



BLACK DAWNING

Pilot

by
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INT. ST. JULIANA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL (LOBBY) - DAY

Old building, walls yellowed with age. NUN NURSES, WEARY PARENTS, SICK KIDS.

FELTEN (8) rolls his wheelchair to the hospital directory, pushes up his baseball cap, adjusts his glasses for a better look.

DONAL (40) stands behind. Hoodie. Stocking cap. His eyes flick to a lone surveillance camera. He pushes Felten's baseball cap down. Felten pushes it back up.

FELTEN

I can't see.

He steps out of the wheelchair, walks to the directory.

FELTEN

I had a dream about a birds door.

DONAL

A door on a bird cage or a door with birds on it or what?

FELTEN

A birds door. Let's go to nine. I've got a feeling on nine.

INT. HOSPITAL (9TH FLOOR) - DAY

Felten's eyes. Shut tight. His voice, focused and clear through an unnerving cacophony of screams, moans and vocalizations of irreparably disabled children.

FELTEN

No... No... No...

Donal pushes him down the ninth floor hall. Slow. Some doors are open. Some not. Cruel rolls of the genetic dice are glimpsed: cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, worse.

FELTEN

No... No... Not there... Stop.

He points at room 906.

FELTEN

There.

INT. HOSPITAL (ROOM 906) - CONTINUOUS

WYATT (15) sleeps in the bed. IVs in both arms. A ventilator breathes for him. Piss drains into one bag, shit into another. Feeding tube direct to his stomach. Limbs locked in rigor at wrong angles.

Donal's KNIFE ding-dings the bed rail.

DONAL

Wake up.

Wyatt's eyes open, see Donal, the knife. Fear. Had he the ability to move or scream, he would. His eyes look to the equipment monitoring his heartbeat, his breathing.

Donal holds up a small DEVICE he's clipped onto a monitor cable; a light blinks on the device.

DONAL

Everything at the nurse's station'll read nominal. No one's coming. Can you blink? Once for no. Twice for yes. Do it slow.

Blink, blink. Yes. Donal holds a picture from the nightstand so Wyatt can see it.

DONAL

Your parents?

Blink, blink.

DONAL

You love 'em?

Blink, blink.

DONAL

Tell anyone what happens here today and I'll kill your parents. It'll be your fault if that happens. Understand?

Blink, blink. Terror. Felten stands, leans over Wyatt.

FELTEN

Is there something beautiful you remember from your life, Wyatt? Something that filled your heart?

Blink. No.

FELTEN

Is there something you've imagined could fill your heart?

Blink, blink. Felten smiles.

FELTEN

Good. Close your eyes. Imagine that. Only that. It's behind a door... Open it, go in and shut the door behind you.

He flexes his fingers and wraps both his hands around one of Wyatt's.

FELTEN

There will be pain. Stay behind the door. Don't be afraid. I'll be with you.

Felten CLOSES HIS EYES.

FELTEN

(to Donal)

Pull those things out.

Donal pulls out IVs, tubes, all of it. Dripping holes are left gaping. He pulls the ventilator last, kills the volume on the machines beeping alarm.

Wyatt SUFFOCATES. FELTEN SUFFOCATES with him. Their bodies tremble and... AS ONE, they GASP a breath of air.

Wyatt's mouth opens and FELTEN'S VOICE issues forth.

FELTEN

(through Wyatt)

I need something to bite.

Donal rolls up a washcloth, puts it in Wyatt's mouth. The mouth bites down. Both boys' eyes open. Their PUPILS DILATE fully; the air HUMS. The bed rails VIBRATE.

The dripping holes on Wyatt's body HEAL SHUT. Bones in his body BREAK with thick, wet cracks and RESET in proper alignment, joints POP and TWIST to natural angles.

Screams are muffled behind the teeth gnashing the washcloth and - the screams STOP.

The cardiac monitor: *beepbeepbeepbeebreebeebreeeeeeeeeeeeee* - Donal reaches to pull Felten's hands off Wyatt -

FELTEN

NOT YET.

WYATT

NOT YET.

Wyatt's body arcs, holds, then falls to the bed. It is done. He is healed.

Felten's eyes: still dilated, bottomless.

FELTEN

The blue stairs, Wyatt. Past eating tree.
All the way down.

Felten shudders, his pupils shrink, eyes finding focus. Donal helps him into the wheelchair. Felten smiles at him and passes out.

Wyatt breathes on his own, eyelids heavy, half conscious.

Donal puts a blanket over Felten, pushes the wheelchair to the door. He comes to Wyatt's bedside, takes the device off the cable.

Wyatt looks to Donal, overwhelmed, profound gratitude in his eyes. He moves a trembling hand, reaches out. Donal puts the picture of Wyatt's parents in it.

DONAL

Remember what I told you.

TITLES

Play through and blow out to WHITE...

INT. THE QUIET PLACE

A WHITE DOOR. Pure white. It's red knob turned by A CHILD'S HAND. Within...

BLACK. Absolute darkness. Then, a soft, yellow cone of light illumines a MAN (55) frozen in the process of creating a mosaic tilework on a wall.

The angle of light changes, moving shadows across the man's face, deepening then shallowing.

GRETCHEN (O.S.)

No.

The light changes. The view of the man shifts, looking up at him now. His expression changes. A hint of a smirk.

A CHILD'S HAND reaches in, feathering a touch to the man's cheek. The hand belongs to GRETCHEN PARKS (10).

GRETCHEN

Almost.

Gretchen steps back a few feet and the man takes on the appearance of a post-impressionist painting. Were one to paint this man's soul, it would look thus.

GRETCHEN

Yes. There.

A PAINTBRUSH APPEARS in her hand as she lifts it. On the downstroke, it finds canvas. The work is swift, the figure before Gretchen taking shape in paint. Flawless.

A WOMAN'S VOICE echoes. Distant. Gretchen ignores it. The voice sounds again. Calling her name. Louder. Closer.

Gretchen focuses on the work. The voice insists. It's right beside her now. Gretchen growls frustration and acknowledges the presence of...

INT. GRETCHEN'S PAINTING STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

A tentative ABBY PARKS (40). The same painting from The Quiet Place is taking shape on canvas here. Gretchen's eyes don't leave the painting.

GRETCHEN

Mom, I'm *working*.

ABBY

I know, baby. I'm sorry. Don't be mad...
An emergency surgery scheduled, so I
can't go to LA with you and dad.

Gretchen grabs a different brush, dips the filbert tip into another color.

ABBY

I thought maybe we could hit that ice
cream place though.

GRETCHEN

When I eat it, will it make me feel like
some kid you don't even know isn't more
important than me?

ABBY

Gretchen, come on. You know -

GRETCHEN

Is it a boy or girl?

ABBY

Baby boy. Fourteen months. A dog tore up his face. He's on a plane now.

Gretchen's painting slows to a stop.

GRETCHEN

Can you fix his face?

ABBY

I think so.

GRETCHEN

You can. You're the best... Sorry.

She looks up at Abby, smiles, means it. Abby leans down, kisses Gretchen's forehead.

ABBY

S'okay. I'm disappointed, too. I really wanted to go.

(re: the painting)

Honey, is that the guy who tried to steal your painting from The Louvre?

GRETCHEN

He tried again and fell down a ventilation shaft and broke his neck. It's for his kids, so they remember him a good way. Or they can sell it.

Abby gives her little girl a big squeeze.

ABBY

Gretch, you must've been born in a bag a' sugar you're so sweet. I wonder why he wanted that painting so bad.

GRETCHEN

Dad says he was crazy and crazy people do crazy shit.

EXT. AIRAVATA TOWER (ROOF) - DAY

Skyscraper. The service door opens, a SECURITY GUARD backs out, hands up.

JIN HAN NING (40s) follows, HANDGUN leveled. Tears streak his face. Nice suit. Covered with blood, but nice.

SECURITY GUARD

I'm beggin' you, man, please. Jump if you want, I won't stop you, do whatever you -

BANG. In the throat. The security guard falls, hands clasping the wound. Dying. Drowning in his own blood.

JIN HAN NING

It isn't me!

He turns, walks to the edge of the roof.

JIN HAN NING

It isn't me.

He steps into 110 stories of air and falls. Almost quiet now. A calm day. No wind. Just the wet sucking of the dying guard's breath. Then, just quiet.

INT. AIRAVATA TOWER (BATHROOM) - CONTINUOUS

The handicap stall. A rascal-scooter-bound SCARLETT (40s) drools, eyes rolled back to the whites.

She blinks, shakes a little, comes around. Wipes drool with a lace-frilled hanky, smiles.

SCARLETT

Oh, my.

Southern accent. Georgia, maybe. Pretty. BRUCE (40) leans in. Black. Built. Suit. He looks Scarlett in the eye until she focuses. Scarlett shivers.

SCARLETT

Goodness, what a way to fly. But, Bruce, honey, I cannot get them to shut up for the life of me. Little weasel was jibbering nonstop - *it isn't me, it isn't me* - same thing every time, you'd think somebody'd have something original to say. Well, the Lord gives us all little mountains to climb, doesn't He?

BRUCE

You have to shit before we go?

Scarlett takes a breath to contain herself.

SCARLETT

I believe we had a talk about vulgarity regarding my private functions.

BRUCE

If you could get on and off a toilet by yourself I wouldn't have to be a party to your private functions.

SCARLETT

Boy, you watch yourself or I'm gonna have a talk with Malcolm about you.

Bruce leans in, not fucking around.

BRUCE

We had *this* talk, too. Call me boy again like I'm your house nigger and I'm gonna drown you in that toilet, Scarlett.

Scarlett's not fucking around either.

SCARLETT

Sugar, I'll make you castrate yourself and run laps around your momma's bedroom while you bleed out. Think I won't do it?

BRUCE

I think if I had someone waiting on me hand and foot, seeing to my every need as well as my personal safety - a person who has the power of life and death over me twenty four hours a day - I would go to great lengths to assure the happiness and contentment of that person with his job.

Scarlett smiles, caresses Bruce's cheek.

SCARLETT

Bruce, darlin', you're the best handler I've had but there is a line. I am a lady and there is a line. I didn't call you a nigger. Boy is part of my vernacular and you know it, but there you go makin' threats anyway. Well, alright, if that's how you want it, that's how you get it and God help you if you try me.

BRUCE

I won't need help. But I imagine He'd give it to me just to shut you up.

WHACK - Scarlett slaps him. WHACK - Bruce slaps her back. Scarlett takes it, stares death, then withers.

SCARLETT

This about Memphis?

BRUCE

You're goddamn right it's about Memphis. You have to use the restroom or not?

Scarlett stuffs her hanky in a fanny pack, indignant.

SCARLETT

Yes.

INT. DONAL'S CAR (DRIVING) - DAY

Donal drives. No cap. No hoodie. He looks sharp. If you'd seen him at the hospital, you couldn't pick him out of a lineup now. Felten sleeps in a booster seat in back, head off to one side. Donal checks on him in the rearview.

Red light. Donal stops, looks at a POSTER glued to the side of a bus stop. On it: a stylized drawing of a smiling CESAR KELLY and, "Town Hall meeting with Congressman Cesar Kelly - The voice of the future!"

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - DAY

Donal carries a sleeping Felten in one arm, the boy's head on his shoulder. Ding, the doors open.

A PORTLY MAN in a suit with a WHITE TIE enters the elevator, sets down his briefcase, pushes a floor.

PORTLY MAN

(re: Felten)

All tuckered out, huh? How old?

DONAL

Too old to get carried around when he gets sleepy.

Portly smiles. Donal smiles, his body turned to conceal the movement as he puts a finger through the knuckle-duster ring of a KNIFE in his pocket.

PORTLY MAN

Been awhile since I carried my twins - they're 16 now - but my back's still feeling it. I'd have one in each arm, biceps on fire, sciatic lighting up like a Christmas tree -

Felten stirs. Portly locks his lips, throws away the key. Donal nods his thanks. Portly checks his watch.

Donal steps back, angles Felten away from Portly, pulls his KNIFE free, conceals it against his forearm. Ding. The elevator stops; the doors open.

DONAL

Hit fifteen for me? I hit ten by mistake.

Portly hits the button, exits with a smile and a wave. Donal sees the room Portly goes to. 906. The doors close. The elevator rises. Stops. Tenth floor. The doors open. Donal steps out.

INT. DONAL'S HOTEL SUITE - DAY

Felten still asleep on his shoulder, Donal shuts the door, deadbolts it, engages the chain.

DONAL
Felten, wake up.

FELTEN
I've been up.

Donal lowers him to his feet, squats to the kid's level.

DONAL
Go to the room. Lock the door. Get your gun. Load it, chamber a round. Put on -

FELTEN
Because of the man in the elevator?

DONAL
Yes.

FELTEN
Was he a White Tie, Donal?

Donal holds Felten by the shoulders.

DONAL
Go to the room. Lock the d-

The word stops half out his mouth. Felten has his HAND on Donal's. Both their pupils DILATE. Go INTO DONAL'S EYE and ENTER...

INT. DONAL'S MIND (PATHS OF MEMORY) - CONTINUOUS

DOORS and PATHWAYS of all kinds stretch in ALL directions at ALL angles, like Escher's *Relativity* on LSD.

Felten is here. He looks around, walks down a path to the ELEVATOR DOOR; the HOTEL ROOM DOOR'S next to it.

Felten pushes the call button; the elevator doors open; the boy sees Portly's WHITE TIE.

INT. DONAL'S HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Felten releases Donal and the bond is broken. The boy is an absolute panic.

FELTEN

I won't go back. They'll, they'll -

Donal grabs Felten's head with both hands, brushes the kid's temples with his thumbs as he talks.

DONAL

Easy. Calm. Get it together. Breathe. Look at me. You're not there. You're with me. Calm. Breathe. Get it together...

Felten's panic breaks against Donal's composure.

FELTEN

Keep it together... And we walk out together. No matter what.

DONAL

No matter what. We talked about not going in my head, yeah?

FELTEN

Yeah.

DONAL

Doesn't happen again. I don't know if he's a White Tie or not. That's why we have processes in place. Now go to the room. Lock the door. Get your gun. Load it, chamber a round. Put on your vest -

FELTEN

Get my knives. Get my effigy. Go in the bathroom. Lock the door. Mark it. Get in the bathtub. Wait. Listen. Don't open the door, not even for you.

DONAL

Not even for me. When I'm sure it's safe, we'll Q and A out. Anything happens, use your effigy, talk to Malcolm. Anything touches that door, you shoot holes through it. Go.

Felten runs out of the room. Donal watches him go to the bedroom, shut and lock the door.

INT. DONAL'S HOTEL SUITE - MINUTES LATER

In CUTS, Donal: puts on a tactical vest with knives, ammo, a few POUCHES and VIALS; loads a combat SHOTGUN, a pistol; uses a black substance to paint a SYMBOL on the door with his fingers.

INT. DONAL'S SUITE (BATHROOM) - CONTINUOUS

The same SYMBOL is smudged on this door: A TUSKED, MULTI-TRUNKED ELEPHANT. THIS IS **THE SEAL OF THE ELEPHANT.**

The symbol is a bleeding, bastardized version of the small **MULTI-TRUNKED ELEPHANT GOD EFFIGY** squatting on the edge of the sink.

Felten's in the tub, 9mm PISTOL trained on the door, KNIVES attached to his tactical vest for quick access.

He pushes up his sleeve, runs a thumb over a TATTOO on his left forearm - a cleaner, more intricate version of the symbol on the door. THIS IS **THE MARK OF THE ELEPHANT.**

His eyes pull to the effigy. It's ancient. Stone cracked. Missing an ear. He looks away as though the stone god might catch him peeking.

INT. DONAL'S HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Donal watches the door from across the room. Sleeves pushed up, **THE MARK OF THE ELEPHANT** tattooed on the underside of his left forearm.

On a table beside him, another **ELEPHANT GOD EFFIGY**, made of metal. Completely different from Felten's stylistically, but it clearly represents the same being.

Donal reaches a tentative hand toward the effigy, pauses short of touching it. Makes a decision, takes out his cell phone. Dials. Someone picks up on the other side but doesn't speak.

DONAL

Might have a White Tie problem. Got the room locked down. Could use your girl.

SOFIA (PHONE)

We're booked tonight. You tell Malcolm?

DONAL

Rather not unless I know for sure. Reach out when you're done.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Parked cars. Businesses. Not the best area. A MOTEL on one side of the street.

INT. SOFIA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

An Impala. Parked. SOFIA (40s) at the wheel. Hispanic. Casual dress. Hair ponytailed. Phone on speaker. MARK OF THE ELEPHANT TATTOO on her left forearm.

SOFIA

Copy that. Bye.

KARA (15) sits shotgun in a long-sleeved, vintage pink dress with frilled lace at the wrists and neck.

KARA

Well, if it isn't your fuck buddy and his little retard.

SOFIA

God, you are endlessly offensive.

KARA

And you're an endless cunt, Sofi.

SOFIA

Sofia. And you're not gonna get a rise out of me, so knock it off.

She puts a pair of small binoculars to her eyes, watches someone walk to a room at the MOTEL across the street.

KARA

What bullshit reason did Donal come up with to get us over there so he can lay some pipe in your ass?

SOFIA

He wants you to check on a guy. Might be a White Tie.

KARA

You think I'm afraid of a fucking White Tie? I'll make a nightmare for that asshole so deep he'll have another heart attack in the afterlife.

SOFIA

You should be afraid of White Ties. They've got tricks, too, and they do not fuck around. Odds are it's just some schmuck with bad fashion sense.

KARA

Like you, you sneaky bitch?

Sofia lowers the binocs, turns to Kara.

SOFIA

What is your fucking issue, Kara?

KARA

My issue is you stole my seafoam green dress that was handmade in nineteen-thirty-fucking-two.

SOFIA

I didn't take any of your weird-ass dresses.

KARA

Seafoam green with a bow on the back. From that basement in Austin. I made eight in-dream kills *in a row* wearing that dress. It was good luck, and you stole it.

SOFIA

You lost the dress. Get off my ass.

A new car pulls into the motel lot. Sofia observes VIA BINOCULARS: A middle-aged BLACK COUPLE gets out with some grocery bags. She lowers the binocs.

SOFIA

That's our guy.

KARA

You dirty, lying cunt of a -

SOFIA

I did steal it! I stole it and I burned it. I hated that fucking dress and I burned it. I hate all your creepy-doll dresses, but that one I really hated and it fucking stunk and I burned it. Ya got me, okay? Fine. I'll get you a new dress.

KARA

I don't want a dress, Sofi. I want *that* fucking dress.

SOFIA

You will need me to save your life at some point in time. It will happen.

KARA

I don't need any washed-up old slut to save me from shit.

SOFIA

You're new. I've handled four tricks before you. You think you're bad, but believe me when I tell you that on the list of real bad things out there you don't even register.

KARA

Keep running your mouth, Sofi. Out here you might have me, but everybody sleeps, and when you do, you're in my world.

Sofia bites her tongue, starts the car.

EXT. CITY - DUSK

The sun, about to fold below the horizon.

INT. WESLEY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Dirty, blood-caked fingertips scratch a line of symbols on hardwood with the barest sliver of chalk. *Incantations* are whispered.

WESLEY'S (30s) on his belly, shirtless, held in a column of setting sunlight that stretches from a window toward a door across the room.

One of his pant legs has been ripped off, the flesh beneath is rent, blistered, bloody. TATTOOS criss-cross his back and arms.

A procession of symbols and circles are scribed in chalk and blood at the edges of the sunlight. Beyond that single line of light, the room is filled by absolute, preternatural dark.

Wesley bites a thumb and as the blood wells up, SOMETHING WET AND IMMENSE moves in the concealing dark, the sound of its locomotion like a mass of slick intestine slopping and folding over itself with swift, liquid ease.

It's right at the edge of the light, unseen but felt, the floor groaning with shifting weight. Wesley stays at his task. He thumbs a circle of blood around what he's drawn.

There's a foot of black space between Wesley and the door. He looks back at the window and sees the shadow pushing toward him from the window as the sun sets.

WESLEY

Oh God oh fuck no no no no -

The darkness flows closer, the THING moves in it. Wesley's hysterical. His symbols and circles on the floor sizzle, smoke and disappear as the black flows over them.

The door is so close, but so is the THING in the dark. Not much time now, the fading sunlight protecting Wesley is almost gone.

Wesley takes a breath, steels himself and BITES OFF his right pinky at the second knuckle, screaming close-mouthed as he shakes his head to rip skin and ligament.

He spits it into his hand and throws it across the room; the thing moves, its lubricious bulk breaking glass and buckling furniture in manic pursuit of human meat.

Wesley runs to the door, opens it...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

... and slams it shut. He frantically draws a binding symbol on it with his blood. WHOOM, the thing slams against the other side.

Wesley's already half down the hall at a dead sprint. The blood symbol on the door *sizzles*.

EXT. THE PARKS HOUSE - NIGHT

A well-kept Victorian cut hard with moon shadow.

INT. THE PARKS HOUSE (DALE'S WORKSHOP) - NIGHT

A carpenter's shop. Lots of old school tools. In CUTS: a series of tiny tools work with precision and patience on a piece of maple.

The result is an exquisite table leg, its length carved with fauns, satyrs, nymphs and maidens dancing in some ancient wood, so skillfully rendered they seem to move.

Hairy arms fluffed with sawdust, DALE (40s) holds up the leg to the light for inspection, blows off some shavings.

He lays the leg on a blanket, runs his fingertips over the wood, looking, feeling. Gretchen moves in alongside.

DALE

Bags packed? Flight leaves early.

GRETCHEN

I'm packed.

Gretchen trails a tentative hand over the satyrs and fauns and nymphs, careful, like her dad.

GRETCHEN

Dad... does it take from you?

DALE

Does what take from me?

GRETCHEN

This.

She indicates the workshop entire.

DALE

Ah. The work. The wood. The art. Hell yeah, it takes, takes my time, takes my patience, takes my confidence now and again, my sleep. Having trouble?

GRETCHEN

I feel like I can't stop sometimes. Like something inside's making me paint and if I don't do it something bad will happen.

She stays focused on the table leg, a fingertip whispering a touch to a satyr's horns.

DALE

Like what?

GRETCHEN

I don't know. It's just a feeling.

Dale rests a hand on her back. Gretchen looks at him.

DALE

You talk to your mom about it?

GRETCHEN

She wouldn't understand.

DALE

She would. She's an artist, too, you know. A master. With a very delicate, living medium. Just seeing a little baby with its face all ripped up by a dog is enough to give anyone nightmares. Now imagine you've got to fix it. You can't look away. And surgery after surgery you've got to cut into that baby's face and sew it back up to make it better. Think about what that takes from her. And every time you snap at her for doing her art you take something from her that doesn't need to be taken.

Gretchen looks down.

DALE

I'm not trying to guilt you. I want you to understand so the next time you maybe catch yourself before you do it.

He puts a gentle finger under Gretchen's chin.

DALE

But baby - hey, look up. The art. The work. It gives it all back. What it takes from me, from you, from your mom, it gives it all back and more when you're done. And then - and this is the magic of art - it gives to everyone who sees it, who touches it. And to some it gives something more beautiful and true than you ever intended, it heals something in them that nothing else can.

Dale's eyes fill. Gretchen smiles, shakes her head.

GRETCHEN

You're so sentimental.

DALE

Fucking art, huh?

GRETCHEN

Fucking art.

Big hug, Gretch buries her face in daddy's shoulder.

INT. DONAL'S SUITE (BATHROOM) - NIGHT

Felten in the bathtub. Gun steadied atop his knee, sights on the door. Hyper vigilant. Breathing quick.

His hands start to shake. His fear bleeds over into anger. His face sets. He puts the gun down on the side of the tub, rests his hands in his lap, calms his breathing.

FELTEN

Get it together.

His muscles ease, his breath steadies.

FELTEN

Keep it together.

He CLOSES his eyes. His heart beats, beats, beats.

His eyes OPEN and HE SEES HIMSELF IN THE TUB from a vantage near the door. There he stands. TWO OF HIM. One in the tub, eyes closed, heart and breath slow, steady.

The other at the door, hand on the knob. He is in his own mind, in the memory of a few seconds past. He opens the door and steps into...

INT. FELTEN'S MIND (PATHS OF MEMORY) - CONTINUOUS

An endless, surreal warren of pathways and doors in all directions. Voices, screams and the black tidings of unnameable horrors drift on mental winds.

Felten turns his ear one way, then another, listens, listens, *there* - a CHANT crawls to the forefront of the mental noise, deep voices droning, repeating.

The screams of a child bleed into the chant. Felten's breath quickens. Fear. The chant, louder. The screams louder... LOUDER.

FELTEN

Get it together... Keep it together.

Then, Felten sees IT: Something long and dark slithering along the pathways at incredible speed. Coming for him.

FELTEN

It's my mind. I have the only power here.
It's my mind. Get it together...

The slithering thing shoots down the path toward Felten - CHOMP - it latches onto his leg... and falls still.

It's a CHAIN, terminating in a SHACKLE around Felten's ankle. SILENCE stamps down. Just Felten's breath and the rattle of the chain now.

Felten looks down at his shackled ankle. The chain tugs, urging him forward. He complies.

FELTEN
Keep it together.

INT. FELTEN'S MIND (PATHS OF MEMORY)

Felten ascends an inverted stone stair, walking upside down. When he takes the final step, he's oriented right-side up on the landing.

Waiting for him there: A STONE DOOR with its center scorched, blackened, ajar where the chain sneaks out. On either side of the door, CRUMBLED STATUES - what they once were cannot be distinguished.

FELTEN
It's *my* mind.

The chain tugs, incessant. He reaches for the door.

INT. FELTEN'S MIND (FELTEN'S CELL)

A room cut from stone. A raised stone slab with a blanket is the bed. A bucket in a corner is the toilet. CHANTING outside, echoing through halls.

A chain runs from the wall to a shackle attached to the bloody ankle of a skin and bones, white-robed MEMORY FELTEN, cross-legged on the floor.

He is still, quiet. Eyes shut. Meditating. Robe stained red around his ankles. TATTOOED on his left forearm: a SYMBOL suggesting a snake or worm captured in a circle of its own body - **THE MARK OF THE WHITE**.

The CHANTING outside escalates then diminishes to silence. Footsteps outside the door. Memory Felten opens his eyes as the door is unlocked.

A FEMALE ACOLYTE in a white robe enters, head shaved.

FEMALE ACOLYTE
You are called to service by The White.

MEMORY FELTEN
I am called to service.

He stands, face blank. The woman kneels, keys jangling to remove the shackle from his ankle.

The **CURRENT FELTEN** observes the memory in the third person from a corner of the cell. It is not easy for him.

INT. FELTEN'S MIND (CHAPEL OF THE WHITE)

Hewn from stone. Dim lit by fire. TWENTY-NINE MEN AND WOMEN of varying races aged 25-75 in suits with WHITE TIES stand at attention in rows.

Felten walks between these men and women of memory, checking each face, unseen and unheard by all as an observer in memory.

SAMUAL (O.S.)

I bear the mark and the word and the eye
of The White!

A breaking, abraded, off-putting voice. It rattles **Felten** to his core but he continues his task, checking faces.

WHITE TIES

We bear the mark of The White!

SAMUAL (O.S.)

And the *mission* of The White. Yes. A holy mission. A timeless mission. An eternal mission. For the journey to that which is eternal is an eternal journey. Yes. You bear the tie that truly binds. It's not on your neck, it's writ in your hearts, it's emblazoned for all time in your souls! Your ties are white because The White is within you! Yes?!

WHITE TIES

We enforce the will of The White!

Felten finishes a row, goes to the next, holding up a hand to shield his eyes lest he see Samual.

SAMUAL (O.S.)

Indeed... Indeed. And none better to do it. And for your life and your soul's service, The White grants you mercy.

Felten finishes walking the last row. He hasn't found who he's looking for. He turns to Samual's voice.

On a low dais of white marble, SAMUAL: skin stark white, hairless, eyes white and BLIND, THE MARK OF THE WHITE branded into his forehead, white robe, white staff of carved bone. He could be thirty; he could be a hundred.

At the center of the dais, a bleeding, middle-aged WOUNDED WHITE TIE prone atop a white marble altar: broken limbs, puncture wounds, lacerations, face beaten featureless, his blood paints crimson lines down the sides. Still alive. Barely.

SAMUAL
Come forth, child.

The female acolyte takes Memory Felten's hand and leads him to Samual at the altar.

Felten ventures onto the dais to get a look at Wounded White Tie, but he's scared to get close to Samual.

SAMUAL
(re: wounded White Tie)
Lay your hands on this servant who has sacrificed and let the mercy of The White work through you.

MEMORY FELTEN
No.

Samual spins on him, crouching to Memory Felten's level, sniffing his scent.

SAMUAL
What's this?

Memory Felten is terrified but he stands his ground.

MEMORY FELTEN
It's not The White. It's me. *I* do it. And I'm not going to do it for you anymore.

SAMUAL
You profane this gift?

He addresses the room entire.

SAMUAL
The White revealed itself to me and I was blinded, for mortal eyes are not meant to behold such beauty. Blinded, but given sight beyond sight! The color was driven from my body, the hair from my skin, mortal blood from my veins, and in its place... purity.

He touches The Mark of The White on his forehead.

SAMUAL
And purpose.

He stands to his full height, SLAMS the heel of his staff into the ground and THE ROOM TREMBLES, the fires dim. He levels an accusing finger at the boy.

SAMUAL

I bear the mark and the word and the eye of The White and I ask you, boy, do you blaspheme?

MEMORY FELTEN

I speak truth.

SAMUAL

You want truth? So be it. Then hear you THE WORD of The White!

MEMORY FELTEN

NO!

The acolyte grabs Memory Felten, pinning the boy's arms to his sides.

FELTEN

No.

Felten is paralyzed by fear, frozen in time as...

WHITE TIES

We hear the word!

Samual shakes, bones inside cracking and popping, his rib cage GROWS, his jaw UNHINGES, his throat SWELLS and...

Felten covers his ears, curls up on the ground and SCREAMS, WRITHING IN PAIN as an inhuman, unearthly cacophony issues from Samual, burying all sound beneath a deafening Stygian dissonance.

This is THE WORD OF THE WHITE. It resonates with SAMUAL'S STAFF, lighting it white from within, TURNING ALL EYES WHITE, save for **Felten's**.

The White Ties and the acolyte are in ecstasy. Memory Felten is in hell, like someone having heroin forced into their veins.

The Word threatens to bring the entire chapel down before Samual quells it. His staff's light dies. His body resumes its shape. He wipes black bile from his mouth.

SAMUAL

So speaks The White.

(to acolyte)

Release him.

Memory Felten's eyes: PURE WHITE. Samual points to Wounded White Tie.

SAMUAL

Take it, child.

Memory Felten lays his hands on Wounded White Tie. They both shake and scream as Felten heals the man, closing every wound, setting every bone. It doesn't take long.

SAMUAL

(to Wounded White Tie)

Rise.

Wounded White Tie rises. Healed. None speak.

SAMUAL

The mercy of The White. And to his faithful, the benevolent blessing of The White.

(to Felten)

Give it, child.

FEMALE ACOLYTE

Bless me... Bless me!

Memory Felten puts his hands on her. The acolyte screams as her bones break, her blood lets, every injury taken from Wounded White Tie is given to her... and she succumbs. Dead.

SAMUAL

The blessing of The White!

WHITE TIES

The White is merciful!

Felten looks at Wounded White Tie's healed face. Not the man from the elevator. None of them are.

FELTEN

It's not you either.

Samual turns, like he's looking right at **Felten**. He sniffs the air, reaching out with his staff.

SAMUAL

What's this?

Felten stumbles back, falls. Samual moves in. **Felten** scrambles away. He can hardly find his voice.

FELTEN

(whispering)

It's my mind. I'm the only power here.
Door. Door!

Samual swings his staff and STRIKES **FELTEN'S** HAND. Samuel smiles, sniffs, reaches out.

SAMUAL

You've made a mistake, child.

Felten pulls up his sleeve, brandishing THE MARK OF THE ELEPHANT and A GREAT TRUMPETING AS OF A THOUSAND ELEPHANTS BLOWS SAMUAL BACK.

FELTEN

DOOR!

He reaches out and his hand finds the knob of THE BATHROOM DOOR as it materializes between he and Samual.

INT. DONAL'S SUITE (BATHROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Felten jolts out of his meditation in the tub, pulls the washcloth from the elephant effigy and stops short of grabbing it when he sees a DARK BRUISE on the back of his hand where Samual's staff struck him in his mindspace.

FELTEN

No... No.

He picks up the gun with his little hand, studies it for a moment. Puts the barrel to his temple. Tenses his finger. Breathes. Breathes. Closes his eyes and...

INT. DONAL'S HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Donal waits behind an impromptu barricade of hotel furniture, combat shotgun with a pistol grip resting against his chest by its strap. Dead quiet.

A CLICK grabs his ear and Donal swings left, shotgun searching for a target and finds... Felten, standing in the bedroom doorway, pistol in hand. Donal doesn't lower the shotgun.

FELTEN

He's not a White Tie, Donal. The man from the elevator. I checked them all.

DONAL

How do I like my oatmeal?

Donal steps out from behind the barricade, shotgun steady on Felten as he moves in.

FELTEN

Oh. Q & A. Sorry. You like it cold and gross with no sugar, sometimes raisins.

Donal lowers the shotgun, kneels in front of Felten.

DONAL

I told you not to come out of that bathroom without a Q & A. You're lucky you didn't get a chest full of buckshot.

FELTEN

Don't let The White get me, Donal, no matter what. Kill me if you have to. Promise. Swear it on your love.

DONAL

On my love?

FELTEN

For me. Do you love me?

Donal, reticent but earnest.

DONAL

Yes.

FELTEN

Then swear on it. Promise me.

DONAL

I'm not gonna promise to kill you.

FELTEN

You won't?... You'd let them take me?

DONAL

That's not -

Felten puts the pistol to his head and pulls the trigger - THUNK! - Donal gets a lucky finger between the hammer and the percussion cap. He pulls the gun from Felten's hand.

DONAL

Jesus, Felten...

If Donal were a millisecond slower, Felten's brains would be all over this room. Felten stares Donal down.

FELTEN

Promise.

DONAL
I promise.

FELTEN
Say it all.

DONAL
I swear on my love I won't let The White
get you, no matter what... I'll kill you
if I have to.

Felten wraps his arms around Donal's neck and holds on
for dear life.

DONAL
S'alright. I got you. I got you.

FELTEN
I've got you, too.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Moonlight. Cypress trees. Vines. Moss. Animals about
their nocturnal business. Glide over the stagnant waters,
through mist, past an alligator, past an odd, whitish
stone sticking half out of the water.

There's another one, another and - wait - they're not
stones, they're BONES. SKULLS. Of birds, beasts, people.

Keep going, there're more, piled, heaped, bone peaks
rising from the water like little mountains of ivory
death. Higher and higher the closer they get to LAND.

Keep moving. Onto the shore. Through the vines and growth
to A STONE DOOR IN A CLIFF FACE.

On either side of it: Ancient statues overgrown to an
extent that their serpentine forms cannot be fully seen.
Carved in the door, **THE SEAL OF THE WHITE**.

INT. TEMPLE OF THE WHITE (SAMUAL'S CHAMBERS) - CONTINUOUS

A single oil lamp casts dim light on sleeping Samual,
prone on a slab of alabaster.

The distant trumpeting of an elephant echoes and Samual
wakes with a howl of rage, cutting an arc in the air with
his staff.

MONROE (30s) is beside him, seemingly out of nowhere. He has white hair, wears A WHITE SUIT, head-to-toe white. Samual senses him, reaches out; Monroe helps him up.

MONROE
Your ears are bleeding.

Indeed they are, crimson trails stark against Samual's white skin. Samual smiles. He knows.

SAMUAL
A kiss from the elephant. Where's The White Tie with the mirror walking trick?

MONROE
Levi. He's here.

SAMUAL
Send him to the desecrated temple. Have him get the shackle from the binding room and bring it to me.

MONROE
I serve The White.

Monroe turns, walks halfway out and looks back at Samual, a question in his eyes. A pink, raw smile splits the white of Samual's face like an open wound.

SAMUAL
Yes, the boy lives.

INT. THE PARKS HOUSE (GRETCHEN'S ROOM) - NIGHT

Gretchen sleeps. Bedside clock: 2:00 AM.

On the wall at the foot of her bed, a single PAINTING lit by a display light: An OLD WOMAN with a wrinkled, angelic smile looks out through green corn stalks.

INT. THE PARKS HOUSE (BATHROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Abby showers. The door opens; Dale steps in with her.

DALE
Get your back?

Abby hands him a soapy poof; Dale scrubs her back.

ABBY
What time's your flight?

DALE
Five. When's your surgery?

ABBY
I start prep at four thirty.

DALE
How you feeling about it?

ABBY
Nervous. Get the backs of my arms; I get those little bumps if you don't.

Dale scrubs her triceps.

DALE
You get those little bumps when you don't drink enough water. New procedure?

ABBY
No. It's just harder with infants. They don't know what's going on. They think you're torturing them. They look at you and they're so scared and they think you want to hurt them and their parents are there and they're complicit - it's fucking horrifying for them, Dale.

Dale hands her the poof, turns her around to face him.

DALE
I can't even imagine. But think about that little boy all grown up with a face that doesn't look like a jigsaw puzzle. Gets a cush job, hot wife, gets laid on the reg.

Abby shakes her head, smiles.

ABBY
How did you segue this into getting laid?

DALE
Am I getting laid?

ABBY
No.

Dale hands her the poof, smiles.

DALE
Yeah, I am. But get my back first.

ABBY

No, you're not.

He turns around; Abby scrubs his back.

ABBY

I get why she'd be pissed, I had time to go to India but I'm bailing on a three-day trip with her.

DALE

Well, performing free cleft palate surgeries for six weeks isn't exactly a vacation. She gets it. She's not mad.

ABBY

She said you had a talk... and that you said I'm an *artist*. And here I thought I was the odd man out around here.

DALE

I think she may have misquoted me there.

Clearly a sore spot for her. Dale turns to face his wife.

DALE

I didn't just say you were an artist, I said you were a *master*.

Abby can't contain her smile. She drops the poof, rises to her husband's lips. He's getting laid.

ABBY

I hate it when you're right.

INT. SCARLETT AND BRUCE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Curtains drawn. Bruce sleeps. Only enough light to see his silhouette. A HAND moves through the still air.

Bruce opens his eyes before the hand comes to a soft rest on his chest.

BRUCE

What?

It's Scarlett, next to the bed in her wheelchair.

SCARLETT

I've been paralyzed from the waist down since I was five. You think I've had suitors knocking down my door? You're the only man who ever took an interest.

BRUCE

Me and your buddy in Memphis.

He removes her hand from his chest like a used tissue.

SCARLETT

It was the first time in my life someone came on to me. I didn't plan it. I went into a bar for a drink and it happened.

BRUCE

That's a whole lot of steps you skipped between going in for a drink, getting picked up, going to some stranger's house and fucking him.

SCARLETT

How many women have you been with, Bruce? While you were out sowing seed all over creation, I was in this chair wondering if I'd ever have a man at all. *Ever.*

Bruce sits up, puts his legs over the edge of the bed. Scarlett takes his face in her hands.

SCARLETT

Baby, I'm *sorry*. At some point you've got to stop punishing and forgive me. I can't live like this.

BRUCE

I'm gonna take a shower.

He pulls her hands away, stands, walks to the bathroom.

SCARLETT

You hard-hearted son of a bitch. What's it gonna take for you to let it go? What do you want me to do, kill him?

BRUCE

I already killed him.

He goes in the bathroom, shuts the door. Scarlett puts a hand over her heart, truly touched.

SCARLETT

I love you, too.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

The same joint Sofia and Kara were staking out. Impala parked with a few other cars. The strident rhythm and moan of hard fucking within bleeds into the parking lot.

INT. SOFIA AND KARA'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

And that hard fucking's even louder here, but this isn't where it's happening. It's sounding through the wall.

Kara's on the bed in the same vintage dress, headphones on, watching some gory horror flick on a laptop.

Sofia reads a book in a chair, pistol cocked and locked on her lap, a lamp behind her. Kara pulls one side of her headphones away from an ear.

KARA

Fuuuck. It's five-thirty. Maybe you should go over there and double team him, you know, tire him out, clear the cobwebs out of your twat - sounds like some deep dicking in there.

Sofia turns a page of her book.

SOFIA

Make sure you've got the dream straight when it's time. Malcolm was very specific. No ad lib, no freestyle.

KARA

Like you have any fucking idea how I do what I do. You know what? I'm gonna give you a visit one of these nights when you're asleep. Make you piss yourself.

Sofia doesn't look up from her book.

SOFIA

Used to handle a guy named Burton who did a kind of teleporting trick. Walk in one shadow, come out another. Between shadows he was passing through some dimensional plane of eternal dark.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The door to Wesley's apartment has been blown off the hinges along with the walls around it.

SOFIA (V.O.)
 Malcolm said be careful, things lived
 there - he called them The Nameless. Burt
 never saw anything when he was passing
 through. But something in there saw him.
 And it waited.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Wesley runs, shirtless, frantic, covered in blood from
 the pinky he bit off. He looks over his shoulder and sees
 streetlights GOING DARK a few blocks back.

SOFIA (V.O.)(CONT'D)
 One day, Burt's shadow jumping to me in
 the desert and the thing follows him.
 Burt pops up out of my shadow, takes a
 step and his skin rips off and sucks into
 his shadow - like something sucking it
 off through a straw.

Wesley skids to a stop at the door of a shop advertising
Antiques, Mysteries, Magicks. He fumbles a KEY from his
 pocket, looking back at the coming darkness as he opens
 the door and runs in.

INT. ANTIQUES, MYSTERIES, MAGICKS - CONTINUOUS

Wesley sprints through, knocking over antiques and
 mysteries on his way to...

THE BACK ROOM, where Wesley goes to shelves lined with
 jars, vials, bags, beakers and all manner of sorcerous
 mediums. He knocks half of it to the floor, searching...

SOFIA (V.O.)(CONT'D)
 His body buckled on itself, bones
 breaking, snapping, organs bursting, all
 of it sucked into his own shadow. Not a
 drop of blood made it to the ground. When
 Burt was gone, his shadow was gone...

Wesley finds a JAR of yellowish liquid, finds a little
 pouch of a greenish POWDER.

SOFIA (V.O.)(CONT'D)
 And I saw the thing, wet and oily, size
 of a fucking van, nothing on this world
 to compare it to - dumped twenty rounds
 into it on reflex, didn't phase it.

Wesley mixes the powder into the jar of liquid, shakes it as the sound of something huge bulldozing its way through the shop comes to ear. He runs to a door that leads to...

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

A stairwell. Wesley runs up flight after flight. He's almost to the top when the door BLOWS OUT below.

SOFIA (V.O.)(CONT'D)
I'm sure I'm gonna die, but the thing doesn't make a move for me, it's writhing and sizzling in the sun. Then it communicates. Not words so much as images and feelings sent into my head.

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Wesley runs on to the roof, eyes searching - *there*, the glow of the sun just below the horizon. He holds the jar up trying to catch sunlight - but the sun isn't over the horizon yet.

SOFIA (V.O.)(CONT'D)
It made a mistake. It can't live in the light. It has to hide. But we're in the desert. Middle of the day. The only darkness is my shadow. And it can't cross the light to get to it, can't even find it - it's blind here. It's dying.

Wesley scales a rooftop antenna to its zenith, raises the jar as high as he can - the rooftop door BLOWS OUTWARD. The nameless thing has come for him.

WESLEY
Pleasepleaseplease, *come on...*

He stretches and SUNLIGHT HITS THE JAR. Whatever's in that jar MAGNIFIES THE LIGHT, casting it in all directions. The THING sizzles and squeals below.

Wesley holds onto the antenna for dear life, chances a look down and finds the rooftop vacant, light spilling over it as the sun ascends.

INT. SOFIA AND KARA'S MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kara's rapt, movie paused, headphones off. Sofia still hasn't looked up from her book. She turns a page.

SOFIA

It offers me a deal: I move my shadow to it, save its life and it'll owe me one - cash it in whenever I want. But how do I know it's not gonna fucking eat me the second it gets in my shadow? As a guarantee, it gave me its name.

She lowers her book, nods to her shadow.

SOFIA

And there it lies. In my shadow, waiting to fulfill its bargain. It never sleeps. It never dreams. It hungers and it waits.

Kara peers over the edge of the bed into Sofia's shadow.

SOFIA

You hear that?

KARA

What?

SOFIA

Silence. Get ready.

INT. DONAL'S HOTEL SUITE - MORNING

Felten and Donal eat room service breakfast, a rough, hand-drawn map of sorts on the table between them.

DONAL

This is where all the handshaking's gonna take place. I'll get you to the front, you pass on that kid's disease to the congressman and we go.

Felten nods, pokes at an egg with a piece of bacon.

DONAL

And it's gotta be a slow give, so the disease materializes over the next few months. Can you do that in a handshake?

Felten nods. Donal taps the map with a finger to pull the boy's eyes to it.

DONAL

Nobody's getting in without a pat-down and they'll have wands, too. So no knives or guns for either of us, but we'll both have one of these.

He puts two PENS on the table.

DONAL

Nothing special. Regular pens. Bodies are mostly stainless though, so they'll pop holes in a pinch.

Felten nods, goes back to his egg poking.

DONAL

Alright, that's it. Get up.

He grabs one of the pens as he stands.

FELTEN

I don't want to train.

DONAL

Grab the pen and get up.

Felten does as asked. Donal gets on his knees to be eye-to-eye with the boy, holds the pen in a stabbing grip.

DONAL

Reverse grip, cap it with your thumb. You don't have a slash...

He illustrates as he speaks, mock stabbing Felten's throat, eyes, temples, just behind the jaw, the sides of the neck - fluid, swift motion...

DONAL (CONT'D)

... so your puncture targets are here, here, here, here, here. Go.

Felten does a half-hearted version of what Donal did.

DONAL

The fuck was that? Again.

Felten pops two stabs to the side of Donal's neck. *Fast*. Making a point.

DONAL

Where's the rest?

FELTEN

I got your jugular. That's enough.

Donal moves in on Felten, pen stabbing, seeking targets, aggressive - Felten's able to block or parry most, this is clearly not his first rodeo.

DONAL

Most the time people don't die fast. That first stab hits, and even if it's fatal, the body doesn't know.

Then Donal speeds up, connecting with every strike; making his point. He stops when he thinks he has.

DONAL

Let the blood loose until that body stops whether it knows it's dead or not. It's them or it's you, or me.

Felten nods, noncommittal. Donal drops his intensity, sits back on his haunches.

DONAL

Thinking about last night?

FELTEN

About Wyatt. From the hospital yesterday. He was so happy because he thought I was going to kill him. That was the thing that filled his heart. For a long, long time it's all he thought about - just wanting to die.

DONAL

Then you did a good thing. Now he can think about something else.

FELTEN

I used to be like that when The White had me. Before you came. I thought about it all the time. I didn't do it because I had a feeling. I knew someone would come, but I didn't know when. You showed up all bloody and said you were taking me away from The White and I knew it was you I was waiting for. You picked me up and said, "Close your eyes, Felten. Don't look." That moment, that was the first time in years I wanted to live.

Donal grips Felten's shoulder.

DONAL

You deserved a better life, but this is the one you got. What's been done can't be undone and you've got to live with that. Or you don't. I can't make that choice for you. If you decide you don't want to live with it anymore, that's your choice. It's your life.

A thumb to Felten's chin brings the boy's eyes up.

DONAL

But if you do it, there's gonna be an awful lot of people coulda thought about something except their pain that you're never gonna get a chance to help.

FELTEN

What about the people I give it to? What about their lives?

DONAL

Those are bad people, Felten.

FELTEN

How do we know?

DONAL

Malcolm knows. He gives me the heebie jeebies, too, but he's the one who pointed me to you. And you don't know what he got me out of, but if Malcolm wanted to propagate evil, all he had to do was leave me where I was.

FELTEN

Have you ever met him? Not with an effigy. In person.

DONAL

No.

FELTEN

He's not like us, you know.

DONAL

I know he saved me and he sent me to save you. He has a plan. I don't know what it is, but he has one. Maybe we wouldn't understand it even if he tried to explain it. He gave us his protection and you and I have both seen the things his sign and seal have protected us from. Whatever he is, there are worse things.

FELTEN

I could look in doors and see if they were bad. I could see for sure.

DONAL

You can't look in 'em all. You can't know.

(MORE)

DONAL (CONT'D)

But you can know a kid doesn't have to be crippled anymore. You can know I'm a good guy...

He puts a hand on Felten's heart.

DONAL

... and you're a good guy. You got me. I got you. We don't let each other down. That's all we need.

INT. MORNING SHOW - MORNING

Show hosts MAGGIE ROBBINS (30s) and ERNESTO COX (30s) sip coffee on a set made to look like a Stepford Wife's living room.

ERNESTO COX

Child prodigy. Artistic genius. Painter.

A SCREEN lowers and IMAGES of Gretchen's paintings scroll past to *ooos* and *ahhs* from the STUDIO AUDIENCE.

MAGGIE ROBBINS

From The Smithsonian to The Louvre to The Vatican Museum and The Metropolitan, her work graces the most prestigious museums and galleries around the globe.

ERNESTO COX

Ladies and gentlemen, the ten-year-old who has been called the only living master by critics and peers alike... Gretchen Parks, everybody!

Gretchen enters to music and applause. She shakes Ernesto and Maggie's hands, curtsies to the audience.

OFFSTAGE - Dale watches his daughter, proud as hell.

ONSTAGE - Gretchen takes a seat. Applause dies down.

MAGGIE ROBBINS

Gretchen, it's wonderful to have you on the show with us.

GRETCHEN

I'm sure it must be.

Laughs from the audience, the hosts. Gretchen smiles.

GRETCHEN

Thank you for having me.

ERNESTO COX

And I'd heard you were a tough interview.

GRETCHEN

Give it a minute.

Laughs. Maggie gestures to the screen as six of Gretchen's paintings appear. Each a portrait, each in a distinctly different style.

MAGGIE ROBBINS

Gretchen, this is a small sample of your prolific output. All portraits, but...

(re: each painting)

This one is photo real, this an abstraction, here's an impressionist piece, here realism, here minimalism, cubism, and a comic book slant. There's no signature style to point to that we see with most artists but -

GRETCHEN

I paint truth. That's my style. I don't paint what a person looks like. I paint who they are.

INT. HOSPITAL (BREAKROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Abby's in surgical scrubs, standing. She watches her daughter's interview on a wall-mounted television.

MAGGIE ROBBINS (TV)

Is it true you don't talk to the people you paint?

GRETCHEN (TV)

I've painted people I know, but for the most part my subjects are strangers. People I see in restaurants or malls or crowds, in cars or airports or talk show audiences, anywhere.

INT. MORNING SHOW - CONTINUOUS

ERNESTO COX

And you just remember them?

GRETCHEN

I keep them in The Quiet Place.

MAGGIE ROBBINS

Like a kind of mental studio?

GRETCHEN

No, it's an actual place.

Maggie shares a confused glance with Ernesto.

MAGGIE ROBBINS

An... actual, physical place?

GRETCHEN

I didn't say physical; I said actual.

ERNESTO COX

Ooo-kay, so...

GRETCHEN

Gotcha.

A devious smile. Laughs from the audience, exhalations of relief from Maggie and Ernesto.

ERNESTO COX

She said to give it a minute.

MAGGIE ROBBINS

A genius and a prankster - your parents must have their hands full. Your father's also an artist, yes?

GRETCHEN

He works in wood. He's a master.

ERNESTO COX

Is it helpful to have another artist in the family?

GRETCHEN

My mom's an artist, too. A plastic surgeon. Not the boob job and facelift and labia rejuvenation kind, the burn victim and dog mauling and birth deformity kind.

MAGGIE ROBBINS

That is a kind of art, I suppose.

GRETCHEN

A *kind* of art, you suppose?

Gretchen's smile tightens.

OFFSTAGE - Dale knows that look.

DALE

Don't do it.

INTERCUT: ABBY IN BREAKROOM.

Abby knows that look, too.

ABBY

Oh, shit.

ONSTAGE - Gretchen zeroes in on Maggie.

GRETCHEN

Do you know what a masterpiece is,
Maggie?

MAGGIE ROBBINS

I, uh, I guess I don't really know how to
define it.

GRETCHEN

I know you don't. That's why I asked. A
masterpiece is a work of art where the
artist has reached beyond their ability,
beyond their experience, beyond the
confines of their heart and soul and body
and captured the ineffable in physical
form - in paint, in stone, in wood, in
living flesh. But that's not enough. What
makes it a true masterpiece is that it
gives a catharsis, an enlightenment, a
deeper understanding of self and others
to those who experience it - it reflects
to us the true beauty within us all.

Wild applause starts up and Gretchen shuts it down with a
palm raised toward the audience.

GRETCHEN

An artist might be lucky to produce a
single work like this in a lifetime. Yet,
my mother produces one masterpiece after
another, every time she brings her art to
living canvas.

INTERCUT: ABBY IN BREAKROOM

Abby, all smiles.

GRETCHEN (TV)

So, yes, Maggie, I suppose it is a *kind*
of art.

ONSTAGE:

Gretchen looks to camera.

GRETCHEN

We'll be back after some commercials for laundry detergent and erectile dysfunction pharmaceuticals. Stay tuned.

INT. SUV (DRIVING) - DAY

LA surface street. Rental car. Dale drives. Gretchen in back. Mid-convo.

GRETCHEN

She was a moron, how is that my fault?

Dale stops at a red light.

DALE

You chose to embarrass that woman on her own show. When we get back to the hotel, you're going to write - *handwrite* - an apology letter to her, okay?... *Okay?*

He turns to see why he isn't getting a response and sees Gretchen: wide-eyed, shaking, terrified -

DALE

Gretchen?! Are you okay? Gretchen!

Gretchen SCREAMS, attacks her seatbelt catch.

GRETCHEN

GO! DRIVE AWAY!

DALE

Gretch, what -

Gretchen gets her seatbelt off and curls up in a ball on the floorboard, looking to Dale with pure desperation.

GRETCHEN

DADDY, HE'S GOING TO SEE ME! GO!

Dale runs the red light to a furious chorus of screeching tires and horns; a crash calls out in a punch of buckled Japanese plastic behind as he clears the intersection.

He looks over his shoulder at his shaking, crying daughter, as terrified as she.

Gretchen's eyes: Wide. Dilated. Quivering.

GRETCHEN

Go. Faster. Faster. Don't let him see me. Getawaygetawaygetawaygetaway...

INT. THE QUIET PLACE - CONTINUOUS

Gretchen stands outside the white door that leads to The Quiet Place where she paints. The door is ajar. Horrifying voices SCREECH and GROWL within.

Gretchen steels herself, peeks inside -

INT. SUV (DRIVING) - CONTINUOUS

Dale pulls over, looks back at his daughter.

DALE

I'm taking you to a hospital, Cedars is -

GRETCHEN

NO! I need my paints! The hotel. Go! I need my paints. *Daddy, please... Daddy. Getawaygetawaygetaway...*

Dale watches his little girl crumple back into a ball, shaking, crying. He looks out at a sign for Cedars Sinai Hospital - an arrow points the way.

INT. DALE AND GRETCHEN'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Dale carries Gretchen in, kicks the door shut behind. He sits on the bed, rocking her, stroking her hair.

DALE

You're okay, everything's okay. You peed your pants, we've got to get you out of -

GRETCHEN

My paints. I need my paints.

Gretchen's eyes focus, she knows where she is now - she scrambles off daddy's lap, dives into her painter's bag.

DALE

Gretch, what happened? *What's going on?* You're scaring the shit out of me.

Gretchen grabs a few tubes of paint, a brush, walks to the bathroom talking to herself.

GRETCHEN

Mars black, cremnitz white, size 20 brush. That's good. Good. I know how.

(MORE)

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

(to Dale)

Don't come in, daddy. Don't let *anyone* in.

She walks into the bathroom, shuts the door. Dale is beside himself, terrified, distraught. He puts a hand on the doorknob and -

GRETCHEN (O.S.)

OOOOOUT! OOOOOUT!

Dale withdraws his hand, pulls out his phone, almost dials Abby... but no. He pockets the phone, sits on the carpet outside the door and waits.

INT. TEMPLE OF THE WHITE - DAY

The sounds of dripping water. Almost like rain. Dark here. Hard to see. But this much can be discerned:

A BLOODY SHACKLE is held high by Samual's bloody hand. Stay on it as THE WORD OF THE WHITE *rumbles* through the senses and subsides.

The LIGHT of Samual's staff illumines him and the shackle - both red with blood that drips from above.

He lets go the shackle and it STAYS SUSPENDED IN AIR; it turns and POINTS a direction, pulling against the chain Samual holds.

SAMUAL

It's ready. Use your gift, Levi. Bring him back to me.

LEVI (40s), a White Tie, steps into the light and takes the chain. He turns to a full-length MIRROR and reaches a hand INTO IT. The SHACKLE PIVOTS, POINTS INTO THE MIRROR.

LEVI

I serve The White.

Levi STEPS INTO THE MIRROR and he's gone. Move back a bit as Samual walks into the blood rain coming from DOZENS OF DEAD ACOLYTES HUNG UPSIDE DOWN ABOVE, THROATS CUT, BLOOD RUNNING. Such is the cost of this sorcery.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Sofia's Impala and a few other cars remain.

INT. SOFIA AND KARA'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Kara sits in the center of her bed, eyes closed, feet under her rump, hands worrying her knees, teeth picking a corner of lip. A dew of sweat on her face.

MOVE THROUGH THE WALL INTO...

INT. COTTON'S MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Empty liquor bottles abound. Drug paraphernalia. Fast food detritus.

COTTON BANKS (50s) sleeps, a nude ELVIRA BANKS (40s) sleeps beside him. Cotton mumbles in his slumber, stirs.

INT. SOFIA AND KARA'S MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kara smiles.

KARA

Shhhhh. There you go. Shhhhh.

EXT. MOTEL (DREAM) - DAY

Cotton walks out of his motel room, looks to his left, his right, not a car in the lot.

COTTON

Where the hell's my car?

He turns around to go back to the room and finds...

EXT. FARMSTEAD (DREAM) - DAY

He's on a farmstead. Barn. Silo. Chicken shed. House. Windmill spinning. It's not much, but it's clean and there ain't no high grass.

MAMA BANKS (O.S.)

Cotton, go get after some a' them barn rats with your daddy.

Cotton turns to his mother's voice. MAMA BANKS (30s, white) hangs clothes on a line. She's happy; it shows.

MAMA BANKS

Don't know where they all come from, but your daddy's flat obsessed. Been in there shootin' 'em all day.

Cotton runs to hug her and when he does, HE IS A BOY AGAIN, YOUNG COTTON (8). He holds on like she might blow away. Mama returns the affection, kisses his head.

YOUNG COTTON

Mama. Oh, God, mama. I missed you so much. I guess it's finally over.

MAMA BANKS

What's over, sugar?

YOUNG COTTON

This is heaven, isn't it? If you're here... I used too much, I guess.

MAMA BANKS

It does feel like heaven sometimes, doesn't it? 'Cept for those damn rats. Your daddy got twenty foot a' rope up to Carver's today, he's in there now tryin' ta rig up a trap or somethin', I guess.

A realization hits Young Cotton...

YOUNG COTTON

Rope?

... and he runs for the barn like Satan's at his heels. Behind, Mama is gone, KARA stands in her place, pink dress adrift in the wind.

INT. BARN (DREAM) - CONTINUOUS

One of the big sliding doors opens and Young Cotton runs in to find - PAPA BANKS (30s), his father, a black man in overalls... hung from the rafters by his neck.

Newly dead, urine and shit still dripping from his boot tips. Young Cotton covers his eyes as the tears come, and when he moves his hands, he is ADULT COTTON.

COTTON

(to Papa)

You son of a bitch.

His dead Papa LOOKS UP at Cotton.

COTTON

Jesus God Almighty.

Papa points to a doorway.

PAPA BANKS

The book.

His body falls limp again. Cotton looks to the doorway and he's suddenly in -

INT. BARN - CATTLE STALLS (DREAM) - CONTINUOUS

A room of CATTLE STALLS, five on each side. Blood flows from the stalls to a drain gutter in the main alley.

Cotton walks through, sees the Holsteins in the stalls have all been SHOT DEAD. He turns a corner into...

A short, DEAD-END HALL, a few lightbulbs hang from the ceiling. Under the last, Mama Banks. On her hands and knees, digging in the dirt.

She's paler than pale, hair crusted with blood. She turns to Cotton and he sees the BULLET HOLE in her head.

COTTON

Mama... You left me all alone.

MAMA BANKS

Dig, Cotton. DIG.

The lightbulb above her BLAZES A BRILLIANT, BLINDING WHITE and the TRUMPETING OF ELEPHANTS buffets Cotton as he shields his eyes and finds himself...

EXT. PLAIN (DREAM) - CONTINUOUS

On a wide plain, blinding sun in the sky. Wait, no. Not the sun - Cotton sees the light is emanating from the hand of A MAN whose face cannot be seen.

A MULTI-TRUNKED ELEPHANT rises beneath the mystery man, raising him up, and the light in his hand becomes A BOOK.

The elephant TRUMPETS and Cotton finds that HE is the man atop the elephant, he raises THE BOOK and before him, a MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE raise their hands to his call.

INT. COTTON'S MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cotton wakes. Sweating. Gasping. He rises from the bed, shaking, braces himself against the nightstand.

COTTON

Oh, Lord. Oh, Lord God.

Elvira wakes.

ELVIRA
Baby, what's wrong?

COTTON
Lord, forgive me.
(to Elvira)
We're going clean. Off all of it.
Anything we've got, throw it out, flush
it down, get rid of it.

ELVIRA
Cotton, what the fuck?

Cotton starts grabbing bottles, going through drawers. He
snags a bag of crack, a pipe - Elvira grabs his hand.

ELVIRA
Calm the fuck down. You're out of your
shit. Let's get a bump or two in you so
you can think straight.

Cotton grabs her by her arms, stern.

COTTON
*Clean, Vira. Hear me. You're my wife and
I've dragged you into this shitpile with
me and now I'm dragging us out. I've been
given a vision. A true vision. We gotta
get back to my dad's farm*

ELVIRA
Cotton, you're scaring me.

COTTON
Me, too.

He pulls her to his chest, looks past her to a future
awaiting, to a barn and a bulb and the dirt beneath it.

COTTON
Dig, she said. Dig.

INT. SOFIA AND KARA'S MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kara opens her eyes. Smiles.

SOFIA
Done?

KARA
Done and done.

Kara lays on her side and she's out like a light. Sofia pulls the comforter over her. The girl looks angelic when she's not awake and vomiting profanity.

Sofia goes to a suitcase, opens it, pulls out something bundled in cloth, unwraps it - A JADE, MULTI-TRUNKED ELEPHANT EFFIGY. Liangzhu styling, circa 3000 BC.

She holds it with the cloth, sets it on the nightstand. With a held breath, she reaches for the effigy.

EXT. RURAL HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Small, rural high school. Parking lot full to the brim - maybe a hundred cars. Two CRUISERS from the COUNTY SHERIFF. Three BLACK SUVs parked at the entrance - SECURITY PERSONNEL outside them.

The school's light board displays: "Town Hall Meeting With Congressman Kelly."

INT. RURAL HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

A small, rural gym. Donal and Felten in the bleachers along with TWO HUNDRED other PEOPLE. Applause. CONGRESSMAN KELLY (40s) at a podium.

CONGRESSMAN KELLY

There is a battle going on in the world. In every facet of human civilization. In our political processes, in our philosophies and religions, in our economies, in our hearts and souls and homes. I'm not just talking about civil war in Sudan, Boko Haram and Islamic State, or the conflicts in the Ukraine, in Pakistan, in Afghanistan, in Mexico, Burundi, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Israel, Palestine - I'm not just talking about armed conflict and warlords and religious zealotry and violence. We've got no shortage of people killing one another, and as a species, we never have.

He pauses, loosens his tie.

CONGRESSMAN KELLY

We're also on the brink of complete ecological collapse.

(MORE)

CONGRESSMAN KELLY (CONT'D)

We have more people in more areas than this planet has ever seen and we have pushed all arable land to its maximum output at the cost of the land itself, of the water and the wildlife - we are actively fouling and despoiling the very natural world that allows us to exist.

A cheer from the crowd. Kelly shuts them down.

CONGRESSMAN KELLY

No! No. There's nothing to cheer for. I've done nothing but state facts that everyone already knows. We all see our march to extinction taking place and yet we do nothing. Every time anything of actual import starts to get momentum, it's derailed by people losing their minds over someone saying something racist or homophobic or misogynistic or insensitive, or some celebrity's boob coming out by accident. And you all turn and run after it like a cat after a laser pointer. Over and over.

A silent, chastened crowd.

CONGRESSMAN KELLY

The next time it happens, don't be distracted. Don't let the people in power flick that laser pointer and reset your focus. The stage is set for World War III and you're worried about what celebrities are wearing on the red carpet. The NSA is monitoring every - every - communication you make online, by phone or text. The Department of Homeland Security has purchased two billion rounds of ammunition, hundreds of armored personnel carriers and has built over a hundred "emergency facilities" with prison-style housing and barbed wire angled in - to keep people in, not out.

ALLAN DRURY (50s) a wiry man with a PRESS BADGE stands.

ALLAN DRURY

And what, exactly, is your point, Congressman? This is all the same kind of unfounded, conspiracy theory nonsense that got you ejected from the democratic party, yet, as an independent, you continue to espouse misinformation and wild speculation as fact.

CONGRESSMAN KELLY

My point is that while you were covering fashion week, twenty-five teenage girls were crucified on a mount in the Thar Desert. *Crucified*. For secretly gathering to teach themselves mathematics from an old textbook one of them found - and no one in this country covered the story.

Drury half opens his mouth; Kelly shouts him down.

CONGRESSMAN KELLY

My *point*, Mr. Drury, is that those in control know what's coming. And you, sir, are a part of it, either complicit or deliberately ignorant. They know something we don't and they'll go to any length to keep it that way. To keep all the sheep pacified, uninformed, fat and distracted until it's too late.

He looks out at the crowd, earnest, grave. The crowd is with him, solemn and silent in their seats.

CONGRESSMAN KELLY

People, do not be those sheep. Do not let the Allan Druries of this world distract you from the truth crying out for your attention, for your intervention, for your hands and hearts and souls. Vote for me or vote against me, but do not be so deafened by the chatter of the ever-offended press and the bought-and-paid-for politicians that you cannot hear the bell that tolls even now, ringing in the eleventh hour of mankind. When the day comes - and it is coming - do not lie down, do not go quietly. Stand up. Be counted. And if you've got to go down, by God, go down swingin'.

The crowd surges to its feet, cheering. Kelly doesn't bask in it; he observes, and it saddens him.

INT. DALE AND GRETCHEN'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Dale's still outside the bathroom door, eyes red from crying. Gretchen's chitters, laughs, sobs and mumblings barely audible, but Dale hears them. And then, they stop.

The bathroom door opens, light spilling from within. Gretchen emerges, paint in her hair, up her arms, on her face, drops and streaks of blood here and there. She shakes with fatigue.

DALE

Baby.

She falls into him as he lifts her, curls into him, inhales his scent.

GRETCHEN

Sleep.

Dale takes her to the bed, lays her down.

GRETCHEN

He can't get me. I painted him out. He's gone now.

DALE

Who? Gretch, what happened?

Gretchen points to the bathroom as her eyes close.

GRETCHEN

The Movearound Man.

She sleeps. Out. Dale brushes her hair back from her face, covers her. He looks to the bathroom, the blade of light cutting from the sliver of open door.

He has to look. He has to see. He has to know. And so he walks, one fearful step after another to the door. And he opens it.

Wait here as he steps inside. Wait here as he chokes on a scream in that bathroom then steps out the door and shuts it behind, trembling, sobbing, horrified. He grabs a trash can and VOMITS into it.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Congressman Kelly makes his way down the hall pressing the flesh, flanked by SECURITY PERSONNEL. He shakes one hand after another after another and *stops*, both hands gripping FELTEN'S HAND.

INT. KELLY'S MIND (PATHS OF MEMORY) - CONTINUOUS

Felten stands in the labyrinth of doors, pathways. He sees a door carved and painted with tropical birds.

FELTEN

The birds door.

He opens it.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Security steps in to break Felten's overlong shake with Kelly but the boy lets go first. Kelly stares into the middle distance, out of it for a second.

SECURITY GUARD

Everything okay, sir?

CONGRESSMAN KELLY

Yeah... I'm fine. That boy, he just reminded me of something.

Kelly looks for Felten, but he and Donal have already disappeared into the crowd.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - DAY

Sinks. Mirrors above them. Metal trash cans. Stalls. Donal and Felten enter. Donal crouches to see there aren't any feet in the stalls. Felten stays at his side.

DONAL

Anybody home?

Nope. He folds up a program for the event and wedges it between the door and frame as he shuts it, then adjusts the hydraulic arm atop the door, effectively locking it.

INSIDE A STALL... SECONDS LATER

Donal faces the shut stall door, Felten behind on the toilet. Mid-convo.

FELTEN

He's right though, there's something happening, Malcolm knows, too -

DONAL

Hurry up.

He turns when he hears Felten flush. The boy looks to him - something's off in his eyes.

OUTSIDE THE STALL... A HAND REACHES OUT ONE OF THE MIRRORS OVER THE SINKS.

BACK IN THE STALL...

DONAL

What's wrong?

FELTEN

Donal, I didn't do it. I didn't give it to him.

DONAL

What do you mean? Did something go wrong?

FELTEN

I'm not going to do it anymore. Not for Malcolm, not for anybody.

He says it with defiance, with authority. Before Donal can respond -

A BLOODY SHACKLE shoots under the stall door and CLAMPS onto Felten's ankle. Donal stomps on the chain, throws open the door and sees the blur of Levi charging at him.

IMPACT - a flurry of brutal, bloodletting strikes exchanged, Donal doing his goddamndest with his pen against Levi's WHITE CERAMIC KNIFE.

It is not pretty. It is not graceful. It ain't a fuckin' ballet. These men are trying to kill each other.

Felten claws at the shackle, the other end of which is ATTACHED TO LEVI'S LEG. Even with that handicap, Levi's slicing and dicing the hell out of Donal.

DONAL

Felten, get it together!

Donal slips inside Levi's knife hand, SHATTERS the ceramic knife against a sink, rams Levi's head into a mirror - BUT HIS HEAD GOES INSIDE THE MIRROR, unharmed -

Levi pushes back, BREAKS the mirror, catches a broken shard as it falls and STABS a half-dozen holes in Donal before Donal locks up Levi's arm - Levi reverses it, CRACKS Donal's head into a sink and follows with an elbow that drops Donal and - CRULTCH - a knee to Donal's face -

Donal goes down; Levi moves to finish him and his leg gets YANKED BACK - it's Felten pulling on the chain attached to both their legs.

Levi JERKS the chain and Felten's feet fly out from under him, his head BOUNCES off the tile and he's KNOCKED OUT.

Levi turns back to Donal and - CRUNCH - Donal nails him in the face with a metal trash can. Levi stumbles a step; Donal steps on the chain, tripping Levi and RAMMING him with the trash can -

Levi hits a sink; he falls back, the TOP OF HIS HEAD GOES INSIDE A MIRROR and Donal SHATTERS THE MIRROR.

Levi stops moving, eyes wide, surprised - THE TOP OF HIS HEAD IS GONE, somewhere on the other side of that shattered mirror.

The body falls forward. Donal braces himself on the sink. He's fucked up, bleeding all over the place. It's fairly GUSHING from a cut on the side of his neck. He applies pressure with a hand. His eyelids droop.

DONAL

Felten?

He staggers a few steps toward the boy, drops to his hands and knees, crawls.

DONAL

Get it together... Keep it... Keep -

He falls to the floor, unconscious, blood mingling with Levi's, pooling red geometries in the tile grout.

FADE TO BLACK