just before he smashes it through the back of Victor's head, Victor's entire body pulsates with a burst of electricity.

It hits Eli like a sledgehammer, and he flies clean off his feet. He crashes into the fireplace, its mantel collapsing down on top of him.

Eli coughs up a torrent of blood as chunks of marble from the fireplace mantel rain down all around him.

He lifts himself to his feet, grabbing a giant chunk of marble as his wounds heal up. Victor, drained from the exertion, is too weak to stand.

Eli hobbles over and swings his boot into Victor's stomach. Victor screams out in pain and flips onto his back, hacking up a fresh gush of blood.

Eli mounts Victor, raises the chunk of marble overhead.

Eli's arms straighten, and-- BOOM! His chest explodes into pink mist, and he goes flying backwards.

REVEAL: Stell, propped against the wall, clutching a Mossberg Six-Shot. Too weak to support her own weight, she slides down the wall.

KA-CHK. Stell ejects the empty. She may not be able to stand, but she can still aim a shotgun.

Victor scrambles to his hands and knees and snags a pair of handcuffs from one of the dead cops. Eli, his chest a writhing mass of regenerating flesh, pulls himself up off the floor.

Stell pulls the trigger again and BOOM! -- half of Eli's head explodes in an eruption of gore and he hits the ground hard.

STELL
Cuff him! Now!

KA-CHK. Spent shotgun shell hits the floor. Lands in the growing puddle of blood under Stell's leg. Eli's head starts to knit itself back together but Victor wrangles his arms together and slaps the cuffs around his wrists.

CLICK. Eli's finally restrained. Victor, covered in Eli's blood, scrambles over to Stell. The distant sound of police and ambulance sirens pierce the air.

VICTOR
Stay with me, Stell.

STELL
(chuckles)
I'm fine... ain't goin' nowhere.

Victor reaches down, unbuckles her belt, and rips it from her waist. Eli, hands cuffed, lying on the floor in the corner of the room, struggles to sit.

ELI
What's your plan, Vic?

Hands tremble as Victor positions the belt above Stell's bullet wound and cinches it tight around her thigh. He clenches it taut with his teeth and jams the buckle pin down.

ELI (CONT'D)
You've always got a plan up your sleeve. What's your play?

Victor turns to face Eli. His eyes are heavy. Dark. Weighed down with sadness.

VICTOR
I'm surrendering.

ELI
You know I'll never surrender.

VICTOR
Then it's a good thing I'm making the decision for both of us.

Victor takes Stell's pulse as sirens grow louder.

ELI
You let them arrest me, how long do you think it's going to take me to break out of prison? How many people do you think I'll kill in the process?

Victor, barely keeping it together, rubs his temples. Eli continues to work him...

ELI (CONT'D)
You gonna try to explain to them what I am? What we are? Who will believe you?

VICTOR
(shaking all over)
Shut up.

ELI
I won't allow myself to be taken in, Vic. You do this, and the blood of everyone I kill is on your hands.

Victor squeezes his eyes shut. Clamps his hands over his ears, as if to keep his head from exploding.

His eyes snap open. He marches over to Eli and hoists him to his feet. He pushes Eli ahead of him as they shuffle past Stell and towards the front door.

Victor shoves Eli OUTSIDE and piles him into the passenger side of Stell's cruiser. He slams the door shut, then runs back inside.

Victor kneels in front of Stell. Police sirens grow louder. Victor feels for a pulse at Stell's jugular. She's fading. He rests a hand on her shoulder and whispers into her ear.

VICTOR
This will all be over soon.

Stell nods. With that, he gets up and darts out the front door.

INT. STELL'S CRUISER - MOVING

Victor drives along the coast, lost in thought. Through the window, colossal waves crash and break along the boulder-strewn shoreline. Eli shifts in the passenger seat.

ELI
I know what you're thinking. You'll take me somewhere secure. Figure out the best way to arrange my handoff. Try to explain how dangerous I am.

Eli snarls.

ELI (CONT'D)
You'll be a hero in the eyes of the public. And I'll just be the monster you dragged in from the depths.

VICTOR
(detached)
I could take you somewhere remote. Dig a deep hole. Dump you in it. Fill it with cement.

Eli stares at Victor's somber expression.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I understand... the logic behind what you're doing. I do.

Eli grimaces.

CLOSE ON Eli's hands, cuffed together behind his back, as he dislocates his thumb and starts working his hand free.

ELI

Then you understand why I still
have to kill you and Sydney Clarke.

VICTOR

There are others out there. The
world is changing, Eli. I'll make
sure Sydney and I keep our secret,
but I can't guarantee someone else
won't come forward.

ELI

You're right, Victor. You can't.

Eli, his hands free now, shoots for the steering wheel. He
grabs it, and, throwing all of his weight behind him, cranks
it all the way to the left.

The car violently swerves into oncoming traffic, and, before
Victor can react, they smash head-first into a pickup truck.

EXT./INT. STELL'S CRUISER

Eli, not wearing a seatbelt, flies through the windshield in
a torrent of blood and glass. He slams into the pavement,
tumbling for another twenty feet before finally skidding to a
stop. Unrecognizable.

Stell's cruiser is in rough shape, but the ram guard absorbed
the brunt of the impact-- the pickup truck they slammed into,
on the other hand, is an accordion.

Back inside the cruiser, Victor shakes the cobwebs loose. He
looks out over the deflating airbag and sees Eli, his body
knitting itself together, pull himself to his feet.

Victor tries opening the driver's side door, but it's jammed
shut. He tries starting the car. The engine sputters and
dies.

Eli, his body a writhing, grotesque patchwork of road rash
and glass shards, hobbles closer as his broken bones reset.

Victor yanks the keys out of the ignition and tosses them
aside. He presses his thumb against the metal ignition
receiver and sends a volley of electricity into it.

The engine roars to life and Eli, fully healed now, breaks
into a run as Victor slams the gearbox into reverse and cuts
the wheel at an aggressive angle, turning the car around.

Victor puts the cruiser in drive and peels out in the
opposite direction moments before Eli gets close enough to
launch himself onto the car.

INT. AMBULANCE - SAME

Stell's laid out on a gurney in the back of the ambulance. Grimacing. Her burner phone rings.

STELL

Answer it. I.. need to answer it.

PARAMEDIC

Not now, Detective. We're gonna patch you up first.

STELL

Please.

The PARAMEDICS exchange glances. One of them removes her burner from her coat pocket, accepts the call, and holds the phone against her face.

INTERCUT WITH Victor, barreling down the highway in Stell's cruiser.

VICTOR

Eli escaped. He's going after Sydney. What precinct did you say she was at?

STELL

Downtown... A... 1.

The ambulance hits a pothole and Stell grimaces, instinctively cradles her broken ribs. The other PARAMEDIC injects her with Dilaudid.

PARAMEDIC

(to Stell)

This will help with the pain.

VICTOR

Where are they taking you?

Stell exhales, and her eyes flutter shut.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Stell? What hosp--

The Paramedic holding the phone raises it to his own ear.

PARAMEDIC

Paramedic speaking.

VICTOR

This is her partner. Put her back on.

PARAMEDIC
I'm sorry, Sir, we gave her
something for the pain, and she's
out of it.

VICTOR
Where are you taking her?

PARAMEDIC
Massachusetts General.

INT. STELL'S CRUISER - MOVING

Victor tosses his burner phone onto the passenger seat and stomps on the gas.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A middle-aged WOMAN in a station wagon pulls over at the scene of the accident. She sees Eli approaching and exits her car.

WOMAN
Are you alright? I'm calling 911.

Eli doesn't answer. He just walks over, shoves the woman away from her car, gets in, and speeds off.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Eli, idling in the parking lot of a marina, removes Serena's cell phone from his pocket. Its glass screen is spiderwebbed, but the phone works. He dials Sydney.

INT. DOWNTOWN BOSTON PRECINCT A1 POLICE STATION - SAME

Sydney, seated inside a holding room, answers her phone.

SYDNEY
Serena?

INTERCUT WITH ELI:

ELI
I'm calling from Social Services.
Is this Sydney Clarke?

SYDNEY
Yes. Where's Serena? Is she okay?

ELI
Serena's been in a car accident,
but she'll be alright.

SYDNEY
Can I come see her?

ELI
Of course. Just tell me where you
are and I'll send someone to come
pick you up.

EXT./INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Victor pulls Stell's beat-to-shit cruiser into the parking lot.
- Victor removes a navy colored windbreaker from the car's trunk. Emblazoned across the back is the word "POLICE."
- INSIDE the bathroom, Victor winces as he scrubs dried blood off of his face.
- Victor zips the windbreaker over his blood-caked shirt.
- BACK OUTSIDE, in the parking lot, Victor approaches a Jeep. Briefly scans the area before getting into the driver's seat. Moments later, the SUV roars to life and he drives off.

INT. JEEP - DAY

Victor, parked along the side of the road, stakes out the Downtown Police Station from across a busy intersection.

He straightens his police-issue windbreaker and checks his reflection in the flip-down visor: he looks like he just went ten rounds with Floyd Mayweather.

VICTOR
(sotto)
Fuck it.

He flips the visor up.

Suddenly, people start filing out of the station. Victor exits the vehicle.

EXT. DOWNTOWN BOSTON PRECINCT A-1 POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

A panicked mob of people spill out of the station, running and pushing each other out of the way. Victor moves into the throng, against the tide.

He grabs a uniformed OFFICER by the arm.

VICTOR
What's going on?

OFFICER
Bomb threat. EOD team is on the way, but you should get back across the street.

Victor nods, and the Officer disappears into the fleeing mob. Victor hops onto the hood of a police car. His irises glow silver as he scans the crowd.

VICTOR'S POV: A frenzied sea of blue "auras" rushing out of the station and across the parking lot. And then he sees her: a single red aura. Different from the others. Sydney.

VICTOR
(through cupped hands)
Sydney!

And that's when Victor notices a second red aura headed for Sydney. It's Eli.

Victor hops off the car hood and fights his way towards Sydney, pushing people out of the way. Eli closes in from the opposite side of the mob.

Victor gets to her first. He quickly kneels.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Sydney. Do you remember me?

SYDNEY
No.

VICTOR
I'm Victor. I'm a friend of
Serena's. I'm here to take you
somewhere safe.

SYDNEY
I want to see her. What's
happening?

VICTOR
I understand. I need you to come
with me, and I'll explain
everything. I promise.

Sydney hesitates. Unsure whether she can trust him. Victor glances up, sees Eli fighting his way through the panicked crowd.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
You like the aquarium, right?

SYDNEY
It's my favorite place.

VICTOR
I remember. I'll take you there and
tell you everything you want to
know. But we need to go now, okay?

Sydney thinks for another moment, then nods. Car horns blare as people pile into their cars. Victor scans the parking lot-- Eli's closing in from that direction, and there's already a bottleneck of vehicles trying to leave.

Victor spies a train station across the street. He takes Sydney by the hand and they weave through the mass of people, using the crowd to put some distance between them and Eli.

INT. BOWDOIN TRAIN STATION - BLUE LINE - DAY

Victor lifts Sydney over the turnstile, then hops it himself. He looks back just in time to catch Eli descend into the station.

VICTOR
C'mon. We need to move!

He clamps his hand around Sydney's and breaks into a sprint-- not so fast that she can't keep up, but nearly.

The T train enters the station. Its brakes clamp and squeal, slowing it to a stop. The doors slide open and a crowd of commuters disembark. Victor and Sydney board the--

T TRAIN

and Victor repeatedly checks over his shoulder as he pulls Sydney along towards the train's front car.

SYDNEY
Who's chasing us?

VICTOR
Eli Cardale.

SYDNEY
(stunned)
I know Eli. He's nice. He would
never hurt us.

VICTOR
He's not the same Eli you remember.

INT. BOWDOIN TRAIN STATION - BLUE LINE - DAY

Eli, sprinting, reaches the platform just in time to hop into the final car before the train speeds away from the station.

EXT. NEW ENGLAND AQUARIUM PLAZA - DAY

The New England Aquarium, a massive, steel-and-glass architectural masterpiece. Victor and Sydney disembark the T train and disappear inside the futuristic-looking building.

INT. NEW ENGLAND AQUARIUM - GIANT OCEAN TANK - DAY

Families and tourists take photos and stare in awe at the 200,000 gallon saltwater tank, housing a vibrant coral reef and a vast array of marine occupants: giant sea turtles, moray eels, devil rays, barracudas, and dozens of species of fish.

Victor crouches so he's eye-level with Sydney. Clasps his hand over hers.

VICTOR

There's something I need to tell you, Sydney. About Serena.

SYDNEY

A man called me at the police station and said she was in a car accident. But he said she was okay. She's okay. Right, Victor?

Victor searches for the right words, but they don't come.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

(lip quivering)

I'm not a little kid. You can tell me. Is my sister okay?

VICTOR

(hesitant)

No.

Sydney stares down at her feet before completely breaking down. Victor gently embraces her. As she sobs--

VICTOR (CONT'D)

I don't want anything to happen to you, Sydney. So I need you to be brave. You and I have a lot in common. We're different. Special. Because of that, Eli is going to hunt us for the rest of our lives.

Sydney buries her head into Victor's chest, sobbing harder now. Sydney raises her head. Her face is beet-red. Victor wipes her tears away with his hand. Straightens her hair.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Find Detective Stellman. Sabrina Stellman. They took her to Massachusetts General Hospital. Don't speak to anyone else. She's seen what Eli's capable of. She's the only person you can trust, the only person that can keep you safe.

SYDNEY
Why can't you come with me?

VICTOR
Because this needs to end. I can't
run from Eli forever.

Sydney's shell-shocked. Sensing this--

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I know it's a lot to take in all at
once, and I wish there was a--

Sydney points to something behind Victor. Victor whips around to see Eli, fists clenched, standing at the opposite end of the atrium. He starts towards Victor and Sydney. Victor turns back around.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I'm going to pull the fire alarm.
Blend into the crowd, and do
exactly what I told you. You have
to go, Sydney!

Victor gives Sydney one last hug, then pulls the fire alarm. Klaxons blare, lights strobe, and hordes of people make their way for the exits.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Go! Now!

She backs away, staring at Victor for a few last moments, before finally turning and vanishing into the throng of people.

Victor turns, planting himself between Eli and Sydney like a mountain as Eli closes the distance between them.

VICTOR'S POV: Eli's RED AURA flickers-- a needle on a broken record.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I can help you, Eli. Claire was
right. We're waves, not atoms, and
you're crashing onto the same surf
break, over and over. You're caught
in a loop, like a short circuit. I
can literally see it. With my
powers, I might be able to break
that circuit.

ELI
No, I won't fall for that. I don't
plan on spending eternity locked
away. There's too much work for me
out there.

(MORE)

ELI (CONT'D)

I'm going to make sure there are no more of us. No more exceptions.

VICTOR

You're immortal! You could discover a million lifetimes' worth of scientific breakthroughs! You could shape the future of the human race!

ELI

And I will, when my work's done. But it's not a future you'll be a part of.

VICTOR

Eli... Please. I'm begging you not to do this. There has to be another way. I don't want to fight you.

Eli cracks his knuckles.

ELI

That'll make this easier, then. Anything else you want to say before we begin?

VICTOR

Yes. I'm sorry. For everything. I let you down. I let Angie down. I was given a gift, and I wasted it out of selfishness and pride and fear. And if I've been given, for whatever reason, a second chance to make up for those mistakes, then I want to make the best of it. You owe it to Angie to use your powers the right way, too.

ELI

Finally, we agree on something.

Eli explodes towards Victor, whose fists crackle with electrical energy. Eli's too fast, though, and he wraps Victor in a bear hug and slams his back into the giant glass tank.

Victor gets the wind knocked out of him, but clamps his hands around Eli's head. Eli's face turns bright red and his head quakes as Victor sends electricity straight into his skull.

Snake-fast, Victor lowers his right arm and delivers a lightning-charged uppercut to Eli's face. The explosion sends him flying into a concrete support beam with so much force that a massive chunk sloughs off, collapsing onto Eli.

Victor spreads his hands, energy crackling between his fingers, and focuses a lightning bolt of electricity straight into Eli's chest, sending him flying into a wall.

Eli, charred and drenched in blood, screams and writhes as millions of volts of electricity course through him. He coughs up a torrent of blood as he desperately tries to muscle himself back to his feet.

A moment later, Victor slumps over and leans against the aquarium tank, drained from the exertion. Eli, his face contorted, takes the chance to pull himself together.

He stands up, his body twitching erratically from the volleys of energy Victor sent through him.

Eli wipes blood from his mouth as his body knits back up. He marches towards Victor.

Victor, breathing heavily and covered in sweat, shakes his head in disbelief. Eli's clothes are charred tatters, but his body's completely healed.

ELI (CONT'D)

That's why you can't beat me,
Victor: I don't run out of juice.

Eli clutches the back of Victor's head and knees him in the face, sending him flying into the tank, hard. Victor, blood gushing from his nose, tries to regain his feet.

VICTOR

Eli, stop...

ELI

No.

Eli smashes him with a devastating overhand left, sending him crashing to the floor.

Eli bends down, grabs Victor by his bloodied collar, and lifts him to his feet.

He pushes Victor up against the tank and punches him in the gut. Over. And over. We hear Victor's ribs snap one by one.

Victor crumples to the floor, coughing up a gush of blood as his right eye swells shut.

Eli grabs Victor by the hair, lifts his face up, and smashes his elbow into it, breaking his jaw. Victor weakly crawls across the floor, spitting his own teeth out as he tries to escape the onslaught.

ELI (CONT'D)

Get up!

Victor, already half-dead, slowly lifts himself off the ground. Just as turns to face Eli, Eli pounces and rocks him with a ferocious Superman punch, nearly finishing him.

Eli throttles Victor against the massive aquarium tank by the throat and lifts him clear off the ground with both hands.

ELI (CONT'D)

I always took the long view, Victor. Buy you, you could never see past yourself. To you, scientific discovery is a personal challenge. You don't want to save everyone-- you want to show the world that you can. So they'll think you matter. And maybe they'll return the favor and convince you of it. Victor Vale, the Genius. Victor Vale, the Savior.

Victor stamps his legs against the glass, but it's no use.

ELI (CONT'D)

It doesn't matter to you what happens in the aftermath. Their part will be over once they lift you onto their shoulders. You don't care that every single one of them will be crushed under the weight of your fucking ego.

Victor, hanging on by a thread, chokes and gasps as Eli tightens his grip.

ELI (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Victor... I'll save them from you. I'll save them from Sydney. I'll save them from themselves.

(then)

I will restore the natural order.

Victor, his face twisted in rage, plants his palms on the glass tank. Air crackles with electricity, and, one by one, the lights in the atrium flicker and explode.

Inside the tank, the animals go crazy. Schools of fish swarm into a seething mass. Dozens of stingrays flit past Victor in a crisscrossing motion. Eels, turtles, jellyfish-- all swirling and swimming erratically, drawn to Victor, whose entire body thrums and pulsates.

Just as Victor's vision begins to fade, the glass behind him spiderwebs. The cracks snake all the way to the top of the tank, and, before Eli realizes what's happening--

TIME DILATES as hundreds of thousands of gallons of water burst through the glass, hitting Victor and Eli like a tsunami and instantly turning the entire atrium into a giant conductor.

UNDERWATER, Victor and Eli churn and tumble in the roiling water. With Eli's hands still clamped around his throat, Victor wraps his arms around Eli and pulls him in, like he's bringing him in for an embrace.

ABOVE WATER, sparks fly from outlets and power strips in the walls and floor, lights in the ceiling-- anything that's wired to the grid.

BACK UNDERWATER, Victor locks his hands together behind Eli's back, and electricity snakes through the swirling, bubbling water in SLOW MOTION, drawn towards Victor, until the flooded atrium is an electrical vortex: every molecule of water supercharged.

Victor focuses the energy into himself, and, although we can't hear him, air bubbles escape his mouth as he screams. Bolstered by the enormous underwater electrical field, Victor sends a massive amount of energy, more than we've ever seen him wield, through his and Eli's bodies.

BACK ABOVE WATER, there's a neon-blue flash, followed by an enormous underwater explosion, as the entire room flashes over with electricity.

VICTOR'S UNDERWATER POV: A fleeting glimpse of Eli's AURA flickering from red, to blue, to nothing before Victor loses consciousness.

BACK ABOVE WATER, dead marine animals start to surface by the dozens. Fish. Eels. Stingrays. Turtles. Too many to count. And then Victor and Eli surface, side by side. Pale. Lifeless. Bloodied. Floating like driftwood.

Fire trucks and police sirens can be heard in the distance as we DISSOLVE TO WHITE.

Although we can't see anything, the metronome-like beeping of an ECG takes us to--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL - LONG TERM WARD - DAY

Stell, who's miraculously recovered, leads Sydney, who's clutching a stuffed starfish, into Victor's hospital room.

Victor's on life support, hooked up to breathing tubes and EEG leads. The EEG monitor is a flatline, showing zero brain activity.

Stell looks away-- she can't bare to see Victor like this. Sydney climbs onto the edge of his bed. She places the starfish next to him.

SYDNEY

This is for you, Victor. You can
give him a name when you wake up.

Sydney takes Victor's hand in hers and tenderly traces her thumb along his knuckles. She studies his face.

Did his eyelids just flutter?

Sydney smiles, and WE SLOWLY PUSH IN ON the EEG monitor as a single, almost imperceptible blip floats across the screen.

SMASH TO BLACK.